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SOUTHERN ONTARIO HIGHWAYS PROGRAM

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, September 19, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services and the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Provincial Ministers of Public Infrastructure Renewal and Transportation be applauded for initiating the first step towards multi-year infrastructure planning in the recent release of the *Southern Ontario Highways Program 2006-2010*, and that the Province be requested to:
 - Confirm a construction completion date for the Highway 404 extension to Glenwoods Avenue as endorsed by Regional Council.
 - Extend the *Southern Ontario Highways Program* to correspond with the 30 year timeframe of the *Places to Grow* Provincial growth plan by producing 10-year capital plans and 30-year Transportation Master Plans that cover highways, local and rapid transit funding, cross-boundary and boundary road funding, transportation demand management funding and GO Transit.
 - Better reflect a commitment to the Provincial growth plan by including annual updates of the *Southern Ontario Highway Program* to coincide with Provincial budget announcements.
2. The Province be requested to expedite the environmental assessment for the Highway 427 extension in the City of Vaughan to facilitate the early construction of this critical infrastructure.
3. Copies of this report be forwarded by the Regional Clerk to the Ontario Ministers of Transportation, Public Infrastructure Renewal and Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Clerks of the local municipalities in York Region.

2. PURPOSE

This report is to inform Regional Council of the release of the *Southern Ontario Highways Program 2006 to 2010* report and its implications on York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

On April 21, 2005, Regional Council adopted Clause 2 of Report No. 4 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee which reported on Provincial funding required for York Region's 30-year infrastructure needs. The report included recommendations that:

- Within the next 6 months, the Province of Ontario produce 30-year Transportation Master Plans and 10-year capital plans to complement the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and that the following services/infrastructure be covered; Provincial highways, local and rapid transit funding, cross-boundary and boundary road funding, hospital and related human services funding, GO Transit and natural heritage implementation funding.
- Staff report back regarding the specific timing of infrastructure within the Provincial 10 year capital plan.

The following sections provide an update on the two recommendations above.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Traffic congestion is an important issue with residents of York Region and the Greater Toronto Area. It is an issue that must be addressed at all levels of governments.

In June 2006, the Province released its first ever 5-Year Provincial highway capital plan, the *Southern Ontario Highways Program 2006 to 2010 (Council Attachment 1)*. The release of this Provincial highway capital plan should be applauded. The plan is timely and necessary because Southern Ontario is home to 90% of Ontario's population and is expected to grow by 3.7 million people over the next 25 years, an increase of almost 50% from the 2001 population of 7.8 million people.

4.1 Southern Ontario Highways Program (SOHP)

A 5-year, \$3.4 billion highway construction plan for Southern Ontario with \$1.4 billion for expansion projects and \$2.0 billion for rehabilitation projects, the SOHP is part of *Renew Ontario*, a five-year infrastructure investment plan for Ontario released in May 2005. The SOHP is touted as supporting the implementation of the principles and policies of the Provincial *Places to Grow* land use plan and its strategic investment objectives.

Based on the three themes of keeping roads safe for Ontarians, strengthening Ontario's infrastructure for the future and protecting the environment, overall this 5-year plan will:

- Add 130 kilometres to Ontario's highway system
- Build and replace 64 bridges

- Repair 1,600 kilometres of highways
- Repair 200 bridges

The Provincial report lists key 2006 projects, 2006 to 2010 highway expansion projects and 2006 to 2010 highway rehabilitation projects. Key expansion projects of the 5-year plan include:

- Six-lane widening of Highway 401 from Woodstock to Cambridge
- Six-lane widening of Highway 401 from Windsor to Tilbury
- Four-lane widening of Highway 7 from Highway 417 to Carleton Place
- High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on QEW from Oakville to Burlington
- HOV lanes on Highway 417 from Highway 416 to Palladium Drive in Ottawa
- Extending Highway 410 from Bovaird Drive to Highway 10 in Brampton
- Extending Highway 404 from Green Lane to Ravenshoe Road in York Region

The SOHP also listed future highway expansion projects that are in the planning stages beyond the priority 5-years. Details on each future expansion project are not included in the document other than the highway name and location of the project. This list was preceded by the following statement:

“While the list includes projects that are not part of the current five-year plan, they are subject to further study and prioritization, **and may be brought forward.**” (Our emphasis.)

