

To: York Region Rapid Transit Corporation Board of Directors

From: Mary-Frances Turner, President

Subject: Yonge Subway North Extension – Funding and Planning Update

Ref: YORK-#4420521

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Staff report back on the Metrolinx update to the Yonge North Subway Extension Benefits Case Analysis in the first quarter of 2013
2. Metrolinx be requested to undertake an analysis of options to increase transit capacity into downtown Toronto
3. Staff report back on the Downtown Rapid Transit Expansion Study report released by the TTC
4. The Regional Clerk be requested to forward a copy of this report to Metrolinx

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an overview of the status and need for the Yonge Subway Extension and identifies four recommendations on activities related to the Yonge Subway.

Executive Summary

- The Yonge Subway Extension remains in Metrolinx's top 15 projects, identified in the Regional Transportation Plan - "The Big Move".

- This 7.4 kilometre extension from Finch Station in Toronto will connect 14,000* riders during the morning peak hour at the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Urban Growth Centre, delivering the highest transit ridership of any single rapid transit line project within The Big Move.
- The Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway hub will deliver more riders and ridership movements than any other anchor hub in the GTHA, apart from Union Station.
- Only a subway can move the projected ridership demanded in this corridor.
- The urgent demand for a high volume rapid transit line on Yonge will continue to build, and in anticipation of a Yonge Subway Extension, residential and employment projects are already underway.
- The Yonge Subway Extension is a key, unfunded missing link to the other rapid transit network projects that are underway.
- This project is practically shovel-ready – an Environmental Assessment is approved, a Conceptual Design is complete, and a comprehensive Business Case Analysis will be finalized by year end.
- Funding and timing remain as key challenges for the Yonge Subway Extension.
- The Metrolinx Investment Strategy, update to the Big Move and project prioritization, and Yonge Subway Business Case will each be important discussions and will influence decision-making on the Yonge Subway in 2013.
- York Region Rapid Transit Corporation and York Region Transit have been working closely with Metrolinx and TTC to finalize an update to the Benefits Case Analysis for the Yonge North Subway Extension. The result of this analysis will be presented to the Board in the first quarter of 2013.

Background

The Yonge Subway Extension remains in Metrolinx's top 15 projects

- In November 2008, Metrolinx adopted a Regional Transportation Plan, “The Big Move”, laying out nine big moves in terms of priority projects and the 15-year and 25-year rapid transit and highway network plans for the GTHA. The Big Move, with its overall objectives of reducing traffic congestion, connecting key travel centres and keeping people moving, will have a transformational impact on the GTHA when it is fully implemented and will result in a tripling of the rapid transit network currently in the GTHA. Metrolinx is currently developing the investment strategy for

implementation of The Big Move, and Provincial legislation requires that Metrolinx table that investment strategy by June 2013.

- Specific to York Region, The Big Move included the extensions of the Spadina subway to the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre and Yonge subway to the Richmond Hill Centre. The Spadina subway extension is now under construction and is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2016. The Yonge Subway Extension is listed as one of the top 15 project priorities of The Big Move and stands ready for funding.

The Yonge Subway Extension is a key, unfunded missing link to other rapid transit network projects that are underway (see Figure 1)

- Funding for the Spadina subway extension was announced in 2006, and the \$1.4B program to construct the Yonge Street, Highway 7 and Davis Drive rapidways was announced in 2009. Construction of York Region's rapid transit network – vivaNext – began in 2010.
- The Spadina subway extension is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2016 while the rapidways will be completed in stages by 2018.

Figure 1: The Missing Link – Yonge Subway Extension



The Yonge Subway Extension will connect more than 14,000 riders during the morning peak hour at the most important new anchor hub in the GTA – second only to Union Station in number of riders, transit connections and scale of new development

- The Yonge Subway Extension is a 7.4 kilometre extension of the Yonge subway from its current terminus at Finch Station in Toronto to the Langstaff/Richmond Hill Urban Growth Centre anchor hub at Highway 7 and Yonge Street in York Region. The approved design includes six stations and two intermodal bus terminals at Steeles and Yonge, and at the major anchor hub at the Langstaff/Richmond Hill Centre urban growth centre, and a 2,000 car commuter parking lot at Langstaff.
- The Yonge Subway Extension provides significant intermodal connections to GTA transit networks connecting bus rapid transit, conventional transit, heavy commuter rail (subway and GO transit) and 407 express rapid transit services. The Langstaff/Richmond Hill urban growth centre will be an important hub connecting people to a variety of different transit services across York Region and beyond into the GTA, and will form the most important new anchor hub in the GTA, second only to Union Station in number of riders and scale of new development.

