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FRAMEWORK FOR A YORK-SIMCOE CROSS BOUNDARY TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM NEEDS ANALYSIS

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated October 20, 2011, from the Acting Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council endorse the framework for a York-Simcoe Cross Boundary Transportation System Needs Analysis as described in this report, to be conducted as an in-house study jointly between York Region and Simcoe County staff.
2. A copy of this report be forwarded by the Regional Clerk to the Ministry of Transportation and the Clerks at the County of Simcoe, Bradford West Gwillimbury and York Region's nine area municipalities.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides a summary of the planning for York-Simcoe cross boundary transportation needs, including planning for the Bradford Bypass, and seeks Council endorsement for a framework to review and update the assessment of current transportation system needs through an in-house study to be conducted jointly by York Region and Simcoe County staff.

3. BACKGROUND

York-Simcoe cross boundary transportation needs were identified as early as 1979

The issue of transportation needs and traffic congestion in the area south of Lake Simcoe was first examined by MTO in 1979 followed by two additional studies in 1984 and 1989. The 1989 study identified the long-term need for a Provincial highway north of Bradford, linking Highway 400 to the Highway 404 extension (the Bradford Bypass).

The previous needs studies indicated that the east-west travel demand in the area is comprised in large part of long distance north-south trips making a crossover between

Highway 400 and Highway 404. The Bradford Bypass EA acknowledged that these trips are a provincial responsibility, and are distinct from locally-generated trips.

MTO completed the EA for the Bradford Bypass in 2002 and is protecting the corridor

MTO initiated an EA for the Bradford Bypass concurrent with the EA for the Highway 404 extension in 1993 and approval was granted by the Ministry of Environment for both EA's on August 28, 2002.

In 2004, the Province designated the approved alignments for the Bradford Bypass as a Controlled Access Highway Corridor under the Highway Traffic Act, thereby protecting the route from development until the highway is constructed. The Bradford Bypass is planned as a 16 km, 4 lane highway connecting Highway 400 in the County of Simcoe to the Highway 404 extension in the Regional Municipality of York. The EA approved alignment is shown in *Attachment 1*.

York Region's Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan identify the need to address inter-regional travel crossing the York-Simcoe boundary

The following policies are specified in the Region's Official Plan (2010) in support of addressing the increasing demand for inter-regional travel between York Region and Simcoe County:

Policy 7.2.53

To work with the Province and local municipalities to plan for and protect the following corridors and facilities:
c. the Bradford Bypass.

Policy 7.2.61

To plan and co-ordinate cross-boundary transportation needs with adjacent municipalities and appropriate agencies.

The technical analysis undertaken for the Transportation Master Plan reconfirmed the increasing cross-boundary travel needs and for implementation of the Bradford Bypass by 2031. The Transportation Master Plan identified the following:

Section 6.3 Road Network Issues

The following list of major road network improvements are recommended in the plan and their rationale for inclusion are presented below.

Bradford Bypass – includes a 4-lane Provincial expressway between Highway 400 and Highway 404

- *An Environmental Assessment was approved in 2002 and the Province has designated it as a controlled access highway*
- *Key infrastructure for accommodating future travel demand from Simcoe County*
- *Supports economic development in East Gwillimbury*
- *Diverts inter-regional traffic and relieves significant pressure on Regional and municipal roads*
- *Inter-regional corridor for goods movement between Highway 400 and 404, and*
- *Completes a comprehensive network of expressway bus services.*

Council has continued to advocate Provincial transportation investment to support Growth Plan objectives

Council has consistently advocated that the Province implement key infrastructure in support of the Growth Plan, including the Bradford Bypass. The need for the Bradford Bypass has been discussed and advocated for in a number of Council reports, including:

- Clause No. 10 in Report No. 1 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, January 2011 entitled *Proposed Amendment No. 1 to the Growth Plan: An Amendment and Implementation Tools for the Simcoe Sub-area.*
- Clause No. 1 in Report No. 6 of the Transportation Services Committee, June 2010 entitled *Coordinated Road Network Plan for Northern York Region.*
- Clause No. 1 in Report No. 6 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, September 2009 entitled *Provincial Transportation Infrastructure Requirements for 'Places to Grow' - Status Update.*
- Clause No. 5 in Report No. 6 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, September 2009 entitled *Places to Grow – Simcoe Area: A Strategic Vision for Growth – Environmental Bill of Rights Registry Posting 010-6860 Regional Comments.*
- Clause No. 2 in Report No. 3 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, March 2008 entitled *Need for Bradford Bypass.*
- Clause No. 4 in Report No. 3 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, March 2007 entitled *Provincial Infrastructure Required to Implement the "Places to Grow" Plan in York Region.*

