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PERSONAL TRAVEL PLANNING PILOT PROGRAM

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated December 19, 2011, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Community Planning.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The results of the Personal Travel Planning pilot program be used by Regional staff as a key consideration in Transportation Demand Management plans and programs for residential development in York Region.
2. The Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report to the Clerks of the local municipalities.

2. PURPOSE

This report summarizes the results of a pilot outreach program to encourage residents to shift their travel behaviour away from single-occupant vehicle trips to more sustainable modes of travel.

3. BACKGROUND

Personal Travel Planning and Smart Commute are Transportation Demand Management measures tested by York Region

The Region has been a leader in piloting new Transportation Demand Management (TDM) initiatives that have been shown to shift travel to more sustainable modes. A Personal Travel Planning or Individualized Marketing pilot, similar to the one described here, was recently completed in a new community in Vaughan in partnership with the developers of the community. In addition, York Region played a lead role in the creation of Smart Commute, which to date has reduced greenhouse gas emissions in York Region by almost 1,000 tonnes. The Region's Community and Health Services Department has recently partnered with Smart Commute to test a program that facilitates increased physical activity in the workplace. The Region is continually seeking out new opportunities and new partners to implement TDM measures as per trip reduction policies in the Regional Official Plan.

In other jurisdictions, Personal Travel Planning has been shown to change people's travel behaviour

York Region's Personal Travel Planning (PTP) project was conceived to test a household-based Transportation Demand Management approach to shifting travel behaviour. Personal Travel Planning is also sometimes referred to as Individualized Marketing as it targets specific households or individuals that express an interest in changing their behaviour.

Household-based Transportation Demand Management focuses on providing people with information about their travel options in the form of a "travel kit" for all types of trips, and encouraging them to try a new method of travel. Personal Travel Planning focused on residents' access to information about travel options as a barrier to shifting travel behaviour. This approach has been implemented successfully in several other jurisdictions, including Vancouver, Winnipeg, Portland, and the United Kingdom.

The Region received a grant from the Ministry of Transportation and financial contributions from the Town of Markham and the City of Vaughan

The Region applied to MTO's Transportation Demand Management Municipal Grant program in the Fall of 2009 for matching funding to cover a portion of the costs for the pilot Personal Travel Planning program, and was awarded a grant of \$28,025. The two participating local municipalities, Markham and Vaughan, each contributed \$5,000. The balance of the budget was provided by York Region. The overall budget and expenditures for the pilot are discussed in Section 5 of this report.

York Region's proposal to MTO indicated 400 travel kits would be delivered to interested households. The consultant that assisted the Region in this pilot presented a project design that would work towards that target. The program successfully reached its goal, delivering 403 travel kits to households in two pilot communities.

Personal Travel Planning was tested in the Cornell community in Markham, and the Thornhill area of Vaughan

The pilot was designed to test the viability of the Personal Travel Planning approach in two communities, Cornell and Thornhill, which represent two different transportation networks and urban forms. York Region worked with staff at the local municipalities to select the communities. The Cornell neighbourhood was chosen because it has a mixture of single-unit and multi-unit housing types, and is pedestrian-oriented. The Thornhill community, specifically the area bounded by Yonge St., Steeles Ave., Bathurst St., and Centre St., features mostly single-detached homes, is located 3 km from the terminus of the Yonge Subway line, and has a higher accessibility to transit than most residential areas in York Region. Each target area included approximately 2,500 households.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

The Personal Travel Planning Pilot was designed to provide the resources available from Regional departments, local municipalities, and Smart Commute directly to residents

Many Regional departments and outside agencies in York Region are engaged in creating resources for residents about their travel choices. These include the following:

- Smart Commute, through local Transportation Management Associations, provides information about travel alternatives at work sites, and specifically offers carpoolzone.ca, an online ridematching service for those interested in carpooling.
- York Region Transit (and other transit services) provides several tools to riders, including online route planning, text message alerts, and route navigators.
- York Region Public Health provides information on active lifestyles (i.e. walking, running, cycling) to promote healthier communities and improve air quality.

