



Northern Road Link Project

Proposed Terms of Reference Summary

May 2022



Thank you for your interest in the **Northern Road Link Project** (the Project). This is a summary of the information you will find in the **Proposed Terms of Reference (ToR)** for the Project.

What is a Terms of Reference?

A Terms of Reference (ToR) is a **roadmap** or work plan for an Environmental Assessment process. It proposes the range of studies required to identify and understand the potential effects of a project. The Draft ToR for the Northern Road Link Project (the Project) was presented to Indigenous communities and the public for consultation. Feedback on the Draft ToR was used to prepare the Proposed ToR, which was submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) in April 2022. The Minister of the MECP will review the Proposed ToR, including the comments and the proponent's responses. MECP then decides to:

- Approve the ToR
- Approve ToR with amendments, or
- Reject the ToR

Once the proponent has an approved ToR, they can proceed with undertaking the EA as set out in the ToR.

What is an Environmental Assessment?

A ToR is a work plan for an Environmental Assessment (EA). An EA is a planning tool to:

- Identify potential effects (positive and negative) to the environment.
- Identify mitigation measures to reduce or remove potential negative effects.
- Facilitate decision-making.

- Provide opportunities to comment on how a project may impact communities and their use of land.

The Project:

- Must be reviewed under the Ontario *Environmental Assessment Act* (EA Act). The provincial process is called **Environmental Assessment (EA)**.
- May have to be reviewed under the federal *Impact Assessment Act*. The federal process is called **Impact Assessment (IA)**.



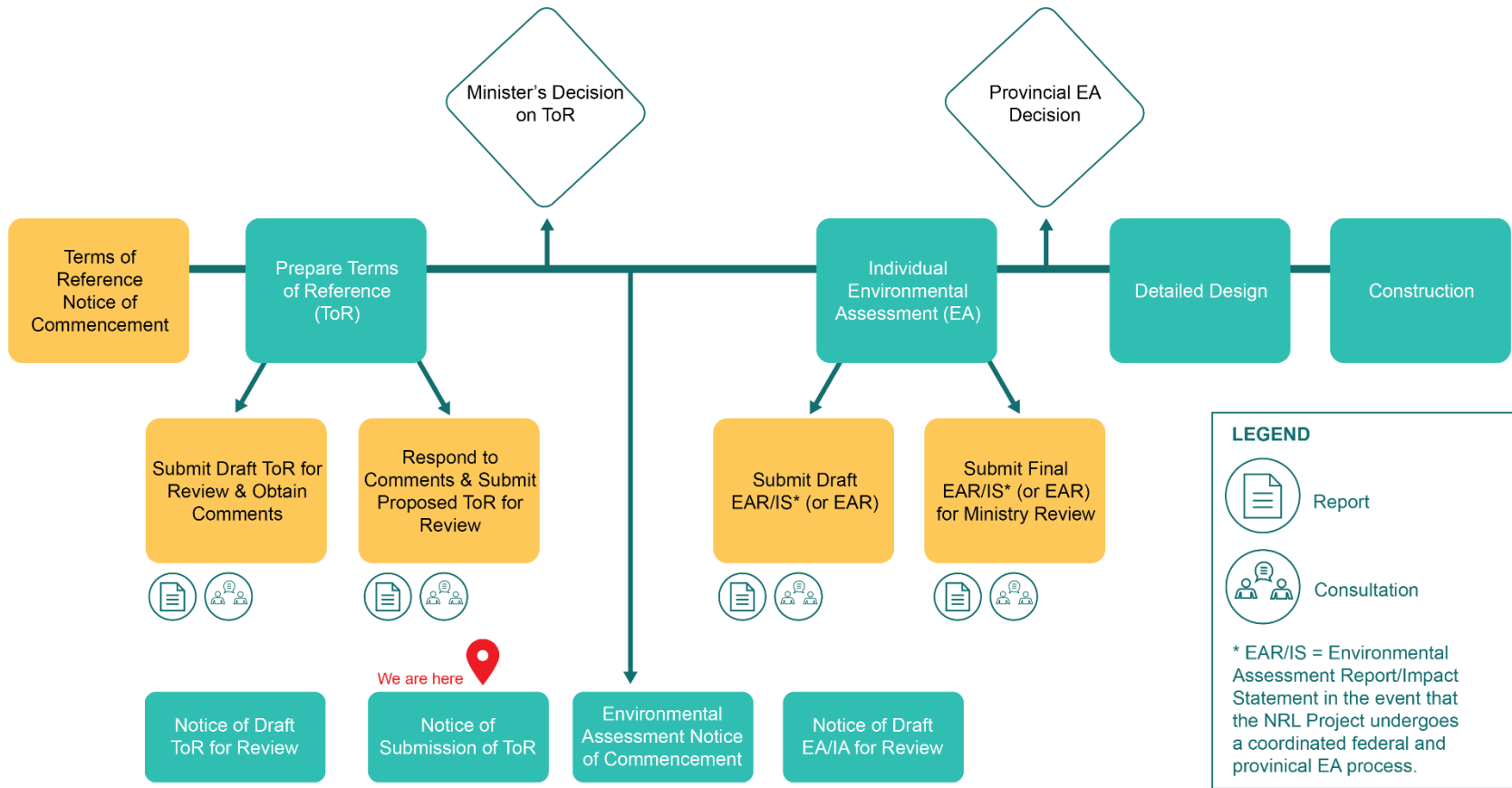
The MFFN and WFN communities' knowledge is important for the EA to protect culture and land use

An EA will be undertaken to determine the preferred route for the Project and to assess how the project may affect the environment, including Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and Interests, physical, biological and socio-economic environment, cultural heritage resources, and human health. Studies will be carried out and data will be collected to understand how best to avoid and/or minimize negative project effects and maximize positive project effects.

Provincial Process

We started the provincial EA process by submitting the **Draft ToR** to Indigenous communities, government agencies and other stakeholders for their review and comment. Next, using the comments received we prepared the **Proposed ToR** and submitted it to the Minister of the MECP for a decision. If the Proposed ToR is accepted, we will initiate the EA process. As an Indigenous community-led project, the Project will provide many opportunities for consultation and engagement.

Provincial Environmental Assessment Process



LEGEND

 Report

 Consultation

* EAR/IS = Environmental Assessment Report/Impact Statement in the event that the NRL Project undergoes a coordinated federal and provincial EA process.

