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COST-SHARING OF STUDY UNDERGROUND ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION YONGE STREET AND HIGHWAY 7

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, June 5, 2007, from the General Manager, Roads:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Staff be authorized to participate in a review of underground electricity transmission in conjunction with PowerStream.
2. Consulting costs for this initiative be shared equally with PowerStream.
3. The Regional share of the costs be funded from the streetscaping partnership funding set out in the 2007 Roads capital budget.

2. PURPOSE

This report recommends cost-sharing a study with PowerStream (the local electricity distribution company serving the municipalities of Vaughan, Markham, Richmond Hill and Aurora) to examine opportunities to bury overhead electrical transmission lines along the regional growth rapid transit corridors on Yonge Street and Highway 7.

3. BACKGROUND

The Provinces' "Places to Grow" document and the Regional Official Plan Centres and Corridors Amendment No. 43 have set the stage for significant new growth along regional corridors particularly the rapid transit corridors on Yonge Street and Highway 7. Recent budget announcements from both the Federal and Provincial governments have continued funding for phase 2 surface rapid transit expansion. At its March meeting, Council approved the construction of dedicated transit lanes or "rapidways" on Yonge Street as part of the funded Viva improvements. In addition several large development applications have begun to emerge on the corridor.

The project will result in important aesthetic enhancements to Yonge Street including a planted median, enhanced boulevard and pedestrian environment, particularly through the Thornhill Heritage Community. Construction is scheduled to start in 2008. As part of

the Environmental Assessment process and in conjunction with preparing the designs, consultation is required with all utilities (gas, electrical and telecommunications) that are located, as a right, in the road allowance.

PowerStream is the local electricity distributor serving Vaughan, Markham, Richmond Hill and Aurora. PowerStream currently owns overhead electrical transmission in the Yonge Street and Highway 7 road allowances and has plans to expand this part of their system.

Electrical distribution systems have been installed underground in new developments since the 1970s. The remaining overhead facilities are either (i) older installations or (ii) higher voltage transmission lines.

In the course of completing the rapidway design, discussions have been held with staff at PowerStream, Markham, and Vaughan. The municipalities are interested in the prospect of burying the existing overhead lines.

While the prospect of burying the power lines will have a favourable aesthetic impact, the costs are not insignificant. Simply relocating overhead lines on Yonge Street (between Steeles and Langstaff has been estimated, by PowerStream, to cost \$4M. Burying the lines would increase the estimated costs to \$40M.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Burying electrical supplies is highly desirable on the regional growth/rapid transit corridors for aesthetic and practical reasons. The options and costs for burying electrical lines along the entire extent of the planned regional growth/rapid transit corridors should be considered comprehensively. Where practical overhead alternatives that can achieve both cost efficiencies and aesthetic improvements should also be considered as part of the rapidway design.

While a specific study to look at options for the overhead power lines to accommodate Spring 08 construction is already underway, the balance of the regional growth corridors need to be reviewed comprehensively. Opportunities to bury lines as part of major development applications or road widenings in advance of the rapid transit construction need to be considered. By way of example, the Region is currently planning to widen a portion of Highway 7 in the Town of Markham where the next phase of the Tridel development is under construction and overhead lines exist. In this example no funding for the rapid transit portion of the roadway is secured.

It is proposed that Terms of Reference for this study be jointly undertaken by Regional, local municipal and Powerstream staff. The Terms of Reference will require a consulting team that includes electrical transmission, transportation and architectural expertise to consider, among other things:

- Alternative options for present and future electrical transmission and distribution facilities
- Costs of alternative relocations (overhead, buried, etc.)
- Rate/funding basis for covering costs of alternatives
- Integration with telecommunications and transit power supplies
- Timing for completing relocation work

The work is expected to be substantially completed in early 2008 and will serve as a basis for subsequent stages of VIVA construction. It may also serve as a basis for the future refinement of strategies for relocation/burial of transmission lines on other Regional arterial roads.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Very preliminary budget expectations are in the order of \$200,000. A 50/50 cost sharing with PowerStream would require \$100,000 of funding from regional sources. The 2007 Roads Capital budget includes funding for streetscaping partnerships with local municipalities. Given the significant impact of overhead hydro lines on the urban streetscape, it is proposed that the funding be drawn from this source.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Burying hydro lines is a prerequisite to higher densities along regional growth/rapid transit corridors. The affected municipalities have expressed an interest in reviewing options. The work will be carried out in consultation with the local municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

Facilitating the regional growth strategy along the rapid transit corridors on Yonge Street and Hwy. 7 necessitates the relocation and/or burial of hydro lines. A study is required to confirm options, costs, schedules and funding sources. It is proposed that a study be funded equally by PowerStream and York Region and include the participation of local municipal staff.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.