Rather than duplicating these resources, the Personal Travel Planning project worked with the partners mentioned above to create a program that presented their material and resources more directly to residents with the purpose of shifting their trip modes. These stakeholders, along with representative from the local municipalities, participated in the project through a working group that developed the project materials and oversaw the implementation program. Utilitarian trips were the focus of the outreach (i.e. trips with a purpose or destination), rather than recreational trips.

This pilot was implemented by Regional staff with the participation of a number of Regional departments, outside stakeholders, and a consultant

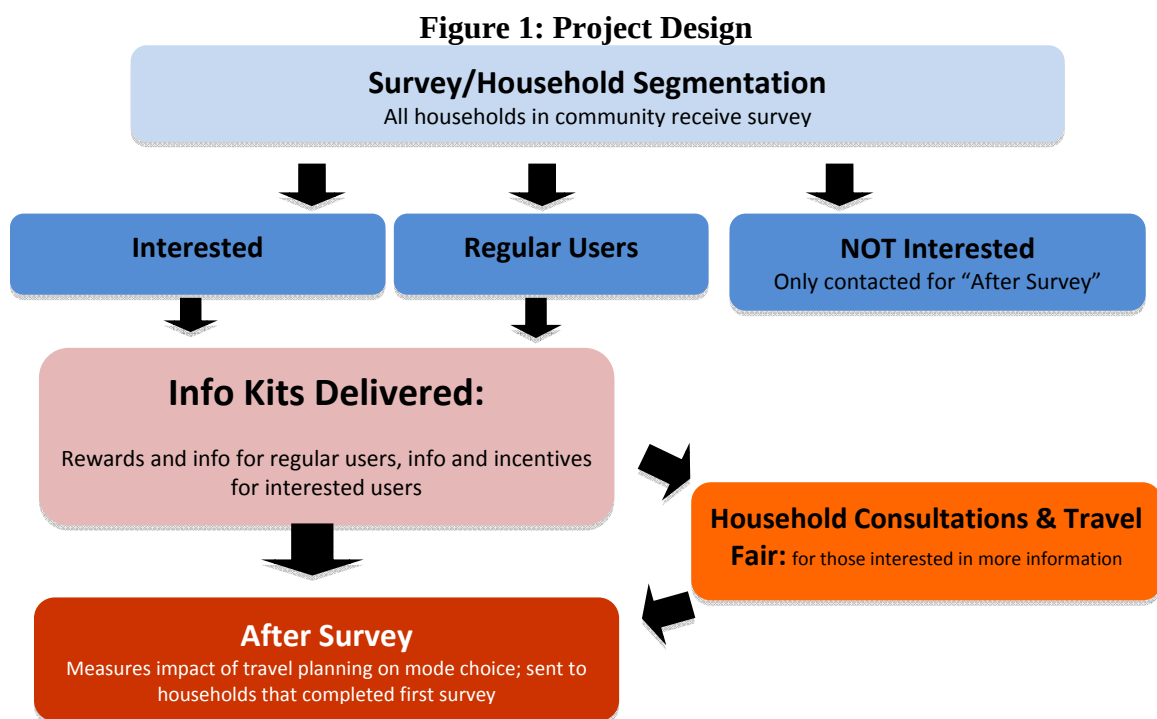
The pilot was implemented through an in-house Working Group, bringing together staff from Planning, Transportation Services – Policy and Planning, York Region Transit, York Region Public Health, the local municipalities, and Smart Commute, to develop and implement an outreach strategy. The working group's goal was to develop a single theme that drew on the existing resources of all stakeholders, leveraging their expertise in promoting different travel modes. The working group was closely involved in program development decisions, including naming the project, selecting appropriate information materials, and creating website content. This approach allowed staff to gain and retain the experience of implementing Personal Travel Planning.

The pilot was intended to take the implementation model, established through testing in other jurisdictions and apply it locally, with some adjustments as warranted. A consultant, UrbanTrans North America, with previous experience implementing Personal Travel Planning, or Individualized Marketing, in several other jurisdictions was selected

to assist the working group. UrbanTrans provided ongoing advice allowing the working group to carry out the pilot and gain experience, while being able to draw on best practices as directly as possible. The consultant's main task was to carry out the survey component of the pilot.

