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#### **YORK REGION EMPLOYEE TRIP REDUCTION PROGRAM**

**The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, September 22, 2005, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:**

##### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council approve the introduction of an employee auto trip reduction (YRETR) program for Regional employees under the proposed Work Plan.
2. Staff proceed to implement Phase 1 of the Work Plan subject to senior management approval.
3. Staff report back on the progress of each phase of the YRETR program.
4. The Regional Clerk send a copy of this report to the Clerks at the Towns of Newmarket and Aurora.

##### **2. PURPOSE**

This report is seeking Council approval to develop an employee trip reduction program under the proposed Work Plan and approval to implement Phase 1 of the program subject to senior management approval.

##### **3. BACKGROUND**

An auto trip reduction program is a series of programs and services that encourage or require employees to use alternative modes of transportation to driving alone, to reduce the amount of travel or to avoid travel altogether. Such programs and services can include parking management, carpooling, vanpooling, transit incentives, shuttle service, walking/cycling, telecommuting, compressed work week, flexible work hours, or tele/video-conferencing.

###### **3.1 Alternatives to Driving Alone**

There can be a number of alternatives to driving alone to work. They include public transit, car/van-pooling and walking/cycling. However, depending on the home and work locations, some of these alternatives are not available. For instance, if there is no transit service within a typical walk distance from an employee's home, then public transit is not a reasonable option. If the work location is more than 2 kilometres from home, then

walking to work is not a reasonable option. Similarly, cycling to work is a reasonable option typically if the workplace is within 5 kilometres of home. Car or van-pooling is an option only if there are services available that allow employees to find carpool partners and offer incentives.

### **3.2 Options for Reducing Travel**

There are also a number of alternatives that can reduce or eliminate travel altogether. Policies such as compressed work week and flexible work hours reduce the number of days of commuting or shifts the work commute onto the shoulder of the peak rush periods. Tele- or video-conferencing are programs that allow meetings to occur with participants at different locations. They generally reduce the number of work related trips during the day between peak periods. Other policies such as telecommuting can eliminate the commute entirely. Telecommuting is the practice of doing work at home or at an office close to home for some part of the work week. It is not normal practice to have an employee telecommute an entire week.

York Region currently has employee policies in place for compressed work week, flexible work hours and transit ticket discount.

### **3.3 Benefits of Reducing Vehicle Travel**

The introduction of alternative travel modes provides benefits to both employers and employees, and ultimately our community as a whole. They include:

- Improved air quality from reduced air pollution emitted from lesser number of vehicles on the road. If a worker that currently drives alone to work daily, takes an alternative mode of transport such as transit or carpool only 1 day a month, that worker would reduce greenhouse gas emission by 60 kg per year. If every car driver were to do the same by randomly picking one day a month to try an alternative mode, there would be an instant 5% reduction in traffic congestion. If all current car drivers use an alternative mode more frequently at 1 day a week, the reduction in traffic congestion would be 20%.
- Reduced personal stress from not having to fight traffic for the daily commute. Stress from commuting is known to have an impact on worker productivity.
- Improved personal health. Research has shown that people who drive to work on a regular basis are generally 6% heavier than those who use alternative modes. Using public transit, walking and cycling are active modes of transportation that improves personal health as well as saves money.
- Reduced facility costs such as additional parking infrastructure. Where there is a shortage of parking spaces, providing alternatives to driving, and therefore avoiding the need for additional parking capacity, has been shown to be a much cheaper and healthier solution.
- Improved ability for the employer to attract and retain new employees. It is a known fact that potential and existing employees are more likely to choose an employer that provides commuting choices.

Typically, no one commute option can satisfy the commuting needs of all employees. Therefore, a package of programs and services must be developed. The proposed YRETR program presented in section 4 is premised on existing Regional policies and objectives that speak to the York Region's vision on air quality.

## **4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS**

### **4.1 Rationale for the YRETR Program**

The following sub-sections present the rationale for proposing the YRETR program.

#### **4.1.1 Leadership**

Air quality is a major public issue that has implications for the residents and businesses in York Region. Recognising the importance of this issue, Regional Council has among other things adopted Vision 2026 and struck a Corporate Clean Air Task Force and approved York Region's participation in various GTA initiatives with air quality implications. These actions speak to the leadership role that Regional Council has taken. In keeping with that leadership role, it would be useful for York Region as a major employer to implement an employee trip reduction program on which it can then promote to other employers and businesses to adopt.

York Region has in fact already taken a few steps in the area of employee trip reduction. The current employee policies of providing a 50% discount on York Region Transit tickets, compressed work week, and flexible work hours all lend themselves to reducing auto travel. This report proposes to take these steps further to provide a comprehensive package of alternative commute options for York Region employees.

By endorsing a comprehensive employee trip reduction program, York Region will be the first Region in the GTA (including the City of Toronto) to do so. This would be another signal of York Region's leadership in the area of air quality and auto trip reduction.

#### **4.1.2 Corporate Clean Air Task Force**

This task force is mandated to identify, develop and recommend department-specific Corporate Clean Air Actions and to incorporate the recommended actions and plans into a comprehensive Regional Air Quality Policy. An employee trip reduction program has been identified as a possible Regional initiative with significant air quality improvement potential.

