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FRAMEWORK FOR A REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT TO ENHANCE TRANSIT IMPLEMENTATION

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated May 25, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. This report serve as the basis for the preparation of a draft Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) to advance the implementation of Regional transit infrastructure and services, based on the following three principles:
 - i) Employ new implementation tools under the *Planning Act*.
 - ii) Clarify the intent of Regional policies and related schedules.
 - iii) Implement the transit-focus of the *Growth Plan*.
2. Regional staff consult with the local municipalities and other stakeholders in preparing the ROPA.
3. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the nine local municipal planning departments for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to introduce an approach to enhance the Region's existing transit-related policies through a future Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA). The background and analysis provided in this report will also help to frame consultations with the local municipalities and other stakeholders throughout the ROPA process.

2.1 Purpose and Scope of Proposed Amendment

The amendment being introduced in this report is limited to providing further implementation tools and technical updates, related to the operation of Regional conventional and rapid transit services. It will further develop existing policies, bring the ROP into conformity with recent changes to Provincial legislation, and provide a higher level of detail with respect to the approved plans for conventional and rapid transit improvements, including Viva Phase 2 and the extension of the University-Spadina Subway into York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Transit is a Key Component of the Regional structure

A greater emphasis on transit and transit-oriented development was incorporated into the ROP through the Regional Council approval of ROPA 43 in December 2004. This amendment reinforced the Region's centres and corridors structure, and introduced policies to assist in the implementation of the Regional Rapid Transit Plan. The first phase of that plan – Viva Phase 1 – was launched in September 2005.

Moving forward with a further transit-related ROPA – the framework for which is outlined in section 4 of this report – will make the ROP more responsive to the changes that have occurred since ROPA 43 was approved over two years ago. These changes include the initiation of Viva Phase 2, the adoption of Regional transit-oriented development guidelines, the Provincial funding announcement for the subway extension to York Region, the enactment of the Provincial *Growth Plan* and changes to the *Planning Act*.

Regional transit infrastructure and service improvements are planned to ensure that transit ridership continues to grow. A key component of these improvements is the next phase of the Regional Rapid Transit Plan – Viva Phase 2. This phase is a \$1.88-billion project to construct 67 kilometres of dedicated rapid transit lanes in the four Regional Rapid Transit Corridors. Implementation of this phase through the appropriate, supportive Regional planning policies is vital.

3.2 Provincial Legislation Strengthens Role of Transit

New Provincial legislation under the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (Growth Plan), and changes to the *Planning Act* effective as late as January 1, 2007, have re-enforced municipalities' plans for compact, transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly communities. Changes under this legislation signal a substantial change in how growth will be focused and supported in the GTA. Among the most significant of these changes is the requirement for 40-per cent of new development within municipalities to be accommodated through intensification by 2014. These changes to Provincial legislation will support the Region's transit objectives, and are described in sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.3 of this report.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Amending the Regional Official Plan (ROP) to further advance the implementation of transit infrastructure and services is consistent with the Provincial *Growth Plan*, recent changes to the *Planning Act* and the Region's planned urban structure, and therefore represents good planning.

The ROP policies of Chapter 5 – Regional Structure and Growth Management, and Chapter 6 – Regional Infrastructure will be the primary focus of the ROPA. Combined,

these policies guide local planning implementation for communities that are compact, transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly.

4.1 Principles to Guide the ROPA

The following will be the major thrust of the transit-focused ROPA, consistent with the Region's urban structure and related implementation efforts:

4.1.1 Employing New Tools Under The Planning Act

Changes to the *Planning Act* have been made to assist municipal planning implementation of compact, transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly communities. Perhaps the most useful of these is the new ability, under *Section 51(25)(b.1)*, for municipalities to require the dedication of land for "transit stations and related infrastructure" as a condition of draft plan of subdivision approval. While the legislation does not require an Amendment to be effective, incorporating a similar policy to the Section 6.2 policies of the ROP will enhance the Region's ability to implement rapid transit services in the Regional Corridors.

4.1.2 Clarifying the intent of Regional Policies and Related Schedules

The policy enhancements described in this report may require clarifications and updates to the balance of the ROP policies. Such changes will include new definitions, updates to terminology and timeframes, and revisions to the associated map schedules. More specifically, the future proposed ROPA will:

- Define transit terms including "Operation and Maintenance Facility," "Dedicated Right-of-Way" and "Inter-Modal Station" in addition to select terms from the glossary of the *Growth Plan*.
- Update Map 5 – Regional Structure to, for example, show elements of the conventional and rapid transit networks.
- Update Map 10 – Conceptual Transit Network to, for example, remove the word "Conceptual."

