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**TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNAL REQUEST – YONGE STREET
OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ CORRIDOR PARK
TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL**

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends:

- 1. The recommendations contained in the following report, September 21, 2005, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be adopted; and**
- 2. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing be advised that the Region of York endorses the installation of a traffic control signal on Yonge Street (Y.R.1) at the entrance to the Oak Ridges Moraine spine trail location and future trail parking, Town of Richmond; and**
- 3. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing be requested to pay the installation, operation and maintenance costs associated with the traffic signal installation:**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received by Committee and Council for direction on a proposed traffic control signal on Yonge Street (Y.R. 1) at the entrance to the Oak Ridges Moraine spine trail location and future trail parking, Town of Richmond Hill.
2. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Clerk of the Town of Richmond Hill, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to address a request from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, on behalf of the Province of Ontario (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing), for a traffic control signal on Yonge Street at the entrance to the proposed Oak Ridges Moraine spine trail and future trail parking. The requested traffic control signal is proposed approximately 500 metres south of Old Colony Road. *Attachment 1* shows the proposed location for the new traffic control signal.

3. BACKGROUND

Regional staff receives many requests for improvements to intersections and private entrances. These improvements range from a simple signal timing change and advance green indication to additional turning lanes and the installation of traffic control signals.

This report is prepared to present the details of a request for traffic control signal, staff position on the request and to seek Regional Council's direction.

3.1 Request for Consideration

On September 23, 2004, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced that the Province of Ontario and the owners of lands on the Oak Ridges Moraine in Richmond Hill had reached an agreement to exchange these owners' lands for provincially owned lands in Pickering. The purpose of the land exchange was to protect the last remaining natural corridor link between the eastern and western parts of the Oak Ridges Moraine in Richmond Hill. Under the agreement, 427 hectares (1,057 acres) of lands in Richmond Hill would come into public ownership (*Attachment 2*).

The Park lands are generally located between Bathurst Street and Bayview Avenue, north of Jefferson Sideroad and south of the community of Oak Ridges. The lands are generally in greenspace and agricultural use and contain the headwaters of three watersheds (Humber, Rouge and Don rivers) and a collection of natural heritage features such as kettle lakes, wetlands, bogs and significant forest tracts.

The primary purpose of the Park is to protect many ecological functions of the area and ensure continuity across the Oak Ridges Moraine. This is especially important in this location because the lands exist at a pinch point along the Yonge Street corridor in Richmond Hill, which is experiencing significant growth and development.

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority is currently having a management plan prepared for these lands which will address all aspects of park management including the establishment of pedestrian and wildlife linkages/corridors.

3.2 Public Use Access

As part of the agreement between the Province of Ontario and the Richmond Hill landowners, the owners will contribute \$3.5 million towards improvements to the Park lands, including construction of an east-west spine trail through the length of the park. As part of the management plan for the Park, the spine trail alignment and design concept has been prepared. The proposed spine trail will run the length of the Park, from Bathurst Street across Yonge Street to Bayview Avenue. In order to provide a trail that is attractive to users, a safe crossing of Yonge Street is required.

3.3 Wildlife Corridor Function

In addition to safely accommodating trail users across Yonge Street, the terms of reference for the management plan for the Park includes the need to address an ecological

connection across Yonge Street. Specifically, the Park needs to provide for the east-west movement of animals as well as a corridor that will provide for genetic dispersal of both plants and animals across the Oak Ridges Moraine.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

A consulting team was retained to complete the management plan for the Park. The plan is required to consider a number of options for both pedestrian and wildlife movement, including short term options for a pedestrian crossing of Yonge Street in conjunction with construction and opening of a spine trail system within the year. Long term options for wildlife and potentially pedestrian movement across Yonge Street are still being considered and will be subject to further investigation as the work on the management plan continues. Some of the wildlife crossing options being considered are discussed in Section 4.2.

As part of the land exchange agreement between the Province of Ontario and the Richmond Hill landowners, finalization of the location, and construction of the spine trail is to commence as soon as possible.

