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BOLTON COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated April 15, 2011 from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Metrolinx be requested to assess and identify additional GO rail station location opportunities in the Woodbridge and Nashville areas with a longer term perspective to accommodate travel demand on the future Bolton commuter rail service.
2. Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report to Metrolinx and Clerks of the City of Vaughan and Peel Region.

2. PURPOSE

This report informs Regional Council of the Metrolinx Bolton Commuter Rail Service Feasibility Study (December 2010) and requests Metrolinx to further assess and identify GO station location opportunities in York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

The need for the Bolton commuter rail service has been identified in various Provincial transportation plans

The Bolton rail service was one of the initiatives announced in 2007 by the Province as part of MoveOntario 2020. Subsequent to this, Metrolinx developed the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) or “The Big Move” in 2008 which also recommended the GO commuter rail expansion from Union Station to the Town of Caledon, which includes the community of Bolton, in its 15 Year Plan.

Furthermore, the Province approved a series of “Quick Wins” projects recommended by Metrolinx in 2008. One Quick Win project proposed included the improvement of service frequencies and bus/rail connections for the Bolton GO Transit bus services. It was anticipated that the implementation of bus service improvements would stimulate ridership and support the initiation of the Bolton GO commuter rail service identified in the Metrolinx RTP 15 Year Plan.

Metrolinx reconfirmed the need for the Bolton GO rail service in its GO 2020 Strategic Plan and identified the requirements to provide peak period train service at 30 minute frequencies on the Bolton Corridor.

York Region's transportation plans and policies also reflect the need for the Bolton GO commuter rail service

York Region's Transportation Master Plan Update (Nov 2009) identified the Bolton GO rail service and proposed station locations in its long term plan. The Bolton GO rail line and potential stations were also reflected in the Transit Network Map of the new Regional Official Plan. Five proposed station locations were identified conceptually in the Region's Transportation Master Plan Update and the Official Plan including stations in the vicinity of:

- Highway 407 and Islington Avenue
- Woodbridge Village north of Highway 7 at Kipling Avenue
- Rutherford Road and Highway 27
- Major Mackenzie Drive and Highway 27
- Nashville Road and Huntington Road.

Metrolinx has completed the Bolton Commuter Rail Service Feasibility Study

The Bolton Commuter Rail Service Feasibility Study was initiated in 2008 and was completed in December 2010. The Study included an examination of rail/non-rail requirements, operational scenarios, train service options, property requirements, environmental issues, and construction cost estimates. The Study included a consultation program that involved meetings with York Region and City of Vaughan staff during the early stages of the study in 2009.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Study assessed the feasibility of routing options and ridership forecasts

The Feasibility Study examined four (4) routing options connecting Union Station to Bolton. All of the options converged north of Steeles Avenue in the City of Vaughan to use the CP Mactier Subdivision as illustrated in *Council Attachment 1*.

Route Option 4 was identified as the preferred option and is highlighted in *Council Attachment 2*. The route uses the CP Mactier Subdivision from Bolton to Highway 407; the CN Halton and York Subdivisions from Islington Avenue to Snider; the GO Newmarket Subdivision from Snider to Parkdale; the GO Weston Subdivision from Parkdale to Bathurst Street; and the Union Station Rail Corridor from Bathurst Street to

Union Station. The Study indicates that Route Option 4 using the CN Halton and York Subdivisions has yet to be reviewed by CN representatives.

The end to end trip duration for the preferred route is anticipated to be less than one hour and the rail service is shown to be technically feasible. A modest ridership was anticipated within the 2031 planning horizon (4,400 a.m. peak period riders).

The service has an estimated infrastructure cost in excess of \$300 million including additional track, signals, structure/culverts, station facilities, parking, tunnels, and trains. Rail service to Bolton is not contemplated in the next 15 years due to funding priorities elsewhere.

Three station locations were recommended within the City of Vaughan

The Study recommended three (3) stations within Vaughan as shown in *Council Attachment 2* including:

- “Woodbridge station” at Highway 407 and Islington Road
- “Vaughan (Elder Mills) station” at Rutherford Road
- “Kleinberg station” at Major Mackenzie Drive.

Other station locations within the corridor include stops at Bolton, York University, Downsview, and Union Station.

The approach to identifying and selecting potential station sites was based on criteria including:

- Straight, essentially flat section of track (grade of one percent or less)
- Approximately 225m of track for platform
- Sufficient space for station building, kiss ‘n’ ride and parking provision (approximately 2.5 to 4.0 ha)
- Adequate access to the arterial road network
- Complementary adjacent land uses, or uses which would not conflict with station use.

Two station locations identified in the Region’s Transportation Master Plan Update were not recommended

The station site selection process was based on an investigation of aerial photos, site visits, and a review of land availability along the corridor. The assessment of properties focused on commuter type stations including proximity to vacant areas available for commuter parking lots. As a result, two station locations identified in the Region’s Transportation Master Plan Update were not included. One was in the Woodbridge Village area and the other was in the Nashville Road area. The Study consultants indicated that limited available lands for parking and grading issues in the vicinity of these two sites were the main reasons for discounting the sites.

A station in the vicinity of Nashville Road is still possible within the land use plans under consideration

Based on the Region's Transportation Master Plan Update and review of the long term transportation network in the Kleinburg area, a future GO rail station in the vicinity of Nashville Road is still a possibility. Although the City of Vaughan has completed the North Kleinburg-Nashville Secondary Plan for the lands east of Huntington Road in Kleinburg to include residential uses, there is still opportunities for a station site on the west side of Huntington Road. With the long term potential for Highway 427 to extend north of Major Mackenzie Drive to a future GTA West Corridor north of Nashville Road, a station location in this vicinity would have considerable ridership potential.

Additional location opportunities within the Woodbridge proper should be reviewed for potential urban stations

Although the Study focused on commuter type stations, GO rail stations do not all have to provide large parking lots in close proximity to the platforms. Another form of a GO station is an urban type station consisting of a platform and limited pick-up/drop-off area with good connectivity to other transit services such as the York University station on the GO Barrie Line. These urban type stations have a lower cost to implement and use up much less land.

Other potential areas for urban type stations in York Region where there is no parking lot in close proximity to the GO station should be considered. The Woodbridge core area in the vicinity of Highway 7 with Viva service is a prime candidate that should be further assessed for long term needs and intermodal connectivity including connections to YRT and Viva services. The operational impacts (e.g., travel time delay versus ridership increase) need to be considered as well.

Staff comments reflect the need for Metrolinx to consider a longer term perspective when assessing potential GO station sites

Sites should be assessed on a long term perspective rather than based only on current land vacancy and land use opportunities. A longer term perspective allows consideration of potential redevelopment and urban context to identify all possible station site opportunities to make the potential GO line successful and improve future transit connectivity. At a meeting on March 30, 2011 with Metrolinx project staff, York Region and City of Vaughan staff expressed the need for Metrolinx to review additional sites and provide greater detail on the rationale for discounting locations.

Next steps for Metrolinx include expanding bus service to build up ridership in the corridor and monitoring the travel demands

Metrolinx indicated that they will continue to develop the transit market by expanding GO services in the area including addressing overloads on the existing Barrie and

Georgetown lines, and work toward all-day two-way service. The next steps for Metrolinx will also include the expansion of GO bus routes to serve the Bolton area with connections to the Georgetown GO train and bus service, and the TTC subway at Yorkdale and York Mills.

Working with local municipalities, Metrolinx will consider property protection, as appropriate, through the planning process or acquisition. No timing or process has yet been established, however, Metrolinx staff indicated that property acquisition may be considered where appropriate.

Other steps required prior to implementation will include Environmental Assessment, Detailed Design, and a Benefits Case

Rail service to Bolton is not contemplated in the next 15 years and will need funding commitments from the Province. Once there is such a funding commitment, a Benefits Case, Environmental Assessment study, and detailed design must be completed. These are unlikely to occur within the next 10 years given the Province's current priorities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Implementation of the Bolton GO rail line and its stations requires full coordination and collaboration with the City of Vaughan, the adjacent municipalities, and Metrolinx. Consistency between the City of Vaughan's policies and the Region's policies in protecting and planning for the potential Bolton GO rail line will ensure greater success in implementing the infrastructure once funding is available. A future GO line through the City of Vaughan will provide an alternative sustainable mode of transportation to meet the needs of commuters and residents in the Region.

Introduction of the Bolton GO rail service is identified in the York Region Transportation Master Plan along with five conceptual station locations within the Region. The station locations that were not recommended in the Feasibility Study were discussed during the March 30, 2011 meeting with Metrolinx and City of Vaughan staff. It was agreed that additional station locations could be explored in the future. York Region and City of Vaughan will continue to consult and coordinate with Metrolinx to identify potential station opportunities including those recommended in the Region's Transportation Master Plan through on-going and future planning and engineering studies.

7. CONCLUSION

The Bolton Commuter Rail Feasibility Study (December 2010) provides the rationale for routing and some station locations within York Region. This information is useful for further planning of potential station locations and providing residents with a future alternative sustainable mode of transportation.

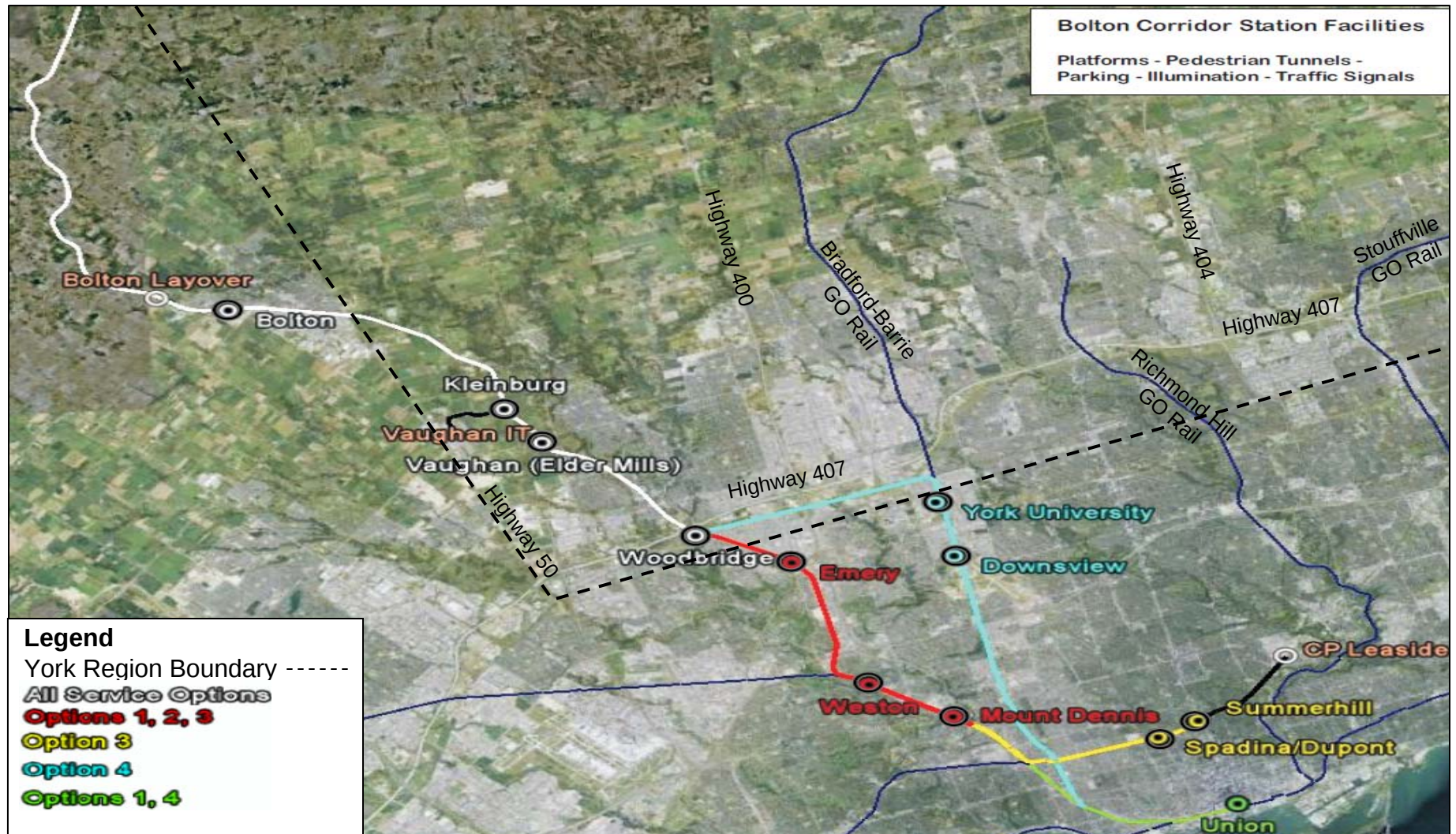
The Feasibility Study focused on commuter type stations, however, an urban type station which has a lower cost to implement and uses up much less land should be considered. For example, the Woodbridge core area in the vicinity of Highway 7 with Viva service is a prime candidate that should be further assessed for long term needs and intermodal connectivity including connections to YRT services. Sites should be assessed on a long term perspective rather than based only on current land vacancy and land use opportunities. A longer term perspective allows consideration of potential redevelopment and urban context to identify all possible station site opportunities to make the potential GO line successful and improve future transit connectivity. It is recommended that Metrolinx be requested to review additional station sites in York Region and provide greater detail on the rationale for discounting station locations.

For more information on this report, please contact Richard Hui, Manager, Transportation Planning, at 905-830-4444. Ext. 1578 or Loy Cheah, Director, Infrastructure Planning at Ext. 5024.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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

Bolton GO Commuter Line Route Options



Preferred Bolton GO Line Options and Stations Identified

