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DON MILLS ROAD AND LESLIE STREET LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCUREMENT OF CONSULTANT SERVICES

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated January 27, 2009, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services and the Vice President, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Staff be authorized to proceed with the planning and functional design for light rail transit (LRT) on Don Mills Road and Leslie Street from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7 in advance of commencing the transit environmental assessment process.
2. Council authorize retaining the consulting firm of URS Canada Inc. to undertake planning, functional design and the transit environmental assessment process for LRT from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7 as outlined in this report, at an upset limit cost of \$582,356.00 exclusive of GST.
3. The Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report to the Clerks of the Town of Markham, Town of Richmond Hill, City of Toronto and to Metrolinx.

2. PURPOSE

This report updates Committee and Council on the status of the planning for LRT on Don Mills Road and Leslie Street from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7. The report also seeks approval to proceed with the sole source procurement of consulting services from URS Canada Inc. for the environmental assessment consistent with the Region's Purchasing By-Law.

A map showing the location and context of the project is provided in Attachment 1.

3. BACKGROUND

Metrolinx approved the Regional Transportation Plan in November 2008 including the Don Mills LRT

On November 28, 2008, the Metrolinx Board of Directors adopted the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) named *The Big Move: Transforming Transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area*. The Metrolinx RTP includes a plan to build more than 1200 kilometres of rapid transit, including an LRT line in the Don Mills Road/Leslie Street corridor from the Bloor-Danforth Subway to Highway 7. The project is identified in the 15 year plan of the Metrolinx RTP.

The City of Toronto has commenced planning for the Don Mills LRT from the Bloor-Danforth Subway to Steeles Avenue

The City of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) are carrying out a preliminary planning study to identify a light rail transit (LRT) route in the Don Mills Road corridor extending from Steeles Avenue to the Bloor-Danforth subway, with options for providing continuous service to downtown. The Don Mills LRT study is part of Toronto's Transit City program, a plan to add 120 kilometres of LRT within Toronto.

In June 2008, the Regional Rapid Transit Public/Private Partnership Steering Committee recommended that Toronto be requested to extend their study for the Don Mills LRT north of Steeles Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive. Staff met with Toronto Transportation Planning staff and staff from the TTC to discuss project coordination in July and September 2008. Toronto responded to the request to extend their LRT study into York Region in a letter dated September 5, 2008 (included as *Attachment 2*).

Toronto identified strong support for a well integrated planning approach for LRT on Don Mills into York Region. Toronto is currently undertaking the preliminary planning for the project and will be commencing the 6-month transit project assessment process this year. Given the fact that their study was already well underway, Toronto indicated that the extension of their study into York Region could not be facilitated to allow both the Toronto and York Region portions to proceed in a timely manner.

The Ministry of the Environment has approved a new transit project assessment process

In June 2008, the Government of Ontario created a new exempting regulation under the *Environmental Assessment Act* for public transit projects known as *O.Reg. 231/08, Transit Projects and Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Undertakings*.

Under the regulation, the environmental assessment process commences once a proponent has selected the preferred transit project and has completed enough functional design and assessment work to allow for consultation and review to occur within the 6-month regulation timeline.

The regulation does not require a proponent to revisit the rationale for a transit project. It does, however, require the proponent to consider and consult on alternative designs for the project. As a self assessment process, the transit project assessment does not require formal approval from the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) as is the case for an Individual EA. The new transit assessment process also limits any MOE decision making to issues of Provincial interest related to the natural environment or cultural heritage and to issues related to constitutionally protected aboriginal or treaty rights. The regulation also provides well defined timelines for a Provincial decision on those issues specifically identified.

It is worth noting that the Yonge Subway Extension is the first project in Ontario to follow the new transit project assessment process and is nearing completion. The process clearly establishes rules for a transit project assessment and limits Provincial involvement to issues of direct interest, leaving much of the decision making to the proponent, in consultation with stakeholders and the public.