The Richmond Hill Centre station will provide intermodal connections to BRT, heavy commuter rail, subway and conventional transit in a newly planned community, putting over 48,500 residents and 29,500 employees within walking distance of the station for work, live or play. The latest ridership analysis undertaken as part of the *Yonge Subway Extension Conceptual Design (Final Report March 2012)* forecast a total volume of 14,090 subway riders passing through the Richmond Hill Centre station in the 2031 morning peak hour alone. These ridership numbers take into account the GO transit improvements to the Richmond Hill, Bradford and Stouffville lines.

The Yonge Subway Extension is a technically sound project which reflects government Smart Growth and land use policies

- The Yonge Subway has undergone comprehensive engineering analysis, public consultation, enjoys extensive community support, and forms a key part of the transportation strategy developed by York Region to manage its mandated growth targets. These targets reflect the direction set out by the Province through the Places to Grow – Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and the corresponding land use framework and policies developed by the Province and York Region.
- These policies have been embraced within York Region, and currently millions of square feet of residential and employment development are unfolding, to meet the burgeoning 50% population expansion to be accommodated by the Region between 2008 and 2031.

The Yonge Subway Extension environmental assessment is approved

- The Yonge Subway Extension environmental assessment was completed through the Province's expedited Transit Project Assessment Process (O.Reg. 231/08) and was approved on April 6, 2009. Following completion of the Transit Project Assessment Process, a Conceptual Design and Functional Planning Study was completed and approved.

Toronto Council has directed Toronto planners to develop a new transit plan for 2013

- In the past five years, the rapid transit network plan for the City of Toronto has been evolving.
- In debating the OneCity Transit Plan, Toronto Council did not endorse that plan but instead directed City staff to report back in September 2012 on the work to date arising from City Council decisions in February and March of 2012 on transit expansion matters, and to report "in the second quarter of 2013 with a proposed City-wide transit plan to update the Official Plan and a prioritization strategy for all lines".
- In September and October 2012, Toronto staff reported to their Planning and Growth Management Committee and to their Executive Committee with an approach to developing a long-term transportation plan and funding (investment) strategy to address the City's comprehensive transportation needs in the context of their Official Plan 5-year review process. Staff were directed to proceed with recommended public consultation on Official Plan transportation policies including transit plans and on funding options.
- Regional staff will continue to monitor the situation and report back to Regional Council at the appropriate time.
- TTC and Toronto Planning and Transportation have been involved in the development of the Yonge TPAP and Conceptual Design and are aware of the pressing need for the Yonge Subway Extension.

Analysis***The Yonge Subway Extension will deliver the highest ridership of any single rapid transit line project within The Big Move***

- As the City of Toronto's priorities for the transit network within their city have continued to evolve over the last several years, the broader outlines for an interregional GTHA network have not changed. Within this larger network, an

unchanging top priority has continued to be the need for a link between the northern half of the GTHA and the transit spine along Yonge Street.

- The data to support this project is not in question: the Yonge Subway Extension will deliver the highest transit ridership of any single rapid transit line project within The Big Move (ranging between 22,670 at Finch to 14,090 at the Richmond Hill Centre in the 2031 Morning Peak Hour, Yonge Subway Extension Conceptual Design Report - Final, March 2012) and the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway anchor hub will deliver more riders and ridership movements than any other anchor hub in the GTHA, apart from Union Station.
- Given the current and projected volumes of trips being made in both directions between Toronto – York, the Yonge Subway forms a critical link and will promote transit ridership increases on connecting transit systems in the GTHA.

The urgency of the demand for a high volume rapid transit line on Yonge north and south of Highway 7 will continue to build

- Building on both Provincial and subsequent Regional Smart Growth policies and planning direction, and in anticipation of the Yonge Subway being available to their future tenants, significant residential and employment projects are already underway or in various stages of approval for the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Urban Growth Centre and along Yonge Street north of Steeles. This intensification is going to continue to take place along Yonge Street both north and south of Highway 7. The lack of transportation capacity in this corridor will continue to be an impediment to intensification until the subway is built.

