

Policy paper has Windsor moving forward

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The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce has just released a comprehensive regional transportation policy paper offering a forward-looking vision for our region. The chamber is the voice of business for the region, representing approximately 1000 business members collectively responsible for \$10 billion in sales.

The Regional Transportation Paper (RTP) is first in a series of three proactive policy papers focused on the Windsor-Essex business priorities and planned for release within the next few months.

This paper was created by the chamber's Transportation Committee and has been approved by the Board of Directors. Initially a vision from a 100 day plan by Matt Marchand, who was appointed Chamber president and CEO in March 2012, the paper builds on a chamber priorities survey and further consultation with chamber members.

Transportation is especially important to the Windsor-Essex region because our economy is driven by freight-dependent industries, including manufacturing and agrifood, and our border location puts us at the nexus of road, rail and marine transportation networks. These facts create both challenges and opportunities for the Windsor-Essex region.

Along with a forward-looking vision for transportation, the paper provides 27 specific recommendations. Among them are key infrastructure, logistics and regulatory items such as:

- Preventing delays associated with the new International Trade Crossing Bridge.
- Dedicated bridge lanes for shipments and travellers under the FAST and NEXUS programs.
- Extension of the Lauzon corridor to a new interchange with Highway 401.
- Support for the construction of the new Detroit River Rail Tunnel.
- Exploring a passenger rail link across the Detroit River with affordable higher speed rail technologies.
- Infrastructure renewal in the Great Lakes addressing pressing issues such as low lake levels.
- Reasonable, risk-based and consistently enforced environmental regulations.

In the opinion of the chamber, these and other transportation priorities defined in the paper are necessary preconditions to maximize future economic success.

The RTP also identifies opportunities to take greater economic advantage of our strategic location, including providing more services to cross-border truck traffic and establishing our region as a hub for transportation, distribution and logistical industries.

Finally, it calls for business, government and educational institutions to join in an outreach program helping local firms cope with the challenges of moving goods and people across the Canada-U.S. border. The goal is to establish Windsor-Essex as the Border Ready Region.

To access the chamber's Transportation Policy Paper you can visit the chamber's website at windsorchamber.org.

Bill Anderson is the Ontario Research Chair in Cross-Border Transportation Policy at the University of Windsor and Chair of the Transportation Policy Committee of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce.