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VIVANEXT 2009 COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

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

- 1. Receipt of the presentation by Dale Albers, Chief Communications Officer, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation; and**
- 2. Adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated April 30, 2009, from the Vice President, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Council authorize the Regional Chair and Clerk to execute a contract with York Consortium 2002 for the amount approved in the 2009 budget of \$900,000 (net of GST), on a cost-plus-fee basis, for vivaNext communication activities throughout 2009, in a form acceptable to staff and Legal Services.

2. PURPOSE

This report seeks approval to award the implementation of the 2009 vivaNext phase of the communications, stakeholder relations and public outreach strategies to York Consortium 2002.

3. BACKGROUND

Tasks one through four of the Phase 2 Viva communications budget are now complete

On May 10, 2007, Committee was presented with a report that outlined the 2007 and 2008 communications and outreach strategy. Council endorsed the report, contained in Regional Council Report No. 4, Clause 5, on May 24, 2007. At that time, a budget of \$300,000 was established. The work was allocated to York Consortium 2002 (YC2002) for communications activities to be completed from October 2007 to spring 2008 (Tasks 1 through 3) and this work has been executed.

On April 17, 2008, Committee was presented with a report that outlined Task 4 (communications and outreach strategy). Council endorsed the report and a budget of \$630,000 was established on April 24, 2008. Task Four activities were completed by end of April/early May 2009.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Public survey has confirmed that the general public, local businesses, Provincial MPPs and Federal MPs have a low level of awareness of vivaNext

Public awareness of Viva, as it exists today, is excellent. With the exception of those who live and work along the corridors of the vivaNext projects or who have attended a couple of information meetings, the general public and business owners know very little about the vivaNext plan for the future. VivaNext includes the rapidways construction and work being done on both the Spadina and Yonge Subways. The 2009 communication plan is designed to ensure that public and political awareness is addressed prior to and during construction of vivaNext projects.

YRRTC requested a communication plan proposal from York Consortium 2002

In April 2009, York Consortium 2002 provided the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation with a work plan for the communications, stakeholder relations and public outreach strategy. The work plan provides for the development and articulation of strategies, tactical deployment, research, use of multi-media and advertising.

The communications plan emphasizes the role vivaNext will play in the transformation of today's York Region into the York Region of the future – especially during simultaneous construction projects along Davis Drive and Highway 7.

VivaNext's promise is to deliver truly rapid transit service by removing buses from mixed traffic and connecting the Yonge and Spadina subways to York Region on Highway 7 at Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway and at the Vaughan Corporate Centre, respectively. VivaNext is also a cornerstone of the regional urban growth transformation and encourages community pride, support and understanding for the construction of the project as a necessary foundation of our future.

By combining transit planning with development planning, public and stakeholders can then appreciate and support that the vivaNext projects will not just make it easier to get around, but will help manage growth and enhance the quality of life.

Seven core objectives have been identified in the communication plan

Having had several discussions already with property owners, councillors and members of the public, in addition to monitoring media coverage and online blog posts, several strategic objectives have been considered in developing this plan. Specifically, this plan aims to achieve:

- Greater awareness throughout York Region of the purpose/benefits of vivaNext.
- Promote, encourage and facilitate public support from third-parties.
- Share information to build consensus and pre-empt objections/issues.
- Educate and gain the support of impacted businesses and businesses in general.
- Strengthen relations with key elected officials at every level of government and provide timely, continuous updates.
- Protect and fortify the Viva brand.
- Highlight the steady progress being made on the projects.

Key messages have been developed

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

- VivaNext is a plan that will put the rapid in rapid transit. VivaNext will extend subways into York Region and build rapidways that will put Viva Rapid Transit Vehicles in their own lanes.
- Dedicated rapidways will speed Viva riders past traffic congestion and reduce their transit travel time by up to 40%.
- VivaNext will help more individuals and families get around more quickly and more efficiently, without the need for a car. This will not only be good for the environment, but it will give people more time to enjoy all of the good things life in York Region has to offer.
- VivaNext will help create a seamless transit system, connecting people in York Region and throughout the GTA.
- Short-term inconvenience from construction is manageable and worth it.

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 social gathering places.
- Leveraging interactive elements at special events and online 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 voice to be heard. 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. The tactics include:

- Social/Multi Media – Will maintain an online presence (blog, twitter, facebook, etc.) to hear what others are saying and be part of the discussion. This component includes posting interactive elements and audio-visual files that are fun and interesting to the public in keeping with the Viva brand.
- Ongoing Research – Tracking mechanism to measure communications effectiveness and to identify areas needing improvement or more attention. The vivaNext plan is complex with many varying timelines and specific local issues. Ongoing research will ensure communications is breaking through the clutter and that people are receiving and understanding the message.
- Mass Media – Takes advantage of opportunities to contact many people in one mechanism, such as transit shelters, newspapers, mailers and outdoor opportunities.
- Overarching Communications – Will make use of newsletters, promotional material, ambient media opportunities (such as floor graphics), presentations, community-specific panels for special event booth and so forth to fortify the brand, inform the public and mitigate concerns.
- Media / Government / Public Relations – Takes advantage of opportunities to earn media coverage by holding special events, issuing a news alert or profiling a project milestone. It also demonstrates progress to all levels of government and keeps them well informed and able to respond to constituent questions. In addition, a monitoring element is included for online communications in chat rooms and blogs. When people are talking about vivaNext, staff can be part of that discussion to convey project details that might otherwise be misrepresented.