#### **4.1.3 20/20 - The Way to Clean Air**

York Region is a participant in the City of Toronto's Public Health social marketing campaign 20/20 – The Way to Clean Air. The goal of 20/20 is to help individuals and families across the GTA to reduce home energy use by 20% and vehicle use by 20%. This campaign targets transportation and home energy use as major contributors to air pollution and climate change.

#### **4.1.4 Smart Commute Initiative**

York Region is the lead agency of the multi-partner Smart Commute Initiative, a project designed to deliver transportation demand management (TDM) programs and services through the Smart Commute Association and local Transportation Management Associations (TMA) across the GTA+Hamilton region. As part of Smart Commute Initiative, a Newmarket-Aurora area TMA is being developed to bring together employers and businesses to address common transportation issues. York Region, by virtue of its leading role in the Smart Commute Initiative and as a major employer in Newmarket, is very much involved in the development of the TMA. Regional staff is working with staff from the Towns of Newmarket and Aurora to develop the TMA. The goal of the TMA is to have employer and business members develop, implement and offer TDM programs services to their respective employees. To this end, York Region would be taking a leading role, and leading by example, by endorsing an employee trip reduction program, which is just a collection or package of TDM programs and services. By doing so, the example set by York Region can be offered up as evidence of the benefits of TDM and employee trip reduction programs to other employers and businesses.

#### **4.2 Proposed YRETR Work Plan and Schedule**

A three-phased approach is proposed for the YRETR program as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Proposed Work Plan and Schedule

| <b>Phase</b> | <b>Objectives</b>                                                                        | <b>Schedule</b>         |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1            | Develop and introduce quick hits (early success programs and services).                  | Fall 2005 – Spring 2006 |
| 2            | Develop and introduce more aggressive programs and services.                             | Fall 2006 – Spring 2007 |
| 3            | Expand pilot programs to other appropriate Regional sites and improve levels of service. | Fall 2007 – Spring 2008 |

This work plan will develop and implement the YRETR program over a three-year period.

#### **4.3 Proposed Phase 1 Program**

The potential TDM programs and services that form Phase 1 of the YRETR Program is proposed to include the following:

- An information source on the YRETR program and employee sign-up for individual programs and services on the Region's intranet website will be developed.
- A carpooling program that provides a web-based ride-matching service allowing employees to find potential carpool partners. As well, as part of Phase 1, preferred

parking spots for carpool vehicles will be provided at the Administrative Centre in Newmarket to help ease the parking shortage there. Issues that will have to be addressed include program registration and enforcement of use of the preferred parking spots.

- A review of transit access for employees to determine whether the current 50% transit ticket discount is effective in encouraging employees to take transit and an examination of how it can be improved will be conducted. The current take-up is very low at about 60 employee purchases per month. The review will take into account the arrival of Viva service to the Newmarket area in November 2005 and the subsequent improvement in transit accessibility for employees.
- A walk/cycle to work program that will examine opportunities to improve the existing cycling facilities (bike racks and lockers) at the Regional Administrative Centre will be developed. Subsequent expansion of this program to other Regional buildings will be examined in Phases 2 and 3.
- A draft Regional telework (work-at-home) policy will be reviewed and proposed.
- An education/promotion campaign on the YRETR will be developed.

An inter-departmental project team consisting of representatives from all Regional departments has been formed to manage the YRETR program. Additional staff resources on specific issues will be brought into the project team or sub-groups when needed.

#### **4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026**

Vision 2026 includes action areas such as:

- promoting clean air policies and initiatives
- promoting alternative transportation methods that improve air quality, such as public transit and cycling
- ensuring mobility through accessible and affordable transportation
- providing for alternative forms of transportation such as walking and cycling

The YRETR program is an action in all of these areas.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

For each TDM program or service proposed as part of the YRETR program, a business case will be developed incorporating an analysis of costs and benefits. Each business case will be presented to senior management for review and approval before proceeding to implementation. Where the proposed TDM program or service has significant policy implications to York Region, a report for Committee and Council consideration will be prepared.

## **6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT**

York Region, as a major employer in Newmarket, is an active member of the Steering Committee that is developing a new TMA centred on the Newmarket-Aurora area. Towns of Newmarket and Aurora staff have been involved in the process.

The example that York Region will set by adopting a comprehensive employee trip reduction program will reflect an act of leadership on which local municipalities, and for that matter, other GTA regions and municipalities can emulate.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

An employee trip reduction program is a series of programs and services that encourage or require employees to use alternative modes of transportation to driving alone, to reduce the amount of travel or to avoid travel altogether. Such programs and services can include parking management, carpooling, vanpooling, transit incentives, shuttle service, walking/cycling, telecommuting, compressed work week, flexible work hours, or tele/video-conferencing.

In addition to contributing to the reduction in traffic congestion, introducing an employee trip reduction program is good corporate policy for any employer that is concerned about the health and productivity of its employees and its responsibility to the community in the area of air quality.

This report seeks Council approval to establish a comprehensive employee trip reduction program over a three-year period. TDM programs and services such as carpooling, improved transit access, parking management, telework and walking/cycling to work are proposed to be implemented mostly at the Regional Administrative Centre as part of Phase 1 of the YRETR program. Phases 2 and 3 will see the introduction of more aggressive programs and services and the expansion of them to other Regional sites to further entice employees to try alternative modes of transport to get to and from work.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.