



Engagement Notes

Regional Citizens - Open Meeting

October 5, 2021 | *Meeting Host:* Michael Jacobs, GIFL Project Manager

In Attendance

Registrations Via Eventbrite = 136

Attendees – 61 Via Zoom

Names and Zoom profiles of participants are documented via Eventbrite platform – not shared in these notes.

ENGAGEMENT ISSUE: A number of emails were received with people having trouble with the Zoom link. It appeared to be an issue between Eventbrite platform and Zoom platform. Video and notes will be posted to Fixed Link website and emails notifying of the video will be sent out to all registrants.

General Purpose of Engagement

This was the first Introduction to the Fixed Link for the community at large. The intent of the session was to bring the greater Lake Simcoe community informed on the project history from a First Nation lens through to the submission of the Draft Initial Project Description to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

General Notes, Observations, Discussions

The following questions and responses we provided through the chat:

1. Will there be a link available for the recording?

Yes the link to the recording is provided at www.gifixedlink.com under the engagement + project presentations tab.

2. Will there be a copy of the slide deck?

The deck is part of the recorded presentation.

3. When you refer to “the community” what does that include?

Early in the presentation we discuss community visioning and the community has done this or that. This is referring only to the First Nation community of Georgina Island. To date, this is the lens that most of the work has been done from.

4. Has consideration been given to other users of the lake? Will the bridge have sufficient clearance that boats can still get to either side? Will the causeways cause silting to make the water shallower in the area so boats will not be able to cross? (Similar question: will sail boats be able to pass under?)

Yes, this is a consideration that will be explored more as studies begin. It was noted by Sail Georgina during a presentation that the depth does not allow for large vessel navigation. As users of the Lake for recreational and sustenance, the First Nation members also raised this as a concern during visioning exercises. As evaluation of options continues, this issue will be addressed in more details.

- 5. Will fixed link make a casino possible on the island? Additional question #1: Once commissioned, is it expected that this will enable further development on the island like hotel, golf course, etc..? Additional Question #2: if the bridge gets built what is the vision going forward on the island as far as development?**

The reality is if the community desired a casino for economic development purposes, it would have many legal and permitting processes to go through whether there is a Fixed Link or not. The community Vision is one of protecting the community, not encouraging a high volume of unknown visitors to the Island at this time. The Fixed Link Project is driven by the improvement of the safety of the current transportation systems more so than any economic drivers, including large scale economic development projects such as resorts or golf courses on the Island.

- 6. Will the ferry survive another 5 years?**

It is well documented that the ferry is nearing it's useful and intended life. The community has a strict maintenance schedule for the aging vessel to keep it safe and operational. It is believed, at this time, that the ferry will survive until the fixed link can be commissioned.

- 7. What is estimated cost of building fixed link? Additional question #1 - who will pay for it? Additional question #2 - Will funding come only from Federal government?**

The initial rough order of magnitude costs for the fixed link is \$250 Million. Without formal design and engineering consideration, this is the initial scenario based on the assumption provided in the technical review. We anticipate this to change and evolve over time.

At the present time, the community is working with the Canada Infrastructure Bank for funding. The community has investment funds that would be applied to the project. Other federal and provincial infrastructure funds will also be sought. At this time, a portion from the community, a portion from the federal/provincial governments and a loan portion from the Infrastructure Bank

- 8. How long will it take to build?**

Based on the assumptions provided during the technical visioning process, the project timeline estimates approximately 2 years to construct. As more engineering and environmental studies are complete, efficiencies or inefficiencies may result making it a shorter or longer process. The First Nation Council resolution states they are working to a 2026 completion date.

- 9. Is there going to be a toll to cross? Similar questions, the lifespan of the barge is a concern but this is great however wondering is it possible to make this a gated community so that we don't have anyone coming over?**

The community has expressed significant concern over people coming over with no intent – meaning that random visitors is not preferred. There are mechanisms that can be put in place to limit that – gated community or tolls have been discussed. No formal evaluation of this has been conducted and was primarily detailed during the community visioning process. Also, with a portion of the financing a loan, generating revenues to offset loan repayments may be a financial requirement for the viability of the project. This is not yet known, but there is a possibility of a toll.

- 10. Can the island take increased traffic and what about parking?**

The Island roads are not meant for high traffic volumes or for the potential safety requirement of high traffic volumes at the present time. Traffic studies will be an important part of the research completed to ensure that any resulting or projected traffic increases (mainland and Island) will be accounted for and managed. As for parking, no design has been put in place as of yet, so this is unknown.

11. Why not replace the ferry with a “greener” icebreaker ferry that can be used all year long?

The fixed link is not the only option that has been reviewed during this process. The impact assessment process requires Georgina Island to state what other options have been explored. To document First Nation needs, a Health Impact Assessment has been completed (currently in draft form) that identifies the Fixed Link as the only solution to effectively meet the health issues currently facing the First Nation community. An executive summary will be available by the end of November to support the community’s findings.

12. What will happen to all the members who are currently working on the barge? As this is their income?

The loss of the ferry will have some documented, negative socio-economic impacts – on the mainland and on the Island. The actual needs for barging services, even with a Fixed Link has not been assessed, but it is recognized that ferry requirements will be less significant than with the requirements with the present transportation system. As requirements are identified through the studies, it is anticipated that new opportunities for employment across all sectors of the economy will arise.

13. Will residents and cottagers be treated the same in terms of possible tolls or other costs associated?

This has not been assessed at this time. Financial viability will be addressed as the costs and operating expenses get evaluated over the next two years.

The following general comments were provided in the chat:

1. I am so glad that this will bring safety to the members physically and mentally....as a cottager it has always been a concern of mine for their safety...this will keep future generations safe...thank you for all the information
2. Many people have died try to cross this lake IT is the right choice!
3. Great Job!
4. great presentation, thank you!
5. positive start and great communication - thank you - you did a great job
6. Thanks Michael....Great Presentation!
7. Thanks for the info. Glad I tuned in to learn more.
8. If anyone needs any help from a cottager i would love to be involved...
9. great job
10. great presentation. very informative
11. Good Job!

Action Items For Secretariat

1. ASAP, get the presentation online and notify those that couldn’t log in of the links available.

Other Items Requiring Follow-Up

1. Once the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada process is open, notify registrants and website subscribers that the official federal consultation process is open and able to accept community input from citizens, businesses, organizations, etc. (<https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency.html>)