West Lincoln

Cultivating West Lincoln
New Official Plan

Discussion Paper

A Connected Township

November 2026

Introduction

Transportation affects everyday life in West Lincoln. It connects residents to work, school, shops, services and recreation; allows farms and businesses to move goods; and supports emergency response and municipal services. A connected Township needs a coordinated network of roads, sidewalks, cycling routes, trails, transit services and parking.

West Lincoln's transportation needs are not the same everywhere. Smithville is growing and requires a more connected urban network, while hamlets and the agricultural area depend on rural roads that can accommodate farm equipment, trucks, drainage, winter maintenance and longer travel distances. Urban transportation approaches should therefore be focused where they are appropriate, rather than applied across the Township.

The Official Plan Review can protect long-term connections and coordinate transportation with growth. Detailed routes, road dimensions and construction standards will continue to be refined through master plans, environmental assessments, engineering standards, capital planning and development approvals.



Aerial view of the existing roundabout at Highway 20 and Townline Road in Smithville, West Lincoln.

Direction from Existing Documents

Niagara Official Plan

Chapter 5 and Schedules J1, J2 and M direct municipalities to coordinate transportation and land use, protect goods-movement corridors, support transit and active transportation, and plan road allowances. The new Official Plan should carry forward relevant direction for West Lincoln, including the Conceptual Planned Corridor that would connect the QEW to Mud Street East through the escarpment. It should also recognize the Region's ongoing role in regional roads and transit.

OPA 63 and the Smithville Transportation Master Plan

These documents establish a connected road and active transportation network for Smithville, support future transit, and identify road-width and sidewalk expectations. They provide the starting point for Smithville policy and schedules, with refinements to occur through block plans and engineering work.

Niagara Region Transit Plans

West Lincoln is currently served by intermunicipal microtransit rather than local fixed routes. Niagara Region Transit's current master plan identifies future regional service through Smithville and, over time, a local Smithville route. Development should therefore preserve connected streets and practical locations for stops, waiting areas and accessible pick-up and drop-off.

Parks, Recreation and Trails

The Township's 2026 Parks and Recreation Plan recommends continued investment in a connected parks and recreation system. The Official Plan can protect important trail and pathway links while a future update to the 2012 Trails and Corridors Master Plan confirms priorities and alignments.

Smithville Downtown Bypass Environmental Assessment

Niagara Region is evaluating possible Highway 20 bypass routes around downtown Smithville, with the study scheduled to conclude in 2027. The Official Plan should preserve reasonable planning flexibility without selecting a route before the environmental assessment is complete.



View of the intersection at Griffin Street and St Catharines Street in Smithville, West Lincoln.

Emerging Policy Ideas

The following ideas respond to West Lincoln's distinct urban, hamlet and agricultural settings.

Agricultural Transportation and Rural Roads

- Maintain routes that support farm vehicles, agricultural inputs and products, freight, emergency access and rural residents.
- Consider farm access, field operations, drainage, bridges, culverts and the seasonal movement of large equipment when roads or new corridors are planned.

Smithville Streets and Road Cross-Sections

- Use a complete streets approach in Smithville, with each street designed for the users and functions appropriate to its location.
- Develop different cross-sections for downtown, neighbourhood, arterial, collector and employment streets, considering sidewalks, cycling facilities, transit, parking, loading, trees, utilities, drainage and snow storage.

Hamlets

- Maintain the rural scale and function of hamlet roads. Do not require a standard urban complete-streets treatment in every hamlet.
- Consider targeted sidewalks, crossings or short connections near schools, community facilities and other destinations where a need is demonstrated and maintenance can be supported.

Trails and Active Transportation

- Improve connections among neighbourhoods, parks, schools, community facilities and commercial areas in Smithville, and close priority gaps in the existing network.
- Support regional trail connections where feasible while respecting agricultural operations, private property, natural features and long-term maintenance responsibilities.

Transit Readiness and Parking

- Design major development and public facilities in Smithville so future transit stops can be added without committing to unfunded routes or service levels.
- Improve parking availability in downtown Smithville through coordinated public, private, shared and on-street options, while providing accessible spaces, bicycle parking, loading and clear pedestrian routes.

Potential Smithville Bypass

- Evaluate how a bypass could reduce downtown truck traffic and support growth while affecting farms, rural roads, drainage, access, natural features and future development patterns.
- Once the environmental assessment is complete, reflect the preferred solution and any protected corridor in the Official Plan and related transportation plans.

Implementation

Use the Official Plan to guide future transportation planning, infrastructure investment and development decisions. Policies and schedules should be reviewed as ongoing regional and Township transportation plans and environmental assessments are completed.



View of the intersection at Griffin Street North and West Street in Smithville, West Lincoln.