City of Windsor Recommendation for Temporary Road Closures at Ojibway Prairie Complex

WHEREAS, the Ojibway Prairie Complex (OPC), is recognized as: an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest, Provincially Significant Wetland, a Carolinian Canada Site, an Important **Amphibian** and Reptile Area, and part of the International Wildlife Refuge for the Detroit River (first of its kind for North America). The OPC contains the largest protected tallgrass prairie remnant in Ontario. This complex supports a 160 species at risk (SAR) in Ontario, some of which are found nowhere else in Canada and others which are globally imperilled; and

WHEREAS, a systematic road mortality study at the OPC completed by J. Choquette and L. Valliant from 2010-13, and published in the scientific journal 'The Canadian Field Naturalist' in 2016, revealed: at least 2083 vertebrates of 49 species were killed on roads by vehicles, including: 4 species of amphibians, 21 species of birds, 13 species of mammals, and 11 species of snakes and turtles (seven of which are SAR in Ontario); and

WHEREAS, seven different SAR reptiles were found to be impacted by road mortality in the OPC: Blanding's Turtle, Butler's Gartersnake, Eastern Foxsnake, Eastern Massasauga, Eastern Musk Turtle, Northern Map Turtle, and Snapping Turtle, with Butler's Gartersnakes and Eastern Foxsnakes being impacted at more than double the rate of all other SAR combined. COSEWIC status reports for these species lists road mortality and population fragmentation as two reasons for their endangered status; and

WHEREAS, above-average rates of reptile (and SAR) road mortality were observed on Malden and Matchette Roads, despite five other roads surveyed in the area (i.e., Armanda, Normandy, Spring Garden, Sprucewood, and Todd roads); and

WHEREAS, the study found different groups of animals are vulnerable to road mortality at different time periods, with turtles being most impacted from May-June and snakes being most impacted from August to October. SAR reptiles were most impacted in June, September and October. Temporary road closures were therefore recommended during these three months to provide greatest protection for SAR; and

WHEREAS, J. Choquette has continued conducting road mortality surveys beyond the 2010-13 study, to include surveys in each year from 2015 - 2018. Since 2015, a total of 1,243 snakes have been found dead-on-road, including 263 individual SAR snakes. The majority of all dead snakes (63%) and all dead SAR snakes (72%) were found on Malden and Matchette roads (combined). Also, the majority of all dead snakes (72%) and all dead SAR snakes (73%) were found in September and October (combined); and

WHEREAS, the City of Windsor states in Objective C7 in the Environmental Master Plan that the City will identify issues that are currently impairing the quality of natural areas and identify strategies & actions to address these issues as well as continue to implement Species at Risk protection measures in all areas of Windsor and develop strategies to improve their status; and

WHEREAS, the City of Windsor began informing the public about the road mortality problem in 2016 by installing four 'Wildlife Crossing' signs to demarcate the reptile road mortality hotspots along Matchette and Malden roads; and

WHEREAS, the City of Kitchener and the City of Burlington recently imposed an annual seasonal road closure of King Rd. (1 km, 7 weeks) and Stauffer Rd. (700m, 3 weeks) respectively, and have had great success with few complaints by residents with many residents showing pride in their City's forward thinking; and

WHEREAS, Wildlife Preservation Canada will be conducted an ongoing road mortality study in 2019 to determine effectiveness of temporary road closures on mortality rates of vertebrates and SAR at the OPC; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT City of Windsor Council impose a temporary road closure (i.e., "local traffic" only detour) of Matchette Rd., from Sprucewood Ave. to Broadway St. (1.8 km) , and Malden Rd, from Todd Lane to Armanda St. (1.6 km), and beginning on 1Sept 2019 and extending to 27 October 2019 (8 weeks).