Personal Travel Planning focuses on those residents that expressed interest in shifting to sustainable modes of travel

Figure 1 below outlines how the outreach component of the project worked with residents:



Interested households were offered the opportunity to select information about travel modes that interested them, as well as an opportunity for a face-to-face meeting with a professional Travel Planner to discuss their options and the specific barriers they faced in changing their travel modes. In addition, interested residents:

- Received emails with information about new travel options.
- Could participate in community events designed to encourage walking in their community.
- Could attend a one-night travel fair in their community to interact directly with transportation experts.

Each household that was identified in the segmentation survey as either "interested" or a "regular" user of sustainable modes of travel received an order form in the mail, along

with a stamped return envelope. The order form listed 20 pieces of information they could request, selected by the working group and the consultant, covering York Region Transit, TTC, GO services, carpooling, cycling and walking information and tips, as well as safety information for young cyclists.

Table 1 outlines the agencies providing material for the order form.

Table 1
Agency-provided Materials

Stakeholder	Project material contributed
Smart Commute	Information on carpooling, carpoolzone.ca, and the Smart Commute program
York Region Transit	Route Navigators, system maps, “Next Bus” by email tips
York Region Public Health	Children’s safety information, walking and cycling resources, Air Quality information, “20/20 Planner”
City of Vaughan	Thornhill local business guide
Town of Markham	Markham Cycling Map
York Region Infrastructure Planning	Bike-to-Work Guide (new material developed for the pilot)

The pilot project communicated with residents electronically or in person to provide several ways for participants to learn about their travel options

Ongoing contact with residents during a Personal Travel Planning project helps to reinforce the commitment of residents to try a new behaviour and, if they have switched travel modes, sustain that shift. The working group created a Travel Smart website for each pilot community to allow residents to locate information about the travel modes that interested them and provide links to pre-existing tools such as the carpoolzone.ca ridematching website, or York Region Transit’s online trip planner. These websites can be viewed at www.travelsmartcornell.ca and www.travelsmarthornhill.ca.

RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS

Travel surveys conducted before and after the outreach component show the project was successful in reducing single-occupant vehicle trips, particularly in the Thornhill pilot area

The results of the household surveys were assessed to see if any travel behaviour shift had occurred, using travel diary surveys before and after the outreach.

Survey respondents were asked to provide the travel mode used for each reported trip on the day before they completed the survey. The following figure provides a summary of the reported travel mode split information. As shown in Figure 2, the survey analysis found a slight, but not statistically significant, change in single-occupancy vehicle use for the Cornell households in the pilot.