April 2021

November 2021

Federal EA Requirements

It is not yet known if the Project will also have to complete an Impact Assessment (IA) under the federal *Impact Assessment Act*. If so, it is anticipated that the Project would undergo a coordinated Environmental Assessment/Impact Assessment (EA/IA), which incorporates the provincial and federal processes as well as MFFN's and WFN's community processes. We use the term 'EA/IA' in the ToR to account for a potential joint provincial/federal process, and the term 'Environmental Assessment Report/Impact Statement (EAR/IS)' to refer to the single document that would be prepared for both processes.

Who is Leading the Project?

The Project is being led by two Indigenous communities from a remote area in northern Ontario:

- **Marten Falls First Nation (MFFN)** is an Anishinaabe community located on the north bank of the Albany River, approximately 430 km northeast of Thunder Bay and 175 km southeast of Webequie First Nation.
- **Webequie First Nation (WFN)** is an Ojibway community, located on a peninsula on Winisk Lake, approximately 540 km north of Thunder Bay and 175 km northwest of Marten Falls First Nation (MFFN).

Together, MFFN and WFN are the “proponent” of the Project’s EA and preliminary design. The proponent has assembled a team of two Project Co-Leads (one from MFFN and one from WFN) and a Working Group (two members from MFFN and two from WFN) to provide overall strategic direction. The proponent also engaged a Technical Team to prepare the ToR.

Project Co-Leads

- Michael Fox, Indigenous & Community Engagement (ICE), WFN Lead
- Qasim Saddique, Suslop Inc., MFFN Lead

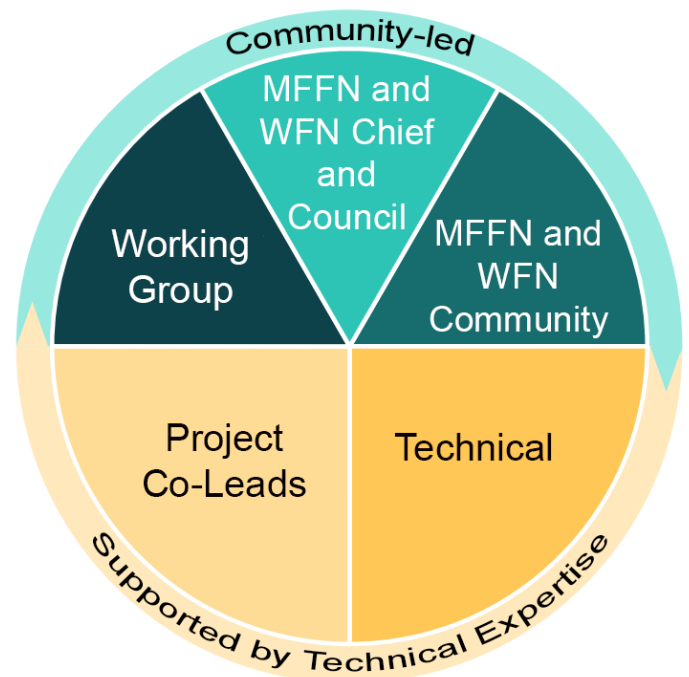
Working Group

- Lawrence Baxter, MFFN Representative
- Alanna Downy Baxter, MFFN Representative
- Roy Spence, WFN Representative
- Gordon Wabasse, WFN Representative

Technical Team

- SNC-Lavalin Inc., Project Manager: Angela Brooks
- Dillon Consulting Limited

Community-Led Environmental Planning



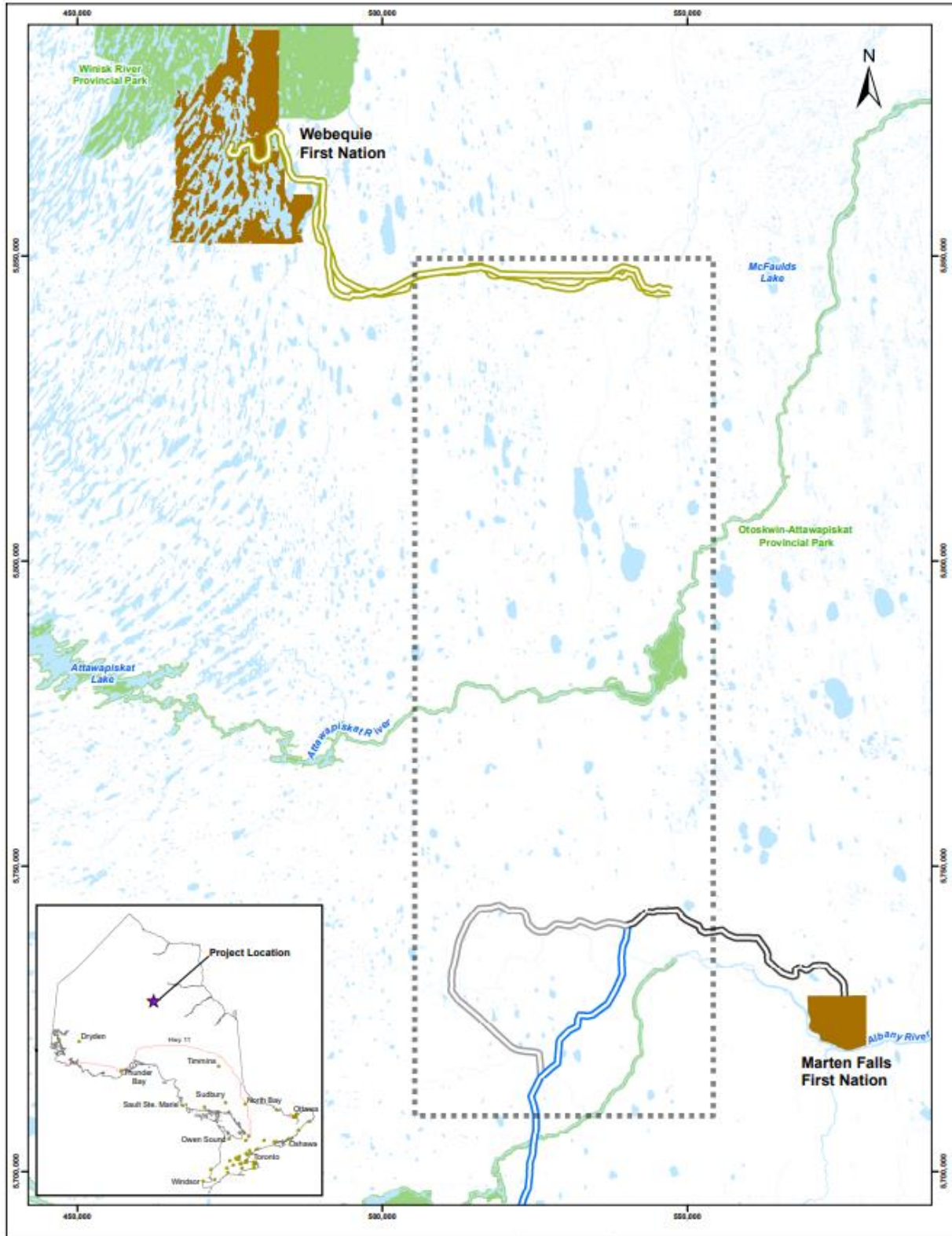
What is the Project?

