

Maley Myths: Exposing Popular Misconceptions - Providing Facts

What exactly is the Maley Drive “Extension” Project? Long a priority and endorsed by past city councils and business interests, many citizens have little knowledge as to what the proposal actually involves. What will be the real costs for the project and what other worthwhile endeavours might be sacrificed such as repair and maintenance of present infrastructure or other capital projects of potentially greater value to the community and its residents without significant borrowing and/or raising of taxes? There are many myths that will be examined in detail for a better understanding of all the factors that deserve to be revealed for full disclosure with facts.

Myth One: Maley Drive is a road north to the “valley” area – specifically Hanmer from Barrydowne Road. This is perhaps the most misunderstood aspect and commonly held belief of the Maley “extension” project.

Fact: The Maley Drive extension runs east and west and not north/south – an extension north would be another entirely different project, however possibly of greater value when compared to the present proposal. Maley Drive provides little benefit to those in the north and virtually no benefit whatsoever to those in the southern portions of the city. The mining industry will benefit to some extent but will not contribute to the cost of the road; only taxpayers will pay for the construction and ongoing maintenance and eventual replacement. Note: The provincial government does not allow municipalities to charge tolls for road usage.

Myth Two: Maley Drive is to be a perimeter “ring road” like the bypass around the south of the city which has existed for many years and was paid for by the province.

Fact: There are no current plans to make Maley Drive a northern perimeter bypass “ring road” which would link Highway 17 East and Elm Street to the West. That would require a new roadway from the Maley Drive, Falconbridge Road intersection to the Highway 17 southwest bypass intersection near Coniston. This is not part of the current plan and due to the distance and topography would be expensive. The total present estimated cost to create a northern ring road as part of the Maley Drive extension would be much more than the estimated cost of \$130 million for the present two phase project of which only the first phase \$80 million cost is to be shared with the province and possibly the federal government.

Myth Three: The Maley Extension will be a four lane highway with planned roundabouts (eventually) large enough to accommodate mining vehicles.

Fact: Only a portion identified as phase one will be four lanes, just a section of what was originally planned and shown on city videos and maps for the whole project. This first part of the project at a projected cost of over \$80 million, shared with the province and possibly the federal government, will be four lanes from the present Barrydowne Road, Maley Drive intersection westward to around College Boreal on Lasalle Blvd. The present Maley Drive would remain two lanes but perhaps resurfaced but not upgraded to four lanes as part of “phase two” until some future date at a reported estimated cost of \$50 million but likely millions more according to staff and this phase at present unfunded by any level of government. Note: Any cost overruns are most likely to be the responsibility of the municipality as will upkeep and replacement.

Myth Five: Money is available now in the city budget for the city portion of the first phase of the project.

Fact: Less than half of the city's contribution of almost \$27 million required to match promised provincial and yet to be announced federal contribution is available. With a budget allocation of currently only a \$1 million a year, the city to contribute its share will have to borrow in some manner, take money from reserves, other sources or raise taxes.

MYTH Six: Maley Drive is or will take most of the area mine haulage traffic.

Fact: Mine haul material from the south rim, north rim or west end is unlikely to use Maley Drive. The ore from these mining areas will either be shipped to Clarabelle Mill (Copper Cliff), Strathcona Mill (Levack) or a mill in Timmins. For all three cases, using the proposed Maley Drive could add costs due to rerouting required. Mine haul material from the east rim is currently being shipped to Strathcona Mill (Levack), and the most efficient route for that is through the Valley. Money to be spent on Maley might better be allocated to other area mine haulage roads.

Myth Four: Maley Drive will open up needed land for development.

Fact: According to the city growth study (Official Plan) there are already enough building lots for decades into the future throughout the city, and intensification will likely reduce the need for these properties even further.

Myth Eight: This project will “boost” our economy, providing jobs and related benefits.

Fact: Road building is a long term negative contributor to the community employing individuals with only limited skill during the construction period and adding little value going forward as compared to construction of social meaningful developments such as sporting, arts or convention facilities.

Myth Nine: The city can do Maley Drive and other city projects within budget and has done a thorough cost/benefit study.

Fact: Unless borrowing, raising taxes or taking from reserves, this cannot be done. A study was done by a consulting firm, AECOM, paid for by the city using data supporting the project, supplied by the city and not independently verified. AECOM states that it “makes no guarantees with respect to the report, the information or any part thereof”. There is nothing which would indicate the return on investment for the city. Nor did the report identify the cost/benefits of other projects the city could as an alternative to Maley, something which a fulsome cost/benefit analysis would have shown.

Myth Ten: Maley Drive will provide an overall long term benefit to the city.

Fact: Any benefits will be short term and only for those in road construction and possibly mining, land speculation and development. Initial cost and cost overruns and on-going maintenance and replacement will have a detrimental effect on local taxpayers and preclude other possible projects of greater value without borrowing and/or increasing taxes as our present assessment base is not growing, and revenue from all sources is decreasing.

Recommendation: As the project has changed in nature and scope from what originally conceived, it is incumbent on the present council to conduct a full review in the most transparent and accountable manner and to entertain presentations from all quarters including the public to determine the validity of proceeding with this endeavour which could have far-reaching consequences for our community. **Note:** Older adult surveys conducted by Friendly to Seniors – Sudbury and the Sudbury Chapter of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) indicated that over 85 percent favoured a comprehensive review of the Maley Drive Project and over 95 percent wanted present roads repaired and maintained before any new roadways were developed. Older adults represent a significant and growing percentage of the population.

This submission was prepared using resources including city documents, media reports and input from informed and involved concerned citizens, Steve May, Thomas Price and Dr. David Robinson. Their comments can be accessed by following the links on the website www.friendlytoseniors.ca.

John Lindsay, Chair, Friendly to Seniors – Sudbury - Hugh Kruzell – Chair CARP – Sudbury Chapter