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METROLINX WHITE PAPERS

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The presentation by Joe Perrotta, Director of Transportation Policy and Planning, Metrolinx (Greater Toronto Transportation Authority), be received; and**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report dated May 30, 2008, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services and the Commissioner of Transportation Services, be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. York Region support the effort of Metrolinx to develop a Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Regional Transportation Plan by offering to work with Metrolinx on travel demand modelling and project and program priority setting.
2. Staff comments on the White Papers as identified in this report be forwarded to Metrolinx by July 10, 2008.
3. Regional Council authorise staff to provide comments on Metrolinx's draft Regional Transportation Plan if the deadline for comments is before September 2008.
4. Copies of this report be distributed by the Regional Clerk to the Clerks of the local municipalities and to Metrolinx.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform the Planning and Economic Development Committee of the release of Metrolinx's White Papers, part of an iterative development process towards a Regional Transportation Plan, and to seek authorisation for staff to provide formal comments to Metrolinx on the White Papers as well as the draft Regional Transportation Plan if it is released for comments during the Summer of 2008.

A presentation by Metrolinx staff forms part of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

Key Implementation Document for the Growth Plan

The Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, publicly marketed as Metrolinx, was established in late 2006 with a mandate of providing seamless transportation across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. One of the main goals of Metrolinx is the development of an integrated Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

Metrolinx's work plan to develop the RTP began with the drafting and release of a series of seven Green Papers for broad-based consultation in January and February 2008. This was reported to Planning and Economic Development Committee in February 2008.

Incorporating comments from municipal and other stakeholders and the public, the revised Green Papers formed the basis for the drafting of two White Papers. White Papers 1 and 2, titled "Vision, Goals and Objectives" and "Preliminary Directions and Concepts" respectively, were released on May 9, 2008 for stakeholder and public review and comment.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Development of a Regional Transportation Plan is a Very Progressive Step

Metrolinx is on an expedited schedule to complete the RTP by Summer/Fall 2008. This aggressive approach is in response to the pressures from all stakeholders for a coordinated and comprehensive transportation master plan for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. For taking the aggressive step to make it happen, Metrolinx should be applauded. It represents a very progressive step that is long overdue and is very timely given the favourable change in Provincial and Federal policy directions in urban transportation funding.

WHITE PAPER 1 – VISION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A simple yet powerful Vision

The vision for Metrolinx's soon-to-be-drafted RTP is:

"An Integrated Transportation System for Our Region that Enhances Prosperity, Sustainability and Quality of Life"

Goals and objectives that encompass the three pillars of sustainability

In White Paper 1 (*Council Attachment 1*), the vision is translated into the three themes of:

- a high quality of life
- a thriving, healthy and protected environment
- a strong, prosperous and competitive economy

Respectively, they refer to providing convenient, reliable, safe and different transportation choices, representing a smaller carbon and land consumption footprint from urban transportation, and a competitive, multi-modal, sustainable, interconnected, efficient and resilient transportation system. Basically, the goals and objectives “reflect a broad set of social, economic and environmental policy objectives”. In total, there were 19 goals and 40 objectives.

A long list of indicators that covers more than transportation factors

A series of 118 numeric and subjective indicators accompany the goals and objectives. These indicators cover not just transportation factors but also factors in the area of public health, land use, planning and air quality that are thought to be directly or indirectly linked to transportation impacts.

Draft York Region Comments on White Paper 1

This paper is very similar to the sustainability principles developed as part of York Region’s Transportation Master Plan Update study except that it is even more comprehensive. The goals and objectives speak to enhancing prosperity, sustainability and quality of life in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area through transportation actions. Achieving these goals and objectives will depend on whether they can be transformed into practical policies and programs with the associated responsibility assigned to the appropriate authority or agency. Thus, in the RTP, changes to legislation, policies, funding mechanisms, governance structure, appropriate assignment of responsibility and other factors must be clearly identified to realise these goals and objectives.

In terms of the indicators, not all of them are measurable and many, while measurable, will require data from many different sources including health care agencies, a number of Provincial ministries, municipalities across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, and their partners. The likelihood of Metrolinx being able to compile data for all of the 118 indicators is slim unless a disproportionate effort is put into it.

Based on the above assessment, staff have the following suggestions for White Paper 1:

- Establish a priority setting framework for the goals and objectives.
- Clarify and identify the role and responsibility of each agency that can influence or achieve each of the goals and objectives.
- The link between transportation and land use needs to be identified as a major goal rather than just an objective.
- Establish realistic targets for some or most indicators.

- Establish time frames for measuring indicators.
- Delete indicators where the transportation link is very indirect.

WHITE PAPER 2 – PRELIMINARY DIRECTIONS AND CONCEPTS

White Paper 2 (*Council Attachment 2*) recognises that a successful RTP will require two key elements: transformational policy programs and tools, and well-integrated and functional infrastructure. It provides the “meat” in terms of policies and infrastructure suggestions and options for the draft RTP. Specifically, White Paper 2 covers preliminary policy directions, test network concepts, performance analysis of the test network concepts and how the resulting RTP is to be implemented.

