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TOWARDS GREAT REGIONAL STREETS - A PATH TO IMPROVEMENT MUNICIPAL STREETSCAPE PARTNERSHIP POLICY AND REGIONAL STANDARD FOR SIX-LANE ROADS

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, September 27, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council adopt the policy for Regional funding contributions towards local municipal streetscape projects on Regional roads as set out in the attached “Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy” (*Attachment 1*).
2. Regional Council adopt the policy establishing a Regional standard for six-lane roads as set out in the attached “Regional Standard for Six-Lane Roads” (*Attachment 2*).
3. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Clerks of the local municipalities for information

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Regional Council final approval of both the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy (*see Attachment 1*) and the Regional Standard for Six-lane Roads (*see Attachment 2*), which are both part of the “Towards Great Regional Streets – A Path to Improvement” initiative.

3. BACKGROUND

In response to Regional Council’s desires for more streetscaping on Regional roads, staff pursued 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 Committee January 2006).
- Regional standard for six-lane roads (reported to Committee in March 2006 and the subject of this report).
- Policy guidelines for lay-by parking on Regional roads (reported to Committee April 2006).
- Guideline/Policy for cost-sharing of enhanced local municipal streetscaping initiatives on Regional roads (reported to Committee April 2006 and the subject of this report).

These initiatives build upon Council's earlier efforts to implement streetscaping on Regional road widening contracts. Currently, streetscaping implementations vary by location as follows:

- Regional road contracts in Regional centres include street trees at 10m spacing, a concrete splash strip, and a two tiered raised landscape median.
- Regional road contracts on other sections of Regional corridors include street trees at 10m spacing, a concrete splash strip, and a one tiered landscape median.
- Regional road contracts on other Regional Roads in urbanized areas receive street trees at 10m spacing.

The current 10-Year Roads Capital forecast anticipates the widening of a number of road sections to six-lane cross-sections. The draft Regional Standard for Six-lane Roads, as endorsed by Regional Council in March 2006, reviewed current practices as well as best practices of other jurisdictions and determined a consistent cross-sectional treatment to be used on all upcoming six-lane projects.

In April 2006, Committee and Regional Council received and endorsed the Draft Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy (*see Attachment 3*). Copies of the report were forwarded to local municipalities for comment.

Upon receipt of comments from the local municipalities, staff were directed to finalize the standards and report back to Committee and Regional Council with recommendations for formal adoption of the new Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy.

In March 2006, Transportation and Works Committee and Regional Council received and endorsed a new Draft Regional Standard for Six-lane Roads. Copies of the report were forwarded to local municipalities for comment (*see Attachment 4*).

Upon receipt of comments from the local municipalities, staff was directed to finalize the standards and report back to Committee and Regional Council with recommendations for formal adoption of the new Regional standard for six-lane roads.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Comments from Local Municipalities

4.1.1 Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy

In April 2006, Regional Council endorsed a draft policy and copies of the report were forwarded to the local municipalities for formal comments by May 31, 2006.

To date, we have received comments back from the City of Vaughan, Towns of Markham, Richmond Hill, East Gwillimbury, Georgina and Township of King. All correspondence received to date is generally supportive of the policy.

A summary of the recommendations from the local municipal Councils as well as comments received from the local municipal staff along with York Region's response is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy - Comments from Municipalities

Municipality	Comments	Response
Town of East Gwillimbury	Seek clarification that the proposed policy was in addition to the existing 2001 streetscaping policy.	Confirmed by way of letter to town staff in June 2006.
Town of Georgina	- Georgina Council supports the proposed Municipal Streetscaping Partnership Policy. - Town staff work with York Region to finalize the Region's Streetscaping program to be provided as part of the Woodbine Avenue widening project.	- No action required. - York Region staff to work with Georgina town staff.
Township of King	- Funding Policy will assist King Township to fulfill streetscaping initiatives/gateway projects. The Township would likely utilize this program as many of the initiatives in the villages, hamlets, and rural areas fronting onto Regional roads. - Recommended that the Region establish the parameters or criteria of what information/details are required in the design study in order for municipalities to submit a complete application.	- No action required. - Draft criteria have been included in approved policy document. - Further work will be done in consultation with local municipal staff.
Town of Richmond Hill	The report is to be received for information.	No action required
Town of Markham	- Markham support, in principle the Region's Standards for Six-lane Roads and Municipal Streetscape Partnership policies subject to the following amendments; - amend Regional Road classifications to	

reflect the adjacent uses, built form and development context through which each Regional road passes as described in this report;

2. adopt financial, environmental and culturally sustainable boulevard and median landscape design standards for each road classification;
3. amend its draft Municipal Streetscape Partnership policies with the objective of reducing overall capital and operating cost impacts to the Region and Town through environmental and culturally sustainable design and construction , to provide for streetscape retrofits on existing roads and a greater Regional financial share of streetscape improvements;
4. better align Regional streetscape standards for each road classification to meet local municipal urban design objectives;
5. develop streetscape standards for four lane Regional roads in keeping with the Region's Standards for Six –lane Roads;

and that Town staff be authorized to meet with Regional officials to discuss Town comments and recommendations, finalize Regional Road classifications, streetscape details, cost estimates, cost sharing formulas and funding sources and report back for Council consideration.

