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YORK REGION TRANSIT MARKHAM STOUFFVILLE HOSPITAL - TEMPORARY BUS LOOP

(Regional Council at its meeting on October 21, 2004 referred this Clause to the November 11, 2004, Transit meeting.)

The Transit Committee recommends:

- 1. The recommendations contained in the following report, September 30, 2004, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works, the Commissioner of Corporate Services and the Vice President, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation be adopted; and**
- 2. Further discussions and negotiations take place with Markham Stouffville Hospital and York Region with respect to the possible future acquisition of the site by the Region of York should the site be identified as the preferred permanent transit terminal location.**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council authorize a nominal value, five year lease agreement with the Markham Stouffville Hospital for the purposes of constructing a temporary bus loop.
2. The Regional Chair and Clerk be authorized to sign any necessary contract documents on behalf of the Region.
3. Funding for the construction of the temporary bus loop be shared between the York Region Transit 2005 capital budget (75%) and the Quick Start capital budget (25%).
4. York Region Transit, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation and Property Services staff be authorized to participate in the master planning exercise currently underway with Markham Stouffville Hospital and the Town of Markham.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to advise Transit Committee and Regional Council of the need for the construction of a temporary bus loop facility at the south-eastern end of the Region. Markham Stouffville Hospital, located in the Cornell community of Markham, is currently the eastern terminus for all York Region Transit (YRT) routes. Beginning September 2005, both YRT routes and the new Quick Start Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes will be terminating in the vicinity of the Hospital. As a result, an expanded bus

looping arrangement is required. As part of the master planning for both the Markham Stouffville Hospital expansion and the lands south of the Hospital, it is envisioned that a fully integrated, permanent transit facility will be constructed within the next three to five years.

3. BACKGROUND

The Cornell community is the terminus of transit services in the south-eastern part of the Region. A total of five York Region Transit routes currently terminate in Cornell and, beginning September 2005, the Quick Start Highway 7 and Markham North-South BRT routes will also terminate here. This area of the Region supports a densely developed and transit supportive residential community and is the location of the Markham Stouffville Hospital and associated medical facilities. Cornell is one of the largest trip generators in the Region and extensive expansion plans are underway for residential, commercial and institutional uses in the area.

As noted above, the Town of Markham and the Markham Stouffville Hospital are currently in the beginning stages of developing a Master Plan for both the Hospital and the lands surrounding the Hospital. Major expansion is planned for Markham Stouffville Hospital, including the construction of a Wellness Centre and the relocation of the Grace Hospital's long term care facility. The Town of Markham is also part of this process, in terms of both overall community planning, as well planning for the construction of a new community centre (in conjunction with the Hospital's Wellness Centre).

Upon completion of the Master Plan, it is envisioned that a permanent transit facility will be integrated into the Cornell community as either part of the future Hospital expansion and/or into the Town of Markham's new community centre. In the interim, until such time as the Master Planning process is complete and the actual transit facility is constructed (minimum three to five years), a temporary bus loop facility is required to handle the transit movements at the south-east end of the Region.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Although currently YRT buses are looping via an internal Hospital road, the arrangement cannot support further increases in service levels. In addition, YRT has been advised by the Hospital that, due to future expansion of Hospital facilities and associated construction activity, the current looping arrangement will cease to be available within the next 12-18 months.

Over the past several months, York Region Transit staff and representatives from the York Region Rapid Transit Project have met with representatives from both Markham Stouffville Hospital and the Town of Markham. The purpose of the meetings was to ensure that all parties were aware of the needs and benefits of a permanent transit facility and to jointly identify a suitable site for the temporary facility.

The future bus terminal will be a major transfer location between YRT core/local services and the Quick Start routes. In addition, the terminal will be the Region's eastern terminus of the BRT system and should provide for a convenient and integrated walk-in transit facility for both the residents of Cornell and Hospital employees/visitors.

In the interim, a number of bus looping alternatives have been investigated, including the potential of on-street looping. The on-street looping option has been rejected due to the number of buses involved (approximately 30 per hour) and their impact on the local community. In addition, it is estimated that the additional running time to loop on-street (minimum 5 minutes per run) would amount to approximately \$200,000 of increased operating costs per year.