Figure 2
Cornell Travel Mode Split Before and After Pilot

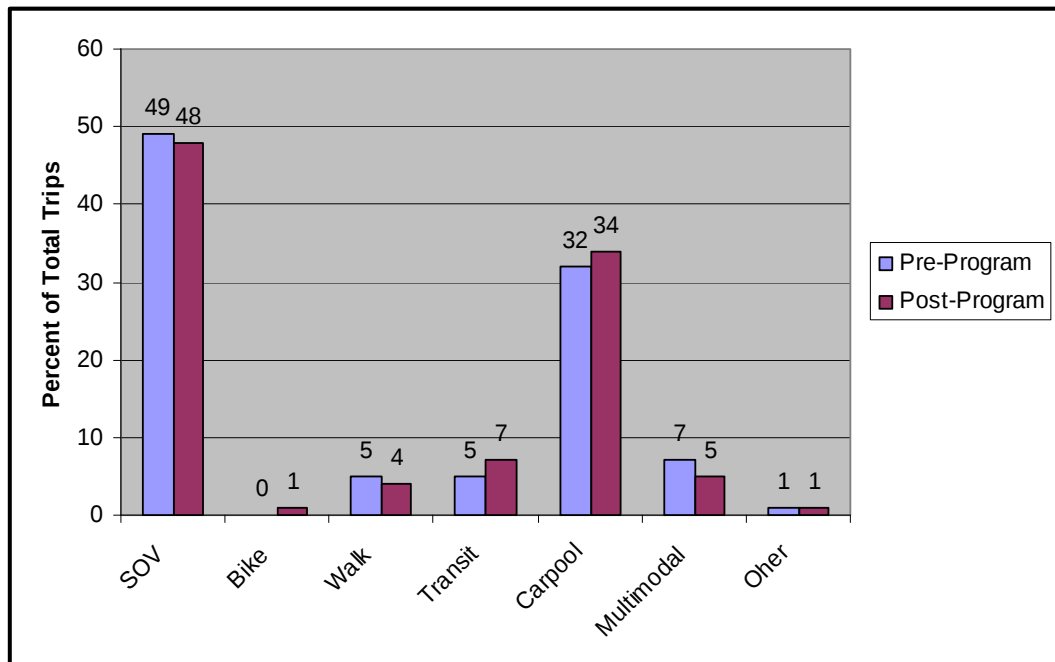
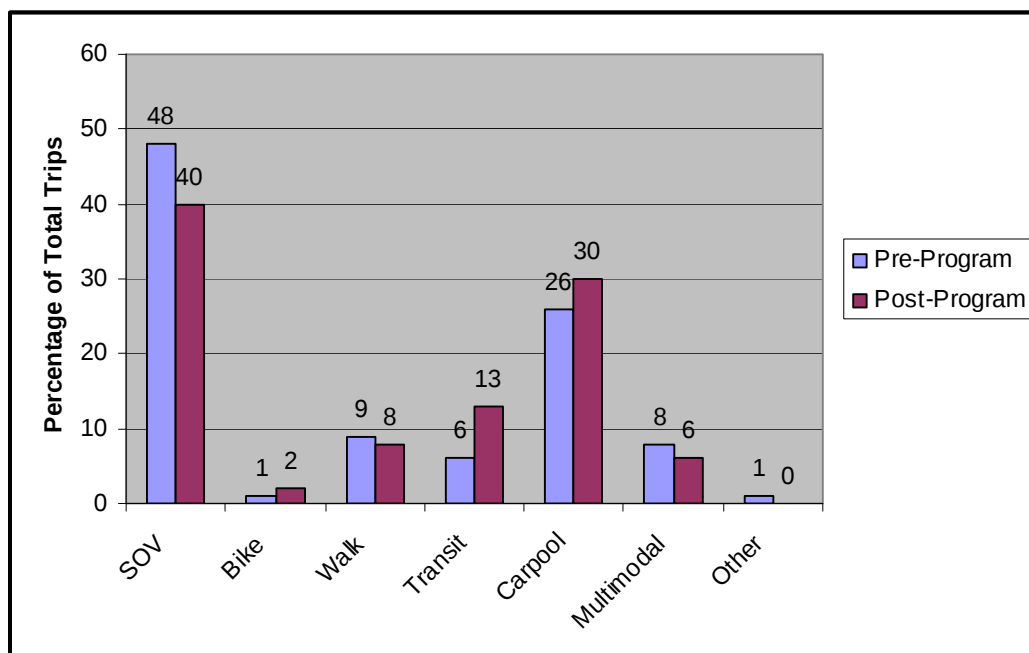


Figure 3 provides a summary of the change in mode split that occurred between the pre- and post-program surveys for the Thornhill pilot households. Single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) use decreased by eight percentage points (a 17% change), overall transit usage doubled, and a large increase was seen in the use of carpools (15%).

Approximately 10% of the households that were initially contacted for The Personal Travel Planning pilot participated in some way. If the 17% percent reduction in single-occupant vehicle trips amongst participants in Thornhill is translated to a Region-wide Personal Travel Planning program then it could shift in the order of 20,000 auto trips per day in York Region to more sustainable modes of travel.

Figure 3
Thornhill Travel Mode Split Before and After Pilot



The differing results between Thornhill and Cornell are likely a product of their respective geographies and levels of transit service. Cornell is a New Urbanist community with a safe pedestrian environment and walkable destinations. However, it is at the far eastern edge of Markham, making it isolated from other destinations in Markham and the Region. By contrast, Thornhill is centrally located, with many destinations in or near the community, and frequent transit service to several destinations including downtown Toronto. Providing information to residents about their travel options still requires viable alternatives to convenient auto trips.

These results demonstrate that Personal Travel Planning may be a useful approach to shifting travel behaviour in other communities in York Region. Particular contexts for future application of PTP could include:

- New communities, to help establish sustainable travel habits amongst new residents.
- Communities where the available travel options are not being used to their fullest potential by residents.
- Communities where new or increased transit service has recently been introduced. This would maximize the potential impact of outreach as well as the return on investment in transit service.
- Communities designed to achieve a certain environmental certification (such as LEED-ND or EnergyStar).

