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ROAD RENAMING - HIGHWAY 7 CITY OF VAUGHAN AND TOWNS OF MARKHAM AND RICHMOND HILL

The Transportation Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated September 24, 2009, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council support the proposed public consultation program for the renaming of Highway 7 (Y.R. 7) to Avenue 7 (Y.R. 7).
2. A subsequent report be submitted on the results of the public consultation.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is threefold. It provides information on the procedure to rename Highway 7, the suggested name, and the process used for public consultation.

3. BACKGROUND

At its meeting of February 21, 2008, Regional Council endorsed a report of the Transportation and Works Committee which approved a process to consider renaming Highway 7. This report also recommended the submission of a subsequent report outlining the results of the process. Since 2008, and following the direction of the approved report, Regional staff and staff of the City of Vaughan, Towns of Markham and Richmond Hill met to create a process that accommodates the interest of all stakeholders. This report presents the results of the consultation with local municipal staff and recommends a preferred approach.

Highway 7 historical context

Highway 7 was constructed during the 1920s and 1930s as the original southern Ontario east-west link from Sarnia to Ottawa. The York Region section of the highway was downloaded to the Region in the late 1990s when Highway 407 was opened in York Region.

York Region and Highway 7

In June 2007, a City of Vaughan Council resolution requested the Region rename Highway 7 to Avenue Seven in keeping with its intended urban and transit supportive future role. A similar Council resolution from the Town of Markham was received at the same time also asking Regional Council to consider options for renaming Highway 7 to Avenue 7, being more representative of an urban arterial road, and requested consultation with other York Region municipalities, the public and businesses. Town of Richmond Hill staff has been involved in the discussions related to the potential renaming of Highway 7, however; at this time, there has been no similar resolution on the topic from the Town of Richmond Hill Council.

Highway 7 in York Region

There are approximately 400 address points with a Highway 7 address. Locations with multiple units on one parcel of land, for example, a residential apartment building or large commercial property, will encompass many more individual units affected by a road name change. The land use types fronting Highway 7 are noted in Table 1.

Table 1
Land Use Fronting Highway 7

Land Use Type	Quantity
Vacant Land	33
Farm	12
Residential	96
Commercial	187
Industrial	19
Institutional	3
Special Purpose	9
Undetermined	32

Municipal addressing and naming of Highway 7 in York Region

The municipal addressing of Highway 7 starts at Yonge Street, and increases east and west towards the borders of York Region. Highway 7, heading west to Highway 50, has an address range of 0-6800 with the first existing address point being 1200 and the last existing address point being 6720. Highway 7, heading east to York/Durham Line, has an address range of 0-8251 with the first existing address point being 160 and the last existing address point being 8036.

Municipal addressing and naming of Highway 7 in Peel Region

Highway 7 is referred to as Queen Street East or West, with municipal addressing starting at Main Street in Brampton. Queen Street East ends at Highway 50 with 4523 as the last address number. Queen Street West ends at Mississauga Road with 1957 as the last address number.

Municipal addressing and naming of Highway 7 in Durham Region

Highway 7 begins at the York/Durham Line and ends at Lake Ridge Road with 3499 as the last address number. Highway 7 then becomes Winchester Road West with the address number descending from 1299 through to Simcoe Street. The road name changes to Winchester Road East, with address numbers ascending to 1599 through to Townline Road North.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

There are two options to consider for public consultations

In March 2009, a request for proposal (RFP) was awarded to conduct an online consultation and three public consultation centres (PCC), one in each of the municipalities of Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Markham.

When the municipal staff stakeholders from the three municipalities met in May 2009, they requested York Region consider an enhanced communication and consultation strategy regarding the renaming of Highway 7 and to seek approval of same. They also asked that the consultation strategy be linked to any transportation, transit and community planning strategies that had been conducted or that are currently ongoing and to prepare a broader communication strategy regarding the renaming of Highway 7. Either option as described below will also include the necessary consultation with the appropriate emergency service groups to ensure their needs are met and any impact to their operation is considered.

