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TRANSIT SUPPORTIVE ROADS UPDATE AND PROCUREMENT OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, May 29, 2008, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Commissioner of Transportation Services be authorized to negotiate defined terms of an agreement with a qualified facilitation firm, for the provision of professional facilitation services to support the Transit Supportive Roads initiative in the Town of Markham pursuant to the sole source provisions of the Purchasing By-law.
2. The Commissioner of Transportation Services be authorized to negotiate defined terms of an agreement with a qualified transportation planning/engineering firm, for the provision of transportation modelling and technical analysis of alternative modes of travel to support the Transit Supportive Roads initiative in the Town of Markham pursuant to the sole source provisions of the Purchasing By-law.
3. The Regional Chair and the Regional Clerk be authorized to sign the necessary agreements, subject to the approval of the Commissioner of Transportation Services and review by Legal Services.

2. PURPOSE

Update Council on the Transit Supportive Roads Initiative

This report is to update Council on the outcome of the first community meeting held on March 19, 2008, in the Town of Markham to address requests for more consultation with regards to the need for many of the Region's transit/road projects in the Town.

This report also seeks authority to retain a professional facilitation firm and transportation planning/engineering firm to assist staff on the Transit Supportive Roads initiative in the Town of Markham.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Implementation of the Transit Priority Network

A key component of the overall transportation strategy for York Region is the development of a transit priority network in the urban municipalities. The transit priority network will provide an advantage to transit and high occupancy vehicles (HOV) over single occupant vehicles. To date, the planning for this transit priority network has focused on widening York Region's four lane arterial roads to accommodate additional transit/HOV lanes.

Included in the redevelopment of the arterial road corridors are cycling lanes, sidewalks, etc. These facilities would provide further choices to travellers within York Region when considering alternatives to the single occupant vehicle.

York Region has initiated a number of Municipal Class Environmental Assessments (EA) for improvements to certain roads in the Town of Markham as part of a larger transportation strategy to increase transit use, manage travel demand and promote alternative modes of travel. These projects include:

- Bayview Avenue from John Street to Major Mackenzie Drive.
- 16th Avenue from Yonge Street to York/Durham Line.
- Kennedy Road from Steeles Avenue to 16th Avenue.
- McCowan Road from Steeles Avenue to 16th Avenue.
- Leslie Street from Steeles Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive.

The plans for corridors reflect the policy direction adopted by Council in October 2006.

3.2 Resident Concerns and Town of Markham Motions

As part of the public consultation on the Class EA's, residents and Markham Council have questioned the need for these projects and raised concerns for how widening the roadways for Transit/HOV will fit into the overall transportation strategy for the area.

Some of the concerns/comments of Markham residents include:

- Why do our communities need to grow?
- Why not convert an existing General Purpose Lane to Transit/HOV?
- Transit/HOV lanes should operate 24 hours/day 7 days/week.
- Widen other roads.
- We will not use transit.
- We do not want 6-lane freeways.
- Road widening will diminish air quality.
- Road widening will increase traffic noise.
- Raised islands and median planters will create access restrictions.
- Wider roads will make it difficult for pedestrians to cross safely at intersections.

In response to these concerns, Markham Council, at their meeting on January 22, 2008, passed two motions, asking York Region to:

- Look at alternatives to road widening for Transit/HOV.
- Include Yonge Street Subway, Hwy 407 Transit way, etc. in transportation modelling.
- Improve consultation efforts with residents, businesses and Markham Council.

York Region Council, at their meeting on February 21, 2008, received these motions and directed staff to act on these motions and report back to Council.

3.3 Enhanced Consultation – Community Meeting 1

To initiate the enhanced public consultation for the Transit Supportive Roads initiative, York Region held the first of four community meetings in the Markham community on March 19, 2008.

This community meeting was considered very successful with over 100 residents attending. Generally, positive feedback was received regarding the Region's plan to enhance consultation and assess broader alternatives for transportation improvements prior to proceeding with the Class EA's

Some of the comments we received include:

- Strong support for establishing a community advisory committee.
- More community meetings should be convened.
- Advertising materials should be available in different languages to engage non-english speaking residents.
- Residents appreciated the efforts by staff and felt they were being listened to/heard.

As part of Community Meeting 1, York Region committed to convening an advisory committee that will meet on a regular basis throughout the Transit Supportive Roads initiative as part of the work to respond to resident concerns and Markham Council motions. In addition, significant work in transportation modelling and analysis was committed to in order to assess alternatives to road widening for Transit/HOV.

Feedback received at the meeting indicated the residents felt they were finally being listened to through York Region's commitment to undertake additional consultation and establish an advisory committee.

Presentation to Markham's Development Service Committee

Regional staff delivered a presentation on April 15, 2008, regarding the outcome of Community Meeting 1. Regional staff also sought Markham's support to proceed with three additional meetings in the communities of Unionville, Milliken and Thornhill.

At the time of authoring this report, the Town of Markham has indicated support for York Region proceeding with meetings in Unionville and Milliken in early June 2008. A decision on the Thornhill community meeting is pending following further discussions with the Town of Markham and confirmation of support from applicable Ward Councillors.

The project team has developed a website to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas with residents, businesses and other stakeholders. This website can be accessed at <http://transitsupportiveroads.cenet.ca/>.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The project team has started planning the significant additional consultation and transportation modelling and technical analysis work required to respond to these input obtained to date. This additional work will require the procurement of resources, specifically a professional facilitator and transportation modelling and technical analysis experts.