The Project is a proposed all-season road that would link two other proposed new roads.

In addition to the Project, MFFN is also the proponent of the Marten Falls Community

Access Road (MFCAR) project, while WFN is also the proponent of the Webeque Supply Road (WSR) project. Both of these projects are also proposed all-season roads. The Project will “link” the proposed WSR to the proposed MFCAR.

Project Location



What Are the Purpose and Objectives of the Project?

The **purpose** of the Project is the design, construction, and operation/maintenance of a proposed all-season road between the proposed MFCAR and the proposed WSR to:

- Connect the Ring of Fire (RoF) mineral deposits in the McFaulds Lake area to the highway network via MFCAR.
- Provide an opportunity to connect WFN to the highway network.
- Enable a broader range of economic activity by facilitating the transport of goods, services and resources.

The **objectives** of the Project include:

- Stimulate sustainable regional economic activity by facilitating all-season road movement of materials, supplies, and people.
- Provide employment and other economic opportunities to MFFN, WFN and local Indigenous community members, while living in or near their communities, preserving their language and culture.
- Give experience and training opportunities to youth to encourage them to pursue post-secondary education.



Alternative Methods of Carrying Out the Project - Where and How Will the Proposed Project Be Built?

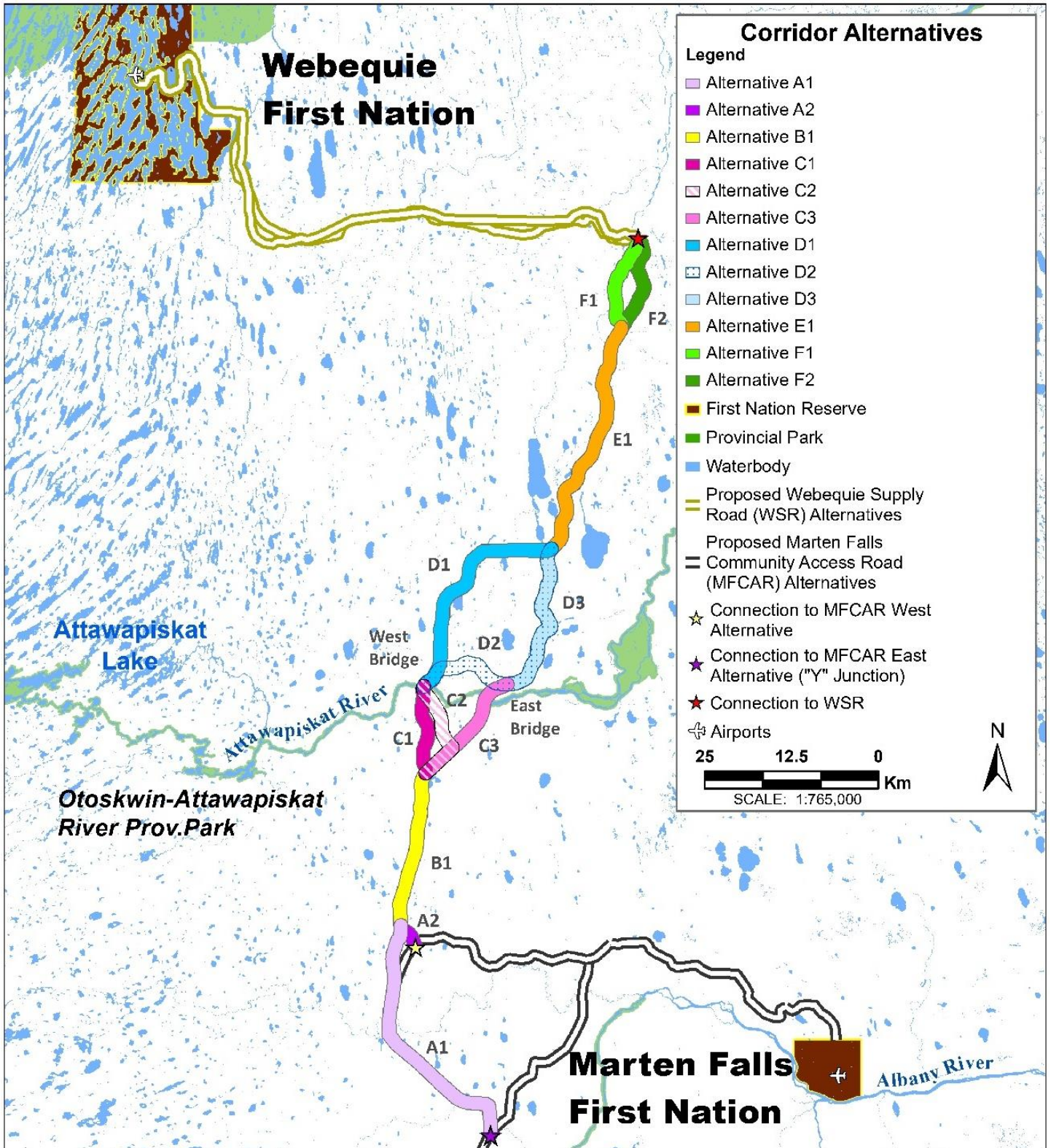
“Alternative methods” are different ways of carrying out the same activity. The EA will evaluate alternative methods for the Project including:

- Corridor alternatives, to select a preferred corridor for the Project.
- Ancillary infrastructure alternatives for the preferred corridor.