Award of vivaNext 2009 Communication Plan implementation to York Consortium 2002 will leverage their project history and success

York Consortium 2002 has provided communications and public consultation since the outset of the project in 2002. This work included the entire communication planning and marketing related to the launch of the rapid transit service, phase one construction and Y1 preliminary engineering, and continues to provide similar support for Davis Drive and Highway 7 rapidways, Yonge subway and other vivaNext projects.

Rollout of activities in 2009 is targeted at a wide public audience, stakeholders within the projects' corridors and stakeholders outside of York Region

The communications plan for 2009 outlines a dynamic series of outreach activities targeted at both the impacted corridors, and residents of York Region and stakeholders outside of York Region that have decision-making authority to influence the vivaNext plan. In 2009, communications will be focused on expanding awareness of the vivaNext plan, building support for each of the projects, reinforcing the brand and managing expectations. An overall timeline of major activities is provided below.

2009	Program-Wide						
	Paid Media	Op/Ed Placements	Reporter Meetings	Wikipedia updates	Other Activities Include		
May	x	x	x	x	transit shelters	mall posters	cinema
Jun	x	x			online poll		
Jul			x		community events		
Aug			x	x	golf tournament	student info kit	fall newsletter
Sep		x	x		online poll	advertorials	
Oct		x			post research	halloween contest	research
Nov		x	x	x	online poll	winter newsletter	
Dec		x			holiday card		

Communications costs are allocated to capital projects and will be submitted for funding as a part of the project claim submission process. Communication expenditures for vivaNext, including the 2009 Budget requirement, represent 0.2% of the total \$1.4 billion programme.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Current business arrangements allow York Consortium 2002 first right of opportunity to undertake future work

In the Go Forward Agreement between York Consortium 2002 (YC2002), The Regional Municipality of York and the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation (YRRTC), YC2002 has a right of first opportunity to undertake future project work in accordance with the Go Forward and Master Agreements.

York Consortium 2002 rates are competitive and provide good value

In order to deliver this program as cost-efficiently as possible, a portion of the work will be delivered and managed internally by York Consortium 2002 (YC2002) at rates that are much more affordable than external outsourcing. In addition, the rates for the boutique communications firms engaged by YC2002 are extremely competitive when compared to the rates charged by some of the larger communications firms. Previously, larger firms that have quoted on specific Viva projects have proposed creative fees that are significantly higher (in some cases in excess of 100%) than YC2002 rates.

The rates to be used by YC2002 for this work programme are the agreed upon rates used for the rapidways work programme on Yonge Street from the Richmond Hill Centre to 19th Avenue and on Highway 7 from the Richmond Hill Centre to Kennedy Road. These rates have been benchmarked against industry standards and have been deemed acceptable.

Roughly 75% of the work will be conducted through subcontractors, with YC2002 providing a project coordination and management role. YRRTC's competitive pricing model encourages competition by requiring that the procurement of goods and services valued over \$100,000 be tendered to three or more bidders and YC2002 will be following the guidelines of the procurement by-law in its procurement practices.

Staff will endeavour to recover all communications expenditures through MoveOntario 2020 funding.

The 2009 communications budget has been approved by Council

The elements provided in Table 1 make up part of the total 2009 communications budget, as summarized in the approved 2009 operating budget by Council on February 19, 2009, to be awarded to YC2002.

Table 1 – YC2002
vivaNext 2009 Communication Plan

Item	Total (\$)
Social/Multi Media	
• Maintain online presence (blog, twitter, etc.)	
• Online interactive, audio-visual components	75,000
• Community events' kiosk	
• Mobile applications	
Ongoing Research	
• Benchmark	40,000
• Awareness monitoring	
Mass Media	
• Outdoor	
• Transit	375,000
• Newspapers	
• Direct to home (e.g., free standing insert)	
Overarching Communications	
• Newsletters	
• Photography	
• Booth panels	
• Print production	350,000
• Promotional material	
• Presentations	
• Ambient media (banners, signs, floor graphics)	
• Creative / Design / Consulting	
Media / Government / Public Relations	
• Special events / photo-ops	
• News releases / Fact sheets	50,000
• Op-Eds	
• Briefing documents	
Misc. - postage, couriers, etc.	10,000
Total	900,000

The elements provided in Table 2 make up part of the total 2009 communications budget, as summarized in the approved 2009 operating budget by Council on February 19, 2009, which will be executed by YRRTC.

Table 2 – YRRTC
vivaNext 2009 Communication Plan

Item	Total (\$)
YRRTC Communications:	
• Part-time resources	
• Equipment / Supplies	
• Venue Rentals	
• Catering / Audio-Visual	75,000
• Printing	
• Postage, couriers, third-party	

Communications budgets are established in two ways. Concept level design and preliminary engineering work programmes include a communication element related to public meetings and related collateral development, such as display boards and presentations specific to that work program. In addition to work programme specific communications, a vivaNext communications work programme pulls together and supports all of the individual work programmes and delivers an overall public understanding of the projects.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Communications implementation will be coordinated and/or conveyed to municipalities and the Region to ensure optimal success and to avoid simultaneous communication efforts.

7. CONCLUSION

The communications plan engages the public and stakeholders to generate greater support, understanding and appreciation for construction efforts underway and to maintain a high-level of two-way communications engagement.

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.