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Without the Bradford Bypass, the York-Simcoe cross boundary travel needs will continue to pressure Regional and Municipal roads

With increased population and employment growth in the Simcoe Area, future conditions dictate that there will be much more travel from Simcoe County to or through York Region for work, recreational and institutional needs. Currently, there are only three major road connections between Simcoe County and York Region (Yonge Street,

Highway 400, and Highway 27). All three routes are congested during peak periods. MTO is currently preparing the detailed design for widening of Highway 400 from 6 to 8 lanes from Major Mackenzie Drive to Highway 9. Although this planned highway improvement will address some of the growing travel demand along Highway 400, it will not address crossover trips between Highway 400 and Highway 404.

In addition to the three road connections, the GO Rail service to Barrie is the only major transit connection between Simcoe County and York Region.

When the Bradford Bypass EA was conducted, the growth projections for both York Region and the Simcoe Area were much lower than the current Growth Plan. The need for the Bradford Bypass even based on the previous lower forecasted population and employment was accepted and the route was EA approved.

York Region has already taken significant steps to improve the transportation systems in this area including construction of a 4-lane high capacity arterial connection between Highways 400 and 404 using Highway 9, Bathurst Street and Green Lane to serve as an interim east-west facility prior to the construction of the Bradford Bypass.

York Region has and is continuing to do its part to improve the arterial road network in the area but this is not enough to address the increasing demand of longer distance trips between Highway 400 and Highway 404.

Provincial Growth Plan does not currently include the Bradford Bypass but does include the need for a Simcoe Area Transportation Study

In 2006, the Province released the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, which sets out a vision and policies to better manage growth, to plan for complete communities, and to protect the natural environment. The Growth Plan has been in effect since 2006, with provision for review and update every 5 years.

The Growth Plan, in addition to identifying population and employment forecasts for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to 2031, also identifies major transportation infrastructure needs for the same horizon. The Growth Plan includes the Highway 404 extension to Ravenshoe Road but not the Bradford Bypass.

In June 2009, the Province released a vision paper entitled *Simcoe Area: A Strategic Vision for Growth* which led in October 2010 to the release of *Amendment No. 1 to the Growth Plan: An Amendment and Implementation Tools for the Simcoe Sub-area*. The vision paper and Growth Plan amendment establish a vision and policies for sustainable growth in the Simcoe area to help manage growth, boost employment and improve quality of life, while curbing urban sprawl and protecting the natural environment and agricultural lands. The Simcoe area includes the County of Simcoe, the City of Barrie and the City of Orillia.

The Simcoe area vision paper identified a number of next steps, including the need to undertake an area transportation study that conforms to the Growth Plan.

The Simcoe Area Transportation Study is now underway

MTO has initiated the first of two phases for the Simcoe Area Transportation Study. Phase 1 includes a detailed origin/destination survey of existing traffic patterns in the Simcoe area. Phase 2 of the project will include development and assessment of a multi-modal transportation system solution. The end product of this work will be a comprehensive plan to deal with Simcoe area travel needs. The study is expected to be complete by the end of 2012 and includes input from technical and municipal stakeholders, including York Region staff.

Development planning in Simcoe County includes the Bradford Bypass

In November 2006, the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury adopted OPA 15 to designate lands around the Highway 400/ Highway 88 intersection for employment uses and included the Bradford Bypass at the north end of the plan. The Amendment was appealed to the OMB on the grounds that the County of Simcoe did not make a decision within the required timeframe.

The August 2009 OMB Decision referenced the intensive facilitated discussions which resulted in a settlement between the parties. The settlement was signed by all parties including the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Bradford Bypass remained in OPA 15. The OMB decision also contains a “trigger” for development of the northerly area being conditional on the construction of the Bradford Bypass.

York Region will continue to advocate for early implementation of the Bradford Bypass during the next steps planning processes, supported by updated analysis of York-Simcoe boundary area transportation needs

Staff will continue to be involved in the MTO Simcoe Area Transportation Study to ensure that network planning for this area addresses York-Simcoe cross boundary transportation needs and includes the Bradford Bypass. During the future Growth Plan update by the Province, staff will also work with the Province, Simcoe County and area municipalities to advocate for inclusion of the Bradford Bypass in the Growth Plan update.

