

2

TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN UPDATE: SUMMARY OF ISSUE PAPERS

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated May 30, 2008, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The Regional Clerk forward copies of this report to the Clerks of the local municipalities in York Region and other members of the Transportation Master Plan Update's Technical Advisory Committee.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present to Regional Council the first four Issue Papers developed as part of the Transportation Master Plan Update. These Papers relate to:

- Building awareness of sustainable transportation.
- Managing traffic congestion.
- Implementing transit oriented development.
- Assessing impacts on the natural heritage and environment.

The Papers have been prepared to update the public on key issues and work done by the Region since the original Master Plan was adopted. They will form part of the contents of the Transportation Master Plan Update and stimulate discussion on potential policies and programs.

3. BACKGROUND

Response to Changing Planning Context

Since the original Transportation Master Plan was approved in 2002, there have been several changes to land use and funding policies at the federal and provincial levels which have an impact on the Region's transportation and infrastructure planning direction. In response, key initiatives by the Region including the Growth Management Plan (Planning for Tomorrow), the Sustainability Strategy and the update of the Transportation Master Plan have been undertaken to address the new planning context and make York Region a leader in sustainability.

Activities undertaken in the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) Update study have included an assessment of the 2002 TMP 5-year action plan, a best practices review of transportation sustainability, two rounds of Public Consultation Centres, and the distribution of information in the form of newsletters and web pages. In addition, the Region has engaged stakeholders through a Technical Advisory Committee comprising of local municipal and other agency representatives, and a study Steering Committee comprised of representatives from various Regional departments.

Information from the consultation process has helped the Region identify a list of key transportation issues which the consultant team was asked to address.

List of Six Topics to Promote Discussion on Policies and Strategies

The following six (6) topics will be documented in separate Issue Papers to promote discussion, provide background and identify potential applicable policies and strategies that could be implemented in the Region:

1. Fostering the Public's Understanding of Sustainable Transportation Issues.
2. Managing Traffic Congestion.
3. Implementation of Transit Oriented Development.
4. Assessing Impacts on Natural Heritage and Environmental Features.
5. Funding.
6. Governance.

This report presents an overview of the findings and recommendations contained in the drafts of the first four in the series of six Issue Papers (#1 to 4). Summaries of the reports are provided in *Council Attachment 1*. The full length Issue Papers can be found by clicking on the 'reports and presentation' icon box on the webpage www.york.ca/tmp.

The remaining Issue Papers (#5 and #6) in the series will be the subject of future Committee reports.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Transportation Master Plan Update is developing programs, policies, and road and transit network initiatives which focus on sustainable transportation. The four Issue Papers presented in this report highlight the need to actively educate the public on sustainable transportation issues, identify measures to manage traffic congestion, implement transit oriented development and assess impacts on the natural heritage.

The Transportation Master Plan Update will address many of the same issues that Metrolinx is attempting to address through its development of a regional transportation plan for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Briefly, the common issues relate to transit, roads and highways, active transportation and travel demand management, influencing better land use and development growth, and mitigating environmental

impacts of transportation infrastructure. Issue Papers 1 to 4 present policy directions and considerations for a number of areas related to these general issues. Policies related to active transportation have largely been addressed with Regional Council adoption of the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan in April 2008.

As was reported in February 2008, preliminary results of the 2006 Transportation Tomorrow Survey indicate positive trendlines towards sustainable transportation usage in York Region. The policy options presented in Issue Papers 1 to 4 attempt to take York Region further to establish a firm foundation for sustainable transportation modes and supportive land uses. As well, for the first time, policy recommendations are presented introducing natural environmental criteria that are to be used in developing transportation network plans.

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Under the umbrella of the *Planning for Tomorrow* Growth Management Initiative, the elements and principles of sustainability are a focal point of the Master Plan Update. This planning direction is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Regional Official Plan, Vision 2026, and the recently adopted Sustainability Strategy. The planning and policy initiatives which will be recommended are to pursue transportation strategies that are sustainable over the long term and aim to simultaneously create a balance between environmental, social, and economic benefits and value.

Paper No. 1: Fostering the Public's Understanding About Sustainable Transportation Issues

This Issue Paper examines some of the methods of communication currently being used in the Region and recommends that the Region consider a range of communication formats to pro-actively "get the message out". A wider communication strategy will:

- foster a much wider understanding of the Region's initiatives.
- encourage residents and businesses to adopt new practices that support the Region's sustainable policies.
- provide a means to regularly inform and engage the public on sustainable transportation issues.

The Paper identifies several current comprehensive initiatives by York Region and the marketing plans which complement these initiatives including campaigns to promote Viva and YRT services to businesses, ethnic groups and students. A brief description of other successful public awareness campaigns employed globally to promote sustainable transportation programs and initiatives are identified in this Paper. The best practices of programs and initiatives highlighted include those from Europe, the United States, and other parts of Canada.

