

Transportation Master Plan Update



ASSESSMENT OF 2002 YORK REGION

TMP ACTION PLAN

A Background Report
By Cansult Limited

December 2006

Introduction

York Region continues to be one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada. As of December 2005, over 918,000 people and 28,000 businesses called York Region their home. Between 2001 and 2005 the population in York Region has grown by 126,000, which represents a 16 per cent increase since 2001 and about 33 per cent of the Greater Toronto Area's population increase. On the employment side there are currently approximately 450,000 jobs in York Region; an increase of 60,000 since 2001. In the past five years, growth has been particularly strong in the business service and retail sectors.

As a consequence of rapid growth, York Region has been facing a number of transportation challenges. As an important step to meet these challenges, York Region approved its first Transportation Master Plan (TMP) in 2002, the adoption of which represented a major step in moving York Region "Towards Sustainable Transportation" (the theme of the 2002 TMP). The TMP assessed alternative strategic directions, and developed a long-term transportation vision of an integrated road and transit network that will support growth in York Region to the year 2031. The TMP included policies and programs to support increases in transit modal split and vehicle occupancies, and a 5-Year Action Plan consisting of 43 recommended actions.

This report summarizes the progress made by York Region since 2002 on moving "Towards Sustainable Transportation", including an assessment of progress on each of the 43 recommendations contained in the 2002 5-Year Action Plan.

Assessment of the 2002 TMP Action Plan

Each of the 43 recommendations in the 2002 TMP Action Plan has been rated using a 0 – 4 point scale. A "very good" rating is depicted by four coloured quarters and represents the highest (or best) grade. A "very poor" rating is depicted by an uncoloured circle and represents the lowest grade. The intermediate ratings represent good, fair and poor grades. The results are summarized below for the categories of Transit Improvements (Actions 1 – 10), Road Improvements (Actions 11 – 19) and Supportive Policies and Programs (Actions 20 – 43). A detailed assessment of each of the 43 recommendations is noted in **Table 1**.

A. Transit Improvements (10 Actions)

- 9 very good; and
- 1 very poor (no action on new Hwy 7 GO station on the Bradford line).

Total score out of a maximum possible 40 is 36, or 90%.

B. Road Improvements (9 Actions)

- 4 very good;
- 4 good;
- 1 very poor (no action on efforts with MTO to improve Hwy 400/Steeles interchange).

Total score out of a maximum possible 36 is 28, or 78%.

C. Supportive Policies and Programs (24 Actions)

- 10 very good;
- 3 good;
- 5 fair;
- 3 poor; and
- 2 very poor (both related to goods movement).

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- 1 unrated (Lower ETR 407 truck tolls)
- Total score out of a maximum possible 92 is 62, or 67%.

Overall, York scored 126 (75%) out of a total 168 which shows the high level of commitment by Regional staff and Council in implementing the objectives of the TMP. This is further emphasised by the tremendous strides made by the Region in the area of public transit, which was the principal focus of the 2002 TMP and driving force for moving “towards sustainable transportation”.

Other Recent Regional Transportation Accomplishments

Three other significant accomplishments have been achieved over the past few years which are not reflected (or not fully reflected) in the assessment of the 2002 TMP Action Plan. The first is the “Towards Great Regional Streets” initiative that has resulted in the recent adoption of two important Regional policies, the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy and the Regional Standard for Six-Lane Roads. These policies recognize that Regional streets must accommodate all modes of transportation, enhance communities and define community character. The streetscape partnership policy provides for financial support for qualifying locally initiated beautification schemes. The six-lane standard policy provides for a roadway cross-section including a 4-6 m wide landscaped median, dedicated bicycle lane and curb HOV lanes.

Another achievement was the securement of Provincial funds for the Spadina subway extension to York University and Vaughan's Corporate Centre. Since the March 23, 2006 Provincial announcement to provide one-third conditional funding for the capital cost of the project, York Region staff have taken steps to ensure that the Provincial conditions will be met. The Environmental Assessment for the project has been completed and submitted to the Province for approval, and a 60/40 Toronto/York capital cost-sharing arrangement agreed with the City of Toronto for the one-third local share.

The third achievement is the adoption of a new noise policy for the mitigation of traffic noise on Regional roads. The changes incorporated are responsive to the concerns raised by residents and local municipal staff. The new policy meets or exceeds provincial and municipal requirements and will lead to recognition of York Region as a leader in best practices involving noise mitigation.

