

11

YONGE SUBWAY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The Rapid Transit Public/Private Partnership Steering Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The presentation by Dale Albers, Chief Communications Officer, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation, be received; and**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report, June 5, 2008, from the Vice-President, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation, be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council endorse the Yonge Subway Communications Plan.
2. The York Consortium 2002 communications team be awarded the contract to implement the Yonge Street Communications Plan at a cost not to exceed \$107,000 for the period May 2008 to spring 2009.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is secure Council's endorsement of the communications plan that supports public consultation aspect of the ongoing technical planning and subsequent environmental assessment work on the Yonge Subway, and raise awareness of the need and importance for the subway extension into York Region among key stakeholders.

3. BACKGROUND

Yonge Subway Advisory Task Force understands that strategic communications will play an important role, without the luxury of a lot of time

The report acknowledges the communications requirements and desires of the Yonge Subway Advisory Task Force. Efforts need to be maintained to build support, rally supporters, influence funding and frequently engage the public through various means.

Yonge Subway Extension is just the start of a transformation

An emphasis of the communications will be on the role vivaNext will play in the transformation of today's York Region into the York Region of the future – unlike the first phase of Viva which emphasized service delivery. The bridge is that vivaNext will

not only deliver faster service by integrating subways with bus rapid transit, but also encourage transit-oriented development and enhance public spaces around its corridors.

By combining transit planning with development planning, the public can then appreciate and support that the subway extension will not just make it easier to get around, but there will be great places to go to rather than just go through.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Objectives have been identified for the communications plan

Having had several discussions already with property owners, councillors and members of the public, in addition to comments offered by the Yonge Subway Advisory Task Force, several strategic objectives have been considered in developing this plan.

Specifically, this plan aims to achieve:

- Collaborative, coordinated communications amongst all stakeholders.
- Greater acceptance, understanding and appreciation by local residents and businesses for the future of York Region and the role the subway will play in achieving that vision.
- Public support from third-party organizations.
- Documented public feedback on various aspects of the project.
- More positive awareness of Viva, that underlies vivaNext, and maintain the momentum established through its original launch.
- Heightened awareness of the project and steady efforts being made.
- Consistent messaging to the media/public by designated spokespersons.

Key messages have been developed

To achieve the objectives noted above, and not confuse the public into thinking the Yonge subway is just an isolated project, the following key messages have been developed:

- York Region is transforming to manage growth, keep beautiful communities connected and make it easier for people to get around.
- VivaNext includes subways and dedicated lanes for express busses – like Viva - that can also be used for light rail service in the future.
- As the cost of fuel and lost productivity continues to climb, people will seek more convenient options. When government funding is provided for the Yonge subway, we'll be in a position to get started right away.
- Short-term inconvenience from subway construction is manageable.

- Dedicated rapidways will speed Viva riders past traffic congestion and reduce their transit travel time by up to 40%.
- An Environmental Assessment is underway and we would like to hear from you.

A communication strategy has been developed

Considering the multiple stakeholders, timing requirements and complexity of various transit initiatives, a strategy was developed to maintain information flow and keep people engaged. The strategy includes:

- Clearly explaining the future vision of York Region, demonstrating how it is relevant to and will benefit all members of the community – it's not an isolated project.
- Providing clear and comprehensive information about vivaNext's implementation.
- Regular communications to municipal stakeholders.
- Identifying business and special interest groups that are supportive of the project and can help lend a voice.
- Engaging the public at gathering centres and through online tools.
- York Region Rapid Transit Corporation will lead project communications, while encouraging opportunities for third-party, public endorsements.
- Public announcements/statements should be cooperative, planned and coordinated by York Region Rapid Transit Corporation with stakeholders.
- Public/media enquiries to stakeholders regarding project timelines, budget, progress and so forth will be directed to York Region Rapid Transit Corporation.
- Leveraging the last public meeting by introducing more interactive elements to create a lasting impression of direct participation.

