



WEBEQUIE SUPPLY ROAD PROJECT

Community Newsletter

Issue 1

What is this Environmental Assessment (EA) project all about?

This project is about Webequie First Nation (WFN) trying to create a better future for itself by taking advantage of opportunities in the region that will benefit community members economically while allowing them to preserve their traditional way of life. As the First Nation closest to the mineral discoveries and mineral exploration activities in the region, it has an opportunity to benefit in many ways. Life in a remote community is not easy, as food, fuel and construction supplies are very expensive because it is delivered by air most of the time. In order to give community members future opportunities, Webequie First Nation has decided to conduct an environmental assessment together with preliminary engineering activities for a Supply Road from its airport to the location of the mineral discoveries and exploration activities. The Supply Road is linked with an ongoing airport redevelopment project and together these two projects would help the year-round movement of supplies, materials and people to the mining development activities.

Who is leading the EA project?

The Webequie First Nation community itself will be leading the project. Webequie First Nation will be the proponent, or sponsor, of the environmental assessment and the preliminary engineering work. They will be helped by a firm that has been hired to provide environmental and engineering technical support.

This project represents Ontario's first community-led comprehensive environmental assessment for an all-season road in Ontario's Far North.

Why are we doing this EA project?

There have been major mineral discoveries southeast of Webequie that have generated a lot of interest within the mineral exploration and mining industry, as well as the federal and provincial governments. There is also interest by these groups to make further mineral exploration investments.

The main reason for Webequie First Nation doing the EA project is that Webequie First Nation wants to protect the land. The best way to do that is for Webequie First Nation members to design and participate in the EA studies with the goal to generate new information in order to make an informed decision for the next phase. We are still in the study phase for the next three years and there are "no shovels in the ground yet". The other main reason for Webequie First Nation to lead the EA studies is to ensure that the EA process is community-driven, transparent, participatory, and collaborative.

The secondary reasons are related to the economic opportunities, given that Webequie First Nation is the closest community to the mineral exploration and proposed mine developments. The community wants to benefit from their location through supplying material, equipment, and people in their traditional area for existing and future projects with their airport facility and the Supply Road.

What will be done during this EA project?

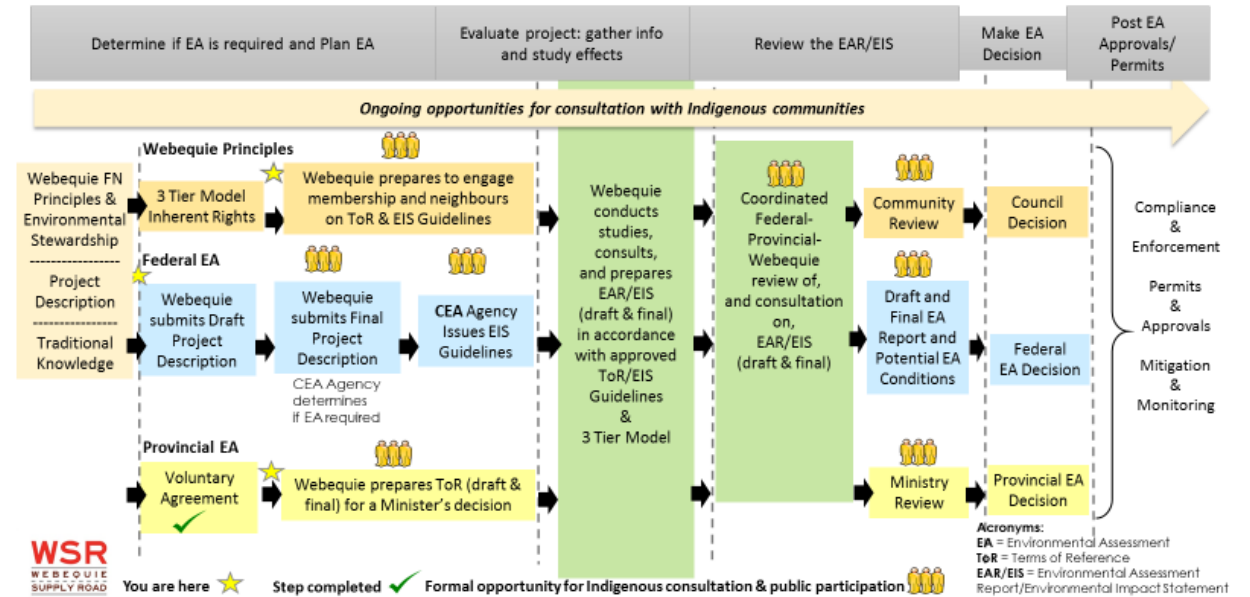
There are two main parts to this project- i) an environmental assessment and ii) preliminary engineering.

i) Environmental Assessment

The environmental assessment process is regulated by governments and public agencies to consider possible environmental effects before a project begins. The Ontario provincial process will begin by Webequie First Nation informing its community members, neighbouring First Nations, provincial and federal regulatory agencies, as well as other interested groups that Webequie First Nation will be beginning an environmental assessment. Once that is done, they will prepare a draft environmental assessment Terms of Reference (ToR), which serves as a workplan of all the studies that needs to be done. The draft ToR is reviewed by provincial government agencies, the general public, and other groups for feedback. Once the public comments on the draft ToR have been received and addressed, Webequie First Nation will produce a final ToR, which is then submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks. Through this entire process, Webequie First Nation community members, the neighbouring First Nations, the local municipalities, and the general public will have the opportunity to provide their input.