Conclusions

The achievements of the Region over the past four years are extensive and wide ranging. In particular, the transit improvements resulting from implementation of the Action Plan helped to increase the average weekday transit usage to 55,000 passengers, yielding the highest annual ridership since the inception of YRT in 2001. Service improvements following the amalgamation of area municipal transit services has already resulted in tangible increases in transit modal share (over just a 3 year period) and with implementation of VIVA bus rapid transit service in late 2005, this trend is expected to continue. In aggregate, the achievements from both the 2002 TMP Action Plan and other recent Regional initiatives represent substantial progress “towards sustainable transportation”. The results of TMP Action Plan and achievements will serve as a guide in determining levels of effort and relative emphases in the current TMP Update.

Assessment of 2002 York Region Transportation Master Plan Action Plan

Table 1

2002 TMP Action		Summary	Comment	Rating
A. TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS				
A.1 Public Private Partnership(P3)				
1	Establish a public/private partnership arrangement for implementation of a York rapid transit system as quickly as possible.	York Region in conjunction with Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill to sought a private sector partner for the planning, financing, implementation and possible operation of a rapid transit system for York Region. As a result, in June 2002, York Region entered into an agreement with York Consortium and formed the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation (YRRTC) with a mandate for the planning, design and construction of the Region's new bus rapid transit service, Viva.	All Completed	
2	Confirm preferred implementation strategy for a York Region rapid transit system.	Quick Start, the initial phase of the rapid transit is which is a capital program that covers rapid transit elements in all four of the designated rapid transit corridors. It will implement bus rapid transit using 12m and 18m buses, bus stop spacing of approximately one kilometre, and transit signal priority at main intersections. It also features 85 state-of-the-art BRT vehicles, 109 stations, new terminals, 127 off-board fare vending machines, queue jump lanes, real-time bus arrival information at all stations, and many other technological features. Future phases include exclusive rights-of-way for buses in all four corridors, with possible conversion to light rail, and the extension of the Yonge and Spadina subway lines. Construction is expected to begin on this project in 2008 subject to confirmation of funding from the senior levels of government.	Preferred implementation strategy confirmed.	
A.2 Initial Bus Rapid Transit Detailed Implementation Plan (BRT)				
3	If the "early BRT" implementation strategy is preferred, develop a detailed implementation plan. Such plan will include the required EAs for road widening and reconfiguration, intersection improvements, and service plans for each corridor. (Service plans would define service levels, stops locations, route structure, priority measures, vehicle requirements and gateway stations).	BRT is the preferred technology to support the potential demand of between 2,500 and 3,500 persons per hour in the peak direction. Bus Rapid Transit allows for flexibility of routing over time as the corridor develops and future rapid transit alternatives are established in the City of Toronto. In fall 2005 York Region introduced the first phase of its Viva bus rapid transit (BRT) program. Viva is the first BRT service of its kind in the Greater Toronto Area. It features 85 state-of-the-art BRT vehicles, 109 stations, 127 off-board fare vending machines, queue jump lanes, a traffic signal priority system, real-time bus arrival information at all stations, and many other technological features.	Detailed implementation plan for BRT developed and it is in the process of implementation.	

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A.3 Environmental Assessment(EA) Studies for Longer Term Rapid Transit				
4	Complete a joint EA study with Vaughan, Toronto and the TTC for the extension of the Spadina subway to York University.	The EA of a Spadina Subway extension from Steeles Avenue to the Vaughan Corporate Centre and York University was part of the undertaking in the Highway 7 and Vaughan North-South Link EA, which was submitted to the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) on September 1, 2005. MOE has agreed that this could be done as a condition of approval of the EA and has requested the Region to carry out a supplementary analysis of the effects of the subway construction and operation for the portion of the subway extension connecting the preferred alignment in the Vaughan Corporate Centre (VCC) to the TTC's preferred alignment at Steeles Avenue.	EA Study Completed	
5	Complete a joint EA study with Markham, Toronto, and TTC for rapid transit connection between Markham Centre and the Sheppard subway.	The Ministry of the Environment (MOE), approved the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Markham N-S Link Corridor Public Transit Improvements EA Study on July 13, 2004. The basic concept for the Markham N-S Link Corridor, as envisioned in the York Region Transportation Master Plan, is to connect the Markham Centre (Warden Avenue and Highway 7 area) with the Sheppard Subway. Connections with the Sheppard Subway could be made to the existing terminus at Don Mills Station or, if the subway is extended, to a future easterly station.	Final EA report submitted to MOE and public notice issued on March 2, 2006.	
6	Complete the studies for Highway 7 & and for Yonge Street.	The Region's 2002 Transportation Master Plan (TMP) proposed the implementation of rapid transit in four corridors. In the proposed rapid transit network, three of the corridors comprise north-south rapid transit facilities. These are the Yonge Street Corridor connecting the Newmarket Regional Centre to the Yonge Subway, a link from the Vaughan Corporate Centre to the Spadina Subway and a link from the proposed Markham Centre to the Sheppard Subway. The fourth corridor is an east-west rapid transit facility in the Highway 7 Corridor connecting to all three of the north-south rapid transit lines, to the Region of Peel in the west and to the Region of Durham in the east.	Both EA studies Completed	
A.4 New Go Stations				
7	Green Lane (2003), McCown(2002) and MountJoy(2002) commuter rail stations with GO Transit.	These new stations had been approved by GO and were high priorities in their capital program.	All completed and open.	