- Currently approved policy applies to six-lanes.
- Further discussions will occur with town staff to address other comments.
- No policy changes are recommended.

City of Vaughan

- This letter shall confirm that we are fully supportive of the policy, as it provides a framework for the City of Vaughan and Region of York to partner in some of the key future streetscaping and urban design initiatives.
- Recommended that the draft policy be revised to address the following comments:
 - Criteria for Partnership – consider revising wording of policy to indicate “A
- Although master plan studies provide

streetscaping/urban design master plan study must accompany proposals”.

for broader vision across a municipality, it is not a mandatory requirement. Accordingly, site specific proposals are eligible for consideration.

- Cost Estimating – the formal cost estimates should include the professional design fees associated with the preparation of the master plan, working drawings, and contract administration as well as a typical 10% contingency allowance and 3% Treasury administration fee for City of Vaughan projects
 - Timing of Application and Budget Cycles – it should be noted that the time limit of March 31 for the initial screening of an application may not work for some municipalities, as their capital budgets may not be finalized and approved by that time. (City of Vaughan)
- Eligible cost items include design, contract administration and construction costs. Contingency amounts and administration fees are not currently eligible.
 - Deadlines are required so that all parties are given equal opportunity to submit and to accommodate York Region’s budget cycle. Late submissions may be considered on a case by case basis if funding and timing permits their inclusion into the current budget cycle. Otherwise, they may be eligible for consideration the following year.
 - We will continue to work with local municipal staff to address these concerns but no policy changes are recommended.

4.1.2 Six Lane Guidelines

In March 2006, following Regional Council endorsement of these draft guidelines, copies of the report were forwarded to the local municipalities by the Regional Clerk requesting formal comments by April 30, 2006.

To date, we have received comments back from the Towns of Richmond Hill and Markham Councils as well as from staff at the Town of Newmarket and City of Vaughan. All correspondence received to date is supportive of the draft guidelines.

A summary of the recommendations and comments received from the local municipalities and York Region's staff response is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Six-Lane Guidelines - Comments from Municipalities

Municipality	Comments	Response Action
Town of Markham	• The centre landscaped median, where feasible, be constructed at the time of any road widenings (four to six lanes). • All maintenance costs for the additional streetscaping (Level 3) be the responsibility of the Region. • Environmental Assessments for widening Regional arterial roads from four to six lanes include the Level 3 streetscaping requirements and address issues such as property requirements and access restrictions.	• Policy currently applies only to six-lane cross section. Further discussion will occur with local municipal staff. • Agreed. Policy as approved allocates all maintenance costs for these projects to York Region. • Agreed. These issues will be included as part of all EA's for six-lane widenings.
Town of Newmarket	• Overall concept and initiative appears to be supportable. • The Region to confirm which roads within Newmarket that this policy applies to.	• No action required. • Response by letter to Town; currently no six-lane road widenings programmed in Newmarket.
Town of Richmond Hill	• The Region preferred six-lane cross section and phasing plan be endorsed.	• No action required.
City of Vaughan	• We are encouraged by the Region's positive response and interest in the matter. • Many of the considerations in the six-lane report would also apply to four-lane roads and should be reviewed with this purpose	• No action required. • Policy currently applies only to six-lane cross section. Further discussion will occur with local municipal staff.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The comments received from the local municipalities in response to our draft Regional Standard for Six-lane Guidelines and Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy do not add any funding requirements beyond what has already been considered by Regional Council in previous reports.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

It is anticipated that the Municipal Streetscaping Partnership 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. Similarly, the proposed six-lane design guideline is supportive of both local and Regional objectives of providing a more user-friendly road for all users as well as defining community character.

Regional staff have reviewed the comments of the local municipalities and have included changes where currently appropriate to address these comments. Ongoing dialogue with local municipalities may result in future amendments to these policies.

It is therefore recommended that Transportation and Works Committee and Regional Council approve the Regional Policy and Guideline for Six-Lane Road Sections and the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy so that they may be implemented immediately.

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.

The draft policy was approved by Regional Council in April 2006 and circulated to all local municipalities for formal comments. The response from the local municipal Councils and staff are supportive and as such it is appropriate for Regional Council to adopt the Municipal Streetscaping Partnership Policy.

Also, a study which has now resulted in a Regional standard for six-lane roads was undertaken to review the manner in which York Region will construct future road

widenings to accommodate expected traffic and transit needs. A review of our current practices suggested that improvements could be made to better address pedestrian and cyclist needs as well.

Ongoing discussion with local municipal staff will elaborate on any additional or outstanding concerns and provide a basis for future amendments, as necessary, to these policies.

It is acknowledged that York Region needs to maintain arterial roads as vital corridors for people and goods, but that increased emphasis needs to be placed on expanding their functions to integrate transit facilities, and encourage pedestrian and cyclist use.

A draft guideline was endorsed by Regional Council in March 2006 and circulated to the local municipalities for formal comments. York Region has now received comments back from municipalities and is seeking Council adoption of the final policy establishing the Regional standard for six-lane roads.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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