Based on initial technical review and feedback from Indigenous communities, the proponent will assess twelve alternative corridor segments: A1, A2, B1, C1, C2, C3, D1, D2, D3, E1, F1, F2. Many segment combinations are possible to assemble a full corridor for the Project from the start point connecting to MFCAR to the end point connecting to WSR. Depending on the chosen segments, the length of the Project may range from 117 km and 164 km. All alternative corridor segments are 2-km wide. The segment combinations that will be assessed to determine the preferred corridor for the Project are:

- A1/A2 – B1 – C1/C2 – D1 – E1 – F1/F2
- A1/A2 – B1 – C1/C2 – D2 – D3 – E1 – F1/F2, and
- A1/A2 – B1 – C3 – D3 – E1 – F1/F2

Corridor Alternatives



The proponent will also assess ancillary infrastructure alternatives for the preferred corridor, including:

- Alternative sites for temporary and/or permanent aggregate sites (pits and quarries) and crushing/production facilities and access roads
- Alternative sites for temporary and/or permanent ancillary infrastructure for construction and operation/maintenance of the road
- Watercourse crossings (type, span length, etc.)
- Road attributes (foundation, alignment, etc.)
- Construction timing (seasonal) and staging.

Criteria will be developed to assess the advantages and disadvantages of the alternative methods for the Project, based on the EA Act requirements, feedback from engagement with Indigenous communities, interested persons, regulators, available Indigenous Knowledge/Indigenous Land and Resource Use, and information collected during baseline characterization.

Preliminary assessment criteria for the evaluation of alternative methods are included in the Proposed ToR. The sum of the preferred methods will constitute the Project that will undergo an effects assessment.

During the EA/IA, road alignments will be identified within the 2-km wide preferred corridor. There will be some flexibility to adjust the

alignments within the preferred corridor to avoid or minimize impact on identified areas of sensitivity or concern.

The largest watercourse that the Project will cross is the Attawapiskat River. Based on historical information and input from Indigenous community members, including community values, two alternative locations are proposed for the Attawapiskat River bridge crossing and will be assessed in the EA/IA: the East Bridge and the West Bridge.

The **East Bridge** crosses the river along an esker. An esker is a ridge of higher ground with sand and gravel, and would be a source of aggregate material for the road; however, community members described this proposed crossing as a known crossing site for Moose.

The **West Bridge** crosses the river upstream of some rapids, which may provide less attractive habitat to some wildlife. For example, Moose are less likely to use the habitat near the West Bridge as they prefer slower moving water with abundant aquatic vegetation. Lake Sturgeon are also less likely to be at this location as they prefer to spawn downstream of rapids in fast moving water.

The photos on the map below show the proposed East Bridge and West Bridge crossing locations in the context of the river.



Proposed Alternative Crossings of the Attawapiskat River

Project Components

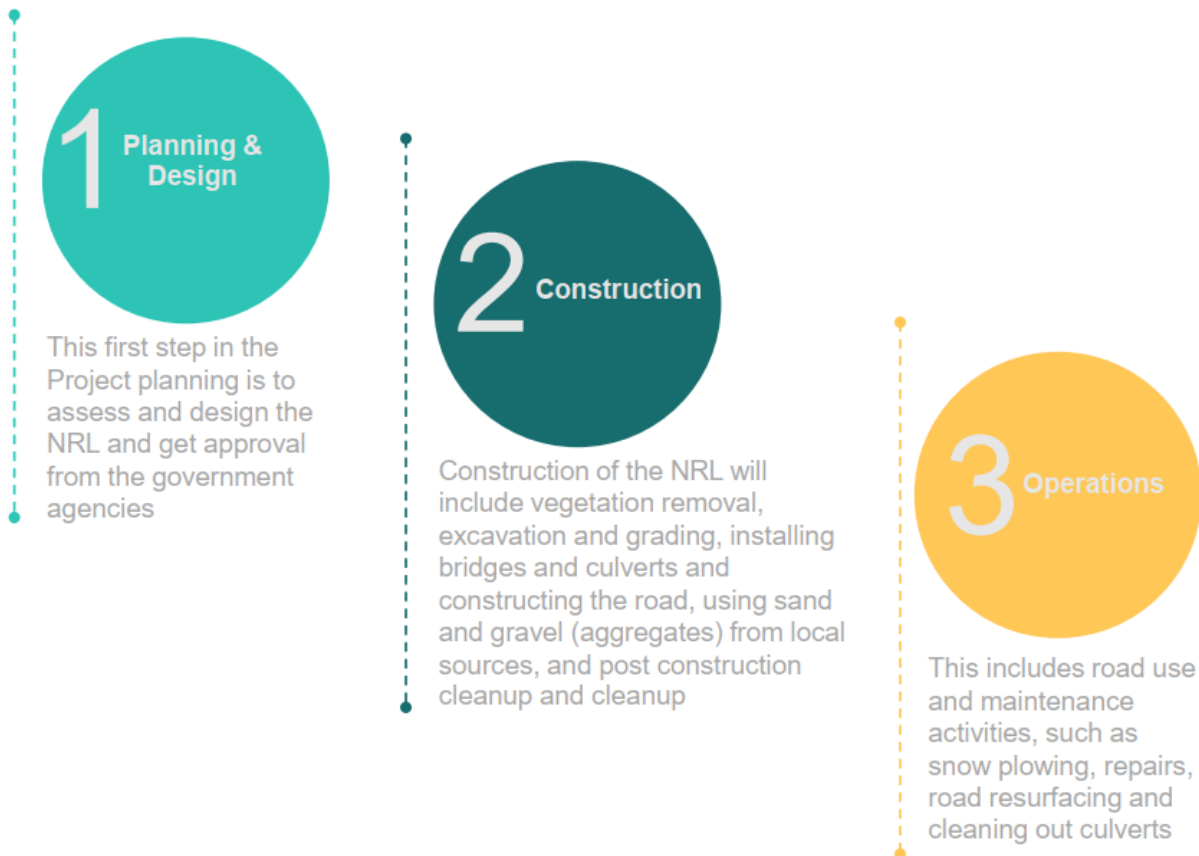
Key components include:

- Approximate length of 117 km to 164 km of all-season gravel road with a 60 m cleared area and a 100 m right-of-way.
- Approximately 11.5 m-wide multi-use road with undivided lanes, shoulders and ditches (as required).
- Water crossings, including one large bridge crossing at the Attawapiskat River and several smaller bridges and culverts.
- Ancillary structures:
 - Aggregate sites (pits and quarries) and crushing/production facilities.
 - Work, storage/laydown areas and construction camps.
 - Temporary/permanent access roads and water crossings.

We are currently in the first phase, **planning and design**, which sets the stage for the success of the next phases, including detailed design and construction of a road that minimizes impacts to all aspects of the environment. That is why your input is so important to the Project.

The Project is planned to operate indefinitely, and decommissioning is not anticipated.

