

Report No. 4 of the Transportation and Works Committee
Regional Council Meeting of April 27, 2006

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TOWARDS GREAT REGIONAL STREETS
DRAFT
MUNICIPAL STREETScape PARTNERSHIP POLICY

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends:

- 1. The presentation by Paul Jankowski, General Manager, Roads be received; and**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report, March 24, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be adopted.**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Committee and Regional Council receive a new Draft Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy as identified in this report and its attachments.
2. The Regional Clerk forward copies of this report to the clerks of all York Region local municipalities for comment by May 31, 2006.
3. Upon receipt of comments from the various stakeholders, staff be directed to finalize the new Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy and report back to Committee and Regional Council with recommendations for adoption of a new Policy.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update members of the Transportation and Works Committee and Regional Council on the progress to date on one of the elements of the Towards Great Regional Streets – A Path to Improvement initiative and to seek approval in principle of the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy (MSPP). The two policies are appended to this report (*See Attachments 1 and 2*).

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Streetscaping Will Respond to Many Regional Objectives

There are numerous goals in the York Region Official Plan, the Vision 2026 document and York Region's Greening Strategy that streetscaping helps to forward. A few examples are:

- “To promote compact urban form, transit use and trip reduction as a means of reducing energy consumption and improving air quality” see page 18.
- “To facilitate walking, cycling and trails” see page 71.
- “York Region residents will live work play and learn in healthy accessible and safe neighbourhoods that are vibrant, exciting and people friendly”.

In response to Regional Council’s request for more streetscaping on Regional roads, staff are pursuing several potential improvements under the theme “Towards Great Regional Streets – A Path to Improvement”. The initiative includes the following studies, standards, policies and guidelines:

- Street tree planting and maintenance program (reported to Transportation and Works Committee in January 2006).
- Regional standard for six-lane roads (report to Transportation and Works Committee in March 2006).
- Policy guidelines for Lay-by Parking on Regional roads (expected report to Transportation and Works Committee in April 2006).
- Policy for cost-sharing on enhanced local municipal streetscaping initiatives on Regional roads (the subject of this report, April 2006).

York Region has included a streetscaping component as part of all Regional road-widening capital projects since the adoption of the 2001 Regional Streetscape Policy. This has improved the aesthetics on a number of road projects and continues to help guide project managers in implementing works that result in a more uniform and attractive public realm.

The 2001 policy document that is currently followed allows York Region to contribute to streetscaping in a relatively prescribed way. All Regional roads in the urban area of York Region are classified as; red, green, or white roads depending on their location.

In the hierarchy of the 2001 policy document:

- Red Streets: [Regional Centres] – receive street trees, a concrete splash strip, and one and two tier landscape medians, which are irrigated at gateway locations.
- Green Streets: [Regional Corridors] – receive street trees, a concrete splash strip, and if space is available, a one tier raised landscape median in the road.
- White Streets: [Regional Roads] – receive street trees spaced at 10 metres on centre.

Recently, York Region has received a number of requests from local municipalities for financial assistance in implementing additional streetscaping initiatives on Regional roads outside of Regional road widening capital projects.

Additionally, the proposals from the local municipalities are often of a high quality and would be a welcome addition to our Regional streetscape. However, until now, York Region has not had a framework within which to evaluate and consider appropriate responses to such requests.

The intent of this MSPP is to be an addition to York Region's streetscaping current practices and the intent proposed policy is to provide a framework for structuring staff recommendations to Regional Council with respect to future requests from local municipalities.

3.2 Consultation

An important part of this study was consultation with stakeholders. All local municipalities were invited to a January 31, 2006 meeting to discuss the general principles of the proposed MSPP.

Present at the workshop were key York Region staff from the Planning and Transportation and Works Departments as well as local municipal staff that included representation from their Planning, Urban Design Engineering and Parks Departments. An excellent turnout occurred with eight of nine local municipalities being represented.

The general principles of the draft program were introduced to attendees and input on the parameters of the program was solicited. Attendees were pleased with the partnership initiative and were generally supportive. The overall consensus from attendees was that a Regional policy in this regard should be adopted soon to allow for such partnerships as soon as possible.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Local municipalities often approach York Region with streetscaping and urban design initiatives in the Regional right-of-way.

