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METROLINX – STATUS UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated January 23, 2008, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be forwarded by the Regional Clerk to the Clerks of the local municipalities in York Region for their information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Committee and Council on Metrolinx's process to develop a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

3. BACKGROUND

The Greater Toronto Transportation Authority (GTTA) was established in late 2006 and has recently adopted the name Metrolinx. One of the main goals of Metrolinx is the development of an integrated Regional Transportation Plan for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

The Metrolinx Board began meeting in early 2007 and by July 2007 had adopted a work plan for the preparation of the RTP. In the Fall 2007, Metrolinx hired the IBI Group as the primary consultant for the development of the RTP.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The RTP is intended to be a long range strategic transportation plan that is:

- Integrated across the entire GTA and Hamilton
- Addresses all modes of transportation
- Integrated with transit supportive land use

It will be a critical document in improving transportation throughout the GTA and setting priorities for implementation. One key output will be the required priority setting for all of the projects identified in the June 2007 Move Ontario rapid transit announcement.

All of the work on the development of the RTP is being analyzed through the three lenses of:

- People
- The Environment
- Our Economy

These three lenses are entirely consistent with York Region's sustainability principles that have been developed as part of our growth management initiative.

4.1 Structure and Content of the Regional Transportation Plan

There will be six key elements of the RTP as follows:

1. Towards Sustainable Transportation – an overview of transportation trends and challenges in the GTAH.
2. Mobility Hubs – identifying key mixed-use centres inter-modal gateways and hubs as a foundation to an integrated, seamless inter-regional transit system.
3. Walk/Cycle/Transportation Demand Management – initiatives to promote active transportation, Intelligent Transportation Systems and Travel Demand Management.
4. Moving Goods and Delivering Services – options to improve goods movement within the GTAH and connecting to major markets and reducing conflicts with passenger demands.
5. Highways and Roads – opportunities to close gaps in the road and highway networks and to accommodate rapid transit and goods movement and improve safety.
6. Transit – identifying new and improved rapid transit corridors while building upon existing provincial and municipal plans.

A series of “green papers” will be issued by Metrolinx on each of these six topics and submitted through a broad based consultation process. Following this consultation, modifications will be made to the discussion papers and they will be finalized as “white papers”. The six white papers will then be brought together to create the overall Regional Transportation Plan.

Metrolinx has indicated their intention that the RTP will be:

- Inclusive in its development.
- Innovative in its approach.
- Inspirational in its messages and direction.

The RTP will build upon the extensive amount of transportation planning work that has been completed in the GTAH as well as the Provincial Growth Plan. It will go beyond the identification of road and transit infrastructure improvements and will also identify supportive policies and programs required to reduce transportation demand, or make more efficient usage of existing infrastructure.

The first of the green papers on “Towards Sustainable Transportation” has now been issued by Metrolinx. It is available on the Metrolinx website for all stakeholders and members of the public to review and comment upon. This first paper includes a detailed description of the process for the development of the RTP as well as a discussion on transportation trends and outlook. It identifies some of the historical growth and changes in travel demand throughout the GTAH and compares the Toronto area to some other major world cities. It also includes a number of side boxes on innovative thinking examples from other areas. The paper concludes with the potential implications of not taking aggressive action on transportation and the need to move forward in a coordinated and integrated manner. The remaining five green papers are planned to be issued by Metrolinx in January and February 2008.

4.2 Process and Schedule for the Development of the RTP

Metrolinx has set up a process for the development of a series of papers for each of the six key elements of the RTP identified in the previous section. The process is identified in *Attachment 1*.

Metrolinx has established a broad based consultation process that includes a number of different stakeholders:

- Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) – these advisory groups have been set up to correspond to each of the key elements of the RTP and consist of provincial, municipal and other agency staff. York staff are represented on all of the TAGs, which also include staff from Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Newmarket.
- Advisory Committee (AC) – an Advisory Committee has been established consisting of non-governmental community leaders with representation from across the GTAH and equally representing each of the three pillars: people, the environment and the economy.
- Multi-Disciplinary Expert Review Panel (MERP) – a panel of independent experts in transportation and planning has been retained to review all of the discussing papers as well as the RTP.
- Public – all members of the public and other stakeholders are invited to participate in the development of the RTP through on-line consultation as well as public consultation meetings.
- Metrolinx Board – all of the discussion papers and the final RTP will be presented to and approved by the Metrolinx Board.

York Region and area municipal (Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Newmarket) staff are involved in all of the TAGs that are reviewing and contributing to the development of the green papers. As previously indicated, the first of six green papers has now been approved by the Metrolinx Board and is now available for public review and comment. The remaining five papers will be presented to the Board for approval in January and February 2008.

All of the green papers will go through a consultation process until April/May and then finalized into white papers. These papers will then be brought together into a draft RTP which will be presented to the Board in late June. The draft RTP will go through a consultation process from June until September when the final RTP will be presented for approval. The green papers and draft RTP will also be reviewed by the Advisory Committee and the Multi-Disciplinary Expert Review Panel.

4.3 Implications to York Region

The development of a comprehensive RTP will be critical to York Region. In particular, the RTP will review and prioritize all of the rapid transit projects identified in the MoveOntario 2020 announcement and will therefore be critical in ensuring that all of the Viva Rapid Transit projects are funded and implemented as soon as possible.

The RTP will also be critically important to York Region for a number of other reasons, including:

- Ensuring integration and coordination across Regional boundaries.
- Identifying supportive policies and programs that are better delivered at a GTAH level such as the Smart Commute program, integrated transit and traveller information, transit fare coordination, etc.
- Support for active transportation initiatives such as pedestrian and cycling facilities
- Identifying the need for Provincial facilities such as highway extensions and improvements, commuter parking lots at interchanges and transitways to be built within freeway corridors.
- Improvements to goods movement to help support economic development in York Region and throughout the GTAH.

York Region staff will continue to be involved throughout the development of the RTP and will report regularly to Committee and Council at appropriate milestones. It is envisioned that the RTP will be complimentary to, and build upon the York Region Transportation Master Plan. However, it will be important for Regional staff to ensure that this coordination and alignment continues.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The development of a Regional Transportation Plan by Metrolinx will have an impact on all local municipalities in the GTA. Therefore, it is recommended that this report be forwarded for information to all area municipalities in York Region. Staff from

Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Newmarket are involved in the Technical Advisory Groups for the RTP.

7. CONCLUSION

The development of a Regional Transportation Plan for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area is critically important and long overdue. Metrolinx has made a good start and has identified an expedited process to deliver a draft of the RTP by June 2008. York and its area municipalities are well represented on the Technical Advisory Groups set up to help with the process of developing the RTP and staff will report regularly as the process unfolds.

For more information on this report, please contact Paul May, Director, Infrastructure Planning at 905-830-4444 ext. 5029 or paul.may@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause was included in the agenda for the February 6, 2008 Committee meeting.)