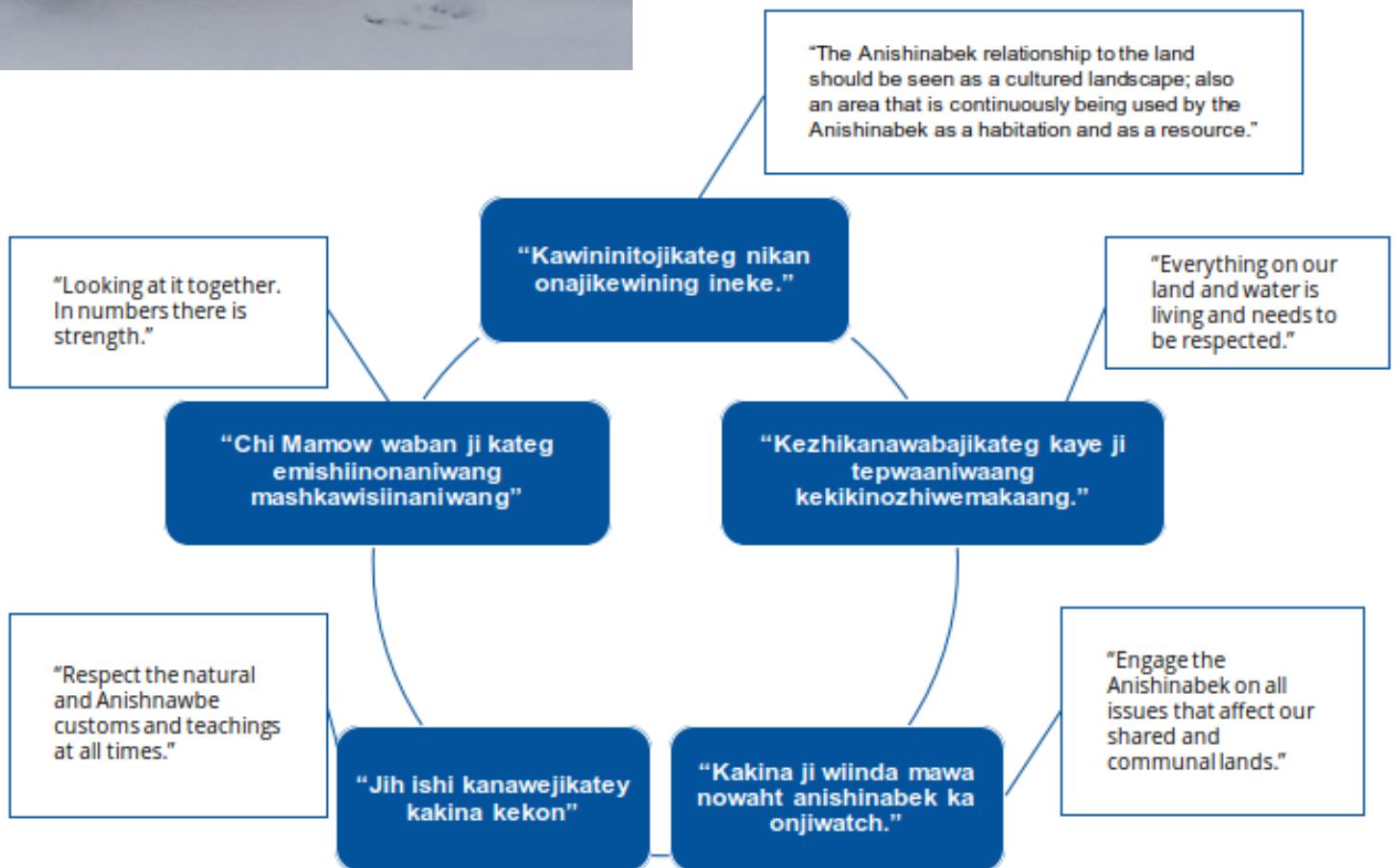
Project Phases





Consultation and Engagement

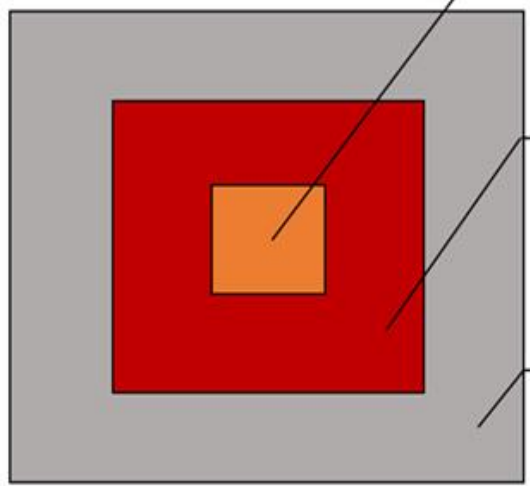
MFFN and WFN are committed to carrying out a thorough and meaningful consultation and engagement process for the Project, in a respectful manner that reflects Indigenous culture and traditions. Consultation and engagement activities will follow MFFN's **Guiding Principles** and the WFN's **Three Tier Approach**. This guidance has been developed by MFFN and WFN over time to embody and pass on their traditional cultural values, customs and beliefs.



MFFN's Guiding Principles

WFN's Three Tier Approach

The three tiers are closely connected and depend on each other.



CORE TIER: *The Community and their Overall Well-Being*

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Social health
- Education
- Employment opportunities
- Income

RELATIONAL TIER: *Preserving the Indigenous Culture of the Community*

- Increasing understanding of the culture by others
- Language
- Traditional cultural activities
- Ancestral knowledge inheritance - recording and passing down knowledge down from the elders

FOUNDATIONAL TIER: *Treaty and Partnerships*

- Fair sharing of benefits from the land with government and industry



Jon Pleizier



Indigenous-Led Community Consultation & Engagement

Messages from the Chiefs about the importance of the Project to their communities:

“Marten Falls First nation and Webequie First Nation are working on providing prosperity for our respective communities. As co-proponents, the Northern Road Link Project allows us to exercise our inherent right of self-determination and create business opportunities for our youth. Marten Falls First Nation will ensure the protection of the lands by having out first Nations lead the EA studies. We look forward to the partnership and the opportunities that will follow with economic development.”

Chief Bruce

“Webequie First Nation is excited to partner on an Indigenous-led environmental assessment (EA) for the Northern Road Link Project. The reason why the two communities are co-leading the EA is to generate information which will allow for us to make an informed decision. As co-proponents, Marten Falls First Nation and Webequie First Nation will ensure environmental stewardship for our traditional territories. We are seeking to enhance the quality of life of our community members and looking forward to working towards our mutual aspirations.”