Only a subway can move the projected ridership demanded in this corridor

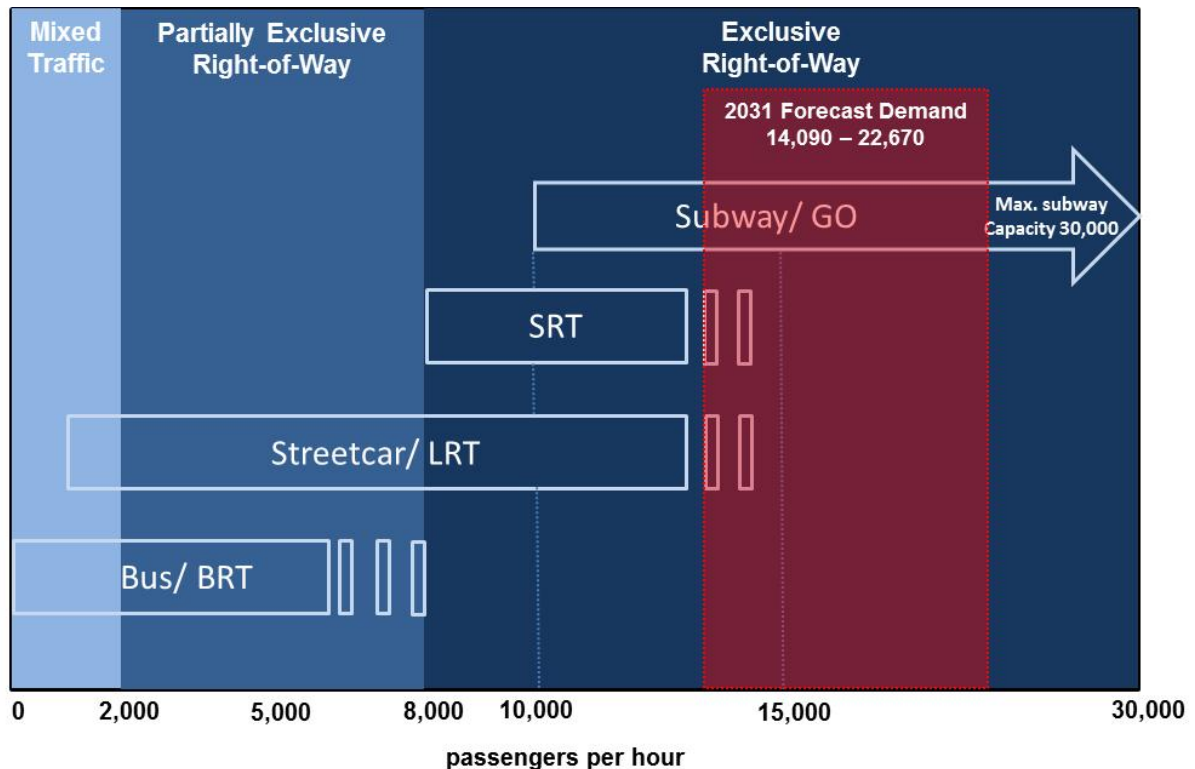
- Transit usage in this segment of Yonge Street carries the highest level of transit ridership in York Region, and pressure to meet this need will continue to build with the pending development, as well as from the growing ridership that will be fed by the new vivaNext Highway 7 and Yonge transit corridors.
- Yonge Street north of Finch is already facing perpetual gridlock in the peak period. In order to carry existing transit riders, 68 peak hour YRT\ viva vehicles (or 1 bus every 50 seconds) currently operate on Yonge Street between Finch Station and the Richmond Hill Centre Terminal during the evening peak hour. The volume of buses will continue to grow with increasing development along Yonge Street. Buses operating in mixed traffic cannot accommodate the forecasted ridership demand within the Yonge Street corridor.
- Analysis of ridership levels in the Yonge corridor show that only a subway can meet the 2031 projected demand.

- By 2031, over 10,000 potential riders will be forced to use their cars if the Yonge Subway is not constructed.

Providing incoming commuters with access to the Yonge subway would result in 27 million annual trips between York and Toronto by 2031

- Research and ridership statistics show that commuters would enthusiastically switch to transit, if it was convenient. With 74% of the south-bound ridership of a Yonge Subway Extension originating north of Steeles, the availability of a rapid transit alternative for this group would significantly improve travel between Toronto and York. The total potential ridership, a collective 27 million trips annually, would result in a massive reduction in car travel and concomitant greenhouse gas emissions.
- If passengers are left to their own to negotiate their connections to and from York Region, it is much less likely that this potential ridership will in fact materialize. Without the mode shift from car to transit, gridlock on Yonge Street, parallel streets and GTHA highways will continue to increase, and all levels of government will be much less likely to realize their greenhouse gas reduction objectives and reduce the economic drag on productivity caused by traffic congestion.

Figure 2: Capacity of alternative rapid transit technologies



- Addressing the transit needs of the GTHA requires a comprehensive network of rapid transit lines, using a range of technologies reflecting specific circumstances. There is no single line that will provide the relief needed across the GTHA. The important discussions to be held by Toronto Council in 2013 will establish the priorities to address Toronto's own needs.

The Yonge Subway Extension is practically shovel-ready

- Many of the Big Move rapid transit projects still need to go through environmental assessment and design phases.
- With all necessary environmental studies and approvals in place, and Conceptual Design completed, the Yonge Subway Extension project is well positioned among unfunded GTHA's high-volume transit solutions in that it is being made shovel-ready.
- Following completion of the environmental assessment in April 2009, Council authorized York Region Rapid Transit Corporation to undertake the Yonge Subway Extension Conceptual Design Study as a joint study with the City of Toronto, which was completed in March 2012.