This is an important distinction that allows adjustment of the program in subsequent years. York Region maintains similar flexibility in the rollout of its \$6 billion 10-year capital forecast which is amended annually by Council through budget approval.

4.2 Provincial Highway Projects in York Region

The following projects affecting York Region are identified in the SOHP:

- In 2006, the Province is investing \$762 million to expand and repair highway infrastructure in Southern Ontario. The only project listed for York Region relates to traffic signal and intersection improvements at three interchanges on Highway 404, at Aurora Road, Bloomington Road and Stouffville Road.
- For the 2006 to 2010 highway expansion program, projects in York Region includes:
 - Highway 400 interchange improvements at Teston Road and King Road with target completions of 2007 and 2009 respectively. Note that the Teston Road interchange improvement is a \$15 million project being completed by York Region. The Provincial contribution to the project is only \$3 million or 20%.
 - Highway 400 widening from 6 to 8 lanes from Major Mackenzie Drive to Teston Road with a target start date of 2008 and a target completion date of 2010.

- Highway 404 northbound HOV lane from Sheppard Avenue in Toronto to Beaver Creek in Richmond Hill, which is already underway with a target completion date of 2007.
- Highway 404 extension structures for the Mount Albert Road and Green Lane underpasses, both of which are targeted to be completed in 2007.
- Highway 404 extension from Green Lane to Ravenshoe Road with a target start date of 2008. The completion date of this extension is unknown since the target completion date is given as “beyond 2010”.
- Under future highway expansion, the SOHP included the following projects with no details provided:
 - Highway 400 – Toronto to Barrie
 - Highway 427 Transportation Corridor in Vaughan
 - GTA-West Transportation Corridor

4.3 Where the SOHP Falls Short in Implementing *Places to Grow* Plan

Included in the April 2005 report on York Region’s 30-year infrastructure projects was a table listing transportation projects requiring Provincial funding that are critical to the continuing growth of York Region and that are needed to support the growth projections as contained in the Provincial *Places to Grow* land use plan. The 30-year infrastructure needs are recommendations of the 2002 Transportation Master Plan and were identified as being necessary infrastructure to support the Provincial 30-year growth projection for York Region. This list is presented again as *Council Attachment 2*. Key highway projects identified in the 30-year infrastructure needs list that are not in the SOHP document include:

- Commitments to the longer term projects
- Highway 427 extension further north to the Bradford Bypass
- Highway 404 extension north of Ravenshoe Road
- Bradford Bypass
- HOV lanes on Highways 400, 404 and 427 within urban areas
- New interchanges or interchange improvements at a number of locations
- Commuter parking lots
- Transportation demand management
- Funding for boundary and cross-boundary roads

4.4 Comments on the SOHP

Although the SOHP is a good start, it does not go far enough. Future editions should consider the following:

- The capital program should be extended to at least 10-years with a 30-year master plan. This is similar to the capital programs developed by York Region and other

GTA Regions and is essential in coordinating large projects given the long lead times involved.

- The 10-year capital program and 30-year master plan must contain commitments to all of the infrastructure improvements identified in *Attachment 2*.
- The Ontario Ministry of Transportation must commit to an annual update of the capital program in order to keep it current.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no financial implication resulting from this report. However, for every project in the 30-year infrastructure needs list that the Province does not fund, there will be implications on York Region's capital program.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Provincial infrastructure affects local municipal infrastructure as well as Regional infrastructure. This report should be circulated to the area municipalities for information.

7. CONCLUSION

In June 2006, the Province of Ontario released the *Southern Ontario Highways Program 2006 to 2010* document, a 5-year highway construction capital plan. While the Province should be applauded for taking this step, the capital plan falls short in York Region in meeting the infrastructure needs to support the growth projections as contained in the Provincial *Places to Grow* land use plan. In particular, no target completion date is provided for the extension of Highway 404 to Ravenshoe Road.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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