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8	Work with GO Transit, City of Vaughan and the Province (Parkway belt) to identify and develop a site for a new Highway 7 commuter rail station on the Bradford line.		Not Completed	
A.5 York 5 Year Transit Service Plan				
9	Implement all components of the 5 Year Transit Service Plan now being completed for York Region Transit. • Comprehensive service standards. • Planning and consultation process with local area municipalities and other stakeholders. • Fare harmonization strategies. • Short and medium term growth plans and phasing strategies. • Annual operating and capital budget forecasts	On January 1, 2001, The Regional Municipality of York assumed responsibility for the funding and operation of public transit (conventional and specialized transit services) throughout York Region. As part of the amalgamation process, a Five-Year Service Plan (2002-2006) was developed and finalized in 2002. The plan provided an overall service strategy for both conventional and specialized transit services. The completion of the Five-Year Service Plan study provides the Region with a framework for the delivery of Region-wide conventional and specialized transit services for persons with disabilities. And also it sets specific targets including ridership, service levels and service coverage. YRT's mandate also includes a major role in contributing to an increase in the Region's transit market share.	Completed (Updated June 2006)	
A.6 Community Transit Concept				
10	Develop a staging plan for new services to rural/small communities. • Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville • Township of King • Town of East Gwillimbury • Town of Georgina	Both conventional and specialized services introduced to smaller/ rural communities in a staged manner between 2002 and 2005. The Mt. Albert extension was implemented 2006.	Completed	
B. ROAD INITIATIVES				
B.1 Road Widening/ Reconfiguration to Support Rapid Transit				
11	Work with City of Toronto and TTC to implement Yonge Transitway.	York Region staff have been working with GO Transit, TTC and the City of Toronto to provide improved public transit infrastructure and service in the network's primary north-south corridor.	Completed	

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12	Initiate and complete EA for Jane Street widening from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7.		Completed	
13	Complete EA for widening of Warden Avenue from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7.	A Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) for the reconstruction of Warden Avenue between Steeles Avenue and Major Mackenzie Drive project was carried out . This study identified that, due to existing and projected traffic volumes, additional traffic lanes are required to provide increased north-south capacity within the Warden Avenue corridor in order to improve traffic operations and reduce traffic congestion and delays. Several options have been reviewed for advancing any section of Warden Avenue within the 2004 Capital Program. The most significant alteration that would be required to Warden Avenue to accommodate rapid transit would be a further widening of the railway bridge overpass north of 14th Avenue, beyond the current widening requirement for six traffic lanes.	Several EA studies have been completed including the Rapid Transit EA.	
14	Complete EAs for widening of Highway 7 east of Woodbine Ave and west of Pine Valley Drive.	East of Woodbine widening included in Highway 7 Transit way EA. West of Pine Valley Drive completed and constructed to ultimate.	Completed	
B.2 Widening to support HOV and/or Reserved Bus Lanes				
15	Initiate and complete EAs to support widening proposed in the 2002 Ten Year capital Work Program. • Davis Drive. • Major Mackenzie Dr. • 16th Avenue • Rutherford Road • Centre Street	In the summer of 2005, Regional staff initiated the 16th Avenue Class EA. This Class EA study would address the planning of a continuous east west transit priority/HOV lanes on 16th Avenue from Highway 404 to the New Markham By-pass, which supports Markham and the Region's growth and transportation infrastructure objectives. Additional right-of-way would be identified and protected prior to full development of east Markham.	• Davis Drive EA initiated • EA for Major Mackenzie Dr. East of Woodbine completed and some construction has been done • Widening of Rutherford West of Weston Rd. has been completed • Centre Street EA included as part of Highway 7 EA	
B.3 Highway 400/Steeles Interchange				
16	Work with MTO officials to determine feasibility of interchange improvements that would provide for movements to Steeles Avenue to and from the north.		Not Completed	

