



Report to: Council

Report Date: November 11, 2008

SUBJECT: Town of Markham's Comments on Metrolinx Draft Regional Transportation Plan
PREPARED BY: Prasenjit Roy, Senior Transportation Engineer, ext. 2625

RECOMMENDATION:

That the staff report entitled "Town of Markham's Comments on Metrolinx Draft Regional Transportation Plan", dated November 11, 2008, be received;

And that the additional public comments received in response to the Town's November 2 and 3 Transportation Summit - "Gridlock, Rapid transit and You: A Transit Plan" (Attachment 4), be received;

And that the Council endorse the Draft Regional Transportation Plan subject to the comments and attachments set out in this report;

And that Staff be authorized to send copies of this report to Metrolinx and the Region of York.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Metrolinx released its Draft Regional Transportation Plan and Draft Investment Strategy on September 23, 2008. The plan proposes \$50B and 1,150 km of transit infrastructure investment over the next 25 years. The Draft RTP responds well to Markham's Building Markham's Future Together Strategic Initiative on Transportation. Staff are supportive of the Plan, and the majority of the Town's previous comments have generally been incorporated (See Attachment 1).

Markham is well prepared to support the implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan's vision, goals and objectives. Metrolinx is urged to work with the Region of York and the Town of Markham to address Town comments. The Metrolinx Plan is being assessed by the Region and the Town transportation models to confirm if the Transportation Plan can accommodate the Growth Plan population and employment projections for York Region and Markham. Further comments will be submitted to Metrolinx and the Province as the modelling and analysis continues.

It has been observed that the proposed rapid transit service is generally weak in the north and east Markham. Additional rapid transit initiatives are required in the north and east, and in the Highway 407 corridor.

The current draft implementation plan is urged to be advanced for early implementation. Currently only \$11.5 B out of the projected \$50 B cost of the plan is funded. Further funding sources should be finalized by Metrolinx in consultation with the Government of Ontario and all stakeholders, as soon as possible. The Town of Markham and Region of York will work with Metrolinx to plan for property protection to implement the transit initiatives.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the collective comments made by the members of Council, staff and the public to the draft Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan.

BACKGROUND:

The Government of Ontario established the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority (GTТА) under the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act in 2006. The GTТА later became Metrolinx. One of the key mandates of Metrolinx is to develop and implement an integrated multi-modal regional transportation plan for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

In its endeavour to build the regional plan for the GTHA, Metrolinx developed and extensively consulted on seven Green Papers, which presented on transportation trends, challenges and opportunities for the GTHA transportation system and best practices from around the world. Town of Markham staff provided an overview and comments on the seven Green Papers to the Development Services Committee Council on April 8, 2008. Subsequent to that staff and Council's comments were sent to Metrolinx for incorporation into the Plan.

In May 2008, building on the input received on the Green Papers, Metrolinx released two White Papers for public and stakeholder comments. The papers proposed the vision, goals and objectives, and a range of potential policies, programs and tools for the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the GTHA. At the Development Services Committee meeting on May 27, 2008, Mr. Joe Perrotta, Director, Transportation and Policy, Metrolinx, delivered a PowerPoint presentation providing an update with respect to the Metrolinx White papers and briefly outlining the next steps. Following that, Town staff presented comments on the White Papers. Subsequently, staff and Council's comments were sent to Metrolinx for incorporation into the Plan.

Metrolinx released its Draft Regional Transportation Plan as well as the Draft Investment Strategy for stakeholder and public consultation on September 23, 2008. Metrolinx presented the Draft Regional Transportation Plan to the Town's General Committee meeting on October 20, 2008. Ms. Leslie Woo, General Manager, Policy and Planning, Metrolinx, presented an overview of the Draft RTP for the GTHA. Following that, staff presented the Town's perspective on the Plan. Copies of the presentation made by

Metrolinx and staff in the General Committee Meeting are presented as Attachments 2 and 3 respectively.

