

2

SMART COMMUTE YORK REGION UPDATE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, May 1, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services and the Commissioner of Corporate Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council approve the launch of the transportation demand management (TDM) programs recommended in this report.
2. Council adopt the policy for registration of employees participating in Smart Commute York Region attached to this report (*Attachment 1*).
3. Council adopt the policy for the use of the Emergency Ride Home (ERH) program attached to this report (*Attachment 2*).
4. Council provide authorization to expand Smart Commute York Region programs and services to all Regional work sites where feasible.

2. PURPOSE

This report is seeking Council approval to implement the following programs applicable for Regional employees and facilities only:

1. Carpool Zone – web-based carpool ridematching software to help employees find matches for carpooling to and from work and to register for preferred parking at the Administrative Centre.
2. Preferential Carpool Parking at the Administrative Centre.
3. Emergency Ride Home Program – to give employees who use transit, walk, cycle or carpool to work a ride home in case of a family or medical emergency.
4. Bike Racks – installation of bike racks at the Administrative Centre and offer incentives for employees that cycle to work.

It also proposes two Regional policies that would provide guidance to Regional staff regarding registration and the Emergency Ride Home components when they participate in the Smart Commute York Region program (previously called the York Region Employee Trip Reduction program or YRETR).

3. BACKGROUND

The Region is taking the initiative to address traffic congestion, improve local air quality and promote sustainable modes of transportation through its leading role in the Smart Commute Initiative. Reducing the number of single occupant vehicles to and from the workplace is one of the goals of the Region and is consistent with the goals and mandate of the Corporate Clean Air Task Force.

The Region currently offers employees a 50% discount on York Region Transit/VIVA tickets, compressed work week opportunities and flexible work hours, all contributing to reduce work related single occupant vehicle trips.

At its meeting on October 27, 2005, Regional Council adopted recommendations of the Planning and Economic Development Committee to implement the Smart Commute York Region program including the following:

1. Staff proceeds to implement Phase 1 of the Work Plan subject to senior management approval.
2. Staff report back on the progress of each phase of the YRETR Program.

Phase 1 of the work plan was proposed to include the following elements:

- An employee registration program
- A ride-matching program
- Preferred carpool parking at the Administrative Centre
- A review of the existing transit incentive program
- An Emergency Ride Home Program
- A Walk/cycle program at the Admin Centre
- An awareness and education campaign
- A draft telework policy

With the exception of the transit incentive program review which will be reported on later, staff has developed programs for the Phase 1 work plan to be implemented at the Administrative Centre.

3.1 Experiences at Local Municipalities

A number of the local municipalities in York Region have implemented employee trip reduction measures. The local municipalities with the most comprehensive and most successful programs are Markham and Richmond Hill.

The Town of Richmond Hill has undertaken a number of successful employee trip reduction programs to reduce employee travel demand and traffic congestion. For example:

- There is an over subscription of the 6 preferred underground parking spots for the 22 staff that currently carpool to work.
- On a monthly average, 43 employees purchase discounted VIVA/YRT tickets at 50 % off.
- Approximately 75 employees informally or formally telework.
- Flexible work hours and Earned Day Off programs also help to reduce the number of employee work trips.
- Bike storage and shower and change room facilities are provided for staff who bike to work.

Similarly, the Town of Markham has also undertaken a number of employee trip reduction programs. The following statistics indicate the success of Markham's program:

- Six preferred parking spots are currently available for 43 registered carpool users.
- In 2005, Markham averaged 162 employees per month purchasing discounted VIVA/YRT monthly passes and/or tickets at 50% off.
- The Town has bike racks for 15 bikes and 17 registered cyclists. All registered cyclists also receive a 20% discount for purchases at the Cycle Path bicycle store in Markham.
- Since October 2004, the Town has offered an Emergency Ride Home program to its 222 Smart Commute registered users.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Smart Commute York Region is a series of programs and services that encourage or require employees to use alternative modes of transportation to the single occupant vehicle. The following programs are proposed to be launched during Spring and early Summer 2006.

4.1 Smart Commute York Region Program Registration

All employees participating in the Smart Commute York Region program through using transit, carpool, cycling, and walking to work must register themselves with the TDM Coordinator to be eligible and recognised for any incentive programs (*Attachment 1*).

4.2 Carpool Zone York Region

To assist employees in forming carpools, the Smart Commute Initiative has established an internet based ridematching program known as Carpool Zone. There are two aspects to the ridematching program:

- A general site for individuals within the GTA and Hamilton region to find a carpool.
- A subgroup site that allow registrants to find carpool partners within that subgroup. A specific subgroup site has been set up for York Region employees.

