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GREEN LANE – STATUS UPDATE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated December 20, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services and the General Manager, Roads, subject to recommendation 1 being amended by adding the words “to ensure Green Lane is maintained as a critical high capacity urban arterial road in the Region” after the word “Corridor”, so that recommendation 1 now reads as follows:

1. Council direct Staff to utilize this report as guidance for preparing recommendations on the ongoing York Region Transportation Master Plan Study and further considerations in local Official Plan reviews and Secondary Plans related to the lands associated with the Green Lane Corridor, *to ensure Green Lane is maintained as a critical high capacity urban arterial road in the Region.*

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council direct Staff to utilize this report as guidance for preparing recommendations on the ongoing York Region Transportation Master Plan Study, and further considerations in local Official Plan reviews and Secondary Plans related to the lands associated with the Green Lane Corridor.
2. The Regional Clerk be directed to forward a copy of this report to the local area municipal Councils.

2. PURPOSE

At its meeting of September 27, 2007, Regional Council requested Staff to report back “on the recognition of Green Lane as a critical bypass in the context of the identification of Highway 404 for development and the proposed Bradford Bypass.” This report responds to the request and acknowledges that Green Lane will continue to function as a high capacity urban arterial road.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Green Lane

Policy 6.1.13 of the Regional Official Plan (ROP, 1994) states that it is the policy of Regional Council to support the planning, corridor protection and the early construction

of “the Greenlane-Herald Road extension to serve as a Highway 9 by-pass for the Town of Newmarket”. The EA for the reconstruction of Green Lane was completed in 1996 in accordance with this policy. The section of Green Lane from Yonge Street to Woodbine Avenue was completed in 1999, and the section of Green Lane from Yonge Street to Bathurst Street was officially opened in 2004.

3.2 Provincial Highways

Since 2002, the routes for the extension of Highway 404 and the Highway 400 to Highway 404 Extension Link (the Bradford Bypass) have been approved through Provincial Environmental Assessments (*see Attachment 2*). In accordance with Council direction, Staff recently prepared a Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA 58) to show the approved alignment of the Highway 404 Extension and the Bradford Bypass on Map 9. During discussions on ROPA 58, Regional Council requested Staff to report back “on the recognition of Green Lane as a critical bypass in the context of the identification of Highway 404 for development and the proposed Bradford Bypass.” (The Bradford Bypass will be the subject of a report to Regional Council in 2008.)

3.3 Comment from the Town of Newmarket

The Region received a letter from the Town of Newmarket outlining the Town’s perspective with respect to the status of Green Lane (*Attachment 1*). Specifically, the Town requested confirmation that the planned function of Green Lane as a Regional arterial road will not change. This report confirms that it is the Region’s intention to ensure that Green Lane will remain as a critical high capacity urban arterial road in the Region

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Major Changes to Northern York Region related to the Growth Plan and the Greenbelt Plan Legislation

Recent Planning legislation, specifically the Places to Grow Plan and the Greenbelt Plan, has had a significant impact on the growth and related planning dynamics in northern York Region. These Provincial Plans have significantly increased the emphasis on intensification within communities, and the development pressure on the lands not included within the Greenbelt Plan Area. There has, therefore, been substantial change since the ROP policies came into effect in the mid 1990s.

Specifically, the Provincial Growth Plan has identified an “Urban Growth Centre” within the Town of Newmarket, where there will be increased densities of population and employment, particularly along the Yonge Street and Davis Drive corridors. Within the Town of East Gwillimbury, the lands in proximity to Green Lane were not included within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan (part of the lands are commonly referred to as the “Whitebelt” lands). As such, these lands are being considered for their potential to accommodate the growth forecasts of the Growth Plan. The Town of East Gwillimbury has initiated an Official Plan Review and a Growth Management Study,

which will determine the focus for new development within the Town and the “Whitebelt” lands along Green Lane are part of this initiative.

Accompanying these growth considerations will be increasing demands and pressures on the key arterial road corridors and Provincial Highways. It is, therefore, important to ensure that growth proceeds in a phased manner, to manage impacts on the transportation system including maintaining the urban arterial role of Green Lane, and also advocating for key additional components of new road infrastructure in northern York Region.

4.2 Green Lane – A High Capacity Urban Arterial

Currently, Green Lane has limited development adjacent to it; however, as growth continues in Newmarket, East Gwillimbury and the surrounding areas, there will be increasing demands and pressures on the Green Lane corridor. These will likely take the form of increased traffic volumes and pressures on Green Lane to become more “urbanized” including requests for a more urban cross-section, full traffic movement access points, and right-in and right-out traffic access points.

It will be important to plan for the accommodation of new development, while maintaining the planned function of Green Lane as a high capacity urban arterial. Limiting access with appropriately spaced intersections and complementing this with additional rapid transit and conventional transit investments, and an active fully functioning collector road system, will be key components of this strategy. The Town of East Gwillimbury and York Region are currently preparing Transportation Master Plans, which will also assist in defining the criteria necessary to ensure that Green Lane continues to function as a high capacity urban arterial.

The Region, the Town of Newmarket, and the Town of East Gwillimbury will need to continue to work cooperatively to ensure that development proceeds in a phased manner to manage impacts on Green Lane, recognizing the role it plays within the Regional Road system.

4.3 Bradford Bypass is a Key Component of the Road Infrastructure

The Green Lane to Ravenshoe Road portion of the Highway 404 Extension is currently under construction and is to be completed by 2012, however, the Highway 400 to Highway 404 Extension Link (the Bradford Bypass) is not shown in the Province’s Places to Grow Plan, within its horizon of 2031. In May 2007, the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Donna Cansfield, advised York Region that the Ministry was not currently proceeding with work on the Bradford Bypass at this time.

Given the Provincial policies and the resulting development pressures within Newmarket and East Gwillimbury discussed above, the Bradford Bypass is an important provincial infrastructure component in the overall transportation network that must be in place to support the Provincial Places to Grow Plan. Therefore, the Region should continue to advocate for the construction of the Bradford Bypass. This will be discussed further in a report to Council in 2008.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Region has met with Town of East Gwillimbury and Town of Newmarket staff on a preliminary basis to discuss the status of Green Lane. It is important that the Region, the Town of Newmarket, the Town of East Gwillimbury and other local municipalities work cooperatively to ensure that potential development proceeds along the Green Lane corridor in a phased manner such that any impacts on the transportation system can be managed appropriately. Local and Regional municipal staff will continue to work together to manage any impacts on the Green Lane Corridor.

7. CONCLUSION

As development and growth opportunities are pursued in Newmarket and East Gwillimbury, there will be increasing pressures on the related arterial corridors and Provincial highways. Therefore, it is important to ensure that as development proceeds in a phased manner to manage impacts on the transportation system including maintaining the existing role of Green Lane, and also advocating for key additional components of new road infrastructure in the Region, including the construction of the Bradford Bypass.

With proper management of land use development patterns along Green Lane, combined with limited access, a fully functioning collector road system, and transit investments, York Region in partnership with Newmarket and East Gwillimbury, intends to maintain Green Lane's key function as a critical high capacity urban arterial road. As such, Green Lane will continue to allow for a higher traffic capacity and faster movement of goods than standard arterial roads, while accommodating appropriate staged growth.

It is recommended that this report be utilized as guidance for preparing recommendations on the ongoing York Region Transportation Master Plan study and further considerations in local Official Plan review and policy work related to the lands in proximity to Green Lane.

For more information on this report, please contact Michael Mallette, M.C.I.P., R.P.P., Senior Planner, Community Planning Branch, at 905-830-4444 ext 1506 or michael.mallette@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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