

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Regional Municipality of York is committed to implementing Vision 2026, a Regional Strategic Plan adopted by Regional Council that embodies a comprehensive strategy built upon accepted sustainable development principles to achieve a more sustainable Region. Building upon Vision 2026, Regional Council adopted in November 2007 York Region's Sustainability Strategy which is a framework for making smarter decisions about growth management and all municipal responsibilities that better integrate the economy, environment and community. Sustainability is about achieving a state of well-being. The Region's goal is to improve the quality of life and health of residents and employees and support overall independence and personal development by planning and developing healthy and strong communities. With regard to moving people, sustainability means assigning more priority to walking, cycling, public transit and carpooling and thereby providing a more balanced transportation system that places less emphasis on single occupant motor vehicle trips while reducing emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases. It means leaving our communities in a healthy state for our children and grandchildren. One of the key action areas of the Sustainability Strategy is preparing and adopting a York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan to promote an active transportation system and lifestyle.

The Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (PCMP) is intended to be one part of a series of initiatives by York Region aimed at improving the quality of life of residents and moving towards becoming a more sustainable Region. Although the PCMP is not

a trails master plan, it does include some off-road segments, such as in-boulevard trails in road rights-of-way and separate trails in greenways, utility corridors or parks/valley lands, as part of the overall network. York Region recognizes that walking/hiking and cycling are among some of the most popular and fastest growing activities for residents. People are recognizing the importance of natural heritage experiences to their quality of life and are associating their measure of fitness and improved health with active recreation and active transportation. Given the benefits of a region wide trail system that provides corridors that are largely free of barriers, that are dedicated to active transportation, and that lead through greenways wherever possible and can connect the Region's Natural Heritage System to existing and future regional, provincial, and national level trails, a separate study was initiated by York Region in late 2007.

The Natural Heritage Trails Concept Study is expected, among other goals, to determine the role of the Region in regional trail planning and development; develop a set of objectives to guide the study as well as appropriate trail route selection criteria for new trails; and identify potential trail corridors which may be investigated in further studies if directed by Regional Council. This study will complement the PCMP by examining opportunities to connect local municipal trail systems and natural corridors, which may ultimately form part of a Regional active transportation network, particularly for those users who prefer off-road facilities. The Natural Heritage Trails Concept Study is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2008.

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The York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (PCMP) is envisioned as a Ten-year Implementation Plan as well as a longer term (10 to 25 year) strategy.

The Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan presented in this report, including the Ten-year Implementation Plan, is consistent with and supportive of efforts to make York Region more sustainable and will assist in improving the quality of life of its residents.

The Region has already built a strong foundation for sustainability through many key initiatives including:

- A Regional Official Plan based on the themes of natural environment, economic vitality and healthy communities;
- The Greening Strategy and Land Securement Initiative;
- Water for Tomorrow Program;
- Conventional Public Transit (YRT) and Rapid Transit (Viva);
- Corporate Clean Air Task Force; and
- A minimum LEED Silver Standard for new Regional facilities.

In 2007, the Region embarked on an update of its Transportation Master Plan as well as other Infrastructure Master Plans, is undertaking a review of the Regional Official Plan, has approved a York Region Sustainability Strategy, and in 2008 prepared this Regional Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan.

The York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (PCMP) is envisioned as a Ten-year Implementation Plan as well as a longer term (10 to 25 year) strategy. It is intended to guide the Region as it works with local municipalities, conservation authorities, the Pedestrian and Cycling Public Advisory Committee, other stakeholder groups and the public to implement a comprehensive on and off-road Region-wide pedestrian and cycling network as well as a set of supporting policies and programs to promote active transportation in the Region. The PCMP builds upon existing and previously proposed pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and outreach programs at both the Regional and local municipal levels. The Plan is designed to be consistent with and support current Regional, local municipal, federal and provincial policies as they relate to sustainable land development and transportation.

The PCMP is founded on extensive consultation with the Region's partners and stakeholders, including staff at the Regional and local municipal levels. It is designed to improve walking and cycling conditions in order to encourage people to walk and cycle more often. The Plan has been designed to be flexible so it can evolve over time and take advantage of opportunities that may not have been anticipated at the time it was prepared.

The PCMP consists of a number of key components that are designed to work together to facilitate the successful implementation of the Plan. These include:

- A recommended network of on and off-road pedestrian and cycling facilities. These facilities will cross jurisdictions, link local municipalities and key attractions, while encouraging utilitarian, leisure, recreational, and touring pedestrian and cycling trips as well as transit use;
- Comprehensive planning and design guidelines to equip staff with the tools necessary to implement the network so that facilities can be designed in a way that minimizes risk to pedestrians and cyclists, as well as motorists and is consistent with best practices from across North America;
- Policy and program suggestions on how to increase the level of walking and cycling in York Region;
- A proposed organizational structure to administer the PCMP and a process for planning, designing and implementing pedestrian and cycling facilities in the Region; and
- An implementation strategy that identifies priorities and costs, sets out a fiscally sound approach to implementation, and provides a pedestrian and cycling network implementation process that can be integrated into annual service, capital investment and delivery programs at York Region.