A Class EA was initiated in 2007 for improvements to Don Mills Road and Leslie Street from Steeles Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive

In 2007, URS Canada Inc. was retained to undertake a class EA for road improvements to Don Mills Road and Leslie Street from Steeles Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive. The Region's Transportation Master Plan (TMP - June 2002) identified this corridor as part of the transit priority network with proposed widening to include two high occupancy vehicle lanes. The class EA was initiated on the basis of the recommendations from the June 2002 TMP.

In 2008, there were a number of factors that resulted in the class EA being placed on hold including the identification of an LRT line for this corridor in the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan. With key issues now resolved, it is proposed that the class EA be completed for the segment of Leslie Street north of Highway 7 to Major Mackenzie Drive and that planning and approvals for LRT south of Highway 7 be pursued separately through the transit project assessment process.

A considerable amount of work was completed as part of the class EA before the project was put on hold, including topographic field survey, geotechnical studies, natural sciences investigation, archaeological assessment etc. Most of the work already completed will be utilized to complete the class EA for the segment north of Highway 7 and to complete the LRT transit project assessment south of Highway 7. The work completed to-date will not be wasted.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Continue with the Class EA north of Highway 7 and proceed with the planning for the LRT south of Highway 7 under the transit project assessment process

In their September 5, 2008 correspondence (*Attachment 2*), Toronto identified strong support for a well integrated planning approach for LRT on Don Mills into York Region but that their study was already well underway and time constraints for expedited completion of their project would not facilitate extension of their study into York Region. Given Toronto's project schedule, staff recommend that planning and approvals for the LRT corridor from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7 proceed separately, with extensive coordination with Toronto's study.

A brief discussion of the new transit project assessment process was provided in section 3 above. The new process is recommended for the planning and approval of the LRT from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7. It is an efficient process specifically designed for transit projects and provides for efficient integration with Toronto's LRT study south of Steeles Avenue, which is planned to follow the same process.

The factors that resulted in the class EA being placed on hold have been resolved. It is proposed that the class EA be completed for the segment of Leslie Street north of Highway 7 to Major Mackenzie Drive and that planning and approvals for LRT south of Highway 7 be pursued separately through the transit project assessment process.

URS was retained to undertake the class EA and are well positioned to undertake the transit project assessment for the LRT

In 2007, URS Canada Inc. was retained to undertake the class EA for road improvements to Don Mills Road and Leslie Street from Steeles Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive.

With confirmation of LRT for the segment of the corridor south of Highway 7, the scope of the original assignment has changed. A detailed work plan and budget has been prepared by URS Canada Inc. for the scope of work to complete the class EA north of Highway 7 and to undertake a transit project assessment for the LRT south of Highway 7.

The work plan includes additional consultation with the public and government agencies, a number of stakeholder workshops to define a transit terminal facility at Highway 7, architectural services to develop a transit facility that is fully integrated with the Highway 7 transitway, provides the highest quality experience for riders transferring between services and is integrated with adjacent development. The work plan also includes extensive coordination with Toronto's LRT study, transit ridership forecasting, traffic micro-simulation and addressing design issues specific to LRT including increased structural loading for bridge crossings and vibration analysis.

URS Canada Inc. has already completed a significant amount of work on the original class EA. They have also been involved in the Yonge Subway Extension project and other Toronto Transit City projects. The consultant team is experienced with the new transit project assessment process and familiar with Toronto and TTC standards related to LRT. The consultant team also has a detailed understanding of the corridor and stakeholder issues and the work required to successfully complete the class EA and the LRT transit project assessment.

Staff recommend that the work to undertake the planning and transit project assessment for the LRT from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7, estimated at \$582,356.00, be awarded directly to URS Canada Inc. The estimated cost is considered reasonable given the scope of work identified in the detailed work plan to complete the project, the sensitive stakeholder issues in the study area and extensive coordination with Toronto and the TTC. The estimated cost is also comparable to other consulting assignments for environmental assessment studies of comparable magnitude and complexity. This recommendation is compliant with Section 10 (Sole Source Purchases) of the Region's Purchasing By-Law.

