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HIGHWAY 407 INTERCHANGE IMPROVEMENT STUDY

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, June 5, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works and Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council endorse the Town of Markham's request for York Region to be a co-proponent in a traffic and financial model study to examine additional ramps for Highway 407 at Ninth Line (Y.R. 69) and the new Markham Bypass (Y.R. 48).
2. Council authorize York Region staff to engage a consultant to assist in conducting an expanded traffic and financial model study to include all potential interchange improvement opportunities along Highway 407 in York Region.
3. Council authorize full Regional funding of the expanded traffic and financial model study using funds from the Transportation and Works Department budget.
4. The Regional Clerk forward copies of this report to the Clerks of the Towns of Markham and Richmond Hill, City of Vaughan, MTO, and 407ETR.

2. PURPOSE

This purpose of this report is to address a request from the Town of Markham and to seek Council's approval for York Region to be a co-proponent of a traffic and financial model study to examine all potential ramp additions to Highway 407 interchanges in York Region including opportunities at Ninth Line, the new Markham Bypass, Leslie Street, Centre Street, Islington Avenue, Kipling Avenue, and Martin Grove Road. The other co-proponents in the study would be the Towns of Markham and Richmond Hill and the City of Vaughan.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Town of Markham Request

At its meeting of February 28, 2006, the Town of Markham's Council approved recommendations including that:

- *the Region of York be requested to finance 50% of a traffic and financial model for the outstanding Hwy 407 ramps at 9th Line and Markham Bypass; and that*
- *staff in conjunction with the Region of York be authorized to retain on a sole preferred supplier basis a consultant to undertake a traffic and financial model for the northbound access ramps to Hwy 407 for 9th Line and Markham Bypass.*

The recommendations stem from the Town's staff report to General Committee, which noted that the Ninth Line and Markham Bypass interchanges with Highway 407 do not provide for northbound traffic to access either the westbound or eastbound lanes of Highway 407. As a result, drivers are making U-turns on Ninth Line to gain access to Highway 407 even though U-turn restrictions have been implemented by the Region. With the opening of the Markham Bypass extension south of Highway 407 expected in 2007, similar U-turn manoeuvres on the Bypass road are anticipated. Recognizing the U-turn manoeuvres and public safety issues, additional mitigation measures (e.g., medians, etc.) may also be considered by 407ETR.

Based on correspondence between the Town of Markham, 407ETR and MTO, it was confirmed that, under the Agreement between 407ETR and the Province, there is no obligation for 407ETR to provide the south-oriented ramps at Ninth Line or the Markham Bypass. ETR407 staff have advised the Town that they would be prepared to consider a business case which would outline future revenue from traffic utilizing the ramps and the payback period for the capital and operating costs associated with constructing each ramp. As a result, a traffic and financial model study would need to be undertaken which could estimate future use of each ramp and revenue forecasts. The modeling study would likely have to be undertaken by a preferred firm who is qualified to update past models completed for Highway 407. Funding for this study was recommended to be on a 50/50 basis between the Town of Markham and York Region.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Highway 407 is a key part of the road network infrastructure in southern York Region and there are several locations where ramp or interchange improvements are needed to serve the existing traffic and forecasted growth in York Region. In addition to the interchanges at Ninth Line and the new Markham Bypass, other locations where new ramps or interchange improvements need consideration include Highway 407 at:

- Leslie Street
- Centre Street
- Islington Avenue
- Kipling Avenue
- Martin Grove Road

Highway 407 at Leslie Street currently has a partial interchange and does not have direct access ramps to/from the east on Highway 407. This results in some of the East Beaver Creek and Commerce Valley commercial area, and other Richmond Hill traffic having to use Highway 7 and an adjacent Highway 407 interchange as an alternative route to get to their destination.

An interchange at Centre Street was originally proposed to be constructed by the Province but was deferred to a later date due to concerns expressed by Vaughan. This study will help identify its need and allow York Region to develop a position on its construction or the implications of its deferment.

Travel routes using Highway 407 to/from the areas of Islington Avenue, Kipling Avenue, and Martin Grove Road are also circuitous since there are no immediate interchanges to serve the surrounding communities and expected growth. Future travel demands will place additional pressure on the existing surrounding road network in southern Vaughan and the Region.

Expanding the above mentioned Highway 407 traffic and financial model study to cover the entire southern York Region is a viable option. It would provide for a comprehensive review and analysis of Highway 407 improvement opportunities and system implications.

Discussions with staff at the Towns of Markham and Richmond Hill and the City of Vaughan have been positive and each of the local municipalities have agreed to be co-proponents should this study be expanded to cover the entire southern York Region area.

It is anticipated that this study will be completed in 2007 as local municipal Council endorsement of the study will be required in late 2006.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Since the study is examining the improvement of Regional road access to Highway 407, staff is recommending that York Region provide 100% of the study cost. The cost of the study for just the Town of Markham interchanges would be in the order of \$75,000. With the recommended study area expansion, the cost of the entire study is expected to be in the order of \$100,000. The study cost will be covered within the existing Transportation and Works Department budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

While addressing the Town of Markham's request to examine Highway 407 ramp opportunities at the Ninth Line and Markham Bypass locations, the expanded study will also assess other interchange improvement opportunities in York Region to improve Highway 407 accessibility to and from Regional roads.

Any additional Highway 407 ramps and interchange improvements will help divert traffic from some of the local municipal roads and reduce circuitous, undesirable and unsafe turning manoeuvres to gain access to/from Highway 407. The interchange improvements would also facilitate better accessibility to employment and residential areas in southern York Region.

7. CONCLUSION

A traffic and financial model study is needed to advise the Region, local municipalities, MTO, and 407ETR of the potential travel demands and financial implications of ramp improvements at selected Highway 407 interchange locations. This report seeks Council endorsement of the Town of Markham's request for York Region to be a co-proponent in the traffic and financial model study.

In addition, it seeks Council to authorize staff to expand the study area to cover Highway 407 locations in the Town of Richmond Hill and the City of Vaughan. Expanding the study area to include all potential interchange facilities on Highway 407 in southern York Region will provide a comprehensive review of the ramp improvement and system opportunities.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.