A two day Transportation Summit called “Gridlock, Rapid Transit and You: A Transit Plan” was held by the Town of Markham on November 2 and 3, 2008. There were presentations by Metrolinx staff including Mr. Rob McIsaac, Chairperson; Ms. Leslie Woo, General Manager, Policy and Planning; and Mr. John Howe, General Manager, Investment Strategy and Projects. Other planning and transportation experts who participated in the Transportation Summit included the following:

- Mr. Richard Gilbert, of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (through recorded video);
- Mr. Peter Newman, former director of Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy at Murdoch University in Perth, Australia and currently Member of the UN-Habitat Global Research Network on Human Settlements Advisory Board and of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the UNESCO SCOPE Ecopolis Project (through recorded video);
- Mr. Joe Berridge (a Fellow of the Canadian Institute of Planners and of the Institute for Urban Design, partner of Urban Strategies);
- Mr. Neal Irwin, Chairman Emeritus and a founding partner of the IBI Group;
- Lon LaClaire, Manager, Strategic Transportation Planning for the City of Vancouver

The Transportation Summit was anchored by the Mayor of Markham, and also included presentations by Regional Councillors Landon and Jones. Attendees and viewers of the Summit provided input and gained considerable understanding of the future of transportation through the Metrolinx Plan, Markham and York Region initiatives, best practices from around the world and directions for the future. A summary of the feedback received from the two-day Summit is presented as Attachment 4.

The Metrolinx Board has directed its staff to present the final RTP for approval at the November 28, 2008 meeting. As such, the last date for commenting as requested by Metrolinx is November 14, 2008. The Town must finalize and issue comments as soon as possible so that Metrolinx has time to assess and incorporate changes into the final RTP.

This report presents staff, Council and public comments received to date, and seeks Council endorsement for formal communication to Metrolinx.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Town staff and members of Council have participated in a number of opportunities to learn and comment on the Draft RTP, as discussed above. A copy of recent presentations made by Metrolinx and Town staff, at the General Committee Meeting dated October 20, are presented as Attachments 2 and 3 respectively. Staff have also received comments through various community and committee meetings and in particular, the Transportation Summit. Based on the various inputs, staff have developed a list of concerns and comments and request Metrolinx to address them. A brief overview of the key highlights of the Draft RTP is followed by Town of Markham comments. More information on the

items are available in the Attachments 2, 3, and the Draft Regional Transportation Plan is available at www.Metrolinx.com.

Vision, Goals and Objectives

The Metrolinx Draft RTP presents a vision to achieve:

- A high quality of life
- A thriving, sustainable and protected environment.
- A strong, prosperous and competitive economy

The vision leads to 13 goals and 33 objectives.

Together the vision, goals and objectives help set the guiding principles for the RTP and planning and decision-making at all levels.

Markham comments and recommendations are as follows:

- Generally supportive of the Vision, Goals and Objectives.
- Out of the 33 objectives presented there is a need to identify and prioritize key objectives.
- Need more clarity on who should administer, or validate meeting these objectives.
- Not all objectives that have been presented are measurable (for e.g. increased daily levels of exercise from walking and cycling). As such, it becomes difficult to justify any level of improvements on these objectives.
- There should be an objective around minimizing trip lengths or zone based fare systems including a fare per distance policy.
- One of Metrolinx objectives should be to develop a centralized transportation authority to make the existing system more customers driven and to make the best value for the investment to be made in the future.
- An objective should be introduced to link transportation, land use and funding in order to achieve sustainable development.
- A 5, 10, 15 year rolling capital plan by Metrolinx is required so that individual municipalities can plan for and address the requirements of the planned implementations.

