

April 14, 2026

Council Meeting

West Lorne Library Expansion Moving Forward

Council received an update on the West Lorne Library expansion project, following the Municipality of West Elgin's approval of a construction tender to proceed with renovations.

The project will expand the library by approximately 1,000 square feet, increasing the total space to roughly 2,800 square feet. Planned upgrades include interior renovations, improved accessibility, and general building enhancements, with construction expected to take up to six months and be completed by the end of October 2026.

The West Lorne Branch will close to the public beginning April 29, 2026 to allow construction to proceed. To help maintain access to services during this time, extended hours will be introduced at the Rodney Library Branch starting May 4, 2026, increasing from 21 to 39 hours per week. Mobile library service through the "Books to Go" program, delivered in partnership with the West Elgin Community Health Centre, will continue to operate, and exterior book return bins at the West Lorne Branch will remain available.

Staff are also exploring options for a temporary holds pickup location within the community. While some service disruptions are expected, these measures are intended to help maintain access for West Lorne patrons throughout the closure period.

The report also notes potential future considerations, including a revised lease agreement and a possible request from West Elgin for an interest-free loan to support project costs.

County Requests Provincial Upload of Highbury Avenue

Council approved a resolution requesting that the Province of Ontario assume jurisdiction over Highbury Avenue, advancing a coordinated regional effort with the City of London and the City of St. Thomas.

Council Meeting

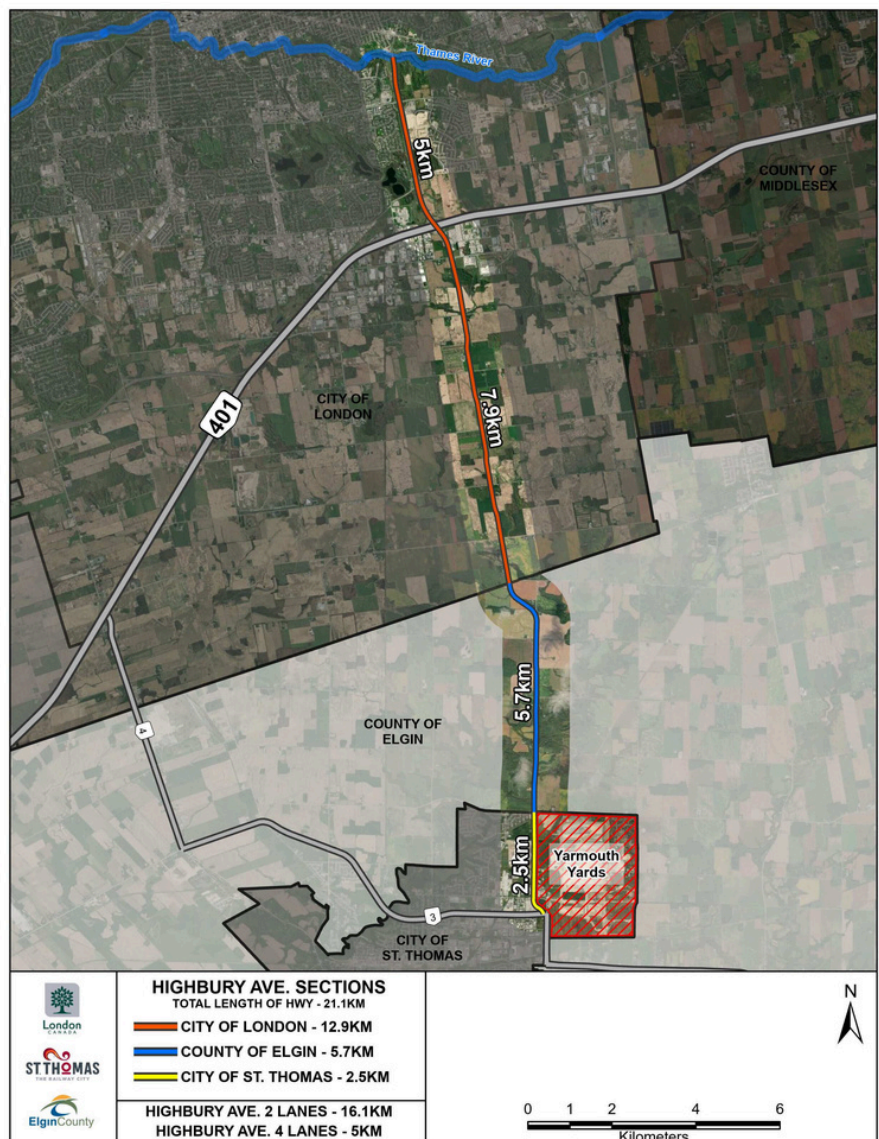
County Requests Provincial Upload of Highbury Avenue (continued)

Highbury Avenue has been identified through the Province's Southwestern Ontario Transportation Planning Study as a key regional goods movement corridor, playing an important role in connecting major employment areas and supporting the movement of goods and services. The County's Transportation Master Plan also identifies that the road will exceed its current two-lane capacity within the next 10 years, requiring expansion to four lanes at an estimated cost of \$150 million.