Often, the projects proposed by the local municipalities support the goals of our Official Plan, Vision 2026 and/or Greening Strategy and there is an existing streetscaping budget that is available to draw from, however the current policy does not provide the kind of flexibility to participate financially in these projects.

Regional staff have discussed options to consider such requests recognizing that significant additional benefits could be achieved on the Regional road network by partnering with local municipalities in funding the implementation of such projects.

Staff focused on the development of a potential policy which could be integrated into the annual preparation of the Roads Capital Budget for the future year. This new policy would essentially evaluate all upcoming requests from local municipalities and then recommend to Regional Council, on the basis of identified technical criteria, a number of projects with corresponding Regional funding contributions for the coming budget year.

4.1 How the Partnership Funding Works

First, on a yearly basis, York Region will approve a fixed amount of funding to be provided for the MSPP.

Second, local municipalities will complete design studies for streetscape improvement projects on Regional roads. The municipalities must commit a proportion of the funding required for each project prior to seeking financial assistance from York Region.

Thirdly, the local municipalities prepare applications to York Region and submit these applications by the established annual deadline.

Finally, the 'York Region Streetscape Review Team' evaluates each application and recommends qualifying applications for funding as part of the budget process for the coming year. The list of proposed projects would be presented for Regional Council approval as part of the Roads Capital Budget for the coming year.

4.2 Establishment of a 'Streetscape Review Team'

A *Streetscape Review Team* will be created in order to take on the role of reviewing and scoring all streetscape applications. The team will be made up of the following personnel:

- Project Manager, Streetscaping.
- Manager, Natural Heritage and Forestry Services.
- Manager, Road Maintenance.
- Transit, Facilities Supervisor.
- Engineering Designate and/or Planner, Planning Department., and/or local area representative.

Consideration will also be given to include local municipal representatives on an as needed basis to help clarify information in their submissions.

4.3 MSPP - The Application Process

The proposed MSPP includes a standardized application process to be followed in order to ensure consistency, fairness, and the incorporation of York Region objectives. The process is divided up into four steps:

- Step One: Screening of Proposals.
- Step Two: Category of Streetscape Proposal.
- Step Three: Determining the Costs of Streetscape Works.
- Step Four: Priority Ranking for Funding.

4.3.1 Step One - Screening of Proposals

The following criteria must be met in order for a proposed project to be considered for partnership funding. The project must be:

- Located within the Region's road right-of-way.
- Supportive of the objectives of the policies of the Region.
- Supported by a resolution of local council and a commitment to cost share.

- Accompanied by a design study.
- Accompanied by a commitment from the local municipality for
 - its proportion of the capital funding required for construction.
 - all maintenance responsibility.

4.3.2 Step Two - Category of Streetscape Proposal

In order to determine how York Region will participate in the variety of proposals likely to be entertained by local municipalities, a hierarchy of interests had to be developed.

It was determined that York Region's highest priority for contributing to streetscaping enhancements would be in locations where capital projects were being undertaken. There is a cost savings associated with these locations since contracts can be combined. Also, York Region is very visible in these locations operating construction sites sometimes for over a year and a track record of successes can be created by both York Region and the local municipality as part of the roads capital projects. Equally as important, is the fact that the street will be set in its final configuration at these locations, thereby, minimizing further disruption to commuters in future. Second priority rating would be afforded to applications for projects not included in Regional road widening capital projects, but nevertheless located within an urban area, town or village as identified in York Region's Official Plan.

Staff have developed three categories (Types A, B, C) that relate to the amount of funding that York Region would contribute and the specific criteria that need to be met. They are:

Type 'A' – 50% Regional Contribution:

- Project Area is an urban area, town, or village.
- Project is on York Region's current 10-Year Capital Plan and project will be completed with a capital project.

Type 'B' – 33% Regional Contribution:

- Project Area is within an urban area, town, or village.
- Project not on current York Region's 10-Year Capital Plan or, project will not be completed with a Capital Project.

Type 'C' – 25% Regional Contribution:

- Project Area is not within an urban area, town, or village.

4.3.3 Step Three: Determining the Costs of Streetscape Works

Applicants shall be required to submit a formal cost estimate to be reviewed and agreed to by the Streetscape Review Team. All cost estimates will then be reviewed against Regional eligibility criteria.