The PCMP goes beyond simply identifying routes and recommending policies. It provides the steps and tools necessary for the Region and its partners to implement the PCMP. It addresses the importance of sustainability, particularly sustainable transportation, and further supports York Region's leadership role in developing "A More Sustainable Region". Sustainability is commonly defined as the ability of the current generation to meet its needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. York Region continues to apply sustainable practices to Regional infrastructure decisions, including roads, transit, and water/sewer infrastructure. The Region supports sustainable land use and urban design strategies and practices, many of which are set out in the Region's "Planning for Tomorrow" strategy, Vision 2026 and Sustainability Strategy (2007). The Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan presented in this report, including the Ten-year Implementation Plan, is consistent with and supportive of efforts to make York Region more sustainable and will assist in improving the quality of life of its residents.

1.1 WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

Master Plans are long-range plans that integrate infrastructure requirements for existing and future land use with environmental assessment principles. These plans examine the entire infrastructure system as a group of related projects, or an overall system, in order to strategically plan out the future needs of the Region. The York Region PCMP study and consultation approach was designed to generally comply with Phases 1 and 2 of the Municipal Engineers Association Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process (June 2000) prescribed by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment.

The PCMP is framed by a vision as well as goals, objectives, recommended actions, and performance measures. Each of these are introduced and described in subsequent chapters. An explanation of these terms is presented below.

A Vision statement articulates what we want York Region to be in the future (i.e. pedestrian and cycling friendly) and is the desired product of the goals, objectives, and recommended actions set out in the Master Plan. Achieving the vision will require the efforts of many agencies, organizations and individuals throughout the Region.

Goals are broad statements that refine the vision into specific objectives.

Objectives are broad, but begin to identify specific strategies and actions for accomplishing the vision and goals.

Recommended actions are specific activities that should be undertaken not only by the Region, but also by the Region's partners in order to achieve the objectives. Actions typically have a specific timeframe and are usually assigned to a specific agency, organization, municipality, division or section.

Performance measures provide a method of measuring how the actions are fostering progress towards reaching the goals and objectives of the plan. They can be used to measure progress at one specific point in time or can be used annually, biannually, or some other regular time frame to provide ongoing information on what progress is being made. They typically require the establishment of some initial benchmark against which future changes can be viewed.

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of on and off-road facilities, identifying missing sidewalk links on Regional roads, and recommending a strategy for improvements to encourage greater use of both travel modes. The primary objectives of the PCMP study were to:

- Consult with and engage staff, stakeholders and the public at key stages of the plan development;
- Establish a vision for walking and cycling in York Region;
- Examine indicators of existing pedestrian and cycling demand using public opinion surveys and other research data;
- Identify barriers and constraints to walking and cycling and suggest solutions;
- Identify a continuous and connected cycling network and pedestrian system in urban and rural areas of the Region;
- Establish or amend existing policies;
- Develop programs to encourage walking and cycling;
- Develop a comprehensive and feasible implementation strategy;
- Recommend education, enforcement and promotion policies and supporting implementation strategies;
- Estimate the cost of network and program improvements, recommend short, medium and long term priorities as well as maintenance and monitoring strategies;
- Identify implementation responsibilities and appropriate partnerships to reduce costs and support implementation; and
- Identify performance measures.

The Master Plan documented in this report is the product of an extensive study and set of tasks that satisfies each of these objectives.

1.2 THE STUDY PROCESS

The York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan was initiated in 2006. MMM Group Limited in association with Go For Green and Decima Research Inc. were retained by the Region to develop a Region-wide comprehensive pedestrian and cycling plan that could link existing facilities and identify future connections.

The approach to the PCMP was to meet the specific objectives established in the Terms of Reference and reflect the planning initiatives of York Region and local municipalities. This approach was based on the need to integrate the existing local municipal pedestrian and cycling networks, provide new routes in Regional road right-of-ways, and recommend a coordinated policy and implementation framework that the Region and local municipalities could work within to achieve the common goal of improving conditions for walking and cycling.

A key part of the approach was the development of an integrated cycling network and improved pedestrian system. The network approach included two key components that can best be described as distinct layers that together form a single integrated pedestrian and cycling plan. The components included:

- A pedestrian system planning approach that identified missing sidewalk and trail links on Regional roads or lands under other jurisdiction (including Hydro One, Conservation Authority and Provincial lands). It reviewed local municipal sidewalk programs and policies to evaluate how they can be better coordinated with Regional capital works projects; and
- An on and off-road designated cycling network that integrated and built upon local municipal cycling plans and facilities, connected communities and key destinations, promoted utilitarian and commuting trips and supported public transit.

Facilities included signed-only on-road routes, bike lanes, and signed bike routes along paved shoulders on rural roads, signed routes in wide curb lanes, boulevard multi-use trails, and off-road multi-use trails.