<http://yorkregion.carpoolzone.smartcommute.ca>

The Region's TDM Coordinator will administer and monitor the use of the York Region Carpool Zone subgroup site. When a carpool is formed, it is the responsibility of the carpoolers to register with the TDM Coordinator. Once the carpool is registered, a carpool tag will be provided with a registration number in order to track the number of carpools formed and identify the participants in the parking areas.

4.3 Preferred Carpool Parking Spaces

As an incentive to encourage carpooling at the Regional Administrative Centre, it is recommended that preferred parking spaces be designated for carpoolers. Use of these spaces will be enforced on the basis of having a carpool hang tag and vehicle licence plate registered with the TDM Coordinator. Monitoring would be carried out at the same time that staff monitors visitors parking. The preferred parking spots for carpoolers would be identified with proper signage and would be located in the north lot of the Administrative Centre near the main entrance to the building. Property Services and Infrastructure Planning will be exploring all other opportunities for preferred parking spots at the Administrative Centre.

4.4 Emergency Ride Home Program

As recorded in the recent employee commute survey, for many commuters, a barrier to choosing an alternative mode of transportation is the need for a ride home in case of an emergency or special circumstance. In order to ensure that employees will not be stranded for choosing alternative modes of transportation, an Emergency Ride Home (ERH) Program is required. The program assures commuters who use transit, carpool, cycle, or walk, that they will be eligible for up to 4 reimbursements per year for rides home via a taxi if an emergency or special circumstance arises. The ERH may be used for trips from the work site to a place of residence or the doctor's office. Certain limitations and conditions to its use are imposed in the ERH program policy. A Manager's Form for the ERH must be completed and signed by management verifying that the employee has commuted to the workplace by carpool, transit, walking or cycling on the day that the ERH is requested. The employee must also have eligible reasons and destination to be approved for an ERH.

4.5 Bike Racks at the Administrative Centre

Currently the Administrative Centre has a bike rack located near the loading dock area of the north lot. Most employees are not aware of it since it is not near any of the building entrances and is not promoted. To encourage cycling as an alternative transportation mode, sheltered bike racks are recommended. Property Services and Infrastructure Planning are developing physical and financial plans to address indoor bike parking.

4.6 Launch and Education Campaign

To encourage employees to join the program, there will be a need for both education and promotion of the services of Smart Commute York Region. Brochures, newsletters and posters will be distributed to Regional staff to bring further awareness and a launch (tentatively scheduled for June 2006) will take place at the Administrative Centre. These materials will encourage employees to Smart Commute and will identify the benefits of

the programs. A Smart Commute York Region webpage will be set up on the Regional intranet site, which will provide employees a link to information and all the services that are offered by the program.

4.7 Additional Incentives and Next Steps

Additional incentives will be provided to Smart Commute York Region participants from time to time in the form of small prizes, recognition in employee publications, and communications. Staff has also received enquiries regarding implementing the same programs and services at the South Services Centre and 90 Bales Drive. Smart Commute York Region programs and services to these and other regional work sites will be implemented as soon as possible in conjunction with Property Services and other Regional Departments.

4.8 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 includes actions areas such as:

- Promoting clean air policies and initiatives
- Promoting alternative transportation methods that improve air quality, such as public transit and cycling
- Ensuring mobility through accessible and affordable transportation
- Providing for alternative forms of transportation such as walking and cycling

Smart Commute York Region is an action in all of these areas.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funds for the Smart Commute York Region program including the promotional material, the ERH component, the new bike racks as well as installation of signage for preferred parking at the Administrative Centre will be covered within the existing budgets from Infrastructure Planning and Property Services. The start-up cost for equipment and materials for this phase of the program will be in the order of \$20,000 with annual operating and maintenance cost being in the range of \$5,000.

There will be additional capital cost requirements for expansion of the Smart Commute York Region program to other Regional work sites. Senior management approval will be obtained prior to installation at each work site.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Region, as a major employer in Newmarket, is an active member of the Steering Committee of the Smart Commute Initiative GTA + Hamilton. The Region is also aiding in the development of a new business-based TMA centred on Newmarket-Aurora with the Town of Newmarket and York Region staff leading the process. By adopting the

recommended program and policies, the Region is continuing to lead the way in addressing traffic congestion and will have a direct impact on encouraging local municipalities and businesses to be proactive in promoting sustainable transportation. This initiative also meets the Corporate Clean Air Task Force goal of demonstrating leadership and encouraging area municipalities to incorporate similar initiatives.

7. CONCLUSION

This report seeks Council approval to implement several programs and policies that will encourage employees to use alternative modes of transportation and contribute to the reduction of traffic congestion and pollutants from vehicle emissions and vehicle operations such as air contaminants and green house gases. Smart Commute York Region is an example of a corporate policy that demonstrates the Region's commitment to improving health and productivity of its employees as well as the Region's commitment to improving air quality. It will also showcase the Region's leadership role in aggressively pursuing ways to manage travel demand.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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