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NORTH YONGE STREET CORRIDOR PUBLIC TRANSIT AND ASSOCIATED ROAD IMPROVEMENTS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT – PRELIMINARY PREFERRED ALIGNMENT

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. Council endorse the preliminary preferred alignment for surface rapid transit service as the basis for development of a preliminary preferred infrastructure design during the summer.
2. Council authorize staff to proceed with presenting the preliminary preferred alignment for the North Yonge Street Corridor Public Transit improvements to the area municipalities for their feedback, and upon receipt and consideration of their feedback, proceed with presenting to the public in June 2007.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the preliminary preferred alignment North Yonge Street Corridor Public Transit improvements to Committee and Council.

The purpose of this report is to obtain endorsement by Committee and Council of the preliminary preferred alignment alternative for the North Yonge Street Corridor Public Transit and Associated Road Improvements Environmental Assessment Study (“the Study”) prior to formally presenting it to the area municipal councils for their feedback (municipal staff have already provided preliminary input through the EA Technical Advisory Meetings) and before presenting it to the public in June 2007.

3. BACKGROUND

In August 2005, the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) approved the Terms of Reference for the Study. The corridor study area, illustrated in *Council Attachment 1*, extends from Bathurst Street in the west and Highway 404 in the east, and from 19th Avenue in Richmond Hill in the south to East Gwillimbury’s Green Lane corridor in the north.

The Study's analysis of Alternative Transportation Solutions was presented to the public in September 2006. It recommended implementation of the Region's planned rapid transit system as the preliminary preferred response to the need for a balanced transportation system to support the Region's Centres and Corridors policy. Also, the need for associated road capacity improvements on Yonge Street between Mulock Drive and Green Lane in Newmarket was confirmed by the analysis.

Subsequently, the Study continued the EA process by analyzing alternative designs comprising alignments and technologies for the rapid transit system and widening, intersection improvements or operational enhancements for the Yonge Street capacity deficiency. Recently, the Town of Newmarket completed an Official Plan update and the land use policy and planning recommendations of these studies have been considered in evaluating rapid transit alignments.

The results of the evaluation of transit alignment and road capacity enhancement alternatives are scheduled to be presented at Public Information Centres (PIC's) in mid-late June 2007.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Given that the North Yonge Street Corridor study area extends over 18 km north-south through three municipalities and into a fourth, the analysis of alignment options was done on a segmental basis using segments generally corresponding to the municipal boundaries (*Council Attachment 1*). The segments were as follows"

- Richmond Hill (RH) from 19th Avenue to Bloomington Road.
- Aurora (A) from Bloomington Road to the south municipal boundary of Newmarket, just north of St. John's Sideroad.
- Newmarket/East Gwillimbury (NE) from the south municipal boundary of Newmarket to Green Lane.

It should be noted that the initial alignment analysis was neutral regarding the type of technology and the findings would apply to either a BRT or LRT technology option given that the alignments were assessed on the assumption that they may have to meet the design standards of both technologies.

4.1 Description of Rapid Transit Route Alternatives

A broad range of route alternatives was identified following existing arterial or collector road rights-of-way (ROW) or the GO Bradford Line rail ROW by assuming a parallel ROW adjacent to the rail ROW.

All routes commenced at the northern limit of the approved South Yonge Corridor transitway alignment, the intersection of Yonge Street and 19th Avenue in Richmond Hill. The northern limit of routes was generally considered to be the East Gwillimbury GO Station in the Green Lane corridor.

4.2 Assessment and Evaluation of Alternative Routes

4.2.1 First Level Initial Screening

Routes were evaluated using a two-step process. An initial evaluation was undertaken to screen out alternatives that clearly would not meet the needs of rapid transit in the corridor and/or may not be feasible due to significant community or environmental impact or unacceptable property requirements. The findings of this initial screening evaluation were presented to the Public at the second series of Public Information Centres held at three locations in Richmond Hill and Newmarket.

