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SMART COMMUTE INITIATIVE 2004-05 UPDATE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, August 23, 2005, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Regional Council of the status of the Smart Commute Initiative, and the development of Transportation Management Associations (TMA) in York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

The central objective of TDM programs is to change travel behaviour by reducing single-occupant vehicle (SOV) trips. This is achieved by promoting a variety of transportation programs that encourage more efficient use of the existing transportation infrastructure and services, including:

- Transit improvements such as convenient transit routings and transit stops with shelters.
- Rideshare matching (carpool) and vanpool program.
- Emergency-ride-home program.
- Parking management.
- Marketing and promotion of alternative transportation modes and services.
- Pedestrian and bicycle network and facility planning.
- Shuttle services.
- Variable work hours.

3.2 Transportation Management Associations (TMA)

TMAs are non-profit, member-controlled organisations aimed at providing sustainable transportation solutions as well as improved mobility and accessibility in a specific development area. The institutional nature of TMAs provides a framework from which transportation demand management programs are promoted, applied and managed. Thus, TMAs are essentially local service delivery agencies of TDM measures.

3.3 Smart Commute Initiative

The Smart Commute Initiative is to deliver TDM programs and services to the GTA+Hamilton area through a two-tier administrative framework. An umbrella group called the Smart Commute Association (SCA) with overall responsibility for the project will assist various municipal, institutional and private sector partners in establishing a network of TMAs across the GTA+Hamilton region. In addition to an expansion of the Black Creek Regional TMA, two new TMAs were proposed for York Region.

The SCA will develop an array of TDM strategies including ride-matching for carpooling; guaranteed emergency ride home; program modules such as employer vanpools; TDM in development review and; a regional marketing and education campaign. Additionally, the SCA will co-ordinate efforts to form local networks of employers, developers and others in promoting transportation choices and offering TDM services through the TMAs.

3.4 Regional Council Commitments

York Region is a founding partner, and since 2001 a funding partner of the Black Creek Regional TMA. Renamed Smart Commute Association of Black Creek, SC-BC is the first TMA in Ontario and was the model for the development of the Smart Commute Initiative, a GTA+Hamilton TDM project that is receiving funding from the Government of Canada through its Urban Transportation Showcase Program (UTSP).

Regional Council on April 17, 2003 approved York Region's participation in the Smart Commute Initiative and endorsed \$120,000 in 2004 and \$230,000 in each of 2005 and 2006 as York Region's financial contribution to the project. On January 22, 2004, Regional Council authorised staff to take the lead in implementing the Smart Commute Initiative through Clause No. 10, Report No. 1 of the Transportation and Works Committee.

Further, on May 20, 2004, Regional Council gave approval to formalise the funding agreement negotiated with Transport Canada for the Smart Commute Initiative and authorisation to hire contract staff to begin the work of delivering the programs and services of the SCA.

3.5 Municipal Partners

With so many municipal partners involved in the Smart Commute Initiative, York Region took the lead by being the administrative representative of the project in signing the funding contribution agreement with the Government of Canada. Of the eight UTSP projects across Canada, the Smart Commute Initiative was the first to sign the contribution agreement and the first to proceed to implementation. The contribution agreement was signed on May 22, 2004.

The Smart Commute Initiative is unique among the UTSP projects in its multi-partner nature and innovative in its core objectives of improving air quality and reducing car dependence through soft infrastructure means.

In addition to York Region, the other major municipal partners are the City of Toronto, Regions of Durham, Peel and Halton and the City of Hamilton. As well, a number of local municipalities are involved including the Town of Richmond Hill, Town of Markham, City of Vaughan, Town of Newmarket, City of Mississauga and City of Brampton. The municipal partners contribute to the project through financial as well as in-kind contributions.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been established that defines the roles and responsibilities of the municipal partners in the project.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Since the signing of the contribution agreement in May 2004, a project steering committee was struck to direct the overall implementation of the project. York Region currently holds the chair of this steering committee. The steering committee has been very active in overseeing the initial steps of the project. The following sections of text describe the accomplishments of the project so far.