The study approach that led to the development of the PCMP included the following phases:

Understanding Walking and Cycling in York Region – This phase included the development of a comprehensive background working paper to understand pedestrian and cycling initiatives undertaken by the various municipalities of York and to understand existing conditions in the Region. Public and stakeholder consultation was also conducted in this phase. A key component included the development and execution of a Region-wide statistically valid public opinion survey designed by Decima Research Inc. to identify pedestrian and cycling profiles in York Region.

Assessing Existing Conditions – An extensive inventory of existing on and off-road pedestrian and cycling facilities was undertaken by digitally mapping existing and planned routes, paths, major attractions and destinations. Once this information was compiled, real and perceived barriers to walking and cycling were identified.

Developing an Appropriate Pedestrian and Cycling Network – This phase involved establishing a vision for the network, then identifying, evaluating, ground proofing and selecting walking and cycling routes and suitable facility types. Through field investigations of Regional roads, local roads and off-road corridors, data was collected for use in assessing candidate routes. This involved a significant level of consultation with the public and stakeholders, as well as Regional and local municipal staff.

Reviewing and Assessing Policies and Programs – This involved a review of existing programs and policies from previous pedestrian and cycling studies completed in York Region and surrounding municipalities. These policies and programs included recommendations related to safety, education, promotion, cycling and transit, bicycle parking and the concept of bicycle-friendly streets.

Establishing an Implementation Strategy – This phase of the study focused on assessing the role of participants that are involved in making decisions regarding pedestrian systems, the cycling network and program implementation, as well as the supporting financial frameworks. From this exercise a number of enhancements were identified. An improved structure was then developed along with a set of supporting recommendations intended to better integrate and facilitate the planning, design and implementation of pedestrian and cycling facilities and related programs in York Region.

Preparing and Documenting the York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan – Documenting the Plan and the associated implementation strategy involved synthesizing all the work that had been done as part of the study into a concise, informative and prescriptive Ten-year plan and a longer term implementation strategy to improve the state of walking and cycling throughout the Region.

Public and Stakeholder Consultation – A Public Consultation Strategy was developed at the outset of the Master Plan Study and confirmed with Regional staff. The strategy was created to ensure that a process was in place over the three phases of the study to actively engage stakeholders and the public and foster an

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understanding of the project. The public consultation component included:

- Meetings with Regional, local staff and stakeholders;
- Creating and collaborating with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of members of Regional and local municipal staff and relevant stakeholder groups such as conservation authorities, school boards and walking and cycling groups;
- Creating and working with a Public Advisory Committee (PAC) consisting of local residents;
- The development of a stakeholder mailing list and an email contact list;
- A Public Opinion Research Paper completed by Decima Research Inc. which identified current public opinions towards walking, cycling and active transportation in York Region;
- Three series of public open houses;
- Delivery of on-line “walkability” and “bikeability” surveys to gather public opinions on walking and cycling conditions in York Region;
- Conducting an Active Transportation Workshop hosted by Go for Green for Regional and Local municipal staff as well as stakeholders, with the purpose of discussing the benefits of Active Transportation (AT) and developing recommended policy actions and infrastructure improvements to enhance conditions for AT throughout York Region; and
- Publishing Project Newsletters to keep the public informed on the development and progress of the plan.

A copy of consultation material along with a summary of public and stakeholder comments is provided in a separately bound Appendix D.

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY REPORT

The York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan has been designed to be a living document that is flexible and capable of evolving over time. It is intended to maintain and enhance existing programs and infrastructure, while guiding the development and implementation of new pedestrian and cycling facilities and programs. Implementation of the PCMP is aimed at encouraging people to leave their motor vehicles at home and to walk or use their bicycles, especially for utilitarian purposes.

The PCMP Study Report includes the following chapters, which detail each of these key principles. The objectives and recommendations associated with guiding principles provide direction as to how each milestone of the plan can be established.

Chapter 1 explains reasons for preparing a Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan for the Region.

Chapter 2 provides information on the transportation, health, environmental and economic benefits of walking and cycling for the Region.

Chapter 3 addresses the Federal, Provincial, Regional and local municipal policies that affect pedestrian and cycling activities in York Region. This chapter also discusses the vision and goals for the PCMP.

Chapter 4 details the strategic framework of outreach support services for the PCMP. The recommended framework addressing

the need for the continuation and improvement of pedestrian and cycling initiatives in the areas of education, encouragement and promotion, and enforcement are detailed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 establishes an important milestone of the PCMP – A Regional Pedestrian and Cycling Network, and discusses how this network was developed.

Chapter 6 provides the Implementation strategy. This chapter defines the role of the Region in implementing the PCMP. It also recommends the schedule and funding of the plan.

Appendix A includes a series of maps that illustrate the network development approach and route alternatives (Figures A1-A4). In addition, maps of the recommended network plan for the entire Region and by each local municipality are provided.

Appendix B provides a list of unit prices and network implementation costs for both Phase 1 and 2 by jurisdiction.

Appendix C and **Appendix D** provide additional documentation in the form of Planning & Design Guidelines and a Project Record respectively. These supplementary volumes are provided separately from the PCMP Study Report.



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Pedestrians on Queensway South in Georgina