4.1 Pedestrian Crossing of Yonge Street

A number of options have been considered for implementation of the Spine Trail across Yonge Street in the short term. Options considered include diverting pedestrian traffic north along the Yonge Street right of way to the existing signalized intersection at Old Colony Road, diverting the pedestrian traffic south to Silver Maple Road, a future proposed new street, where signals could be installed when warranted or sooner, and finally, the preferred alignment, which includes the installation of a new traffic signal at the location of the access to the future parking area for access to the Park. In addition to these options, the consulting team considered the *do nothing* option but it was considered unacceptable as a result of the significant risk of Park users crossing Yonge Street traffic if there was no safe crossing provided.

Public and stakeholder input for the trail concept has been provided through participation in a Public Open House and on the Advisory Committee. The preferred alignment is based on the input received, in addition to safety concerns expressed by the current (developing groups) and future landowners (Ontario Realty Corporation).

This crossing, and the associated pedestrian crossing of Yonge Street, has been supported by the advisory team as the preferred short term solution for construction of the spine trail, to begin fall 2005. This location would provide a signalized access point for Park visitors and make access to Yonge Street safer, as well as allowing a safe crossing of Yonge Street for pedestrians and users of the Park. This location will not meet the warrants for traffic control signals or intersection pedestrian signals.

As part of the Management Plan, the consultants are also charged with proposing a long term solution for both pedestrian and wildlife movements across Yonge Street. The preliminary thoughts of the consulting team, subject to further public and stakeholder consultation are that this signal would accommodate pedestrians and traffic both the short and long term objectives of the Park.

4.2 Wildlife Crossing of Yonge Street

A preferred wildlife crossing is required as part of the management plan. Implementation of the preferred wildlife crossing is not, however, as time sensitive as the pedestrian crossing as it will be completed in a subsequent phase of Park management likely within 5 to 10 years.

Wildlife underpasses and overpasses have both been considered by the consulting team in the interest of protecting the ecological corridor function of the Oak Ridges Moraine. The preferred solution will be determined after significant consultation with the public and stakeholders. For the purposes of this report, staff notes that the consulting team is recommending that the signalized intersection continue to be used as the pedestrian crossing for the Oak Ridges Trail even in the event that a wildlife underpass or overpass is created in the future. Accommodating pedestrians within the wildlife overpass or underpass would not provide the same degree of safety for Park users (as the wildlife corridor should be unlit for maximum function) and would hinder the effectiveness of the structure for wildlife.

4.3 Traffic Control Signal Considerations

Regional staff applied the traffic signal warrant policy to the intersection of Yonge Street and the proposed entrance to the Oak Ridges Moraine spine trail location and future trail parking. The intersection does not meet the warrants for traffic control signals.

The current Region policy provides that signals should only be installed where warranted and, as such, staff does not recommend signals be constructed. If, however, signals are to be installed, the most appropriate location for the signals is at the future entrance to the Oak Ridges Moraine Spine Trail parking lot.

The improvements and associated cost for Yonge Street at the entrance to the proposed Oak Ridges Moraine spine trail and future trail parking would be the responsibility of the owners of the Park. The estimated cost to install signals is \$150,000.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Currently, Council policy does not provide for the funding of traffic control signals at private entrances. Therefore, the requested works at the Oak Ridges Moraine spine trail and future trail parking would have to be funded by others.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Town of Richmond Hill has, through staff and elected official representation on the Oak Ridges Corridor Park Advisory Committee, extended their support for the proposed traffic control signal to accommodate access to the Park and pedestrian use of the Oak Ridges spine trail.

7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report is to present to Committee and Council a request for a traffic control signal at the entrance to the proposed Oak Ridges Moraine spine trail and future trail parking to provide users a safe crossing of Yonge Street. Information is presented to request Committee and Council to direct staff on how to respond to the request for a traffic control signal on Yonge Street at the entrance to the proposed Oak Ridges Moraine spine trail and future trail parking.

To aid the decision making process, the report provides background information and the cost of the proposed improvement measures.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)