To be successful in advocating for needed improvements to deal with growing inter-regional trips between York Region and the Simcoe area, the technical analysis undertaken as part of the York Region Transportation Master Plan will need to be updated to reflect current population and employment targets for the Simcoe area in accordance with the Growth Plan and the analysis should be undertaken at a greater level of detail specific to the York-Simcoe boundary area.

Principles have been developed by York Region staff to continue to monitor and advocate for boundary area transportation improvements

The recommended principles for York Region staff to continue monitoring and advocating for York-Simcoe boundary area transportation needs includes the following:

- Continue to participate and provide input into the MTO Simcoe Area Transportation Study.
- Conduct a more detailed analysis of York-Simcoe boundary area transportation needs jointly with Simcoe County.
- Provide input from the detailed needs analysis to the Province to continue advocating for inclusion of the Bradford Bypass in the Growth Plan.
- Ensure that the results of the MTO Simcoe Area Transportation Study are consistent with the findings of our detailed needs analysis.
- Consult with Simcoe County and affected municipal staff to identify additional opportunities to advocate for the Bradford Bypass and any additional boundary area transportation improvements.
- Provide progress reports to Regional Council.

York Region and Simcoe County staff have developed the scope of work for a joint York-Simcoe Cross Boundary Transportation System Needs Analysis

The recommended scope of work for the cross boundary transportation system needs analysis includes the following:

- Review background studies and summarize relevant findings related to York-Simcoe boundary area transportation system needs.
- Develop a reasonable range of alternative network solutions and assess the performance of each alternative in addressing 2031 forecast travel demand. Alternatives to be analyzed include a “Base Case” alternative (currently planned transportation system improvements) and a “Base Case plus the Bradford Bypass” alternative for 2031. The feasibility of developing a further alternative will also be considered including identifying potential improvements to the system beyond what is currently planned in municipal master plans and capital plans, representing a “Base Case plus the Bradford Bypass plus other improvements” alternative.
- Consult with MTO and affected municipalities.

The cross boundary transportation system needs analysis is expected to be completed in the Spring of 2012. The proposed study area is shown on *Attachment 1*. Prior to commencement, York Region and Simcoe County staff will meet with MTO and Bradford West Gwillimbury staff to get input on the scope of work for the cross boundary transportation system needs analysis, as well as get an update on the status of the MTO Simcoe Area Transportation Study.

Link to Key Council-approved Plans

This report supports the 2011 to 2015 Strategic Plan in the following priority area:

- Continue to deliver and sustain critical infrastructure.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications as a result of this report. This cross-boundary needs analysis will be conducted in-house using existing staffing resources.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

One of the most significant features of the Simcoe-York boundary area is the Holland River and Holland Marsh Lowlands, extending from south of Highway 9 in King Township all the way to Lake Simcoe. Much of the traffic issues stem from discontinuities in the major road network, particularly with respect to crossing of the West Holland River. The only major road crossing of the West Holland River that is east of Highway 400, north of Highway 9 and south of Lake Simcoe (a distance of 16 km) is Yonge Street.

Also, the increase in road-based freight transport has intensified the need for a solution to allow goods movement between Highway 400 and Highway 404. Currently, trucks are using Regional and Municipal roads to make this connection throughout most of York Region.

Implementation of the Bradford Bypass would remove most of the longer distance trips from the Regional and Municipal road system in this area. These longer distance trips are adding to traffic congestion and associated effects in various communities, both in York Region and Simcoe County (including Bradford, East Gwillimbury, Newmarket, Aurora and King Township).

7. CONCLUSION

The Growth Plan includes the Highway 404 extension to Ravenshoe Road but not the Bradford Bypass. Growth planning for the Simcoe area includes the need to undertake an area transportation study to conform to the Growth Plan.

MTO has initiated the first of two phases for the Simcoe Area Transportation Study. The study is expected to be complete by the end of 2012 and includes input from technical and municipal stakeholders, including York Region staff.