4.2.2 Second Level Detailed Evaluation

Based on the route option preliminary screening results, a short-list of candidate route options was identified for further assessment in the second stage in the alternatives analysis process. The routes carried forward for further evaluation, by segment, are illustrated in *Council Attachments 2-4*.

4.3 Evaluation Methodology for Selection of Preliminary Preferred Alignment and Findings

The detailed evaluation within each segment, summarized in this report, considered the ability of the alignment alternatives to respond to five main objectives. These included:

- Improving mobility.
- Protecting and enhancing the social environment.
- Protecting the natural environment.
- Promoting smart growth and economic development.
- Maximizing cost-effectiveness of the rapid transit system.

For each of the above objectives, a range of goals and indicators was established to provide a measure of the effectiveness of each alternative in meeting the objectives.

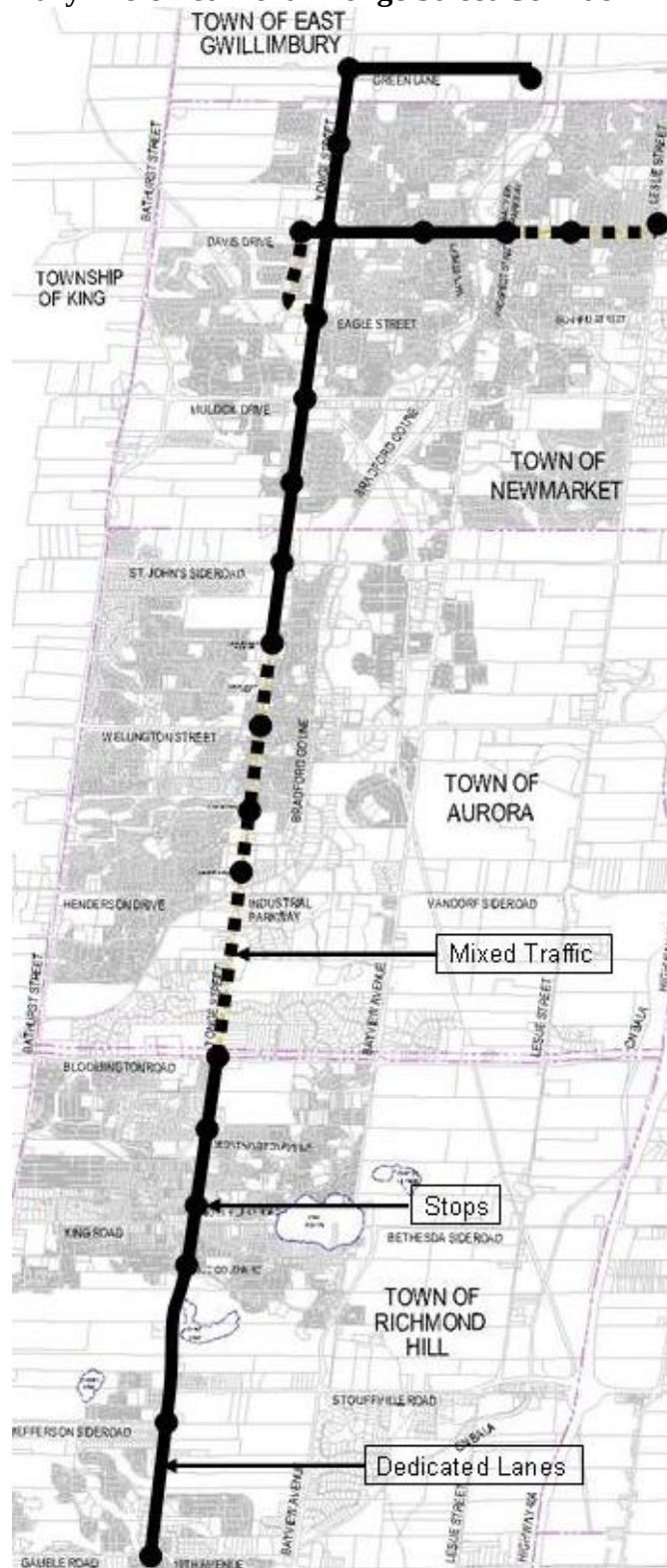
A synopsis of the detailed evaluation in each segment is found in *Council Attachment 5* and the preferred alignment is illustrated in Figure 1 and can be summarized as follows:

