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16TH AVENUE CLASS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STUDY EASTERLY EXTENSION OF THE STUDY LIMITS TOWNS OF MARKHAM AND RICHMOND HILL

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, June 7, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The 16th Avenue Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) study limits be extended easterly from McCowan Road (Y.R. 67) to York-Durham Line.
2. The requirements of the Purchasing By-law be waived to permit staff to negotiate the additional fees to an upset limit of \$500,000 with iTrans Consulting Limited (iTrans) to extend the study limits and the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be authorized to approve the negotiated fees.
3. Copies of this report be forwarded by the Regional Clerk to the Clerks of the Town of Markham and Town of Richmond Hill.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to request Regional Council's authorization to extend the easterly limits of the 16th Avenue Class EA study from McCowan Road to York-Durham Line as requested by the Town of Markham (*see Attachment 1*).

3. BACKGROUND

In the summer of 2005, Regional staff initiated the 16th Avenue Class EA study from Yonge Street to McCowan Road, covering approximately 13 km of road. The consulting firm of iTrans was retained by the Region through a competitive bid to undertake the 16th Avenue Class EA study at an upset limit of \$999,460. Site investigations, information gathering and traffic analysis were done in fall 2005. By November 2005, the team was ready for the first Public Consultation (PCC) and met with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for this study. The Region has expended \$450,000 for the work done to date.

The Towns of Richmond Hill and Markham staff representatives on the TAC indicated that the project – a potential six-laning of 16th Avenue through residential communities, may be controversial. In their review of the Region's 2005 10-Year Capital Plan, Markham Council did not support six-laning of Regional roads within their residential communities. As part of the Region's enhanced stakeholder engagement initiatives and due to the anticipated public concerns about six-lane road widening projects within residential communities, the study team presented the findings to Towns of Markham and Richmond Hill Committee/Councillors prior to the first Public Consultation Centre.

At the January 18, 2006 the Town of Richmond Hill Gridlock Task Force meeting, the study team presented the needs and justification for the project, the alternative solutions and criteria for evaluating the alternatives and the plan to hold the first public consultation centre by the end of February 2006.

A similar presentation was delivered at the Town of Markham's General Committee Meeting on January 23, 2006. Town of Markham Councillors deliberated the issues and concerns, including the need for transit priority and/or High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) lanes, on 16th Avenue. Council had passed the following resolutions (*see Attachment 2*):

- That the 16th Avenue Class EA presentation be received.
- That the Region be requested to report back on the feasibility of extending the Environmental Assessment along 16th Avenue to the New Markham By-pass.
- That Markham staff report back to General Committee, prior to the Region reporting back, on options available and potential ways of improving Regional roads through existing communities and neighbourhoods.

In the discussions that occurred between Councillors at both presentations (Town of Markham General Committee and at the Town of Richmond Hill Grid Lock Task Force Committee meeting), it was clear that significant concerns exist about supporting any future six-lane road widenings through residential communities that are not intended for transit priority/HOV use. Several Councillors expressed that widening for general purpose traffic lanes is a short term solution that is not sustainable or compatible with community based growth objectives within the Region.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Extension of the project limits easterly to New Markham By-pass as requested by the Town of Markham has been reviewed and summarized below.

4.1 Project Limits of the Current Study

Regional roads capital projects and timing of construction are first identified in the Transportation Master Plan (TMP). This allows staff to plan on a Region wide basis for implementation of road improvements in a timely fashion. The 2002 approved TMP identified 16th Avenue as a transit priority corridor to be widened to six-lanes from Bathurst Street to Markham in the 2012-2021 time horizons, except for the section from

Bayview Avenue to Woodbine Avenue, which is planned earlier in the 2002-2011 time horizons. Improvements and widening to four lanes between New Markham By-pass and York-Durham Line are also identified in the 2002-2011 time horizons. An update of the 2002 TMP is currently being coordinated with the Growth Management Plan report and is expected to be completed by mid 2008.

The 10-Year Capital Roads Construction Program, updated annually in consultation with local municipalities and approved by Regional Council, is developed to prioritize projects and allocate funds for implementation. The current project limits for the 16th Avenue Class EA extend from Yonge Street to McCowan Road. Included in this Class EA are all projects identified in the 2006 approved 10-Year Capital Roads Construction Program, except for the easterly section from New Markham By-pass to York-Durham Line. This easterly section was not part of the current Class EA for various reasons:

- The two sections are physically separate by approximately 6 km.
- The project needs and justification for improvements are different.
- The nature of the easterly section is significantly different since it would include the jog elimination at Reesor Road and the replacement of a single lane bridge over the Little Rouge River – a significant and sensitive watercourse.

The Class EA study is usually initiated within five years of implementation to examine in detail the specific options and design alternatives to the project. Public consultation, a major component of the study, provides opportunities for stakeholders to comment and provide input on the project. The guidelines for Municipal Class EAs require that the projects must not be piece meal, hence all projects on 16th Avenue identified in the 2006 10-Year Capital Roads Construction Program were included in the current study.

4.2 Towards Great Regional Streets – Six Lane Design Guidelines

Towards Great Regional Streets – A Path to Improvement, endorsed by Council on March 23, 2006, provides guidelines for future widening of Regional roads to six-lanes. This new Regional initiative identified standards for six-lane roads to integrate transit facilities and encourage cyclists and pedestrians.

