



## Media Release

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For Immediate Release

### **Viva receives green light as York Regional Council approves 2005 Business Plan and Budget**

*From A to Being ... in service this fall*

NEWMARKET – Viva, York Region’s new rapid transit system, is on course to begin operating this September. Today, York Regional Council approved Viva’s 2005 operating and capital budgets, paving the way for a service that will help reduce gridlock, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote efficient land use.

“This may have been a difficult budget year, but the fact is York Region continues to be a magnet for families and businesses, and we require transit services as an alternative to the automobile,” said Bill Fisch, Regional Chair and CEO. “If we are going to keep pace with our growth patterns, Viva will become a significant transit choice that provides our residents with that necessary alternative to driving.”

The 2005 Viva rapid transit budget of \$86.1 million is divided into two components:

- Viva Rapid Transit Capital Budget           \$ 69.2 million
- Viva Rapid Transit Operating Budget       \$16.9 million

Construction crews have been working since June 2004 making intersection improvements, building queue jump lanes, widening roadways and installing intelligent transportation systems. These initiatives are all designed to allow the Viva vehicles to hold the green lights longer, move through the intersections faster, and get people to their destinations without delay.

During 2005, some of the key work initiatives include:

- Installing Viva shelters, ticket vending machines and real time information panels
- Completing work on 77 new rapid transit vehicles
- Construction of a new transit control centre
- Selection of an operations and maintenance contractor

“Tackling gridlock is a priority for the people of York Region, and for members of Regional Council,” said Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell, Vice Chair of the Region’s Rapid Transit Steering Committee. “We have a responsibility to get some of these cars off the road and ensure people can get around easily and quickly, and one of the solutions is Viva.”

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Frequency will be the hallmark of Viva, with rapid transit vehicles arriving every five to 10 minutes during peak periods. Viva stations will be modern, bright and safe, with fare vending machines to allow passengers to purchase their tickets before boarding and provide real-time information indicating exactly when the next vehicle will arrive.

Viva will link the Region's urban centres of Aurora, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Vaughan along four major transportation corridors, including Highway 7 and Yonge Street. In addition, Viva will link York Region with the City of Toronto and its subway system, to transit systems in the Region of Peel, and eventually into Durham Region.

When Viva is fully implemented in 2006, York Region estimates these initial improvements will lead to a 30 per cent increase in transit ridership – moving 7,000 car trips a day off the major arterial roads. During the first full year of operation it is estimated there will be ridership in excess of 7 million passengers.

For more information about Viva or the Viva Challenge, please visit the Viva Web site at [www.vivayork.com](http://www.vivayork.com)

For more information on the Regional Municipality of York, the services offered and links to the nine area municipalities, please visit the Web site at [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)

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