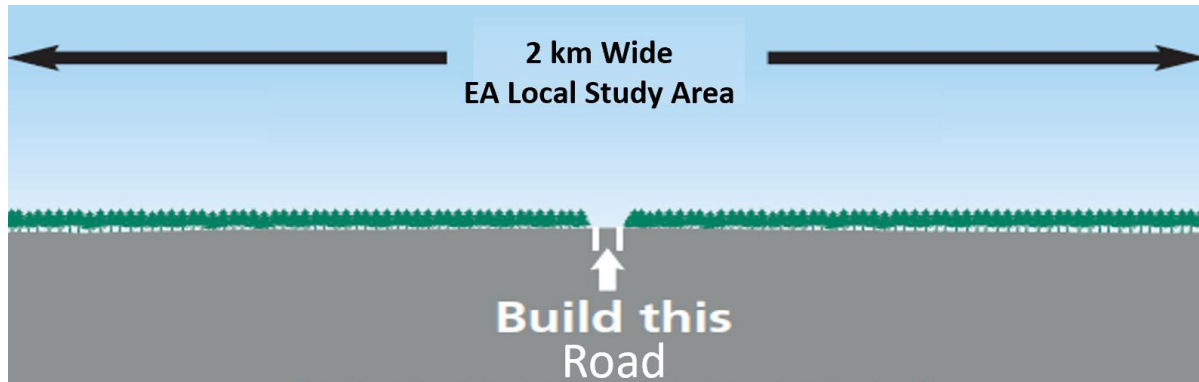
For the Supply Road Project, the federal government has a similar regulatory process that involves the preparation of draft and final Project Description. These are submitted to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) for review. After the CEAA review, CEAA will issue what is called EIS Guidelines, which is a workplan with all the environmental studies that have to be done. Just like the Ontario provincial process, community members, neighbouring First Nations and local municipalities, and other interested groups will have the opportunity to provide their input.

Coordinated Federal-Provincial-Webequie EA Process



i) Preliminary Engineering

The preliminary engineering step will begin by having terrain specialists, consisting of engineers and geologists, looking at the current 2 km wide road corridor and identifying where exactly the centre of the road should go based on the land. This includes identifying the best places to cross rivers. This will be done together with the road engineers, who will look at factors such as the shape of the road and how flat or steep the road will be in order to make sure that the road will be safe. At the same time, geologists and soil (geotechnical) engineers will be looking for potential locations of sources of road-building material (i.e., gravel and rock). The work of all of these experts together will identify the best place to put the road within the current 2 km wide corridor. Once this has been done, more detailed work such as measuring the depth of soft underlying soils (i.e., peat), the types of bridges and culverts required, and soil testing for the bridge foundations will be done.



How long will the EA project take?

The project should take 3 years, with the draft Environmental Impact Statement (federal) and EA Report (provincial) prepared and submitted in Year 2, together with the draft preliminary design package. Year 3 will include the preparation of the final Environmental Impact Statement and EA Report, as well as the Final Preliminary Design Report.

It is important for the community to remember that the environmental assessment and preliminary engineering work is still part of the study phase of the overall project. This work is being done to allow an informed decision to be made on the next phase of the work. There will be “no shovels in the ground” during this 3 year study phase.

How will our community be participating in the EA project?

Webequie First Nation, as the proponent, will be leading the entire project. The Supply Road Project Management Team that consists of local staff, appointed councillors and the Community Infrastructure Planning Coordinator, will direct the firm that will provide technical support to the environmental and engineering components of the project. Community members will participate in meetings and workshops to discuss the project as it progresses, as well as be involved in preliminary training, employment and field studies. Local community members will have the opportunity to receive formal training in selected project activities such as environmental monitoring.

How will our community be engaged?

Both the provincial and federal environmental assessment processes involve extensive engagement and consultation. Community members will be able to access project information at any time via the project website (www.supplyroad.ca) or via regular project newsletters, fact sheets and videos. At different points during the environmental assessment and preliminary engineering process, there will be formal community meetings that could consist of general meetings, or be broken up in smaller groups such as land users, youth, and elders.



It is important to remember that this is Webequie First Nation's project. At any time, community members can share their thoughts about the project with leadership, or with members of the Supply Road Project Management Team. We welcome your input.

Where can we get more information?

Additional information on the project can be obtained from our project website, www.supplyroad.ca, or by contacting:

Local Consultation Lead: samson.jacob@supplyroad.ca

Regional Consultation Lead: michael.fox@supplyroad.ca