A developer-funded Individualized Marketing Program was also completed in 2010, allowing the Region to evaluate this approach in new communities

Known as Neighbourgood, this outreach program was conducted in the Carrville area (Blocks 11, 12, and 18) of Vaughan. Regional staff worked with the developers in these new communities to implement this TDM measure as part of a larger TDM Plan for the communities, secured through development approvals. The goal of the program was to promote sustainable transportation and implement innovative approaches to manage congestion. Working with developers to provide new home-buyers with information on travel options is a policy of the Regional Official Plan. Some key results of the Blocks 11, 12, and 18 program were as follows:

- A 21% decrease in daily trips per person
- A 17% decrease in vehicle kilometres traveled per person

Beyond these results, this program provided valuable lessons regarding conducting Personal Travel Planning in new communities, such as using canvassers, and the effectiveness of email and online tools to improve community participation and engagement.

The success of this pilot will be considered during the development of a York Region TDM Program Strategy in 2012

York Region will be developing a TDM Program and Implementation Strategy in 2012 (see Report 8 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, October 20, 2011). The development of the Strategy will assess a number of options to effectively reduce trips in York Region, and will examine the options for including Personal Travel Planning as a strategy to help improve mode choice, improve the effectiveness of Regional investments in transit and cycling facilities, and manage congestion.

Link to Key Council-approved Plans

The Personal Travel Planning pilot supports the Regional Official Plan policies to reduce automobile dependence by providing information on commuting options and enhancing opportunities to walk, cycle, take transit, and carpool. Also, this and other Transportation Demand Management initiatives which reduce automobile trips support the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan objective to optimize the transportation capacity and services in Regional Centres and Corridors, as well as the Vision 2026 goal of reducing congestion and promoting alternative modes of transportation.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The initial Personal Travel Planning project budget was \$70,918.15, based on the Region's grant proposal to MTO. The final project cost was approximately \$83,000. There were several reasons for the higher cost:

- A public website was added to the project scope for each pilot community to test its usefulness as a project component. The websites were a key piece of the outreach strategy for the pilot. It is continuing to operate (at minimal cost) pending a discussion of the long-term viability of the project as part of the Transportation Demand Management Program and Implementation Strategy.
- Postage costs were not identified in the original project budget.
- Higher printing and outreach costs as project partners; Smart Commute North Toronto Vaughan, and Smart Commute Markham Richmond Hill (formerly known as Smart Commute 404-7) were not able to provide the in-kind contribution originally planned, resulting in extra printing and outreach costs for the Region.

The additional costs were covered through other operating budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipal staff from the participating communities contributed to the pilot

Staff from Markham and Vaughan were closely involved in the design and implementation of the Personal Travel Planning pilot. Markham contributed its Cycling Map, and Vaughan created a Thornhill Business Directory exclusively for the pilot. The local municipal councillors were briefed, and attended public events if available. If the Personal Travel Planning program is continued at a later time, this approach to changing travel behaviour will be introduced in other municipalities throughout the Region.

7. CONCLUSION

The Personal Travel Planning pilot proved to be a valuable way to test Individualized Marketing approach in York Region, and support the Regional Official Plan's objective to reduce automobile dependence. The Cornell pilot did not show any statistically-significant shifts in travel behaviour, despite high levels of interest from households in information and events. Conversely, the Thornhill pilot resulted in a statistically-significant 17% drop in single-occupant vehicle trips, and a doubling of transit trips.

This pilot provides local evidence, as is the case in other cities around the world, that personal travel planning through individualized marketing can be an effective way to shift people's travel behaviour.

York Region would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Transportation for providing the opportunity to pilot the Personal Travel Planning model of behaviour change. Special thanks also to all the members of the Personal Travel Planning Working Group, consisting of staff from Planning, Transportation Services, Community and Health Services, York Region Transit, the local municipalities, and Smart Commute who all contributed time, material, expertise and experience to the development and implementation of the program.

For more information on this report, please contact Richard Hui, Manager, Transportation Planning, at Ext. 1578 or Loy Cheah, Director, Infrastructure Planning at Ext. 5024.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.