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VIVA PHASE 2 COMMUNICATIONS

The Rapid Transit Public/Private Partnership Steering Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, May 3, 2007, from the Vice President, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Committee and Council endorse the Viva Phase 2 communications and outreach strategy as described in this report.
2. Council authorize \$300,000 for implementation of the Viva Phase 2 communications strategy in 2007, which is included in the approved 2007 rapid transit budget.

2. PURPOSE

This report outlines and seeks approval for the Viva Phase 2 communications and outreach strategy for 2007 and 2008.

3. BACKGROUND

On March 23, 2006 the provincial government committed \$7.3 million in funding toward the preliminary engineering of Viva Phase 2.

On June 28, 2006, York Region awarded York Consortium 2002 (YC2002) the Y1 preliminary engineering work. That work included communications support for the preliminary engineering of Y1.

YC2002 has provided communications support for Y1 preliminary engineering including support for the first two rounds of public consultation.

On March 6, 2007, the federal and provincial governments announced support for the Viva Phase 2 – Stage 1 project funding the construction of the Y1 segment of the system (on Yonge Street from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7), as well as preliminary engineering on the Y2 (Yonge from Highway 7 to 19th Avenue) and H3 (Highway 7 from Yonge Street to Markham Centre) segments as illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The recent federal and provincial government announcement of funding for the Viva Phase 2 – Stage 1 project will necessitate a much broader communications program than envisioned in the current work program with YC2002 as construction and preliminary engineering work will have an impact across York Region.

Phase 1 communications had a significant impact

In September 2005, York Region launched Viva's award-winning first phase. The development of Phase 1 was supported by a comprehensive communications strategy which sought to introduce a new concept of transit to residents of York Region.

In a recent survey undertaken to evaluate the impact and importance of the Viva brand to the ongoing design process for Viva Phase 2, respondents linked very positive attributes to Viva – convenient, fast, reliable service. Strong recognition of branding was evident among riders and non-riders, particularly the distinctive blue colour, and importantly, the distinctive "V" logo, vehicles, stations and terminals. This range of visual clues is working in tandem with a positive perception of the Viva service to reinforce and elevate the brand in the public's eye and is clearly reinforcing the brand on a daily basis as riders and non-riders are exposed to them.

A positive brand experience is the foundation of ridership growth

The communications program for 2007 aims to build on and extend this positive perception of Viva into the development of Viva Phase 2 design elements and the Viva Phase 2 program in general. In order to do this, the plan focuses on three key areas:

- Information
- Consultation
- Education

Viva's brand promise, to deliver great everyday moments through the brand foundation of comfort, convenience and fun, will underpin communications in these three key areas. Viva's success in communicating and delivering the brand promise has been an integral part of the success of Phase 1.

Information

Viva Phase 2 brings with it a new dimension to the Viva rapid transit program – the arrival of the long promised rapidways that will truly put the "rapid" into rapid transit.

Critical to providing information will be keeping the many messages in relation to rapid transit in York Region clear:

Message 1: Viva Phase 1 has been up and running for a year and a half and is a success. The York Region Transit (YRT) 2007 marketing plan is built around the

concept of connectivity and focused on letting York Region residents know that Viva and YRT, together, get them where they need to go – connecting them around the region.

Message 2: Preliminary engineering is underway on Yonge Street between Steeles Avenue and Richmond Hill Centre – the first of the Viva Phase 2 segments to be constructed. Public meetings are underway introducing the first elements of rapidway design and beginning the necessary property acquisition process related to rapidway construction. There are two other segments (Yonge Street from Highway 7 to 16th Avenue and Highway 7 from Yonge Street to Markham Centre), which are also funded for preliminary engineering, for each of which a series of public meetings will be scheduled. Each brings its own particular communications needs and challenges as they each impact specific communities.

Message 3: Viva Phase 2 will impact all of York Region. Travel time savings between Highway 7 and Steeles Avenue will result in a more reliable faster service throughout the system. York Region's residents need to understand how the new service is shaping up and the benefits it will bring after the temporary inconvenience of construction.

Message 4: The North Yonge EA is underway in the northern part of the Region, with related public meetings and consultations, public notices and other communications being disseminated to the public.

Consultation

Continued public consultation is necessary and important to the success of Viva Phase 2. Rapidways should not simply pass through, but be part of the communities they serve. Residents can help us realize a system that is well integrated in their communities.

As design moves to construction, we will continue to consult the public to assist in mitigating the negative impacts of lane closures and temporary access restrictions.

Education

Viva Phase 2 rapidways represent a significant change to how York Region residents interact with public transit, whether they are riders or non-riders.

Education will therefore focus not only on the benefits of Viva Phase 2, like shorter travel times and more reliable service, but will also teach riders and non-riders how to interact with the new system, including new U-Turn movements at intersections and introducing the idea of waiting for transit at the centre of the road.

Roll-out of activities in 2007

As shown in *Council Attachment 1*, the Viva Phase 2 communications roll out for 2007-2008 outlines a dynamic series of outreach activities targeted at both the impacted corridors and the residents of York Region in general. In 2007, communications will be

focused on providing information to and consulting with the community along Yonge Street from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7 (the first segment of the system to be built).

Public Open Houses and Workshops

For each segment of the system, four rounds of public open houses and workshops will be scheduled. The first round will reintroduce residents to Viva Phase 2 and the outcome of the environmental assessment process. The second and third round will engage the public on specific system design elements. The fourth round will outline final design and introduce residents to construction plans. This element of the strategy will cost approximately \$115,000.

Newsletters

To keep residents and businesses along the corridors aware of issues specifically of concern in their areas, a special Viva Phase 2 newsletter will be published for each of the affected corridors. These newsletters can later be adapted to keep residents and businesses aware of schedules and lane closures during construction. Production and writing of newsletters will cost about \$12,000.

Website Enhancements

The vivayork.com website will continue to be updated with the latest information about Viva Phase 2, but redesigned to include additional interactive components. The interactive components will allow residents of York Region to provide their input on design elements over the web and is in keeping with Viva's reputation for innovation. The website enhancements and interactive component will cost approximately \$100,000.

Interactive Kiosks

The interactive Kiosks used in Viva Phase 1 will be redeployed to malls in the Region, initially to invite public participation in the design process. As we get closer to construction, content will be developed to educate riders and non-riders about Phase 2 rapidways. \$50,000 has been identified to support the kiosks in malls.

Phase 2 Video

A video will be developed to support the education campaign. Focussed on highlighting key elements of Viva Phase 2 operation, this important multi-media asset can be redeployed in presentations, on the website and for many other purposes. Early work will be undertaken in 2007 in order to deploy the video in 2008. Early work is anticipated to cost \$20,000 in 2007.

Continued outreach to senior levels of government

As part of the Viva Phase 2 communications strategy, staff will continue to pursue federal and provincial funding to support the construction of the balance of the system.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed budget for Viva Phase 2 communications is \$300,000. Staff will endeavour to secure one-third funding of project communications from senior levels of government through Phase 2 funding agreements.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Viva Phase 2 is being closely coordinated with local planning activities along corridors, and with economic development strategies.

7. CONCLUSION

The communications program for 2007 aims to build on and extend the positive perception of Viva into the development of Viva Phase 2 design elements and the Viva Phase 2 program in general. This report describes the various components of the 2007 communications and outreach strategy.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)