Categories, Strategic Directions and Action Items

The Metrolinx Draft RTP presents a visionary plan that includes 5 categories mentioned below:

- Increase Choices for Travel
- Reduce Demands on the Transportation System
- Meet the Needs of the Traveller First
- Build Communities that Make Travelling Easier
- Commit to Continuous Improvement

15 Strategic Directions have been built around the five categories that lead to close to 100 recommended actions. Out of those 100 recommended actions, eight were considered transformational or “**Big Moves**”. The eight big moves are briefly described below along with comments on each big move:

Big Move #1 A fast, frequent and expanded regional rapid transit network

The Draft RTP recommends a 15 year and a 25 year network plan of rapid transit and highway improvements (Attachment 2). The 15 year plan recommends 42 projects; 14 of them are in York Region and 6 of them cut across the Town of Markham (Attachment 3). The 15 year projects in Markham are:

1. Yonge Subway – Finch to Langstaff
2. VIVA Highway 7 – Peel boundary to Locust Hill in Markham
3. Don Mills Rapid Transit – Highway 7 to Bloor Danforth subway
4. Richmond Hill GO Rail – full day, two-way service
5. Stouffville GO Rail – full day, two-way service from Mount Joy to Union
6. Havelock GO rail – new peak period service from Locust Hill to Union Station

The 16 to 25 year plan recommends a further 13 projects of which 8 are in York region and 5 of them are in Markham (Attachment 3). The 16-25 year projects in Markham are:

1. Richmond Hill GO Rail – conversion to Express Rail from Richmond Hill Station to Union
2. Highway 407 Transitway – from Vaughan Corporate Centre to Markham Centre
3. Markham – Pickering rapid transit – from Markham Centre to downtown Pickering via McCowan Road thru Scarborough City Centre and Highway 401
4. Steeles rapid transit – York University to Milliken GO station
5. Steeles/Taunton rapid transit – Milliken GO station to Downtown Oshawa

Beyond 25 years (long term) the plan is not very specific; however, it lists a number of potential additional projects within the GTHA. Of these, the projects that can impact Markham are:

1. New rapid transit service in York Region along Major Mackenzie Drive, with additional north-south connections to the Highway 7 corridor
2. Extension of rapid transit along Highway 407
3. East-west Express Rail connecting Oakville, Mississauga, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Markham and Pickering
4. Additional capacity along the Yonge subway line or in the Richmond Hill Express Rail corridor to provide relief to the Yonge subway
5. Extension of all-day two-way regional rail service to additional communities

Markham comments and recommendations are as follows:

- York Region and Markham are generally well served by Metrolinx Plan.
- We concur with Metrolinx plan on fast tracking the Yonge subway extension to Langstaff, and VIVA Highway 7 between Peel Boundary and Locust Hill in Markham.
- Region of York and Town of Markham will need to model and further analyze the proposed transit network and phasing plan.

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- The proposed rapid transit service needs to be enhanced in the North and East Markham.
 - The Don Mills LRT system from Bloor Avenue to Hwy 7 is supported.
 - The north-south rapid transit corridor on either McCowan Road, the EA approval on Warden Ave, or Kennedy Rd to connect Markham Centre to downtown Toronto needs to be finalized in consultation with the Region of York and Town of Markham. This N/S transit corridor is required within the 1st 15 year capital program plan.
 - Steeles Avenue remains one of the most travelled roads, yet has been neglected from improvements. Two major subway stations will be on this road in the immediate future as described in the Metrolinx plan. Yonge/Steeles subway station is expected to be a 26 bus-bay station with typical bus headway less than 2 minutes on Steeles Avenue. Metrolinx is urged to advance Steeles Avenue rapid transit corridor connecting Durham, York and Toronto to within the first 15 years and also to address necessary road improvements.
 - The higher order transit corridor through Major Mackenzie should connect north south to Highway 7 and to Scarborough Centre and to Don Mills LRT.
 - Early phased implementation of the 407 Transitway LRT between Highway 403 and Locust Hill (Havelock Line) is required within the first 15 years (stations and commuter parking).
 - Stouffville GO rail should be full-day two way service up to Stouffville GO station as per the MoveOntario 2020 plan.
 - Heavy electric rail provide the capacity and speed that is necessary to build transit ridership, and should be implemented on a priority basis.
 - Property protection will be required on all transit corridors.
 - Further work will be needed by Metrolinx/Region of York /Markham required to define and protect the rapid transit corridors.
 - Metrolinx is urged to act as a regional mediator for inter jurisdictional issues for the greater good of the community and GTHA Region.
 - In view of the aging population and equitability, enough care should be taken to design every public access to transportation system is accessible for the disabled.
 - Stops and stations of the higher order transit lines, including the GO rail line should be properly reviewed and provided so as to provide better accessibility to these higher order transit systems.