Chief Cornelius

Indigenous Communities, Groups, and Tribal Councils

The purpose of consultation and engagement is to:

- Promote effective two-way communication between the Proponent and members of potentially affected Indigenous communities and organizations, regulators, the public and others
- Present and receive information
- Identify and address issues and concerns related to the Project through mitigation and/or accommodation

As the proponent of the Project, MFFN and WFN will ensure that the environmental planning is accessible and inclusive.

The MECP identified the following Indigenous Communities and groups that may be interested or affected by the Project and which are being consulted:

Indigenous Communities and Indigenous Groups

- Animbiigoo-Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek
- Aroland First Nation
- Attawapiskat First Nation
- Constance Lake First Nation
- Eabametoong First Nation
- Fort Albany First Nation
- Ginoogaming First Nation
- Kasabonika Lake First Nation
- Kashechewan First Nation

- Kingfisher Lake First Nation
- Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug
- Long Lake #58 First Nation
- Marten Falls First Nation
- Métis Nation of Ontario – Region 2
- Neskantaga First Nation
- Nibinamik First Nation
- Red Sky Independent Métis Nation
- Wapekeka First Nation
- Wawakapewin First Nation
- Weenusk (Peawanuck) First Nation
- Webequie First Nation
- Wunnumin Lake First Nation

Tribal Councils and Provincial Territorial Organizations will be also notified to determine their interest in participating in the process, as follows:

Tribal Council

- Independent First Nation
- Independent Métis Nation
- Matawa Tribal Council
- Mushkegowuk Council
- Shibogama First Nations Council
- Nokiiwin Tribal Council

Provincial Territorial Organizations

- Nishnawbe Aski Nation (also known as Grand Council Treaty 9)
- Anishinabek Nation (also known as the Union of Ontario Indians)
- Métis Nation of Ontario
- Chiefs of Ontario

Public and Stakeholders

General public, stakeholders (people or groups that are interested in the Project), as well as government ministries and agencies will be notified and consulted at ToR and EA milestones. The cities of Thunder Bay and Timmins, the municipalities of Greenstone and Sioux Lookout and the Township of Pickle Lake will be consulted given their proximity to the Project.

Outreach Activities

A variety of materials and activities have been used to engage with Indigenous communities

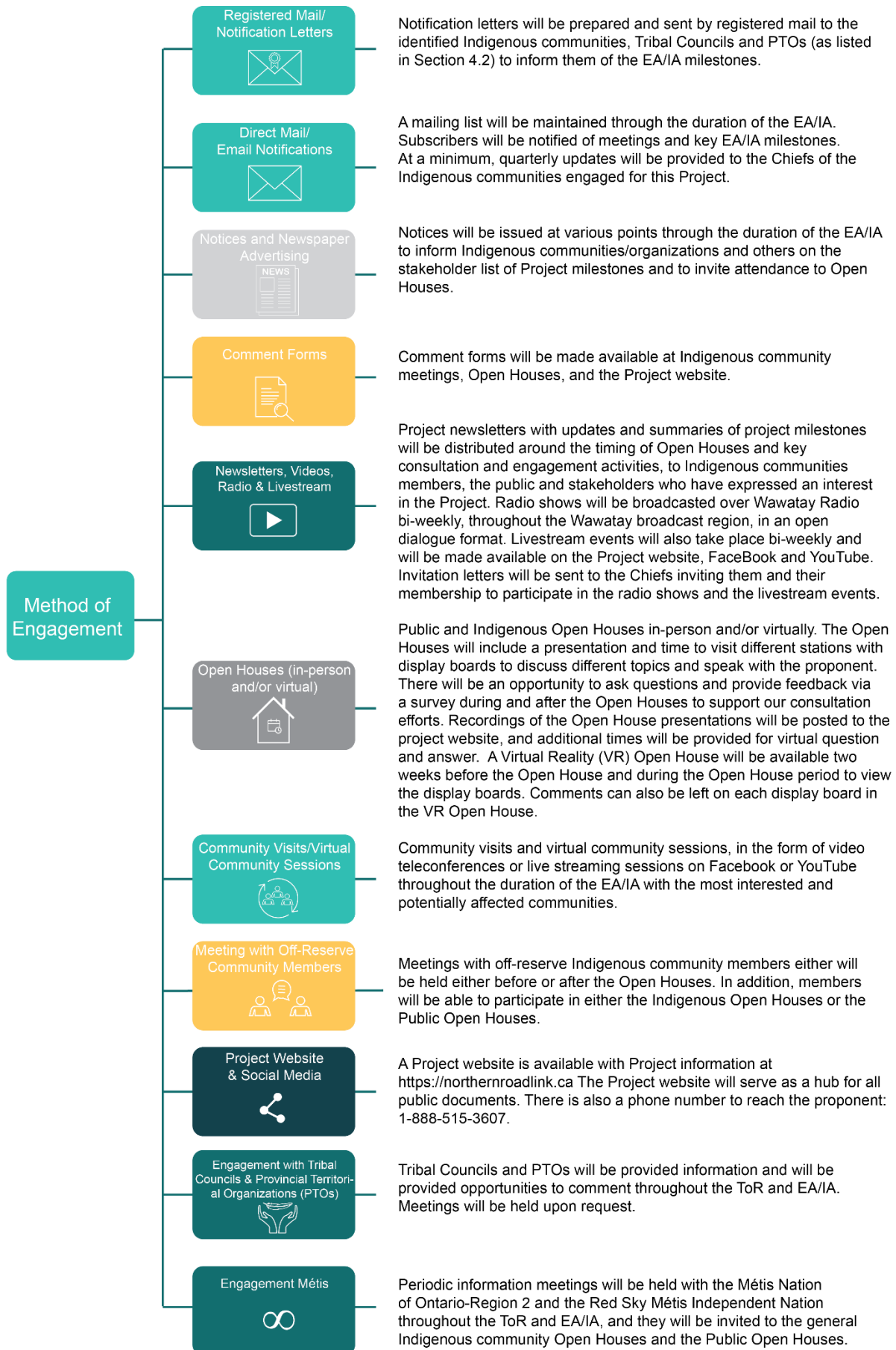
to date and will continue to be used as the project progresses.

When visiting and engaging with Indigenous communities, the Project Team will respect the protocols of those communities. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the Project will use responsibly innovative and adaptive ways to allow for meaningful consultation in a form that respects both the values and safety of Indigenous communities, other Indigenous organizations, and others.

The figure below highlights the types of engagement activities that will be used.