The 16th Avenue Class EA study will incorporate these new standards. The traffic analysis completed for this study indicated that the existing 16th Avenue facility cannot accommodate existing and future traffic demands and cannot support enhanced transit services.

4.3 Rationale for Extending the Study Limits Easterly

As requested by Markham Council, York Region staff has reviewed the feasibility of extending the study limits easterly to New Markham By-pass, including the section of 16th Avenue from New Markham By-pass to York-Durham Line. This easterly section is currently programmed for 2012.

Extending the study limits will advance the Region's long term projects and will accommodate Markham's request. Once Class EA for the expanded study is approved, the Region will be able to identify and protect the additional right-of-way required for the ultimate intended use of the 16th Avenue corridor. The study will also address the connectivity of the east-west transit/HOV lanes from Highway 404 to the New Markham By-pass.

The 2004 approved Transportation Master Plan of Durham Region showed no short and long term plans to connect 16th Avenue at York-Durham Line. The project team will coordinate and work with Durham Region on this study.

4.3.1 Addressing Project Issues

There are a number of significant issues that arise by extending the study limits. These issues and staff's approach to address them are described below:

- Completion of the Class EA may take longer and will affect the ability to deliver the first section, between Bayview Avenue and Woodbine Avenue, in 2009. Staff will work with the Consultant to explore opportunities to advance certain activities in an attempt to maintain the project schedule.
- Additional cost for the expanded scope is not allocated in the current budget. As part of the 2007 budget planning, additional funds will be identified and allocated to the project.
- Over the last few years, the Region has taken a very proactive approach to public consultation and has been successful. Similar approach will be applied to ensure that public consultation on a project of this magnitude is managed efficiently and effectively.
- There are additional technical issues on 16th Avenue east of McCowan Road to York-Durham Line that need to be addressed. These include a rail crossing, a water crossing (Rouge and tributaries), jog elimination at 10th Line/Reesor, and bridge replacement across Little Rouge River. Staff will ensure that the Consultant's terms of reference include technical expertise to address these issues.

4.3.2 Options for Consulting Assignment

To proceed and complete the expanded 16th Avenue Class EA study, there are two options that staff have considered:

- Option A:
The current assignment could be terminated and a new Request for Proposal (RFP) for the expanded study issued to secure consultant services. Completion of the study will take approximately 16 to 18 months at an estimated total cost of \$1.25M.
- Option B:
Staff could negotiate with iTrans to expand the scope of the current study to include the extended limits to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Transportation and Works. The expanded study is estimated to be complete in approximately 12 to 14 months at an estimated total cost of \$1.05M. This estimated amount represents the \$0.55M available from the original assignment and the additional cost of about \$0.50M to undertake the expanded study.

Retaining iTrans to provide the engineering services for the extended section represents good value for the Region in that it represents a four month time savings and a cost savings of approximately \$0.20M. iTrans is familiar with the issues and concerns of the various stakeholders and the team is in place to undertake the field investigations and traffic analysis. As well, iTrans would provide a consistent contact for the public for the expanded study. The study could be undertaken with minimum delay. To date, iTrans on this project demonstrated successfully their capability to undertake such a complex and contentious Class EA study.

In the event that the fees and schedule could not be successfully negotiated with iTrans, staff plan to terminate the current assignment; to issue a new RFP (similar to Option A) for the expanded study area; to request Council to award the new assignment; and to reinstate the expanded Class EA study.

Option B is the best way to move the project forward in order to minimize the delay, subject to the successful negotiation with the current consultant.

4.4 Recommendations

Due to the development in East Markham, staff recommends to extend the study area as requested by the Town of Markham. 16th Avenue, east of the New Markham By-pass to York-Durham Line, should also be included in the expanded Class EA study for continuity of the study limits.

Staff proposes to negotiate the fees, schedule and terms of reference with iTrans for the expanded study to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Transportation and Works. If staff is unable to reach a suitable agreement, the current assignment will be terminated and a new study initiated.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff estimates that the additional cost of extending the project limits is about \$500,000. This amount includes the cost for field investigations such as engineering survey, natural and social environment assessments, geotechnical investigations and traffic analysis. The estimate is based on similar recent projects.

The additional fees for the extension of the project limits (from McCowan Road to York-Durham Line) are not included in the 2006 10-Year Capital Roads Construction Program. These additional fees would be drawn from roads budget item for miscellaneous design and survey for future projects. This amount will be re-allocated and identified in the 2007 Budget and Business Plan.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

This report is prepared in response to the request by the Town of Markham Council. The study team will continue to respond to the issues and concerns expressed by residents and Council.

The expanded Class EA study would address the planning of a continuous east-west transit priority/HOV lanes on 16th Avenue from Highway 404 to the New Markham By-pass, which supports Markham and the Region's growth and transportation infrastructure objectives. Additional right-of-way would be identified and protected prior to full development of east Markham. The most easterly section between New Markham By-pass to York-Durham Line should also be included in the study to address the required improvements for this section in a timely manner.

7. CONCLUSION

To accommodate the Town of Markham's request and to address the planning for a continuous east-west transit priority corridor from Yonge Street to New Markham By-pass, Regional staff recommend to extend the 16th Avenue Class EA study easterly to the New Markham By-pass.

To facilitate completion of the expanded Class EA study, Regional staff propose to negotiate with iTrans the scope, schedule and fees to undertake the added sections from McCowan Road to York-Durham Line to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Transportation and Works.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause were included in the agenda for the June 14, 2006 Committee meeting.)