Big Move #2 A complete walking and cycling network with bike-sharing programs

The Metrolinx Draft RTP recommends planning and implementing a complete, integrated walking and cycling network, that would address key barriers to walking, such as bridges over 400-series highways; bring every urban resident to within a maximum of one kilometre of a dedicated bicycling facility. Metrolinx, as part of the plan, recommends provincial funding commitment increased over time to at least \$20M /year for municipalities to complete the network and also to create pilot bike-sharing programs in major urban centres.

Markham comments and recommendations are as follows:

- Markham is recognized as a leader in promoting alternative mechanisms in addressing transportation demand through various TDM initiatives, and has been actively seeking commitment for long term funding of integrated Active Transportation infrastructure to be identified in Markham's Transportation Strategic Plan (MTSP); and Cycling and Pathways Master Plans. Markham is very supportive of the action.
- However, more detail is required on the funding sources, funding criteria, timelines, and Metrolinx responsibility in the network improvements.

Big Move #3 An information system for travellers, where and when they need it

Metrolinx plans to create a regional transportation information portal that is accessible online and by telephone, e-mail or PDA; a system that provides travellers with easily accessible, standardized information on the full-range of transportation alternatives available to them.

Markham comments and recommendations are as follows:

- Support the action, however there are large challenges to be overcome. The issue will become more complicated because of multiple transit authorities, and each authority will have to update its information and service disruptions/closures in real time to provide any useful information.
- More detail is required on who should be funding, implementing, and maintaining this endeavour.

Big Move #4 A region-wide integrated transit fare system

Metrolinx plans to implement a region-wide integrated transit fare system by 2012 that allows users to pay a seamless, integrated fare for all transit systems across the region.

Markham comments and recommendations are as follows:

- Staff are supportive of the move.
- However, it should be made clear that the integrated transit fare specifically means no double charging just to cross a current multi-jurisdictional border or a fare per distance policy.
- New technology including Smart Cards/PRESTO card is required, however one of the biggest impediment to transit travel in Markham is that (because of double charging) transit travel can be more expensive and time consuming when compared to auto travel. Again a fare per distance policy should be reviewed.
- The different transit systems in the GTHA should be complimentary to each other and not competitive. The system needs to be more customers driven.

Big Move #5 A system of connected mobility hubs

Metrolinx plans to identify and incorporate two types of mobility hubs in municipal Official Plans and Transportation Master Plans:

1. Anchor Hubs have strategic importance due to their relationship with urban growth centres (UGC's). Richmond Hill Langstaff Gateway and Markham Centre have been identified as two anchor hubs serving Markham out of 13 in the GTHA.
2. Gateway Hubs are major transit station areas at the interchange between two or more rapid transit lines, or where significant numbers of people access the regional transit system. Metrolinx may identify additional Gateway Hubs in consultation with municipalities and transit agencies. The DRTP shows two potential Gateway Hub locations in Markham – Yonge/Steeles; and the area surrounded by Don Mills/7/404/407.