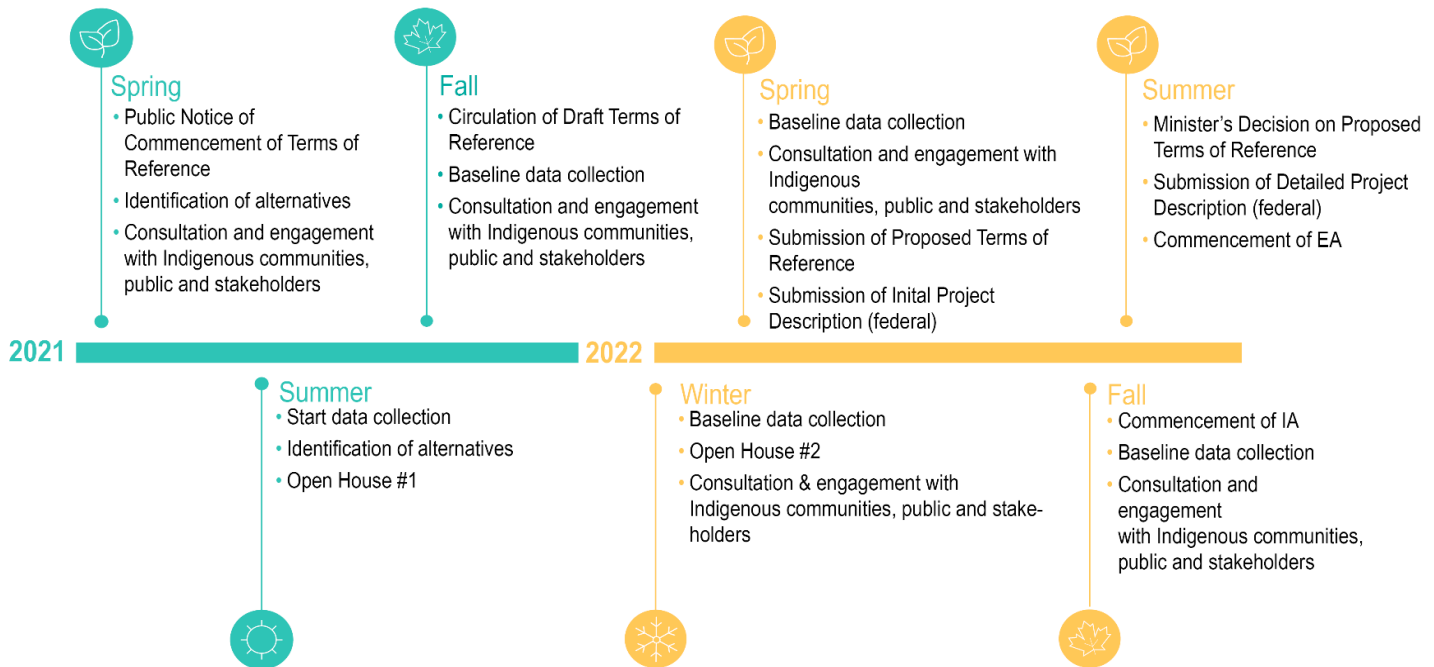
Types of Engagement Activities to be Used



Preliminary Timeline

The timeline for the EA/IA will be developed as the Project progresses. The EA/IA will commence at the end of the planning phase, tentatively in spring 2022.

Preliminary Timeline



Indigenous Knowledge

An Indigenous Knowledge Program will be carried out to collect Indigenous Knowledge/Indigenous Land and Resource Use (IK/ILRU) information for consideration and incorporation into the EA/IA. The program will include both collection of existing IK/ILRU information and completion of Project-specific studies.

Assessment Methods

An assessment of Project-related effects on the environment will be carried out by selecting Valued Components (VCs) for Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and Interests, physical, biological and socio-economic environment, cultural heritage resources, and human health. Valued Components are components of the

environment identified as important and/or sensitive to change, of concern, or of value for cultural or traditional purposes, and likely to interact with the Project.

The EA/IA will describe assessment methods for:

- Selection and scoping of VCs
- Characterization of existing (baseline) conditions
- Identification of project interactions with VCs and potential effects
- Mitigation measures
- Residual effects (effects remaining after mitigation)
- Cumulative effects (effects of the project combined with other projects)
- Commitments and monitoring

Components of an Environmental Assessment



Current Environmental Conditions



The Project is located on provincial Crown land. As typical for the Hudson Bay lowlands, the region is dominated by treed and open wetlands, lakes, rivers and streams within the watersheds of the Attawapiskat and Albany Rivers. Two broad bands of permafrost (sporadic and isolated patches) cross the region.



Wetlands, particularly the peatlands, are carbon sinks, providing protection against climate change. Wetlands also act as a natural filter, improving water quality. Waterfowl use

the waterbodies for stopping and staging (gathering together to prepare for migration). These areas have poorly drained organic soils that tend to retain water. Black Spruce trees dominate both upland and lowland areas.



A wide variety of fish, birds and animals are found in the general area where the Project is located, including species at risk protected by federal/provincial laws (Wolverine, Caribou,

bats, Lake Sturgeon). Caribou and other species (Moose) are important to Indigenous people. These, along with plants, such as berries, nuts, leaves (Labrador Tea), roots and tree foods (maple syrup, bark), are used as food and medicine. Other traditional Indigenous activities on the land include hunting and fishing, as well as cultural and spiritual activities. In addition, there are mining claims and trap lines.

Potential Environmental Effects

The Project will have some effects on the environment. As such, the Project will undergo an effects assessment. Twenty-one (21) preliminary Valued Components (VC) and indicators (how change in the VC is measured) are identified in the ToR for the Project's environmental effects assessment. These VCs and indicators will be studied during the environmental assessment.