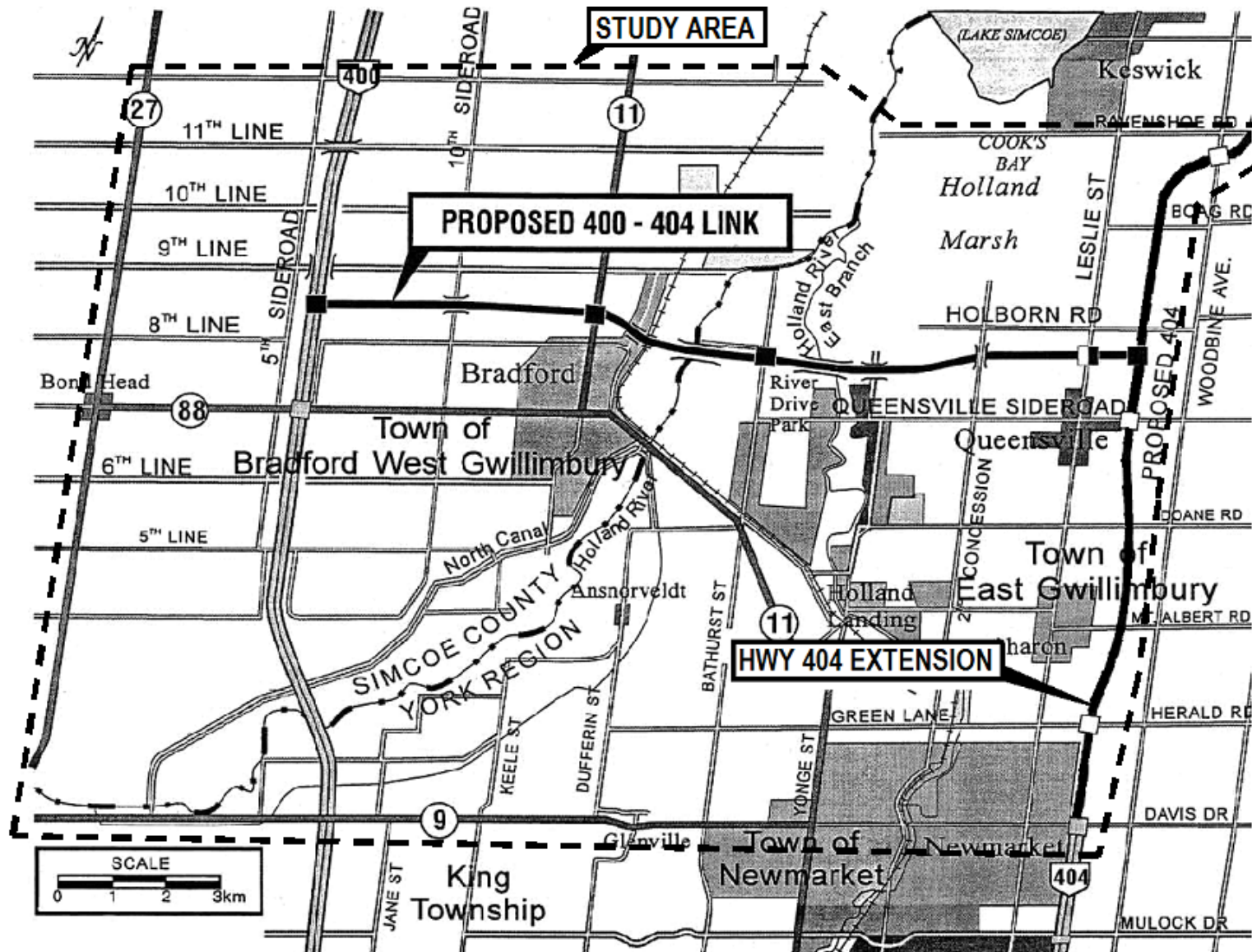
This report recommends a set of guiding principles for York Region staff to continue monitoring and advocating for York-Simcoe boundary area transportation improvements, including updating the assessment of current transportation system needs through an in-house study to be conducted jointly between York Region and Simcoe County staff.

Staff will continue to be involved in the MTO Simcoe Area Transportation Study to ensure that network planning for this area continues to include the Bradford Bypass. During the future Growth Plan update, staff will work with the Province, Simcoe County and area municipalities to ensure that the Bradford Bypass is included in the Growth Plan update.

For more information on this report, please contact Loy Cheah, Director, Infrastructure Planning at (905) 830-4444, Ext. 5024.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)



Proposed Study Area for York-Simcoe Cross Boundary Transportation System Needs Analysis