4.3.4 Step Four: Priority Ranking For Funding

Each of the following six factors will be scored according to developed scoring procedures. Each application is given a score. In cases where funding is not available for all applications submitted in a budget year, the applications scoring the highest would be recommended for the upcoming year's funding. Some of the criteria that will be used are as follows:

- Location
 - An identified urban location.
 - Includes pedestrian connections to other areas.
 - Area is served by transit.
 - A high travel demand exists.
 - Community identity is present.
 - Identified for economic development or tourism.
- Scale
 - Road section will be at 2026 capacity when project is done.
 - The adjacent land use supports an upgraded streetscape.
 - A Negative Use Pattern (such as excessive speeding) of the street is addressed.
- Consistency of Treatments
 - Consistent with Regional policy.
 - Upgrades in harmony with any existing area improvements.
 - Consistent with Regional specifications.
- Design Goals
 - Upgrades in harmony with 'area-wide' design goals.
 - More streetscape upgrades are planned in the vicinity.
 - Extends an existing upgraded streetscape further.
- Connections
 - Will connect to existing area with streetscape upgrades.
 - Will connect with local upgrade project.
 - Opportunity to combine works with another contract.
- Supported by Regional Staff
 - This project is supported by York Region's Streetscape Review Team.

4.3.5 Timing of Applications and the Budget Cycle

On a yearly basis, Regional Council will review the finite funding amount to be used for these funding contributions program. The following timing for applications and review of those applications are proposed to integrate with York Region's budget cycle. Local municipalities will be asked to review this timing to be sure it can be coordinated with their budget cycles.

March 31 Receipt of Qualified Proposal and Draft Cost Estimate

The initial screening of an application is required to be completed by March 31 of each year.

September 01 Finalized Design and Cost Estimate

By September of the same year, applicants will be required to submit complete construction plans for Regional review as well as a detailed cost breakdown of the project.

November 01 Budget Submission

As per the submitted and agreed upon project cost estimate, budget submissions for the successful applications for each year will be forwarded to Council recommending the Region's contribution to individual streetscape improvement projects for approval.

January / February Budget Approved - Funds Available

Whenever the Regional Roads Capital Budget is approved York Region's percentage of funding will then be committed to the local municipalities for the construction works associated with the successful applications.

4.3.6 Maintenance Agreements for Partnerships

It is anticipated that the improvements associated with the Partnership Program will be above the standards adopted by York Region for streetscaping on Regional roads. The streetscaping associated with these improvements are included features such as; interlocking brick, street furniture and upgraded plantings. These features exceed existing Regional standards and therefore require a higher level of maintenance.

In order to assure the upgrades receive the warranted maintenance and that all municipalities are treated uniformly, local municipalities will be required to enter into a legal agreement assuring they are responsible for care and maintenance of the enhanced streetscaping. The Region, however, will continue to maintain the Streetscape works installed as part of the 2001 policy.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Transportation and Works Department has an approved budget of \$3.0 million to spend on streetscape works each year. Presently, a portion of the yearly budget is used for capital projects and spent on, street trees, decorative splash strips and/or centre medians. However, at this point, Regional streetscaping on road widening projects in conformance with the 2001 policy, is costing approximately \$2.0 million, leaving approximately \$1.0 million available for funding further streetscaping initiatives such as these proposals. The funding for this program is currently 100% from tax levy.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

It is anticipated that this new policy will benefit local municipalities by providing a mechanism for York Region to provide a percentage funding for streetscaping improvements such as the ones that York Region has recently been requested to participate in.

Staff have met with local municipal representatives to share the principles of this draft policy and they are supportive of the evolution of the existing 2001 Streetscape Policy toward this MSPP.

7. CONCLUSION

The perception of Regional streets is changing from that of moving vehicles to that of accommodating all modes of transportation, enhancing communities and defining community character. Streetscaping the Regional road system is one of the strongest tools that York Region has to use to accomplish this task. The Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy is one of a number of methodologies being employed to increase the degree to which York Region participates in these projects.

This policy addresses improving the aesthetics of the streetscape by providing financial support to qualifying locally initiated beautification schemes.

Local municipalities will be further consulted after Council endorsement and prior to finalizing the policy. The final policy document will be brought before Council in fall 2006.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)