Due to the level of traffic congestion in the area, the additional operating costs associated with on-street looping and the need for transit transfer/layover facilities, off-board fare equipment and passenger shelters, it was clear an off-street bus loop was required. There is a requirement for a total of eight bus bays (YRT – six, BRT – two), translating into approximately one hectare of property.

4.1 Preferred Site

Following a lengthy analysis of various locations, Markham Stouffville Hospital has offered YRT a parcel of land immediately adjacent to the York Region ambulance site (north side of Church Street, west of Country Glen Road). A map is appended to this report labelled as *Attachment 1*. It was determined by all parties that this site best meets the operational criteria and is the only property currently available to the Region at no cost.

4.1.1 Property/Construction Costs

Markham Stouffville Hospital has offered the Region the subject property on an interim basis and has even indicated interest in sale of the property. Current discussions are based on a lease arrangement which would be in place until such time as a permanent facility is constructed (three to five years). Of the four options considered, the preferred site is the least expensive in terms of costs for the actual bus bay construction and associated roadway/sidewalk improvements. At approximately \$500,000 (plus engineering costs), this expenditure is also less than the additional operating costs associated with on-street looping options during the three to five year period. In fact, it is estimated the additional on-street operating costs (including fuel, added travel time, etc.) would amount to approximately \$200,000 annually.

4.1.2 Safety and Convenience

The subject property is ideal in terms of being removed from future construction activity associated with both the Hospital expansion and the Town's new community centre. The preferred site also provides for safe and convenient pedestrian and bus movements. There is sufficient property on the southern portion of the site to provide a centre platform, pedestrian walkway connections and associated amenities. There is also the potential for sharing of washroom facilities (for drivers only) with the Region's ambulance station

located on the north-east corner of 9th Line and Church Street. Discussions are ongoing with EMS staff to resolve access and security issues associated with this proposal.

4.1.3 Master Planning Process

The subject property provides an ideal location for a bus loop for an interim (three to five year) period. During this time, the master planning process for both the Hospital expansion and the Town's community centre will be complete. It is envisioned that the construction of a fully integrated permanent transit facility will also be part of this process.

In the interim, York Region staff will work closely with the Town of Markham staff to ensure site plan approval, traffic management and any public consultation processes be followed to the satisfaction of the Town.

4.2 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 includes a goal statement relating to the provision of an integrated and accessible transit network. Part of this strategy includes optimal access for all residents to public transit. The recommendations of this report are consistent with the intent of these goal statements.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is estimated that the cost to construct the bus loop facility will be approximately \$500,000. This cost includes paving, curbing, sidewalk connections, lighting, shelter installation, fencing and landscaping. It is expected that approximately 25% of the cost will be funded by the York Rapid Transit Project, with the remaining 75% funded by YRT's 2005 capital (terminal facilities) budget.

Since the need for this facility was not anticipated as part of the original scope of work for the Rapid Transit Quick Start program, a change order is required to incorporate both the work and funding into the project. At this time it is predicted that there is sufficient funding within the \$150 million Quick Start budget to include the 25% portion for this loop.

There will be annual operating costs of approximately \$ 70,000 for the maintenance of the terminal for a period of up to five years. Funds have been included in the draft 2005 Business Plan and Budget to cover this expense. The lease itself is a nominal value lease.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The construction of a temporary bus loop on the subject Hospital lands will provide the residents of Cornell and the employees/visitors to the Hospital and associated medical facilities with convenient and safe access to public transit services. The proposed bus

loop will be integrated into the site insofar as landscaping treatment and pedestrian connections to the adjacent properties.

7. CONCLUSION

It is being recommended that Transit Committee endorse the subject report and give approval for York Region staff to enter into a land lease arrangement with the Markham Stouffville Hospital. Further, approval is being sought to fund the construction of the temporary bus loop and continue with the master planning process to identify the best location for the permanent transit facility.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause was included in the Agenda for the October 14, 2004 Committee meeting.)