Option 1 – Conduct Public Consultation Centres during which the new name Avenue 7 is announced using an implementation plan tied to the opening of the new VIVA Rapidway stations in 2011

A contract is in place to deliver these public and online consultations, once approved by Regional Council. There is potential to combine the renaming of Highway 7 consultations with other municipal or transit consultations taking place in late 2009. This will allow time for an implementation plan to be developed and for the new road name to be potentially announced with the opening of new VIVA Rapidway stations along Highway 7 in 2011. The cost of conducting three public consultation centres, concurrent

online consultation and outreach to the Highway 7 business and residential community is approximately \$25,000.

Option 2 – An enhanced communication strategy to consider other names would require a comprehensive strategy and seek other suggestions for a new name for Highway 7

The requested enhanced consultation strategy offers the community Avenue 7 as a new name for the road, but would also seek other names through a comprehensive communication and consultation strategy and potentially through the use of a contest. A proposed “Community Committee,” co-chaired by a Council member from each municipality of Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Markham would oversee the enhanced consultation exercise, approve all communications materials and/or renaming contest and subsequently recommend the new road name to Regional Council. The estimated cost of conducting an enhanced communication and public engagement strategy to determine a new name for Highway 7 is expected to cost approximately \$60,000.

Public consultation centres will allow business representatives the opportunity to bring forth specific issues

Renaming Highway 7 will require business owners to change stationary and advertisements accordingly. These costs are not available at this time as the impact to these businesses will only be determined during the consultation process. This impact will be assessed and any related costs will be included in a subsequent report to Regional Council.

Renaming this significant roadway must consider both the historical context and the future vision of Highway 7

The transition to a new name for Highway 7 must use a subtle approach. Avenue 7 has become the unofficial new name of Highway 7 in York Region since it was used as a placeholder in planning exercises over the past decade when these exercises were being conducted. Avenue 7 is already mentioned on Wikipedia as the proposed new name for Highway 7. It is believed that the name of Avenue 7 is appropriate as a new name as it represents the future vision for this road as a modern urban arterial road with a transit plan. Other major urban centres with an Avenue 7 include London, England and Singapore.

Avenue 7 also provides a substantive link to the historical context of Highway 7 while maintaining the number 7 making the transition to the new name less problematic for the business and residential communities that front onto the present Highway 7. The cost of conducting the consultations for a suggested name of Avenue 7 versus having an open call and/or contest for new names is roughly half. For these reasons, the recommended option is to offer Avenue 7 as the proposed new name during public and business community consultations.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total overall financial implications associated with this report have not yet been determined, however, these costs will be included in the subsequent Transportation Services Committee report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Renaming a road of this magnitude would have a major affect on businesses and residents in each of the affected local municipalities. There is a direct impact to the municipalities and the Region with the need to change all related planning maps and other documents. There are potential operational issues with transit, operational works and emergency services in the name transition and Provincial and Regional signage will be impacted by the name change.

The implementation and cost impacts of renaming Highway 7 to Avenue 7 will be determined once approved.

It is recommended that the Region maintain the same numbering system of west and east numbers through a methodology of changing the name while keeping the numbers, for example, from 999 Highway 7 to 999 Avenue 7. This will ease the implementation and transition impacts on residence and business owners and also for emergency services.

The *Municipal Act, 2001* does not require any public notification for a municipal street name change. However the Region's existing policy on "Public Notice Requirements" requires public notification and a public meeting for changing the name of a highway.

7. CONCLUSION

The name Avenue 7 is more reflective of the future role this road will play as one of the major Regional arterial roads connecting the three municipal corporate centres with VIVA Rapidway transit. This major arterial road is also linked to the Metrolinx GTA Big Move plan via the future subway connections at Yonge Street and at the Vaughan Corporate Centre and through the VIVA Rapidway.

It is proposed that Regional Council support the proposed public consultation centres for the renaming of Highway 7 to Avenue 7.

The public process defined in Option 1 will invite feedback from affected residents and business owners along the Highway 7 corridor. A subsequent report will be submitted on the results of the public consultation process and identify the notification procedures.

For more information on this report, please contact Lizuarte Simas, Manager, Traffic Systems and Electrical Operations at extension 5209 in the Transportation Services Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.