

Comments on the Draft Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan

General Comments

1. York Region is generally in agreement and supportive of the Draft RTP and looks forward to working with Metrolinx to determine the specific actions required to implement the plan. The draft RTP is very comprehensive and outreaching; appropriately titled "The Big Move". All of the main rapid transit projects in York Region are included in the first 15 years, and part of the top 15 priority projects.
2. Local and Regional Transportation Master Plans (TMP's) throughout the GTHA have been completed in much more detail than was possible in the RTP. It is our understanding that the future infrastructure projects recommended in the Local and Regional TMP's have been included in the base networks for the analysis completed for the RTP. Therefore, the RTP should reference the need for these numerous other transportation improvements throughout the GTHA and that the responsible agencies should continue to implement those projects.
3. Roles and responsibilities need to be better defined. More specificity is needed to indicate how Metrolinx and municipalities would work together to ensure coordination of land use policy and infrastructure implementation.

Transit Comments

4. The draft RTP excludes the EA approved *Markham North/South link* and instead recommends the extension of the Don Mills LRT line north to Highway 7. The RTP should examine the implications and the best plan for rapid transit service in this part of York Region.
5. The extension of the *Richmond Hill GO rail line* to Aurora Road is planned for both the 15-year time horizon (to Bloomington Road) as well as in the 25-year time frame (to Aurora Road). The second extension to Aurora Road is a short 4 km segment with one new station. We suggest that the two extension segments be examined as part of the same project to determine if it would be more effective and cost efficient to implement the extension all at the same time within the 15-year time frame.
6. Our analysis indicates that the *Major Mackenzie BRT/LRT* corridor (and north/south connections to Highway 7) is needed earlier than the "beyond 2033" timeframe and should be included in the 25-year plan.
7. Recommendation 7.1 on p. 40 should be more specific in recommending a truly integrated transit fare policy that is distance-based throughout the GTHA. A consistent and uniform fare policy is required as an essential part of improving transit ridership in the GTHA, but will also have operating cost implications on transit operators. This additional cost should be included as part of the GTHA-wide costs rather than funded by individual municipalities and transit operators.
8. The *Yonge BRT* is planned to be extended across both Davis Drive (to the South Lake hospital) and across Green Lane (to the East Gwillimbury GO Station) in an "F" configuration. This should be shown on both Figures 4 and 5.

9. More information on each of the rapid transit corridors identified in the RTP would be very helpful to proceed with implementation and to determine the implications on local and regional transportation planning. This information includes the capital cost breakdown for individual projects, operating assumptions (speed and frequency), technology, projected ridership levels, operating costs, etc.
10. In addition to the rapid transit corridors identified in the RTP, the York Region Transportation Master Plan has identified that a transit priority network (TPN) is also required. The TPN will include such infrastructure improvements as transit signal priority for transit vehicles, queue jump lanes at signalized intersections, off-board fare payment equipment, variable message signs for passenger information and HOV lanes. The TPN is an essential component of the overall transit network and needed to support the rapid transit lines and to feed passengers to rapid transit who live beyond the normal walking distance. The TPN needs to be recognized by the RTP and the costs of implementation need to be included in the overall cost of transit implementation.

Planning/Policy Comments

11. The RTP requires local Transportation Master Plans to be consistent with the RTP (Rec. 3.3 on p. 32, and section 3.2 on p. 69). Do municipalities have the flexibility to implement within their own timelines and capital programs (eg, the timing of a rapid transit line or the need for a new highway)? Some flexibility is needed in the process for municipalities to identify their specific infrastructure requirements and to recognize that local transportation master plans will contain greater detail than the RTP. On p. 72 it refers to the need for all municipalities to do TMP's, but does this include small rural municipalities, or would the Region's TMP cover it?
12. Figure 6, p. 28 refers to rapid transit connections beyond the GTHA, but this does not seem to have been included as a specific recommendation. Significant growth will be occurring just beyond the GTHA, and needs to be taken into account (for example, Simcoe County is growing from 440,000 to 670,000, with many of those new people needing to travel into the GTHA for employment).
13. The plan should make a specific recommendation to identify and protect long term transportation corridors. Major new transportation corridors, whether they are for rapid transit or for new freeways, are hard to come by. Metrolinx should play a role in identifying the very long term needs and initiating property protection of these transportation corridors. The recommendations should include the development of new and better tools to allow municipalities to protect these corridors.
14. Recommendation 1.11 on p.21 recommends facilitating the use of Provincial lands for transit projects. This recommendation should be extended to the use of Provincial land for all transportation projects at no cost.
15. Section 3.3 on p. 69 suggests the development of a 5-year rolling capital program. It should be at least a 10-year capital program to be consistent with municipal capital plans.

16. Rec. 15.3 refers to changes to the DC Act to allow full-growth related transit costs to be recovered. This recommendation should be expanded to include other sustainable modes such as active transportation infrastructure and TDM programs.

Highway/Goods Movement Comments

17. Metrolinx and the Province should clarify planning responsibilities for highway network planning in the GTHA and complete a comprehensive highway network plan.
18. The RTP only includes the new highways identified in Places to Grow. However, Places to Grow was completed without the benefit of a comprehensive transportation analysis. A number of Provincial and York Region studies have confirmed the need for additional highway improvements. These additional highway improvements need to be examined from the perspective of goods movement, economic development, provincial highway network connectivity, recreational and seasonal travel and connection of the GTHA to the surrounding municipalities and rest of the Province. In most cases, these highway corridors need to be identified and protected as soon as possible to support the long term growth of the GTHA. The potential additional highway improvements are:
 - a. The *Bradford Bypass*. The need for this facility is heightened with legislated Provincial growth in northern York Region that is higher than previously planned as well as planned growth in Simcoe County.
 - b. A further *Highway 427 extension* north of Major Mackenzie Drive. Figure 5 should show *Highway 427* extended to at least connect to the GTA West corridor. The current mapping shows a gap between the Highway 427 extension and the GTA West Corridor. The additional analysis should also identify the need for an extension of Highway 427 north of the GTA West corridor to support growth and economic development north of the GTHA.
 - c. A further *Highway 404 extension* north of Ravenshoe Road. This highway extension has previously been identified by the Province to provide an alternative highway connection to northern Ontario to help offload Highway 400 as well as to support recreational travel and economic development.
 - d. The *GTA West Corridor* should be shown extending to Highway 400 to be consistent with the study area identified in the on-going Provincial EA study
19. Rec. 3.1 on p. 32 refers to implementing the GTHA road network, but this doesn't seem to be specifically defined. For example, is the Provincial HOV freeway program included as part of the GTHA road network?
20. Figures 4 and 5 show the *Highway 404 extension* stopping short of the planned terminus at Ravenshoe Road. These figures should be corrected to show the full extension to be consistent with the current Highway 404 construction program.
21. The *GTA West Corridor* and the *Highway 427 extension* are shown as "New Transportation Corridors Under Study" on both Figure 4 and 5. This designation implies that the corridors will be "under study" until the next review of the RTP.

- The designation on the maps should be changed to “economic corridor” to be consistent with the Provincial Growth Plan.
22. Figure 8 is identified as the Existing Strategic Goods Movement Network but only really shows rail corridors used for freight movements. Goods movement on the freeway network is essential to economic development in the GTHA and should also be identified. A new figure is also required to identify the proposed future strategic goods movement network for both rail and highway.

Active Transportation Comment

23. More detail is required on the implementation of walking and cycling networks. Many municipalities (including York Region and many of its area municipalities) have Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plans already in place and ready to be implemented. More detail is required to identify funding sources and distribution, time lines, implementation responsibility, etc.