Recommended Policies and Strategies for Building Awareness

Based on the analysis in Issue Paper No. 1, the following educational and promotional-related policy and program recommendations are proposed for York Region's Transportation Master Plan Update:

1. Aggressively promote sustainable transportation programs and initiatives to residents, businesses and institutions through different media sources.
2. Explore more creative approaches to market sustainable transportation programs and initiatives to new residents and immigrants.
3. Intensify efforts to market sustainable transportation programs and initiatives to school-aged children, high school, college and university students.
4. Explore new strategies to market sustainable transportation programs and initiatives to seniors and individuals with physical disabilities.
5. Monitor the impacts key messages are having on residents' travel behaviour.

Specific implementation strategies supporting each of the above recommended policies to build awareness on the sustainable transportation issues are outlined in Chapter 5 of the Issue Paper.

Paper No. 2: Managing Traffic Congestion

This Issue Paper on *Managing Traffic Congestion* indicates that traffic congestion is now considered by many as York Region's number one problem. With appropriate measures, it is suggested that traffic congestion can be managed and controlled.

Traffic congestion has the potential to become an "all day" and "all week" issue, as more and more vehicles occupy our roads. Congestion within the Region will soon worsen, and reach severe levels if proper measures are not implemented to help manage traffic. By 2031, it is possible that under a "do nothing" scenario, the Region may experience extensive areas of severe congestion, from the southern areas of Vaughan and Markham north to Aurora and extending into Newmarket.

Measures identified to improve transportation options include Travel Demand Management (TDM) and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). The Region's 10 year ITS Strategic Plan adopted by Council in December 2007 was also referenced. The Paper noted that, with the implementation of the ITS Strategic Plan, the Region expects improved management of traffic flow and congestion, as well as an increased ability to respond to emergencies.

Some of the ITS new and revised applications mentioned in the Paper for consideration in York Region include:

- Detector loop placement locations for left turn lanes.
- Pedestrian pushbutton improvements.
- Web-based travel time and traffic information delivery.

- Changeable message sign systems for route and mode choice to assist drivers.

Recommended Policies and Strategies for Managing Traffic Congestion

The recommended policies and initiatives to manage traffic congestion in York Region's Transportation Master Plan Update include the following:

1. Adopt a "putting pedestrians and transit first" policy approach in the urban areas of the Region, where pedestrian and transit movements are the first priority. Focusing on this approach will lead the Region in a sustainable direction.
2. Expand the application of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to facilitate the smooth flow of both transit and private vehicles.
3. Continue to develop a convenient and reliable transit system that effectively serves individuals without vehicles, as well as "choice" riders.
4. Proactively manage the parking supply and fee structure to minimize single occupant vehicle trips.
5. Encourage practical commuting options through education and social marketing, as well as the promotion of relevant services.
6. In partnership with local municipalities, develop appropriate land uses to support transit, pedestrian, and cycling trips.
7. Manage goods movement to minimize impacts on peak period commuting travel.
8. Work with the local municipalities to implement a coordinated network of commuter bike lanes and supporting bike facilities as identified in the Region's Cycling and Pedestrian Master Plan.
9. Encourage the use of transit and other sustainable modes of travel through Commuter Trip Reduction programs. These include financial incentives for commuters, rideshare matching, teleworking, and guaranteed ride home programs.

Specific implementation strategies supporting each of these traffic congestion management policy recommendations are identified in Chapter 4 of Issue Paper No. 2.

Paper No. 3: Implementation Of Transit Oriented Development

In September 2006, the York Region Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines were adopted with a goal to shape development to respond to the needs of transit users and the transit service itself. With respect to implementation, the Guidelines require that TOD strategies be applied at the onset of the planning process, and that a wide array of stakeholders be involved including municipal councils, developers, and residents.

Although York Region is one of only a few Ontario municipalities to have adopted TOD Guidelines, several other North American cities have implemented policies and initiatives to take it one step further. This Paper highlights some best practices in cities including Calgary, Ottawa, Vancouver, Denver, and Portland.

This Issue Paper recommends that the Region fully integrate the guidelines in its Official Plan to promote sustainable development and implement a policy compelling local municipalities to achieve the minimum densities to sustain higher order transit. Collaboration with local municipalities and stakeholders is key to ensuring that developments within the vicinity of major transit corridors and nodes are supportive of Regional Strategies.

Recommended Policies and Strategies for Implementing TOD

The recommended policies contained in this Paper for the Implementation of TOD include the following:

1. Provide adequate connections between the pedestrian environment and transit.
2. Limit parking around transit oriented developments by initiating transportation demand management (TDM) programs or other initiatives that discourage driving.
3. Ensure type and location of land uses promotes transit use throughout the urban areas, and particularly in the Regional Centres and Corridors.
4. Implement urban design standards in the Regional Centres and Corridors and at all transit oriented development locations to enhance the pedestrian environment and encourage transit use.
5. Develop partnerships with local municipalities and key stakeholders to ensure TOD initiatives are planned and implemented successfully.

A detailed list of recommended implementation strategies is also provided in Chapter 4 of Issue Paper No. 3. It is recognised that the implementation strategies require commitment from a large number of Regional staff and stakeholders to make TOD work.