A very comprehensive set of preliminary directions

This section of White Paper 2 details potential policies and programs in the following areas:

- A system for complete mobility with 11 suggested directions and 44 policy options.
- Place-making and mobility hubs with 7 suggested directions and 33 policy options.
- Excellent customer service with 7 suggested directions and 26 policy options.
- Sustainable funding with 7 suggested directions and 17 policy options.
- Innovation through research with 9 suggested directions and 15 policy options.
- Partnerships and decision-making with 4 suggested directions and 12 policy options.

In summary, a total of 45 preliminary directions and 147 policy options were presented for consultation.

Draft Comments on Preliminary Directions

A number of the policy and program options are general in nature such that they are not specific enough to be readily implemented. These preliminary policy directions would require a tremendous and disproportionate amount of effort to implement. The end result could mean a dilution of effort on each policy or program, and therefore, not leading to the desired result. Thus, a focussing of the preliminary directions would be useful, involving some priority setting and identifying the organisational framework and timeline for implementation.

Other comments on the preliminary directions are:

- Need to develop an active transportation master plan and advocate for more aggressive funding of active transportation projects and programs.
- The issue of fare integration needs a fuller discussion.
- A stronger technology and ITS role is needed.
- More emphasis on the importance of goods movement is required.
- Minor mobility hubs also need to be shown.
- Corridors are equally important to mobility hubs.

- Estimation of financial viability for each network is needed.
- Operating costs should be addressed.
- Reference to an “Urban Development Agency” on page 30 needs clarification?
- Total passenger experience needs to be considered and included in the design of the transportation network.

Four test network concepts developed for testing and analysis

Four test network concepts were developed. They are:

Business-as-Usual (BAU) – representing currently committed rapid transit and major road projects but NOT all of the MoveOntario 2020 projects. On the rapid transit side, it includes the Spadina subway extension to the Vaughan Corporate Centre, a Yonge Street LRT/BRT line from the Finch subway station to the Richmond Hill Centre and other Viva Phase 2 projects. On the road side, it includes the proposed Provincial freeway HOV network but does NOT include an extension of Highway 427 beyond Vaughan, Bradford Bypass and an extension of Highway 404 beyond Ravenshoe Road.

Test Concept A (LINEAR) – representing currently committed rapid transit and major road projects including all of the MoveOntario 2020 projects plus a number of other rapid transit proposals. On the rapid transit side, it includes extensions of the Spadina and Yonge subway lines to the Vaughan Corporate Centre and Richmond Hill Centre respectively, all Viva Phase 2 projects and a new east-west LRT/BRT line north of Highway 7. On the road side, it includes the proposed Provincial freeway HOV network and the GTA West Corridor but does NOT include an extension of Highway 427 beyond Vaughan, Bradford Bypass and an extension of Highway 404 beyond Ravenshoe Road.

Test Concept B (RADIAL) – is a variant of the LINEAR concept with some projects taken out and new ones added. Specific to York Region, this test concept includes extension of the Spadina and Yonge subway lines, turning the Richmond Hill GO line into an “Express Rail” service as a way to relieve over-crowding on the extended Yonge subway line, all Viva Phase 2 projects, a new east-west LRT/BRT line north of Highway 7 and a Steeles East LRT/BRT line. On the road side, it includes the proposed Provincial freeway HOV network but does NOT include the GTA West Corridor, an extension of Highway 427 beyond Vaughan, Bradford Bypass and an extension of Highway 404 beyond Ravenshoe Road.

Test Concept C (WEB) – is an enhancement of the RADIAL concept with some additional projects. Specific to York Region, the only addition is extending the east-west LRT/BRT on Steeles Avenue to the west.

Draft Comments on the Test Network Concepts

The four test network concepts generally included all of York Region's Transportation Master Plan and Rapid Transit Corporation proposals including subway extensions, Viva Phase 2 and GO Rail expansion. Two of the concepts included new east-west LRT/BRT lines in a corridor north of Highway 7 and in the Steeles Avenue corridor.

In March 2008, Regional Council adopted a Planning and Economic Development Committee report requesting the Province to add the Bradford Bypass into the Growth Plan and to develop an implementation schedule for it. As well, in May 2007, Regional Council requested the Province to expedite the GTA West Corridor environmental assessment and other transportation projects that are needed to meet the Growth Plan.

However, the test network concepts generally excluded highway expansions that are critical to meeting the Provincial growth plan in York Region. They are the Bradford Bypass, GTA West Corridor, Highway 427 extension beyond Vaughan and Highway 404 extension beyond Ravenshoe Road.

Preliminary network concepts being developed as part of York Region's on-going Transportation Master Plan Update study has also identified the potential need for additional north-south BRT/LRT corridors in Vaughan and Markham.

To ensure that critical transportation infrastructure necessary to meet the Growth Plan is protected, an expedited corridor protection process for new highways and rapid transit lines is needed.

Other comments are:

- Advocate for critical highway projects and additional north-south LRT/BRT corridors to be included in the draft RTP.
- Express bus services on 400-series highways integrated with rapid transit is important.
- Goods movement needs to be tested as part of the performance analysis of the test network concepts.
- Financial and technical feasibility must be part of the analysis.
- Population and employment forecasts used in the testing and analysis are not current.
- Potential development of "white-belt" areas are not represented in the analysis.
- Transit service levels are not practical and operating speed assumptions are too high.