4.1.3 Implementing the Transit-focus of the Growth Plan

The *Growth Plan* is a transit-oriented plan that represents an opportunity to further advance the strides that the Region and its local municipalities have made in planning for compact, transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly communities. York Region, in particular, is well-positioned to implement the key transit-related tenets of the *Growth Plan*. The following are opportunities to implement the transit-focus of the *Growth Plan* through the proposed future ROPA:

- Add *Growth Plan* definitions related to transit (e.g. "Major Station Areas") and make references to these definitions, where appropriate, in Section 6.2. – Transit.
- Strengthen existing Chapter 5 policies that place emphasis on investments in transit infrastructure to implement centres and corridors development.
- Emphasize public transit as a priority in transportation planning and investments in York Region, with adequate and sustained funding from the Province.

4.2 Next Steps

It is recommended that Regional planning staff begin to draft the proposed ROPA, based on the principles described in section 4.1 of this report. In doing so, staff will consult with and engage the local municipalities, and staff from York Region Transit and Viva throughout this process. This exercise will be on-going throughout the Summer months, and result in a draft ROPA that will be tabled for consideration at a statutory public meeting under the *Planning Act*. Staff propose that this public meeting be held as part of the September 2007 meeting of the Planning and Economic Development Committee.

4.2.1 Opportunity for more Substantive Policy Changes in Future

There is an opportunity to further advance the implementation of transit and transit-oriented development through additional, more substantive changes to the ROP. These changes could include the following:

- Adding the ability of the Region to designate community improvement project areas under *Section 28* of the *Planning Act* to support Regional infrastructure, encourage transit-supportive densities, and to provide affordable housing in a manner which supports and does not detract from local municipal CIP powers.
- Prescribing minimum and maximum development densities, consistent with new local municipal zoning powers under *Sections 34(3)* and *34(16)* of the *Planning Act*.
- Enhancing the scope and detail of urban design criteria.
- Implementing Regional programs including *Great Regional Streets* and the *Regional Transit Priority Network*.
- Updating Map 8 – Regional Roads Network and Map 9 – Future Arterial and Freeway Network to, for example, reflect the requirements of *Great Regional Streets* and the *Regional Transit Priority Network*.

This exercise will require a broader, formal consultation process including public input and dialogue with the development industry. It may be concluded through consultation with the local municipalities over the Summer months that there is an opportunity to include some of the above-listed enhancements in the amendment being tabled for consideration in the Fall of 2007. If so, these enhancements and will be explained at that time, and be included in the related staff report.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

Enhancing the transit-related policies of the Regional Official Plan is consistent with and will serve to advance the goals of Vision 2026, especially “Managed and Balanced Growth” and “Infrastructure for a Growing Region.”

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Ensuring that the policies of the Regional Official Plan are responsive to the challenges of urban structure implementation will support the Region’s significant long-term investment in

conventional and rapid transit. In particular, implementation of new planning tools under Section 51(25) of the *Planning Act* with respect to land dedications for transit stations and related facilities will optimize the cost-effectiveness of Regional transit infrastructure and services.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The local municipalities are primarily responsible for the implementation of the Region's urban structure through such local planning instruments as official plans, secondary plans, zoning by-laws and site plan review. Adding clarity to the transit-related policies of the ROP will provide an enhanced level of direction to these local planning instruments and help support their implementation. Staff from the local municipal planning departments will be consulted throughout the ROPA process, and will have the opportunity to shape the proposed policy enhancements.

7. CONCLUSION

This report introduces an approach to the proposed future ROPA, based on the following three principles:

- i) Employ new implementation tools under the *Planning Act*.
- ii) Clarify the intent of Regional policies and related schedules.
- iii) Implement the transit-focus of the *Growth Plan*.

The future ROPA being introduced in this report will not change the strategic focus of the ROP with respect to transit and transit-oriented development. Rather, it will clarify existing policies, bring the ROP into conformity with recent changes to Provincial legislation, and provide a higher level of detail with respect to the approved plans for conventional and rapid transit improvements, including Viva Phase 2.

Regional staff propose to draft the ROPA over the summer months, in consultation with staff from the local municipalities, and staff from York Region Transit and Viva. The draft ROPA would then be subject to a statutory public meeting under the *Planning Act*, held as part of the September 2007 meeting of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.