Markham comments and recommendations are as follows:

- We need a five and a 10 year rolling infrastructure implementation plan on the anchor and gateway mobility hubs.
- Additional mobility hubs have been recognized by Markham Council that Metrolinx is urged to review. They are:
 - Box Grove / Cornell;
 - Mount Joy;
 - Milliken – GO/Steeles;
 - Steeles/CP Havelock;
 - John Street / Richmond Hill Line including a grade separation with the Bala/York CN lines
- Markham Council also urges Metrolinx to retain the tertiary level mobility hub category to identify local intensification areas as mentioned in the Green Papers, which will include the future subway stations and Highway 407 Transitway stations.

Big Move #6 High-order transit connectivity to the Pearson Airport district from all directions

Metrolinx plans to establish high-order transit connectivity to the Pearson Airport district from all directions, including a multi-purpose, fast transit link to downtown Toronto.

Markham comments and recommendations are as follows:

- In order to be effective in moving people and goods originating or ending their surface trips at Pearson Airport, a network of higher connectivity among the 13 anchor mobility hubs should be reviewed.
- The proposed east-west Express Rail connecting Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Markham and Pickering to the Pearson Airport is necessary for all the municipalities mentioned that are currently not served well to the Airport and should be advanced.

Big Move #7 A comprehensive strategy for goods movement

Metrolinx Draft RTP recommends developing a comprehensive strategy for goods movement within the GTHA, and between the GTHA & other regions. In the process, Metrolinx plans to identify opportunities and actions to improve efficiency, increase capacity, enhance the region's competitiveness, reduce emission of GHGs and other

pollutants, and shift a greater proportion of goods movement to sustainable modes such as rail, short sea shipping and active transportation.

Markham comments and recommendations are as follows:

- Support the move but limited details are available at this time. Metrolinx has confirmed that more work is required on this item.
- While developing the strategy, all different modes of goods movement, including the final delivery to individual, needs to be studied.
- The draft RTP needs to provide more directions on the development of employment lands for Seaton and Pickering Airport.

**Big Move #8 An Investment Strategy to provide stable and predictable funding
Metrolinx Draft RTP recommends the following:**

- A 15 year capital plan worth \$30 Billion in 2008 dollars
- The next 16-35 year capital plan worth \$20 Billion in 2008 dollars
- A total of \$50 Billion capital plan with an annual investment of \$ 2 Billion for over the period of 25 years
- A \$1.5 billion per year investment on operation and maintenance for transit, at full build-out and with full program implementation. Costs do not include local transit or regional bus services.
- \$230 million per year on operation and maintenance, for roads and highways. Costs include operation and maintenance as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction for the GTHA's 400-series highway network and municipal limited-access highways.
- Current Provincial funding commitment \$11.5 B will last until 2015, out of which Quick Win projects worth \$750 million are being implemented right now
- Commitment outstanding (\$6 B from Federal Government and more), which upon fulfilment by will cover the plan until 2018.
- Metrolinx will consult with stakeholders to finalize funding sources for the investment gap (between \$17.5B and \$50B) and then report to Ontario government in 2013.

Markham comments and recommendations are as follows:

- The \$2 Billion per year target is not sufficient funding for the required investment in transit for the GTHA to compete among the most successful city regions, the funding strategy needs to be much more aggressive.
- A 25 year plan is too long to wait. The program needs to be advanced in order to benefit today's citizens. Metrolinx should prioritize and advance the 25 year plan.
- The financing strategy is not defined beyond 2013, and clearly not adequate for the full 25 year program and beyond.
- Metrolinx should consider implementing the various investment strategy tools including beneficiary charges, user charges, development charges, and other alternative financing and procurement strategies quicker than the currently planned 2013 report to the Ontario government.

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- A steady pool of sustainable funding for transit is essential and Metrolinx needs to work with the Province and other public and private partners to advance such financing system
 - The funding strategy and collection of funds needs to start now, in order to be in a position to finance the needed infrastructure in a timely manner
 - Employer based financing and benefits should be considered to make transit more attractive.