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17	Initiate EA study for the section south of HWY 407 connecting to the Morningside extension in the City of Toronto.	The EA for the Markham Bypass to Morningside Avenue Link was completed and submitted to the MOE for review on December 23, 2005, prior to the December 31, 2005 deadline identified by the Ontario Municipal Board as part of the Morningside Heights decision. The City of Toronto has reaffirmed their position that they formally oppose the continuous alignment for the Markham Bypass to Morningside Avenue Link, as developed through the EA. They have notified the MOE that they have no intentions of assuming proponentcy for the Link south of Steeles Avenue and are no longer bound by the OMB imposed policies to protect for the corridor. Given the City of Toronto's position, it is important that the issue of proponentcy be clearly addressed at this stage before the EA proceeds to a final decision by the MOE.	EA study Completed but not yet approved.	
18	Complete the Markham By-Pass as early as possible	Construction divided into 4 phases: • Phase 1 and 2 have been completed • Phase 3 under way, • Phase 4 in capital program for 2012		
B.5 2002 Ten Year Capital Works Program (First 5 Years)				
19	Implement remainder of the 2002-2006 Portion of the 2002 Ten Year Capital Work Program.	The Region's Ten Year Roads Capital Program includes upgrades to the existing road network through road expansion projects, intersection improvements, road, pavement, and bridge rehabilitation projects which improves road capacity, traffic operation, traffic safety and also protects the Region's investment by extending the life of existing roadways and bridges.		
C. SUPPORTIVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS				
C.1 Amend Regional Official Plan				
20	Develop Official Plan Amendment including new and strengthened policies, as well as road and transit network amendments.	ROPA 43 – Regional Centres and Regional Corridors – came into effect on January 7, 2005 following its adoption by Regional Council on December 16, 2004. The amendment serves as the Regional land use “policy” arm of the Centres + Corridors Strategy, complementing “supportive programs,” “financial tools” and “infrastructure investment” strategies to achieve the Region's planned urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors, served by rapid transit. A two-step approach to starting ROPA 43 implementation has been recommended; the first step involves the creation of Regional TOD Guidelines, while the second step calls for the drafting of a long-term, detailed work plan.		

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C.2 Guidelines for Transit Oriented Developments				
21	Develop guidelines for Transit Oriented Development jointly with Area Municipalities and obtain Council endorsements.	The Regional TOD Guidelines are the result of a “Made-in-York” process that began in March 2005 with Regional Council adoption of five high-level principles which are as follows; • The massing, height and density of buildings, • Quantity and design of surface and above/below-grade parking, • Pedestrian safety and comfort, • The layout of streets, sidewalks and other pedestrian connections, • Distances and connections between transit stops and buildings. The adoption of Regional TOD Guidelines will further the implementation of the Region’s planned urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors, served by rapid transit. The guidelines are consistent with Provincial, Regional and local policies and programs to advance transit-supportive development, and represent good planning.	All completed Adopted by Regional Council September 21, 2006	
C.3 Development Review Checklist (transit, Cycling, and Walking)				
22	Develop checklist to ensure transit, cycling, and walking are fully considered in development review process.		The TOD Guidelines (Action 21) partially addresses this checklist, however, the Region’s Development Review Committee includes pedestrian friendly criteria when evaluating development applications.	
23	Implement aforementioned checklist as part of development approval process.			
C.4 Parking strategy for Centres and Corridors				
24	Initiate Parking Strategy study in consultation with urban Area Municipalities.		Some discussions have taken place in the context of area municipal parking initiatives.	

