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HIGHWAY 7 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STUDY UPDATE ROUGE RIVER TO SCIBERRAS ROAD TOWN OF MARKHAM, PROJECT 9818

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, December 16, 2003, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The following report be received for information by Transportation and Works Committee and Regional Council.
2. The Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report to the Clerk of the Town of Markham.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Regional Council of the status of the Highway 7 Environmental Assessment Study for the section of Highway 7 between the Rouge River and Sciberras Road (*see Attachment 1*) and to respond to the Town of Markham's Council resolution (*see Attachment 2*) to consider advancing the timing of this project.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Highway 7 Road Widening – Rouge River to Sciberras Road

In the fall of 1999, the firm of Marshall Macklin Monaghan was awarded the Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) and detailed design assignment for the widening of Highway 7 between the Rouge River and Sciberras Road in the Town of Markham.

The Class EA study was initiated and a Public Information Centre was held. In late 2002 it became evident that the Rapid Transit Program would be implemented. As a result, staff suspended all work on the roadway Class EA due to the imminent Rapid Transit Program; specifically the Highway 7 Transitway Individual Environmental Assessment (IEA) Study. This was necessary to avoid conflict between the two projects thereby increasing the likelihood of success of the Transitway project.

The widening and reconstruction of Highway 7 between the Rouge River and Sciberras Road has nevertheless remained in the Region's 10 year Roads Capital Plan and is programmed for construction in 2007.

3.2 Highway 7 Transitway Study

The Highway 7 Transitway Study is currently ongoing by York Consortium. The section of Highway 7 west of Town Centre Boulevard has been identified as a potential link for a future transitway. A preferred alignment has now been identified.

Completion of this study is expected in the fall 2004.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The 1999 Environmental Assessment Study that was initiated for the widening of Highway 7 had its planning undertaken as a Schedule 'C' Class EA project. The planning study for the Highway 7 transitway project is being conducted under the more comprehensive requirements of an Individual Environmental Assessment Schedule.

In the Municipal Engineers Association Municipal Class Environmental Assessment document, dated June 2000, it is noted that proposed works are separate projects if they are initiated to solve distinctly different sets of problems and the resulting works are stand alone facilities without the requirement of further work to completely solve the problem.

In the case of Highway 7, the road widening and transitway are interrelated since either one has an influence on the other or requires work on one to complete the other. It is only by combining the two projects that the Region can demonstrate how each projects need and justification, alternative impacts and proposed mitigation relate. By not combining these projects, the Region would not be in compliance with the Environmental Assessment requirements and, if proceeded separately, public and agency confusion regarding the projects will occur and the integrity of the EA process would be in question. As such, the Highway 7 road widening and transitway project cannot be considered as separate projects and therefore must be combined under a single study. In cases where two projects are combined into a single study, the Class Environmental assessment process requires that the more rigorous of the two EA Schedules be applied to complete the single study.

Therefore the Region must include the Environmental Assessment work for the Highway 7 road widening into the more rigorous Highway 7 Transitway IEA Study. York Consortium has confirmed the road widening EA study can be incorporated into the Transitway IEA study without significant impacts to schedule or process. Additional public consultation including at least one Public Consultation Centre will be required as part of the expanded IEA study.

As a result, York Region staff has retained York Consortium to complete the Highway 7 Class EA Study for the widening of the section of Highway 7 between Town Centre Boulevard and Sciberras Road. Consequently, it was necessary for the Region to

terminate the Marshall Macklin Monaghan assignment. Work which has been completed to-date by the firm is being incorporated into the expanded Transitway IEA Study.

The expanded Highway 7 Transitway IEA Study is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2004. Following approval of the Transitway IEA Study, Regional staff will proceed with detailed design and construction phase for the widening of the section of Highway 7 between the Rouge River and Sciberras Road as soon as possible.

On November 25, 2003, Town of Markham Council passed a resolution requesting that The Regional Municipality of York advance their Road Capital Program for the widening of Highway 7 between the Rouge River (Montgomery Court) and Sciberras Road from 2007 to 2005/2006.

The advancement of the Highway 7 widening from 2007 to 2005/2006 is contingent on the approval of the Transitway IEA Study. Any commitment by the Region to advance the project will require this prerequisite approval and completion of detailed design for the widening of Highway 7.

In this consideration, the Region could advance some aspects of detail design prior to the completion of the EA with the goal of being ready for 2005/2006 construction, on the understanding that any design work done prior to EA approval would be at the Region's risk.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications of this report since the remaining funds previously allocated for the completion of the Highway 7 road widening environmental assessment work have been utilized to retain York Consortium for the completion of this work.

With the termination of the initial Highway 7 Roadway EA Study, sufficient funds are available within the underspent 2003 budget allocation for the work to be carried out.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

There is no local impact to the Town of Markham through this report. With the action taken, the EA Study for the widening of Highway 7 is resumed and effectively responds to the Town of Markham Council Resolution to work towards the advancement of the widening of Highway 7 between Montgomery Court and Sciberras Road.

7. CONCLUSION

Coupling the Highway 7 Road Widening EA to the Highway 7 Transitway IEA Study avoids conflict between the two projects and is more fitting to the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act and Municipal Class EA process.

York Consortium has been retained to complete the Highway 7 Class Environmental Assessment Study for the widening of the section of Highway 7 between Town Centre Boulevard and Sciberras Road.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing is included with this report and is also on file in the Office of the Regional Clerk.)