LRT project schedule and key issues to consider

The LRT project will proceed in two phases. The first is the planning and functional design phase which will involve the development of the preferred transit project in consultation with stakeholders and the public.

Key issues in this phase will be consultation with the Town of Markham, Town of Richmond Hill and affected landowners to identify transit terminal facilities at Leslie Street and Highway 7 to provide for high quality transfer between the Leslie Street LRT, the Highway 7 transitway and YRT local service as well as provide for some train storage capacity to begin morning service southbound on the Leslie Street LRT. The project schedule includes a number of agency and landowner workshops specific to this issue.

A second important issue is consultation with the residential community south of Highway 407 to mitigate, to the extent possible, concerns related to widening of Leslie Street. The existing streetscape includes an attractive row of mature trees on either side of the street. Preserving the streetscape and even enhancing the aesthetics with the introduction of LRT in the corridor will be an important dialogue with the community.

Consultation with technical agencies including MTO, 407ETR, TRCA and MOE will also form part of the planning and functional design phase of the project. This phase is scheduled to be completed by summer of 2009.

The second phase of the LRT study will be the formal transit project assessment, which will be initiated immediately following completion of the planning and functional design phase. This phase will include agency and stakeholder consultation on the assessment of

the project and completion of the environmental project report. The 6-month transit project assessment is scheduled to be completed by early 2010.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

(all costs listed are exclusive of GST)

The approved budget for the original consulting assignment to undertake the class EA for road improvements on Don Mills Road and Leslie Street from Steeles Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive is \$565,636.00 (P.O. P-06-107). The amount spent to-date is \$223,510.00. The amount remaining on the original P.O. is \$342,126.00.

Completion of the class EA from Highway 7 to Major Mackenzie Drive is estimated at \$247,578.00, which is less than what is available in the original P.O. P-06-107, representing a cost savings of \$94,548.00 resulting from the reduced study limits for the class EA. There are sufficient funds in the 2009 Roads Capital Budget to cover the expected cost.

The estimated cost to undertake the planning and transit project assessment for the LRT from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7 is estimated at \$582,356.00. There are sufficient funds in the 2009 Rapid Transit Capital Budget to cover the expected cost. Staff are seeking Regional Council authorization to award this work to URS Canada Inc. as a sole source procurement as discussed in section 4 above. Recovery of the costs related to the LRT study is expected upon confirmation of project funding from Metrolinx.

The original P.O. P-06-107 contract term extends from December 4, 2007 to December 31, 2008. The contract term will need to be extended to December 31, 2009 to complete the class EA.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The proposed LRT will connect the Highway 7 VIVA rapid transit service to the Sheppard Subway and the Bloor-Danforth Subway and will be a significant enhancement to transit service for the residents and for the extensive employment in this area of Markham and Richmond Hill.

7. CONCLUSION

In the fall of 2008, the City of Toronto began a planning and functional design study for the Don Mills LRT from Steeles Avenue to the Bloor-Danforth Subway. Toronto's study is already well underway and time constraints for expedited completion of their project would not facilitate extension of their study into York Region.

Staff recommend that planning and approvals for the LRT corridor from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7 proceed separately, with extensive coordination with Toronto's study. The transit project assessment process is recommended for the planning and approval of the LRT. It is an efficient process specifically designed for transit projects.

In 2007, a class EA was initiated for road improvements to Don Mills Road and Leslie Street from Steeles Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive. Staff recommend that the class EA be completed for the segment of Leslie Street north of Highway 7 to Major Mackenzie Drive.

For more information on this report, please contact Steve Mota, Program Manager-Transportation Engineering, Infrastructure Planning Branch at 905-830-4444 ext. 5056 or Paul May, Director Infrastructure Planning at ext. 5029.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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