Within the Richmond Hill, segment (RH2), being the only option retained for consideration in the Richmond Hill segment, is recommended for alignment design development. As the most direct route, it minimizes travel time, serves existing and future development in Oak Ridges and confines effects on the Oak Ridges Moraine within the existing Yonge Street ROW.

Within Aurora, both the Yonge St. and Industrial Pkwy. alignments respond well to certain objectives and goals and are less responsive to others, the Yonge St. route (A2):

- Attracts approximately 15% more boardings and Yonge St. S stations have a higher potential to maximize ridership.
- Is most supportive of Regional planning policies and approved urban structure.

Figure 1
Preliminary Preferred North Yonge Street Corridor Alignment



- Has transit-oriented development opportunities that are not available on the Industrial Pkwy. Route.
- Effects on traffic circulation and access can be mitigated by alternative access routes at signalized intersections.
- Widening along part of its length will have minimal affect on the natural environment and can be mitigated by design solutions.

Consequently, A2 is the recommended route in Aurora.

Within the Newmarket / East Gwillimbury district, the combination NE2/NE7 option, an 'F' configuration in Newmarket, permits service to both the high trip generating Davis Drive "urban centre" zone between Yonge Street and the Hospital and future higher ridership generating land uses along north Yonge and Green Lane in East Gwillimbury. In addition, the option of a future extension along Davis to the Leslie/404 node and, in the longer term, potentially northward up Leslie are available with this configuration. Demand forecasts based on currently available demographic data indicate that, initially, ridership on the Davis branch will be approximately three times that on the northern Green Lane leg.

4.3.2 Evaluation Recommendation

Further development of the alignment design and identification of station locations should proceed for option RH2 (Yonge Street) in Richmond Hill, option A2 (Yonge Street) in Aurora and the NE2/NE7 ('F' configuration) alternative in Newmarket/East Gwillimbury. The complete preliminary preferred alignment for rapid transit service is illustrated in Figure 1. The extent of dedicated transitway and mixed traffic operation will be optimized during the upcoming analysis of design alternatives.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The budget for the consulting services to complete the North Yonge Street Corridor EA is included as part of the existing work program agreement between York Consortium 2002 (YC2002) and York Region. This work was contemplated under the \$7.3 work program that is shared between the Region and the Province. No additional costs will be incurred as a result of completion of this work.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Representatives from the Towns of Richmond Hill, Aurora, Newmarket and East Gwillimbury are participating on the Technical Advisory Committee and will be requested to continue their involvement during the remainder of the study and assembly of the Draft EA Report. East Gwillimbury Council has endorsed the preliminary preferred alignment across Green Lane.

This report is to be circulated to Richmond Hill, Aurora, Newmarket and East Gwillimbury for review and comment, and it is anticipated that the on-going Town of Newmarket peer review of the study findings will generally support the recommendations. Staff will consider comments received from the area municipalities prior to presenting the preliminary preferred alignment to the public in June 2007.

7. CONCLUSION

The North Yonge EA Study has completed a detailed evaluation of alignment alternatives for a rapid transit facility within the study area. The evaluation has identified a Recommended Alignment for a rapid transit service between the Yonge St./19th Avenue intersection at the southern end and the Green Lane corridor at the northern limit. A branch along Davis Drive to serve the South Lake Hospital district and potentially the Leslie/404 node is also recommended.

Public comment on the evaluation findings will be obtained at consultation opportunities in June 2007, following which the technically preferred infrastructure design will be developed with consideration of public comments and presented in the fall.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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