Communications tactics have been identified

Various means will be deployed to reach our target audiences, share information with them and encourage their public support. As this plan is implemented, it's important to note that some tactics may be modified or added to ensure success and mitigate any negative outcomes. Tactics for each identified audience is noted below:

Municipalities of York Region

- Circulate a communications protocol regarding media/public enquiries.
- Issue key messages (FAQ) to support councillors' own communications efforts.
- Meet with each communications person in each community – call periodically to gauge environment.
- Each month, send a brief "YSL Update" e-mail which includes scheduled public meetings.

- Issue letter to Mayors from the Regional Chair, to invite and inform them of upcoming Public Information Centres.
- Provide advanced notice of advertising in their community.

Residents, Transit Riders, Potential Riders

- Provide interactive and workshop components at Public Information Centres.
- Create a summary handout, given to attendees after they sign-in at Public Information Centre. The handout frames the overall problem and the plan, then focuses on York Region's activities and concludes with the local focus.
- Place brochures, newsletter and other information pieces at a side table at Public Information Centre.
- Provide poster of Public Information Centre to libraries, malls, recreational centres, etc.
- Send Public Information Centre invitation via mail drop to homes and businesses within a two-block radius of Yonge St.
- Attend key shopping centres to share information face-to-face with the public, gather feedback and offer them a brochure.
- Utilize facilitators and/or audience response tools at final public meeting so attendees can immediately see that their views were considered.

Business, Developers, Unions

- Approach all Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade:
 - Offer guest speaker
 - Supply Q&A article to be included in their newsletter
 - Encourage them to publicly show their support
- Approach UNITE HERE and United Food And Commercial Workers Union to convey the project's importance and benefits to their members and to encourage their public support.
- Meet with key business owners and developers to share information and concerns.
- Issue letters to property owners/tenants to inform them about project and invite them to the Public Information Centre.

Media / Advertising

- Provide casual, one-on-one briefing to key reporters.
- Advertise Public Information Centres in community papers and The Toronto Star.
- Place temporary sign on major route in close proximity to Public Information Centre to invite the public to attend.

Online / Onboard

- Add meetings to “Today’s Events” banner on yorkregion.com.
- Provide pop-up graphic to municipalities for their consideration to place on their website.
- Project information on Viva’s onboard plasma screens.
- Post survey on Viva’s website.
- Use online survey results for possible media campaign.
- MyTransit newsletter

Student Groups

- Send package to student councils; call pre/post mailing.
- Encourage students to publicly show their support.
- Pitch campus newsroom on writing feature article.

Implementation and Timing

Preparations are already underway so that York Region Rapid Transit can quickly initiate this communications plan. Continuous communications efforts will be made throughout 2008 and into the spring of 2009. At that time, a new communications plan will be developed. However, as new information may become available, or unforeseen issues come to light, this plan may undergo minor adjustments. The committee shall be advised if those adjustments cause significant impact on the overall budget.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost to implement the Yonge Subway Communications Plan is estimated at \$107,000. Funding is included in the previously approved 2008 Yonge Subway Capital budget. It is recommended that York Consortium 2002 be awarded the work based on the contingency fee rates that York Region is currently negotiating York Consortium 2002.

A breakdown of the cost allocations is provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Yonge Subway Communication Plan

Item	Total (\$)
Creative / Design	15,000
Printing	8,000
Advertising	40,000
Postage / Courier	4,000
Online / Interactive Tools	15,000
Other - presentations, collateral, facilitators, etc.	25,000
Total	107,000

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Communications implementation will be coordinated and/or conveyed to municipalities to ensure optimal success and to avoid simultaneous efforts to generate public awareness.

7. CONCLUSION

The communications plan engages the public and stakeholders to generate greater acceptance, understanding and appreciation for the future of York Region and the role the Yonge Subway Extension will play in achieving that vision. Furthermore, it builds on vivaNext overall and the positive awareness of Viva, by maintaining the momentum established through its original launch.

For more information on this report, please contact Mary-Frances Turner, Vice President of the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation at 905-886-6767, Ext. 2226.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.