Paper No. 4: Assessing Impacts On Natural Heritage And Environmental Features

York Region is home to a significant number of natural areas including wetlands, forests, lakes, river systems, and major landscape features such as the Oak Ridges Moraine. This Issue Paper stresses that each of the systems and features have different sensitivities and critical elements that must be considered when determining appropriate land use, development intensity, and design and placement of any new transportation infrastructure.

Current legislation and policies under the Federal, Provincial, and Regional levels which ensure assessment of project environmental impacts are identified and tabulated on its ability to address the range of natural heritage features. Several case studies of innovative mitigation measures to minimize environmental impacts are presented.

This draft Issue Paper is currently under review to ensure that it addresses the work and commitments in the area of the natural environment underway. These include the recommendations of TSYR (Towards Sustainability in York Region Advisory Group) in

June 2006, the Sustainability Strategy and the Natural Heritage Strategic Directions approved in November 2007.

Recommended Policies and Strategies for Assessing Natural Heritage and Environmental Impacts

The following policies for addressing the Region's natural heritage features are recommended for consideration in the Transportation Master Plan Update:

1. Plan the location of transportation system elements to avoid significant natural heritage features, including the habitats of threatened and endangered species, wetlands and Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest.
2. Develop and enforce Environmental Best Management Practices for stormwater management, erosion and runoff during construction.
3. Develop measures to minimize environmental impacts resulting from construction activities.
4. The environmental study of individual project elements should be used to fully document the characteristics of natural heritage features within the study area of a specific project. This includes not only significant habitats and features, but also corridors of movement of both fish and wildlife that may also be significant.
5. Provincial legislation, such as the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Places to Grow, and the Provincial Policy Statement require that York Region preserve and maintain greenways to the extent possible.
6. Modify existing and future road lighting infrastructure to lessen the impact on the surrounding environment and wildlife habitat and corridors.

Implementation strategies for each of the above recommended policies are detailed in Chapter 4 of Issue Paper No. 4. These strategies help to build mitigation practices into the development of infrastructure projects as early as possible in order to minimize impacts on the natural and environmental features and systems of the Region.

NEXT STEPS ON THE ISSUE PAPERS

These are the first four drafts in the series of Issue Papers that will be developed as part of the TMP Update project. The anticipated next steps for these four Issue Papers in the project are as follows:

- Improve on the graphics to complement the contents.
- Upload these draft Papers onto the Region's TMP Update website.
- Inform the TMP Update by considering the policies and strategies in the assessment of network development and program analysis.
- Use as background material and present the recommended policies, programs, and network improvements at the next Public Consultation Centre (PCC) in Fall 2008.
- Refine the Issue Papers considering public and stakeholder input.

- Finalize the Issue Papers and integrate them as part of the TMP Update study report documentation.

The study team is also in the process of completing the drafts of the remaining two Issue Papers and they will be communicated to Committee and Council in Fall 2008.

RELATIONSHIP TO VISION 2026

The Vision 2026 goals include managed and balanced growth, infrastructure for a growing Region, and responding to the needs of our residents and engaging communities. The policies and programs identified in these Issue Papers will impact positively on these goals by communicating to residents, and providing measures to address traffic congestion and infrastructure impacts.

These policies and programs will also promote alternative modes of transportation and encourage the adoption of a healthy lifestyle behaviour while minimizing the impact on the natural environment due to reductions in green house gas emissions and air pollutants from transportation sources. The goal is to promote alternative modes of transportation resulting in a more liveable community.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report does not have any direct financial impacts.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipal representatives are part of the TMP Update study's Technical Advisory Committee and their input and assistance in the development of the Master Plan are extremely important. The Transportation Master Plan Update provides the framework for which long term growth and development across the local municipalities can be supported. The policies and strategies identified in these four Issue Papers are proactive and recommend partnerships with local municipalities to develop appropriate land uses to support transit, pedestrian and cycling trips. It also recommends working with local municipalities to implement a coordinated network of commuter bike lanes and supporting facilities identified in the Region's Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan to assist in managing traffic congestion.

Technical Advisory Committee members including staff from local municipalities have had an opportunity to review and provide input to earlier drafts of these Issue Papers.

7. CONCLUSION

The first four Issue Papers for the Transportation Master Plan Update focus on *Fostering the Public's Understanding of Sustainable Transportation Issues, Managing Traffic Congestion, Implementation of Transit Oriented Development, and Assessing Impacts on Natural Heritage and Environmental Features*.

An overview of the policies and supporting implementation strategies recommended in the Issue Papers are presented here. The goals of these first four Papers are to develop ways to build awareness and educate the public on the Region's sustainable transportation issues, and propose practical measures and initiatives to address traffic congestion and infrastructure impacts. The contents of the Issue Papers are intended to stimulate discussion and input for the Transportation Master Plan Update.

The remaining Issue Papers in the series of six topics will be the subject of future Committee reports.

For more information on this report, please contact Richard Hui, Program Manager, Transportation Planning, Infrastructure Planning Branch (905) 830-4444 at Ext. 1578, or, Paul May, Director, Infrastructure Planning at Ext. 5029.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)