Recognizing both the long-term infrastructure demands and increasing maintenance pressures, the County began discussions with neighbouring municipalities and the Province regarding the potential to transfer responsibility for the corridor. These conversations were advanced through a formal delegation at the Good Roads Conference, where provincial representatives indicated support for the request, subject to formal resolutions from each municipality.

This report brings forward Elgin County's resolution as the next step in that process. The City of London has already passed a similar resolution, and the City of St. Thomas has indicated its intent to do the same. Once all resolutions are received, they will be submitted to the Province to formally request the transfer of the roadway.

For the full Council Agenda, [click here](#).



Council Meeting

County Provides Input on Proposed Provincial Planning Reforms

Council directed staff to submit comments to the Province on proposed planning and infrastructure reforms under Bill 98 and the Build Communities Strong Fund.

The proposed changes are intended to accelerate housing development and streamline approvals across Ontario. They include updates to planning processes, standardized approaches to development applications, and changes to how municipalities manage infrastructure such as water, wastewater, and transportation systems.

Council's discussion focused on the potential impacts to Elgin County and its local municipal partners. While the proposed reforms may support housing growth and provide access to new infrastructure funding, they could also reduce municipal decision-making authority, particularly in areas such as land use planning, site plan control, and servicing.

The report also highlights financial considerations tied to the proposed Build Communities Strong Fund, including the requirement for municipalities to reduce development charges to access funding. While this may help offset infrastructure costs, there is uncertainty around funding details and whether it would fully replace lost revenue.

Council's feedback will be submitted to the Province as part of the consultation process, with further updates expected as more details on the proposed changes become available.

Committee of the Whole

Delegation of Authority Considered for 2026 Municipal Election Period

The Committee reviewed a proposed by-law that would delegate certain decision-making authority to the Chief Administrative Officer during the 2026 municipal election period, if required, and endorsed bringing the by-law forward to Council for approval.

Under the Municipal Act, Council may be restricted from making specific decisions during an election year if it is determined that fewer than 75 percent of the current Council will return. This period, often referred to as a "lame duck" period, limits Council's ability to make decisions related to staffing, property transactions over \$50,000, and certain financial commitments.

To ensure continuity of operations, the proposed by-law would allow the Chief Administrative Officer to carry out these functions if Council becomes restricted. Any actions taken under this authority would be reported back to the new Council following the election to maintain transparency and accountability.

Committee of the Whole

New Benefits Provider Considered for County Employees

The Committee supported a recommendation to award a new group benefits contract to Desjardins Insurance, while renewing Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) coverage with AIG Insurance, and endorsed bringing the matter forward to Council for approval.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) was conducted in partnership with the Municipality of West Elgin and the Township of Southwold to identify a provider that could deliver competitive, high-quality benefits coverage and service. Following a comprehensive evaluation process that considered service delivery, financial stability, and pricing, Desjardins was identified as the highest scoring proponent for core benefits.

For AD&D coverage, AIG is recommended to continue as the provider, having matched existing coverage while offering enhancements and competitive pricing.

If approved by Council, the new benefits provider would take effect July 1, 2026, with staff working to ensure a smooth transition for employees.

Committee Requests Further Analysis on Asset Management Software Options

The Committee reviewed the findings of an Asset Management and Work Order Software Feasibility Study and directed staff to report back with a procurement recommendation supported by a detailed business case.

The study explored options for implementing a shared system across the County and its local municipal partners to improve coordination, reporting, and long-term asset management planning. It identified a hybrid approach, where the County adopts a core system that integrates with existing municipal systems, as the preferred model.

During discussion, the Committee raised questions about the proposed approach, including the estimated implementation cost, ongoing licensing expenses, and the need for additional staffing resources to support the system. Concerns were also noted regarding implementation complexity, long-term sustainability, and ensuring the system meets the needs of both the County and its municipal partners.

Rather than proceeding with a specific solution at this time, the Committee directed staff to return to Council with a comprehensive procurement recommendation. This will include anticipated costs, resource requirements, an implementation timeline, and a full business case to support future decision-making.

For the full Committee of the Whole Agenda, [click here](#).