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C.5 Transit priority at traffic signals along BRT/LRT routes				
25	Identify specific signalized intersections and preferred technology.	A new Transit Management Systems (TMS) section was created in 2005 and is responsible for ensuring effective operation of the various Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies on the Viva BRT services, and overseeing the implementation of similar technologies on conventional YRT services. The transit control ITS system (both hardware and software) has been installed, Variable Message Signs (VMS) have been manufactured, installed and tested on Viva.	All Completed	
26	Implement transit priority along (phase 1) rapid transit routes		All Completed	
27	Identify TPN routes for phase 2 implementation in the 2006-2011 period.		HOV lanes considered in EAs	
C.6 Regional TDM Support Program				
28	Recruit a TDM coordinator.		Completed	
29	Introduce "requirement to consider TDM programs" in development approvals process.	Transportation Demand Management (TDM) initiatives can advance the TOD principles of development by partnering Region and local municipalities in TDM strategies with major employers to reduce travel times, traffic congestion and vehicle emissions. Also Innovative TDM strategies include car-pooling programs, bicycle parking and related facilities for cyclists, reduced transit fares and flexible work periods.	TDM initiatives proposed in the context of implementation of TOD Guidelines	
C.6 Regional TDM Support Program				
30	Identify incentives for employers to initiate TDM programs.	The Smart Commute Association is a GTA-wide joint municipal undertaking that will develop an array of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies which includes; ride matching for carpooling and a guaranteed ride home service; program modules such as employer vanpools; education campaign; reporting on initiatives and capturing lessons learned. The Smart Commute Association will coordinate efforts to form up to 10 Transportation Management Associations, local networks of employers, developers and others in promoting transportation choices and offering TDM services. (con't)	Largely Implemented through TMAs	
31	Work with Area Municipalities and employers to establish TMAs in HWY404/HWY7 and Markham Centre areas.		All Completed	

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32	Develop and implement a program for York Region employees	(con't from pg 7) The Smart Commute initiative (SCI) and its programs and services have been beneficial to York Region and the local municipalities. Transportation Management Associations have been working directly to encourage commuters to consider alternative modes of transportation and market YRT/Viva services such as the Business Value Pass program. The net effect of TDM programs such as SCI works towards Regional goals of the Centres and Corridors Strategy, Vision 2026, improving air quality, and sustainable growth.	Program developed; now being implemented	
33	Encourage Area Municipalities and other public sector agencies to develop and implement TDM programs.		Largely Implemented through TMAs	
34	Reassess new road design projects and amend as necessary.	Rural cross-section roads designed with 1.5 m paved shoulders; six lane roads designed with extra wide curb lanes to accommodate busses and cyclist.	Designation of bike routes and lanes are pending the completion of the Ped/Cycling Master Plan.	
C.8 Urban York sidewalk retrofit program				
35	Identify needs and costs, and develop a 5 year program with priority given to roads accommodating transit.	One of the key elements in the TOD guidelines which reflect the challenges and opportunities discussed through consultations with Regional and local staff is Pedestrians. TOD Encourage access, Promote safety and comfort through building and site design and advise to locate activity-generating land uses at street level.	Conditional approval from council for municipal partnership program. Recommendations on priority is to come from Ped/Cycling Master Plan	
C.9 Establish Region -wide Bike Network				
36	Initiate study in consultation with Area Municipalities.	On October 27, 2005, Regional Council authorize York Region staff to engage a consultant to conduct a Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan Study in consultation with the local municipalities. Three proposals for this project were evaluated in accordance with Regional Purchasing Policy, by-laws and practices and the proposal submitted by MMM received the highest score in consultant selection evaluation.	All Completed	
C.10 Lower Truck tolls on HWY.407				
37	Prepare Council Resolution in consultation with trucking industry, and forward to Province and 407 ETR corporation.	Provincial initiatives to manage the actions of 407 ETR have failed.	Regional Council action will not lead to desired results. This action item should be dropped from further consideration	
C.11 Support Establishment of GTA Goods Movement Forum				
38	Identify specific initiatives to encourage modal shift from truck to rail.	Reports specified priority to be given to road improvements accessing intermodal yards.	There has been some consideration	

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39	Identify opportunities for improved truck access to freeways.		There has been some consideration	
40	Identify opportunities for mid-block freeway crossings and review with Area Municipalities.	Regional Council adopt the policy, procedures, and criteria for Regional funding contributions towards local municipal collector road crossings of 400-series highways, as endorsed in draft form in the February 16, 2006 Council Report. Funding for one third of the capital cost of these highway crossings were conditionally included in the 2003 Regional Development Charge (DC) By-law. There are nine projects identified in the DC By-law. Following are five of these nine projects that are in the approved 2006 - 10 Year Capital Program.	Opportunities identified; some EA studies completed; others being implemented	
C.11 Support Establishment of GTA Goods Movement Forum				
41	Identify need for another major rail yard and protect land where required.		Not Completed	
42	Identify specific land use planning initiatives to support goods movement.		Not Completed	
C.12 Pursue Transit Priority Network				
43	Initiate discussion with MTO, City of Toronto and Regions of Peel and Durham to determine level of support and , if appropriate, develop a coordinated network.		Discussions have occurred with Peel and Durham on extending Highway 7 Viva east and west when time is appropriate. Also worked with Toronto on; • Downsview to York • Transitway EA • Don Valley Corridor TMP	