

## **Another bridge to Île Bizard? It's one roadblock after another City of Montreal earmarks \$700,000 to study proposed 'urban boulevard'**

**DAVID JOHNSTON, The Gazette Published: 17 Dec 2007**

The decision to move forward with plans for a new urban boulevard north of Highway 40 on Montreal Island has reminded the 15,000 residents of little Île Bizard just how tedious their daily commute has become.

Things are so bad that housewife Line Turcotte said she and her husband moved away from the island golf enclave because it was taking her spouse up to 90 minutes every morning to get from Île Bizard to his work in nearby St. Laurent.

They moved to, of all places, Alexandria, Ont.

"And now he can get to work in as little as 45 minutes," Turcotte explained on a recent afternoon, back in Île Bizard visiting her grandfather.

"Something really needs to be done in Île Bizard."

Thomas Baller, Turcotte's grandfather, said the urban boulevard planned for the West Island needs to be extended over a new bridge into Île Bizard. That would give island residents a second fixed link with Montreal, and quicker access to Highway 40.

But there's a problem. The proposed new urban boulevard for the West Island would be built on a land corridor expropriated by the provincial government 30 years ago for the never-completed Highway 440 project.

That in itself isn't controversial, but the land corridor extends over into Île Bizard, where any talk of the 440 right-of-way is a highly sensitive political matter, partly because of Parti Québécois leader Pauline Marois's residency in Île Bizard.

Because Marois's fenced estate overlaps the Île Bizard portion of the corridor, extending the proposed new urban boulevard into the island would mean running a road through Marois's backyard.

Officially, Île Bizard borough council is opposed to the idea of a new fixed link to Montreal along the 440 corridor. Borough mayor Richard Bélanger said council would prefer to see the existing sole bridge widened, or a second bridge built immediately to the east of it.

"This option would also be cheaper than a link along the 440 corridor, because you'd be talking about a 550-foot bridge, instead of a three-quarter mile bridge linking up to the new urban boulevard," Bélanger said.

The city of Montreal's executive committee recently approved \$700,000 for a feasibility study relating to construction of the proposed new urban boulevard through Pierrefonds and Kirkland. It would run north-south, west of St. Charles Blvd, from Gouin Blvd. to a new interchange that would be built at Highway 40.

But the study isn't just about a new road. Experts will also be asked to look at the revenue and congestion implications of a related \$1.6 billion in new residential and commercial development in the area surrounding the land corridor, in a part of the Pierrefonds Ouest sector that is still largely undeveloped.

"We're one of the only places on the island (of Montreal) with land left for development," Worth said.

The feasibility study will look at the wisdom of building 1,620 new single-family homes, 2,950 new condo units, and 800 new low-income units from 2010 to 2025, along with 50,000 square metres of new commercial construction.

Green Coalition secretary Daniel Oyama said development on this scale would likely defeat the purported traffic-relief purpose of the proposed new urban boulevard on the 440 corridor. But he agreed a new north-south road link is needed to relieve congestion on St. Charles, St. Jean and des Sources Blvd. north of the Highway 40.

Bélanger said there's another traffic-relief measure that can be implemented besides a new urban boulevard - and that is the long-planned, but never completed extension of Jacques Bizard Blvd. to Highway 40, and Stillview Ave. in Pointe Claire. Jacques Bizard runs north-south in between and parallel to St. Charles and St. Jean.

"It's not really bridge congestion that's our problem in Île Bizard - it's St. Charles and St. Jean that's the far greater problem," he said.

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