Barrie biz coalition working to unlock gridlock, jobs in south end

Laurie Watt
Barrie Advance | Oct 13, 2015

A business group has suggestions on how Barrie can get the Harvie-Big Bay Point Road project moving and unlock gridlock throughout the south end.

Harvie Road Crossing Coalition coordinator Justin Strachan showed the city construction of the east-west overpass could occur two years earlier if Barrie takes a business approach.

“Property acquisition could be done in six months, not in 18,” said Strachan.

“Our coalition members own half of that land (the city needs) … and our members could lend a hand in helping acquire (what they don’t own).”

In the city’s timeline, detailed design would take two years, from 2016 to 2018, and property acquisition and utility relocations would occur between 2018 and 2020. Construction of the overpass that would create an east-west arterial would begin in 2020 and could last until 2022.

Calling the plan Unlock Barrie 2018, Strachan is working to get construction started in 2018 and complete by 2020.

“We’re not just optimistic, but if we tackle it aggressively, it’s doable,” said Strachan, who added the new link will not only unlock gridlock in the south end, but open up job opportunities as traffic flows better and more investment occurs.

“We’re looking at it from a business standpoint. When you plan, you plan for the best results. That can mean we have to be aggressive.”

By contrast, Barrie staff is more conservative budgeting time for the various phases.

The city estimates two years for design, followed by property acquisition in 2018 and utility relocations in 2019.

Strachan thinks property acquisition could be done much sooner, in as little as six months and utility relocations moved up substantially.

He added the city could refine its process to reflect Infrastructure Ontario’s design/build approach, which is more streamlined.

“You’re looking at the best case and the very worst case, and even if it lands somewhere in between, it’s still better.”