An update to the Yonge North Subway Extension Benefits Case Analysis will be released in 2013 confirming the need for subway technology

- Over the past year, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation and York Region Transit have been working closely with Metrolinx and TTC to finalize the Benefits Case Analysis for the Yonge Subway Extension.
- This analysis includes extensive consultation on ridership and land use growth analysis to confirm the need for this form of technology.
- The result of this analysis will form the basis of a comprehensive Business Case Analysis to be finalized by year end and is a prerequisite for Metrolinx consideration of funding and project prioritization for this project.

Downstream capacity challenges on the Yonge Line and Union Station will need to be addressed

- In June 2012, TTC finalized a report titled Downtown Rapid Transit Expansion Study Phase 1 Strategic Plan discussing rapid transit needs in downtown Toronto. The report identifies increases in ridership on the Yonge subway line over the next 20 years and the improvements the TTC is making to accommodate the additional capacity, including the Toronto Rocket subway cars (+10% capacity), and Automatic Train Control (+36% capacity). These improvements increase the peak hour ridership capacity from 26,000 riders today, to 38,000 in 2031.

- The forecasted ridership on the Yonge line south of Bloor without the Yonge subway extension is 35,800 passengers. With the Yonge Subway extension in place, ridership south of Bloor increases by 3,600 passengers to 39,400 during the AM peak hour. An additional 10% capacity is generated by adding a 7th car to the Toronto Rocket trains, meaning the Yonge line could accommodate the Yonge subway extension; however, the addition of the 7th car is not part of the TTC current plans.
- On October 24, 2012, the TTC Commission Report titled Downtown Rapid Transit Expansion Study (DRTES) Phase 1 Strategic Plan, Recommendation 2, sought that Commission:
 - “Confirm its support for City Council’s January 2009 direction that *“Metrolinx be requested to prioritize the Downtown Relief Line in advance of the Yonge North Extension in order to accommodate capacity issues resulting from the extension of the Yonge Subway”*
- YRRTC and York Region Transportation and Community Planning will complete a thorough review of the June 2012, DRTES report and report back to the YRRTC Board in early 2013.
- The TTC DRTES report identifies that there may be additional means to increase capacity into the downtown core by making improvements to rail corridors, but that the work was outside the scope of the study. This additional work may identify cost effective solutions to alleviate capacity constraints on the Yonge Subway line, and there is benefit in requesting that Metrolinx complete this work.
- The challenge for the Yonge Subway Extension will be in determining the timing for construction of the Yonge Subway relative to these other priorities. Staff are working closely with Metrolinx and TTC to ensure fair and reasonable application of these downstream improvements to the timing of funding for the Yonge Subway Extension and any other downstream transportation project, such as the downtown relief line.

The six steps to securing funding and commencing construction for the Yonge Subway Extension have been identified and approved

- Completion of TPAP for tail-track storage north of Richmond Hill Centre (2013)
- Completion and approval of Metrolinx Benefits Case Analysis (2013)
- Completion and approval of Metrolinx Investment Strategy (2013)
- Prioritization of Yonge Subway for financial investment with the balance of Top 15 priority projects (TBD)

- Final design and engineering of Yonge Subway (TBD)
- Construction (TBD)

Local Municipal Impact

- Rapid Transit corridors represent a key component of the York Region growth plan as presented in the Regional Official Plan. Local municipal OPs provide further detailed policies that govern growth along these corridors.
- Regional and local municipal staff work very closely to plan and protect for the future implementation of these rapid transit corridors and where appropriate, to integrate the rapid transit infrastructure into the design of land use developments along the corridors.
- It should also be noted that without the Yonge Subway Extension, density targets will be very difficult to achieve and support due to congestion.

Financial

The Metrolinx Investment Strategy is also a key foundation piece to unlock funding the Yonge Subway Extension

- Metrolinx is required to have in place an investment strategy for the funding of Metrolinx' "Big Move" projects no later than June 2013. All parties involved, including York Region are expected to contribute to the upcoming dialogue regarding alternative funding tools.
- Until the investment strategy falls into place, funding for the Yonge Subway Extension will remain elusive.
- All parties must work together to make the Yonge Subway Extension a reality along with other rapid transit projects in the GTHA.

Conclusion

- With the support of both senior levels of government and of other stakeholders such as the City of Toronto, Metrolinx and the TTC, the missing link in the GTHA transit network, the Yonge Subway Extension, can be built and the objectives of reducing traffic congestion, connecting key travel centres and keeping people moving can be achieved.

- York Region continues to work with Metrolinx to prepare the business case and other supporting technical data and documents necessary to help prioritize funding for the Yonge Subway Extension to the Richmond Hill Centre.

This report has been prepared jointly with the Commissioner of Transportation and Community Planning, Kathleen Llewellyn-Thomas, Region of York.

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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President

October 23, 2012

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