4.1 Smart Commute Association (SCA)

Smart Commute Association office with five staff has been established at the former Borough of East York Civic Centre at 850 Coxwell Avenue in Toronto.

A voluntary advisory committee, chaired by Dr. Gordon Chong, has been created to provide expert advice to the SCA. A media launch of the Initiative, lead by Dr. Chong, was held on June 1, 2005 at the Toronto Board of Trade office in Toronto. The Smart Commute Initiative was billed as the largest auto trip reduction project of its kind in Canada. The launch was well attended by the media with coverage in print, radio and television lasting several days after the event.

A technical committee consisting of SCA, TMA and municipal staff has also been established to provide a forum for technical discussions and input to the implementation of the Smart Commute Initiative.

4.2 Transportation Management Associations

In conjunction with the Towns of Richmond Hill and Markham, a new TMA centred on the areas surrounding the interchange at Highways 404 and 7 was developed and launched in July 2004. The programs and services of Smart Commute 404-7 TMA are being delivered through the Markham Board of Trade and Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce. 404-7 TMA is the second operating TMA in Ontario.

Regional staff is working with Town of Newmarket staff and politicians to develop a new TMA centred on Newmarket. A draft work plan for the establishment of the new TMA has been developed. A working committee of municipal and private sector staff has been

struck and two meetings of this committee have been held. The first stakeholder meeting involving private sector, institutional sector and municipal staff was held in July 2005. This new TMA is expected to be launched later this year.

SC-BC (formerly Black Creek TMA) has expanded its services to most of the City of Vaughan and further east in the City of Toronto.

Elsewhere across the GTA+Hamilton region, new TMAs are being developed in northeast Toronto, Mississauga, and Brampton.

4.3 York Region Activities

As an employer, York Region has taken a few steps in furthering its commitment to establish TDM as an integral component of York Region's Transportation Master Plan.

York Region is leading by example by instituting TDM programs and policies into its employee benefits package. The TDM programs currently available to employees include transit ticket discount, compressed work week and flexible work hours.

Staff is developing a comprehensive employee trip reduction (ETR) program that will expand the TDM programs and services. The ETR program will be the subject of a separate report to Committee and Council later in 2005.

4.4 Actions Taken by Other Partners

Other municipal partner actions include the following:

- Peel Region staff is assisting Mississauga and Brampton to establish new TMAs in those local municipalities.
- City of Toronto staff is piloting an employee trip reduction program and working to develop two new TMAs in Toronto.
- Durham Region has developed and is piloting a bus shuttle module.

The success of the Smart Commute Initiative depends entirely on the degree of commitment of the private sector, institutional sector and municipal government employers to apply TDM programs and services within their operations. As such, all activities of this project involve partners from these three sectors.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Confirmed funding for roughly two-thirds of the Smart Commute Initiative budget for the period ending March 2007 is available from Transport Canada and municipal partners. The remaining funding will come from the private and institutional sector and program users. York Region's contribution has already been approved and budgeted for 2005. No additional funding is required as a result of this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local TMAs deliver programs and services directly to employers and their employees. The benefits to local businesses include improved ability to attract and retain employees, improved employee productivity, reduced lost employee time to illness, reduced parking requirements, and improved corporate image. For the local municipalities, the benefits of this project include reduced local traffic congestion and improved ability to retain and attract new businesses to locate in York Region.

7. CONCLUSION

The Smart Commute Initiative is now one year into its implementation. The complex multi-partner nature of the project makes it much more challenging to implement compared to the other UTSP projects. York Region is the lead partner and is working with the other partners to move the project forward.

Important first steps of the project accomplished include:

- Establishment and staffing of the SCA office.
- Development and launch of a second operating TMA in York Region.
- On-going development work to establish several other TMAs.
- York Region is leading by example through its role as the administrative lead for the project and its efforts to provide TDM programs and services to employees.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.