

To: York Region Rapid Transit Corporation Board of Directors

From: Mary-Frances Turner, President

Subject: 2013 vivaNext Strategic Communications Plan for the Commissioning and Opening of the First Median Rapid Transit Corridor

Ref: YORK #470442

## Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. The 2013 vivaNext Strategic Communications Plan for the Commissioning and Opening of the First Median Rapid Transit Corridor be approved.

## Purpose

The purpose of this report outlines communication strategies, objectives and tactics related to the commissioning and opening of the first median bus rapid transit corridor in the Region of York and the ongoing roles of the vivaNext and Viva brand.

## Background

### ***In 2005, Viva was launched as the rapid transit service brand in York Region***

- Viva was carefully branded and launched in 2005 with York Region Transit as part of the family of transit services in York Region.
- Viva enjoys high levels of brand awareness with transit customers and York Region residents.

### ***VivaNext was introduced as a project name to protect existing Viva brand equity during construction***

- By attaching all transit-related construction to a new persona called vivaNext, Viva itself was allowed to grow and strengthen its reputation as a state of the art rapid transit service.
- Media, government, stakeholders and the public now commonly use “vivaNext” when referencing the Viva Phase 2 project.
- As long as there is a vision and need for rapid transit investment and construction in York Region, there will be a need for vivaNext.

***VivaNext is a strong brand with growing awareness and understanding***

- Strong support exists for the vivaNext vision and plans within the community.
- VivaNext has a clear mandate, vision, brand expression and voice.
- The vivaNext brand promises to go beyond merely building and expanding transit, it promises to deliver change and transformation.

Analysis

***Communications will transition annually from the construction phase to the opening phase to the in-service stage starting this year, as each rapidway segment is completed***

- The opening of the Highway 7 rapidway in Richmond Hill this summer marks a significant milestone – it is the first commissioning of a median rapidway segment. Similar commissioning efforts will continue every year until 2018 as other rapidway segments are completed.
- A brand strategy will guide the transitions from vivaNext construction communications to Viva rapidway opening communications to YRT\Viva service communications.
- This strategic framework helps to ensure communications to the public, customers and stakeholders remain effective and true to their individual brands.

***We will transition our communications from the vivaNext brand to Viva as transit service goes live***

- April – June 2013: During commissioning (that is acceptance of new facilities to the Design-Builders to York Region, but not yet in service), vivaNext branded communications will educate and inform all key audiences about the product we have constructed.
- June – July 2013: As handover of the completed project nears, Viva branded communications will build excitement among all key audiences.

- August – 2013: Following the launch of the rapid transit service, YRT\Viva branded communications will continue to provide service information and market transit services to all key audiences. VivaNext will continue to inform the public about the next phases of the project.

***A comprehensive communications plan will be deployed to achieve the communication objectives for 2013 in relation to the commissioning of the first median rapidway***

- As the public's main information portal for all vivaNext projects, [www.vivanext.com](http://www.vivanext.com) has been redesigned and brought up-to-date for today's technology and legislative requirements.
  - The website better represents the multiple projects underway and provides a more accessible information repository for the project data/updates using a more human touch as the face of the website.
  - The website allows YRRTC to deliver brand content, updates, vision, construction updates and business support information.
  - The website is designed to quickly convey information and integrates social media.
  - The website is developed to meet AODA standards.
  - The redesigned website is scheduled to be launched in June 2013.
  
- Following the launch of the redesigned website, three Communication campaigns will transition through the commissioning process of the first median rapidway to open.
  - Prior to opening, vivaNext will run a four-week public educational campaign, including how to use the rapidway, safety and new technology.
  - Two-weeks prior to handover, vivaNext will manage a Viva branded campaign that helps build the excitement and awareness for the opening of the rapidways and the change in service. This campaign includes customer-focused elements requiring close coordination with YRT\Viva.
  - For the first week of service, YRT\Viva and vivaNext staff will be on site to help celebrate the opening and assist customers.
  
- Several tactics will be used throughout these campaigns to reach our key audiences, including the following:
  - Cinema pre-shows
  - Video (including interactive, virtual station tour)
  - Mall posters
  - Advertising (mainly social media and online sites)
  - Media announcements and events
  - Public engagement
  - Education materials for stakeholders (e.g., EMS, SmartCommute)
  - Roadside electronic message boards

- Many audiences have been considered in the deployment of our tactics, including:
  - Drivers
  - Pedestrians
  - Customers
  - Cyclists
  - Emergency Services
  - Youth/Students
  - Residents in the immediate area
  - Other transit agencies
  - Government officials
  
- In September, as operations have been refined over the past month of operations and students are preparing to return to school, vivaNext will launch a public brand campaign that leverages the milestone opening. The campaign is “Be Moved” and focuses on the vision being delivered and transformation underway. The brand message launch campaign is based on transformation that will move you in ways that you will love, enjoy and look forward to. This campaign helps support the vivaNext promise to deliver, and will carry over into subsequent years as the rapidways are commissioned annually.

***Goals have been set to measure the reach and effectiveness of the communication activities***

- This communication plan will be considered a success if:
  - Public openly celebrates the opening of the first stretch of rapidway
  - A noticeable spike in ridership is seen once the rapidway opens
  - Reputation for on-time, on-budget project delivery is strengthened
  - Positive feedback received from stakeholders and businesses
  - Online engagement increased 10% and mobile devices utilize the new website
  - Subscribers to e-updates increases by 4,000
  - Awareness of vivaNext projects increased by 12%
  - Understanding of vivaNext benefits increased by 5%
  - Support for vivaNext projects increased by 4%
  - New “Be Moved” video receives over 3,000 views

***Communication plans are implemented in consultation with Metrolinx under established protocols and procedures***

- Schedule G, entitled, *Communications Protocol* to the Master Agreement, contemplates a Joint Communications Working Group and defines roles and responsibilities of each of the parties.
- Project and communication activities are actively communicated through the Joint Communications Working Group, with updates provided to the Board through the quarterly reports.

## Financial Implications

- As per the Capital Cost Eligibility Criteria schedule to the Master Agreement with Metrolinx, communications related to rapidway construction is eligible for recovery within the \$1.7 billion funding envelope.

## Conclusion

- Comprehensive communications and branded activities will be deployed and managed to celebrate milestones, help mitigate disruptions, anticipate and alleviate the inconvenience of construction on people's daily lives, and strengthen relations with impacted businesses, tenants and other stakeholders. VivaNext will continue to strengthen its brand which delivers transformation in York Region through transit.

For more information on this report, please contact, Dale Albers, Chief Communications Officer, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation at 905-886-6767, Ext. 1020.

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Mary-Frances Turner  
President

June 4, 2013