The scope of work for the facilitator will include, but not be limited to, facilitating future community meetings, developing the stakeholder advisory committee and organizing, documenting and reporting on the meetings. It is anticipated that approximately six meetings of the stakeholder advisory committee will be held with significant information sharing taking place between meetings. In addition, the facilitator will participate in all subsequent community meetings and manage and maintain the Transit Supportive Roads website.

The integrated transportation solution presented in the 2002 York Region TMP included the development of a Transit Priority Network (TPN) along the north-south and east-west corridors across the southern urban municipalities. The TPN requires the widening of the roadways from 4-lanes to 6-lanes, with the curb lanes designated for transit and HOV vehicles only. The TPN is now in the implementation phase whereby TPN or Transit Supportive Roads (TSR) projects have been included in the 10 Year Roads Construction Program. Additional TSR projects will be added as appropriate and as demand warrants.

Identification of these widening projects in the 2002 TMP satisfied Phase 1 – Problem or Opportunity and Phase 2 – Alternative Solutions, of the Municipal Class EA process. Although as part of each Class EA the project team revisits Phases 1 and 2, it is only to a level of detail sufficient to confirm the environmental setting has not changed since the completion of the TMP. Typical work in this regard includes transportation modelling along the corridor only to assess travel demand. Provided that this modelling demonstrates the travel demand based on population and employment forecasts at the time of the Class EA are consistent with the TMP analyses, the Class EA proceeds to quickly to Phase 3 – Alternative Design Concepts for Preferred Solution.

Although project teams are already in place to undertake the Class EA's for Bayview Avenue, 16th Avenue, Kennedy Road, McCowan Road and Leslie Street, the transportation modelling and technical analysis work required for the Transit Supportive Road initiative goes well beyond the scope of the original Class EA assignments. The scope of work for the transportation modelling expert will include, but not be limited to, detail modelling of alternative solutions on a network basis, including microsimulation of potential traffic patterns. The modelling work is expected to look at a broad range of alternatives, including reversible lanes, converting existing lanes to transit and HOV use, light rail transit, subway and other potential options for moving more people and goods through the arterial road corridors.

Transportation Services staff have been coordinating the need for transportation modelling and technical analysis work with the Infrastructure Planning Section of the Planning and Development Services Department. The magnitude of the work required to support the Transit Supportive Roads initiative exceeds the capacity of internal resources. As such, outsourcing the transportation modelling and technical analysis work is required in order to proceed with the Transit Supportive Roads initiative.

4.1 Option 1 – Proceed with Request for Proposals

The Request for Proposal (RFP) process for both the facilitation services and the transportation modelling and technical analysis work can be used for procurement of these services. This process requires the preparation of a terms of reference, pre-qualifying services providers and then issuing the RFP document to those qualified. Proposals are then received, evaluated and a recommendation of the successful proponent based on a combination of fee and technical merit.

To procure the facilitation services and/or the transportation modelling and technical analysis services under an RFP process will add approximately three to four months to the Transit Supportive Roads initiative. This additional process-related time requirement would further impact the Class EA's for Bayview Avenue, 16th Avenue, Kennedy Road, McCowan Road and Leslie Street which have already been delayed by six months. The additional facilitation and modelling work will add another estimated six months.

4.2 Option 2 – Proceed with Negotiation of an Agreement with Preferred Proponent

Under the provisions of the Purchasing By-law, Council can direct staff to negotiate an agreement with a preferred proponent for the provision of services. This arrangement is typically enacted upon when time is of the essence and opportunities will be lost if the RFP process is followed.

Based on the current schedule for the Transit Supportive Roads, the stakeholders advisory committee and technical analysis is to begin in July 2008. Staff would like to capitalize on the momentum and trust developed through the March 19,

2008, community meeting and the planned meetings for early June 2008. Based on this starting time the work should be completed by spring 2009.

Based on the need to proceed expeditiously following the community meetings scheduled for early June 2008, staff recommend proceeding with Option 2 to accelerate procurement is preferred.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

Funding for this work is available within the approved 2008 Roads Capital Budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Transportation for Today and Tomorrow initiative in Markham will have a positive impact on the local municipality. The intent of this initiative is to be more collaborative with residents, businesses and other stakeholders and to demonstrate a firm commitment to respond to the questions and concerns of the local municipality.

Through the initial phase of this work and the March 19, 2008, community meeting, staff have opened a respectful and trusting relationship with residents and some of the key stakeholders. Staff have worked closely with staff at the Town of Markham and will continue to collaborate and manage their expectations.

7. CONCLUSION

Within the Town of Markham the Region has five Class EA's underway for transportation improvements along the arterial road corridors of Bayview Avenue, 16th Avenue, Kennedy Road, McCowan Road and Leslie Street.

As part of the Class EA process on each of these projects, significant concerns were voiced by residents and Markham Council. In response to these questions/concerns, staff initiated a series of community meetings to fully engage the residents and demonstrate a commitment to addressing their concerns. This collaborating has resulted in a commitment to undertake additional transportation modelling and technical analysis and establish a Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

Proceeding with this work will maintain and foster relationships with residents, businesses and Markham Council. Proceeding expeditiously with the Transit Supportive Roads initiative will build on the momentum and community interest/participation generated through the first series of community meetings.

Report No. 6 of the Transportation and Works Committee
Regional Council Meeting of June 19, 2008

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Jankowski at Ext. 5901.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.