Aboriginal & Treaty Rights & Interests

VC: Indigenous Use of Land and Resources

- Sites/areas used for rights-based activities and other interests (e.g., hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering)
- Availability or quantity of resources (e.g., wildlife, fish, vegetation) for rights-based activities and other interests (e.g., harvesting and gathering)
- Quality or perceived quality of resources for rights-based activities and other interests
- Access to sites and areas used for rights-based activities and other interests

VC: Cultural Continuity and Well-being

- Culturally important sites and areas (e.g., ceremonial sites, place names, teaching sites, archaeological sites)
- Sufficiency or perceived sufficiency of culturally significant sites, areas and/or resources
- Cultural landscapes and access to travel routes
- Environmental stewardship
- Experience of being on the land
- Cultural traditions and way of life
- Mental well-being and future outlook of community members
- Social and family interactions and community cohesion
- Diet and food security
- Cultural knowledge transfer and language protection



Physical Environment

VC: Air Quality

- Concentrations of air contaminants
- Selected volatile organic compounds (VOCs)
- Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) (benzo(a)pyrene)

VC: Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG)

- Quantification of GHG emissions expressed as CO₂ equivalent

VC: Noise

- Continuous one-hour equivalent sound and vibration level (Leq,1hr)
- Day-night sound and vibration level (Ldn)
- Day-time sound and vibration level (Ld)
- Night-time sound and vibration level (Ln)
- Percent highly annoyed (%HA)

VC: Groundwater

- Groundwater Quantity
- Groundwater Quality

VC: Surface Water

- Surface Water Quantity
- Surface Water Quality

VC: Geology, Terrain and Soils

- Terrain type and distribution
- Soil quality and distribution
- Geochemical hazards
- Geohazards
- Permafrost

VC: Visual Environment

- Visual contrast/character
- Visibility
- Visual sensitivity



Biological Environment

VC: Fish and Fish Habitat

- Fish and aquatic species, including fish Species at Risk
- Fish habitat

VC: Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

- Abundance and distribution
- Habitat availability

- Species richness
- Species habitat specificity
- Predation/habitat usage (other wildlife) and human access

VC: Birds and Bird Habitat

- Abundance and distribution
- Habitat availability
- Species richness
- Species habitat specificity
- Predation/habitat usage (other wildlife) and human access

VC: Plants and Vegetation Communities

- Vegetation type abundance (quantity and quality)
- Vegetation biodiversity

VC: Species at Risk

- Abundance and distribution
- Habitat availability
- Species richness
- Species habitat specificity
- Predation/habitat usage (other wildlife) and human access



Socio-Economic Environment

VC: Regional and Local Economy

- Employment
- Income
- Cost of living
- Government finances
- Mining and forestry activity

VC: Community Services and Infrastructure

- Housing and accommodation
- Health care services
- Air transportation

VC: Land Use and Recreation

- Outdoor recreation
- Parks and protected areas

VC: Community Safety

- Crime rate
- Substance abuse



Cultural Heritage Resources

VC: Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Resources

- Archaeological resources
- Built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes



Human Health

VC: Human Health

- Air quality
- Noise
- Country foods
- Surface water and groundwater quality
- Soil quality



Are there any other valued components (VCs) or indicators that you think we should consider in evaluating the Project?

Climate Change Assessment

The EA/IA will include an assessment of climate change looking from both perspectives:

- How could the Project impact climate change, for example, from potential loss of peatlands and emissions from heavy equipment during construction?

- How could climate change impact the operation and maintenance of the road, such as more frequent flooding or repairs?

The EA/IA will look at ways of minimizing negative climate change impacts during construction and operation of the road.

Commitments

The EAR/IS will include a list of commitments made by the proponent during the EA/IA process and how they will be met. The commitments may relate to Project construction, operation/maintenance, mitigation measures, consultation/engagement and compliance monitoring.

Monitoring

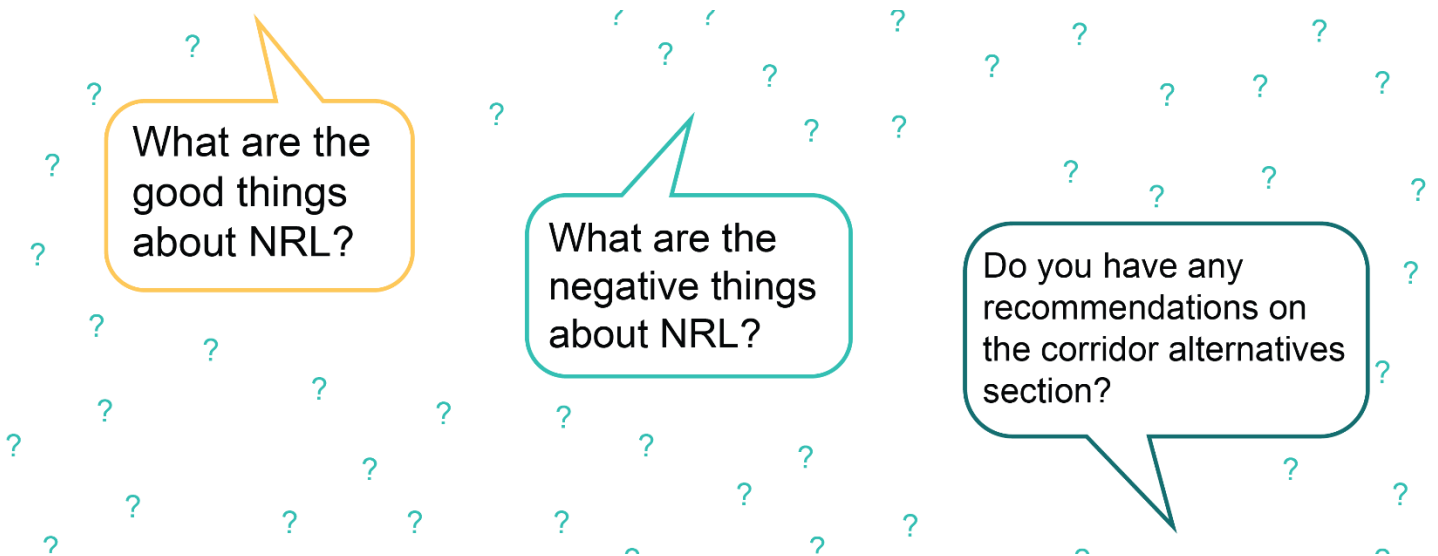
Monitoring is meant to verify the effectiveness of mitigation measures and to help determine if additional action is needed to meet the Project's commitments.

Flexibility to Accommodate New Circumstances

The ToR presents a preliminary description of the proposed Project. The Project is expected to evolve during the EA/IA process. Changes to the project design may be made to accommodate concerns from Indigenous community, federal and provincial regulators, the public or stakeholder concerns, or based on ongoing engineering design, baseline characterization, and the effects assessment.

We Want to Hear from You!

Connect with the Project Team. Please let us know, from your perspective, the following:



We encourage you to get in touch with our main contacts listed below and provide them with comments or ask them questions about the Project.

Michael Fox & Qasim Saddique

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Please visit our Project Website: www.northernroadlink.ca for more information on the Project and check regularly for updates. There is a lot more information on the website, including videos. We welcome any suggestions you may have for future videos / fact sheets to best communicate information about our Project.

THANK YOU!