Implementation Plan and Responsibilities

Metrolinx has provided an implementation plan for the Draft RTP and has also defined roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders, including all levels of government, private sector, academic institutions, and the public. Important points include:

- Metrolinx is recommending that the Provincial Cabinet adopt the RTP as the Province's Regional Transportation Plan for the GTHA and require, through legislation, that the planning and infrastructure investment decisions of municipalities and the Province be consistent with the RTP's directions, and that a prescribed process be established for reviews and amendments to the RTP.
- For municipalities, Metrolinx recommends the following:
 - Develop Municipal Transportation Master Plans (TMPs) as part of their Official Plan processes. These TMPs will need to identify policies and courses of action for capital plans to provide for the infrastructure necessary to implement the RTP.
 - Municipal Official Plans should be brought into conformity with the RTP.
 - Metrolinx will work with municipalities to engage their communities in community outreach and education programs that support the goals and objectives of the RTP.

Markham comments and recommendations are as follows:

- Markham's planning vision and policies are consistent with the directions of the draft RTP.
- The Region of York plays a key role in delivering transit service and the regional road network.
- Markham will continue to play a leadership and advocacy role in partnership with Metrolinx, Province, Region and other stakeholders.
- More clarity is required on the legislation proposed to implement the RTP relative to the Places to Grow Act and Planning Act, and measures to implement with the Region of York and Town planning initiatives and transportation capital programs.
- We would also want to ensure ongoing conformity and coordination between the RTP and municipal planning objectives.
- Land use and transportation planning must go hand in hand to provide the best start and end point of trips and promote transit ridership.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE:

There are no direct financial impacts to the Town at this time. Staff will continue to work closely with Metrolinx and York Region to ensure that projects follow the schedules suggested, and are planned, assessed and constructed in an efficient manner.

Markham staff and Council will need to work with their counterparts in York Region to ensure that benefits case analysis and alternative financing and procurement analyses for all projects properly include all short and long term impacts.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The Metrolinx vision is based on three robust pillars of environment, economy and quality of life. The environmental vision is a transportation system that is people-focussed, has a low carbon footprint, conserves resources, and contributes to a legacy of a healthy and clean environment for our children and grandchildren. Every transit project in the Metrolinx Regional Transit Network will be comprehensively assessed by Metrolinx. This would include a Benefits Case Analysis to inventory the social, environmental and economic benefits and costs resulting from the project. Markham staff will participate in assessment of environmental impacts of each project, and regularly report back to Council to update and receive further directions.

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable.

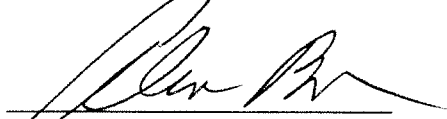
ENGAGE 21ST CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable.

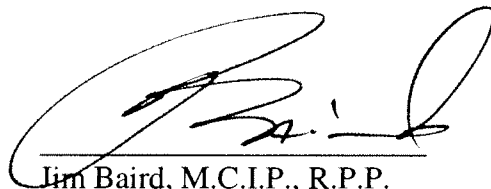
BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Comments from Markham Council, Town Departments and the Markham public on the Metrolinx Draft Regional Transportation Plan have been considered in preparing this report.

RECOMMENDED BY:



Alan Brown, C.E.T.
Director of Engineering



Jim Baird, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Commissioner, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1:** Checklist of Metrolinx' adherence to Markham's comments on Green Papers and White Papers in the Draft RTP
- Attachment 2:** Metrolinx Draft RTP presentation by Ms. Leslie Woo, General Manager, Policy and Planning to DSC on October 20, 2008
- Attachment 3:** Presentation by Markham staff to the DSC commenting on the Metrolinx Draft RTP on October 20, 2008
- Attachment 4:** Feedback received from the November 2 and 3, 2008 Transportation Summit - "Gridlock, Rapid Transit and You: A Transit Plan"