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

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, January 25, 2008, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council support the proposed notification process and public consultation centres for the renaming of Highway 7 (Y.R. 7).
2. A subsequent report be submitted on the results of the public consultation process with a recommended name for Highway 7 (Y.R. 7).

2. PURPOSE

This report is to provide information on the required procedure to consider renaming Highway 7, through the Towns of Markham and Richmond Hill and the City of Vaughan.

3. BACKGROUND

Highway 7 is a former Provincial highway providing a major east-west link from the Peel-York boundary in the west, through York Region, continuing east to the Durham-York Boundary (*see Attachment 1*). The roadway passes through Vaughan, Richmond Hill, and Markham and is approximately 42 kilometres in length which represents 259 lane kilometres of Regional roadway.

3.1 Regional Jurisdiction of Highway 7

The portion of Highway 7 that is currently under Regional jurisdiction was transferred from the Ministry of Transportation in separate stages. The first stage from Highway 50 to Highway 404 was transferred on April 1, 1997. The second stage from Highway 404 to McCowan Road was transferred on April 1, 1999 and the third stage from McCowan Road to Main Street/Markham Road was transferred on September 1, 1999. Recently, Regional Council approved the assumption of a section of Highway 7, from the west limit of Markham Road to east of Donald Cousens Parkway, in the Town of Markham.

3.2 Highway 7 Beyond the Region

The portion of Highway 7 east of Donald Cousens Parkway still remains under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation and continues to be named Highway 7. Beyond the western boundary of the Region (Highway 50), where Highway 7 continues into Peel Region, a name change occurs. At this point Highway 7 becomes Queen Street East/Bovaird Drive and is a Regional road under the jurisdiction of the Region of Peel. The process to rename the section of the former Highway 7, through Peel Region, was commenced in 2000 and was finally renamed in 2003.

3.3 Municipal Resolutions to Rename Highway 7

The Region has received individual resolutions from Town of Markham Council and City of Vaughan Council to consider the renaming of Highway 7 from its western limit in the City of Vaughan to its eastern limit in the Town of Markham.

Both local municipal Councils have expressed concerns that over the past few years, the function of Highway 7 has changed from a Provincial highway and continues to undergo changes that are more reflective of an urban arterial roadway. These changes are the result of the urbanization of portions of the Highway 7 corridor, intensified commercial and residential development fronting Highway 7, and future transit initiatives that will generate considerably more pedestrian activity and an urban environment on Highway 7. Highway 7 was once dominated by vehicles and is evolving to a human-scale “mainstreet” with pedestrian-friendly developments served by rapid transit. Local municipalities have identified key areas along various segments of Highway 7 that are to be developed as Regional centres. The redevelopment of these areas is the first step toward creating the vision for an urbanized downtown core.

At its meeting of June 26, 2007, the Town of Markham Council adopted a report recommending that the Region consider options for renaming Highway 7 through the Town. A similar report was adopted by City of Vaughan Council on June 25, 2007, requesting the renaming of Highway 7 through the City of Vaughan. Both reports suggest that Highway 7 be renamed to Avenue 7. Subsequently, a follow up report was prepared by the Town of Markham that was adopted by their Development Services Committee on September 18, 2007. A portion of Highway 7 is situated within the Town of Richmond Hill, however; at this time no request to rename it has been received from their Council.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

A request to consider the renaming of Highway 7 has been adopted by the Council of the Town of Markham and the City of Vaughan. Due to the changing environment along the Highway 7 corridor, these local municipalities have suggested it is now appropriate to rename this roadway to better reflect a pedestrian and transit-friendly urban corridor.

4.1 Municipal Consultation

Staff hosted a meeting to gather input from the local municipalities. To continue this renaming process, additional meetings must be held with staff of the Towns of Markham, Richmond Hill, and the City of Vaughan and all emergency services to discuss the renaming of Highway 7. Any name change to a roadway of this magnitude will require input from all affected parties to ensure their mapping is accurate and there is no disruption to emergency services or dispatching.

Staff of the City of Vaughan and the Towns of Markham and Richmond Hill will inform their respective Councils of the process to rename Highway 7 through a local Council report. In order to ensure the renaming process continues effectively, over the next few months, Regional staff will meet with staff of the local municipalities and develop parameters to implement this process. It is anticipated these parameters will be established by October 2008.

4.2 Public Consultation

The corridor of Highway 7 is composed of some residential development, but is mostly commercial and business development. There is a large impact to business owners to consider in the potential renaming of Highway 7. This roadway provides an attractive address to business owners and any change to its name will create the need for signage and address changes to many businesses. This can include letterhead, business cards, web-based documents and other items.

4.3 Naming Process for a Regional Road

Recent amendments to the Municipal Act, 2001 removed the requirement to provide notice of a road name change, however, it is felt that because of the large number of affected residents and businesses, a consultation process should be undertaken for the renaming of Highway 7. The legislation does not prescribe a form of notice and enables municipalities to determine the manner and timing as appropriate.

At its meeting of December 13, 2007, Council endorsed a policy titled "Public Notice Requirements". This policy has established circumstances in which the Region is required to provide notice to the public in the course of conducting its business. This policy applies to several items including notification of changing the name of a highway and public meetings. Any proposal to change the name of a highway requires publication in a local newspaper on one occasion at least two weeks prior to the date of the meeting at which the matter will be considered, personal notice to affected property owners and signage along the highway.

4.4 Notice Procedure

Due to the potential impact of the renaming of a roadway such as Highway 7, it may be beneficial to host public consultation centres to allow area residents and business owners the opportunity to review the proposal and provide input.

In accordance with the “Public Notice Requirements” policy, it is recommended that the following notice procedure apply for these consultation centres:

- Publication in a local paper, at least two weeks prior to the date of the meeting, to inform of the proposal.
- Personal notice to any affected person or anyone on record who has demonstrated an interest.
- Notice to the Clerk of the local municipality where the public meeting will be hosted.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implication of advertising, mailing and hosting public consultation centres for the renaming of Highway 7 cannot be determined at this time. If approval is granted for the renaming of Highway 7, the costs to be incurred will be addressed in a further report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Councils of the Town of Markham and the City of Vaughan have requested the Region to consider the renaming of Highway 7. Renaming a road of this magnitude would have a major affect on the businesses and residents in each of the affected local municipalities. In order to ensure local Councils are kept apprised of the process to rename Highway 7, staff of the City of Vaughan and the Towns of Markham and Richmond Hill will inform their respective Councils of the process to rename Highway 7 through a local Council report.

7. CONCLUSION

This report is for information purposes only. In order to address the potential renaming of Highway 7, a process must be established to effectively address all the issues related to the renaming of a major connecting link throughout the Region. This process should also invite feedback from affected residents and business owners along the Highway 7 corridor through Vaughan, Richmond Hill, and Markham.

For more information on this report, contact Brian Harrison, Director, Operations, Roads Branch at extension 5205 in the Transportation Services Department.

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.)