Performance analysis of the test network concepts show significant potential for change

The four test network concepts were tested and some results are presented in the white paper. The results for the 2031 horizon generally show the following for the four test concepts:

- Capital cost estimates range from \$20 billion to \$95 billion.
- Transit operating costs range from \$2.1 billion to \$3.8 billion per year compared to \$1.6 billion in 2006.
- With greater rapid transit investment and the concentration of population and jobs, the share of morning peak period trips by transit and active transportation could range from 26% to 40%, compared to 25.5% today.
- Transit trips are projected to grow between 50% to 155%.
- Cost of congestion, estimated at \$2.2 billion currently, is estimated to grow the least for the WEB concept to \$2.5 billion per year.

The modelling results presented are from a global perspective for the entire Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. However, a more detailed assessment may be needed to uncover gaps in the transportation network in certain geographic areas.

Staff recommend working with Metrolinx on the modelling of the Test Concepts and also on project and program priority setting.

The Paper identified a number of interim findings. They include:

- Significant progress towards achieving the economic, social and environmental goals outlined in White Paper 1 can only be achieved through a combination of bold transit investment, coordinated transportation and land use planning, and supporting policies.
- Transit ridership increases are most significant when improved service is combined with aggressive land use intensification in transit corridors and at mobility hubs.
- The benefits in terms of transit use and efficiency are much greater when development is concentrated around a small number of mobility hubs, rather than when it is distributed over a more dispersed area.
- An Express Rail system would greatly enhance mobility for longer trips and is a viable new transportation option.
- Metro improvements (e.g. subway) should be considered in higher-density areas to maximize transit market share, as the transformative potential of Light Rail and Bus Rapid Transit is more limited.
- Feeder bus and paratransit fleets will need to double or quadruple in suburban areas to support the rapid transit network under any future scenario.
- Implementation of the transportation system test concepts outlined in this paper would not be sufficient by itself to meet provincial targets to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. A whole suite of supporting programs and policies would be required. Further analysis will be performed to identify the steps and investments needed to meet these targets.

Implementing the Plan

White Paper 2 included some general observations on the key activities in the areas of land use coordination, operational and institutional collaboration, government involvement and commuter travel behaviour, and an investment strategy that must be developed as part of implementing the RTP and for its success.

While acknowledging that reliable transportation funding is needed, the Paper also estimates the capital cost of the 2031 test network concepts at \$20 to \$95 billion, compared to the \$17.5 billion estimated for the MoveOntario 2020 plan when it was announced a year ago. Even with an additional decade to implement, this still makes funding a very challenging issue to address for all stakeholders including Metrolinx.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The public and all stakeholders have until July 10, 2008 to review and comment on White Papers 1 and 2. Metrolinx plans to compile the reactions and prepare a draft RTP for presentation to their Board in late July 2008. The draft RTP is to be released for public and stakeholder consultations for the rest of the Summer of 2008 and a final draft RTP is tentatively planned to be presented to the Metrolinx Board in early Fall 2008.

With this tight schedule, there will not be another opportunity for Planning and Development Committee to receive staff comments on the draft RTP. Therefore, staff recommend that authorisation be given to staff to provide formal comments to Metrolinx on the White Papers, as laid out in this report, as well as on the draft RTP if it is released as scheduled.

As well, a coordinated plan is in place to discuss, share resources and harmonise comments with the local municipalities in reviewing the White Papers. This is to ensure that formal comments from York Region are provided to Metrolinx in a timely manner.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Staff from the local municipalities and York Region jointly reviewed the White Papers and collaborated on the draft comments presented in this report.

7. CONCLUSION

Metrolinx is taking an aggressive approach and schedule to develop a Regional Transportation Plan for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Metrolinx should be commended for taking such aggressive actions to fulfil one of its key functions.

Working from the series of Green Papers released earlier this year, Metrolinx has now released two White Papers which represent a step from the draft Regional Transportation Plan that Metrolinx plan to release in late July 2008. The White Papers have been released for public and stakeholder review and comments with a July 10, 2008 deadline.

Draft comments on the White Papers jointly developed with local municipal staff are proposed to be sent to Metrolinx as formal York Region comments. Staff also recommend advocating to Metrolinx to include critical highway projects and additional north-south LRT/BRT corridors in York Region into the Test Network Concepts and ultimately into the draft Regional Transportation Plan.

Under Metrolinx's schedule for the release of a draft Regional Transportation Plan, staff is seeking authorisation to provide formal comments to Metrolinx on the draft Plan during the Summer of 2008 if the schedule is adhered to.

For more information on this report, please contact Loy Cheah, Manager, Transportation Planning, Infrastructure Planning Branch at Ext. 5024, or, Paul May, Director, Infrastructure Planning at Ext. 5029.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The two attachments referred to in this clause were enclosed with the June 11, 2008 Committee agenda and are available on the Region's website at www.york.ca.)