

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Planning and Economic Development
March 12, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

Major Transit Station Areas Update

1. Recommendations

1. Council endorse the identification of 72 major transit station areas recommended by staff for the Regional Official Plan
2. Council direct staff to continue with consultation on the boundaries and density targets for the 72 major transit station areas and report back to Council
3. The Regional Clerk forward this report and attachments to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the local municipalities

2. Summary

This report provides Council with an update on proposed major transit station areas (MTSAs), including ongoing refinements to boundary delineations and minimum density targets. It also provides an update on consultation as part of development of the Intensification Strategy for the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR).

Key Points:

- Regional staff are recommending that Council endorse 72 MTSAs shown in Attachment 2 to be identified in the Regional Official Plan, of which 57 are required stations being along Provincial Priority Transit Corridors identified in the Growth Plan and 15 are stations on Other Transit Corridors
- Regional staff have consulted extensively with internal and external stakeholders and based on feedback, continue to update the proposed MTSA delineations and minimum density targets presented in the Planning for Intensification Background Report in [April 2019](#)
- Beyond Provincial Priority Transit Corridors, staff have included MTSAs with existing or planned transit infrastructure in place in order to maximize the return on transit investments and to focus intensification in areas that are most needed
- Two MTSAs have been added since the [April 2019](#) Planning for Intensification Background Report: the Richmond Hill GO station and the Royal Orchard future subway station in Markham and Vaughan

- Upon completion of consultation, a final Major Transit Station Area report with detailed mapping of boundaries and density targets will be brought back to Council in Q3 2020

3. Background

The Growth Plan requires York Region to delineate and set density targets for major transit station areas

Under the Growth Plan, 2019 (Growth Plan), York Region, in consultation with local municipalities, is required to delineate boundaries and set minimum density targets for MTSAs located on Provincial Priority Transit Corridors. Priority Transit Corridors are identified in Schedule 5 of the Growth Plan and shown in Attachment 1. Provincial Priority Transit Corridors generally reflect existing transit corridors or planned and funded future transit corridors. In York Region, they generally consist of the portions of the Highway 7 and Yonge Street Corridors with funded Bus Rapid Transit, the Barrie GO rail line north to the Aurora GO station, the Stouffville GO line to Markham Centre and the three stations along the Spadina subway line located in York Region.

A major transit station area (MTSA) is defined in the Growth Plan as:

The area including and around any existing or planned higher order transit station or stop within a settlement area; or the area including and around a major bus depot in an urban core. Major transit station areas generally are defined as the area within an approximate 500 to 800 metre radius of a transit station, representing about a 10-minute walk.

MTSAs on Provincial Priority Transit Corridors are mandatory and are to be planned for a minimum density target of:

- 200 residents and jobs combined per hectare for subway stations;
- 160 residents and jobs combined per hectare for light rail transit or bus rapid transit; and
- 150 residents and jobs combined per hectare for the GO Transit rail network.

There is no timing requirement in the Growth Plan for MTSAs to achieve these densities; they can be achieved after 2041.

MTSAs on Other Transit Corridors (see Attachment 1), if identified, also require boundary delineations and minimum density targets but are not subject to Growth Plan minimum density targets.

Section 16 of the *Planning Act* restricts official plan and zoning appeals for areas that are identified as Protected MTSAs at both the Regional and local municipal levels. Staff intend to propose all MTSAs as Protected MTSAs in order for them to receive protection from land use planning appeals. Local municipalities will be required to plan for MTSAs in conformity with Regional policies and the Growth Plan.

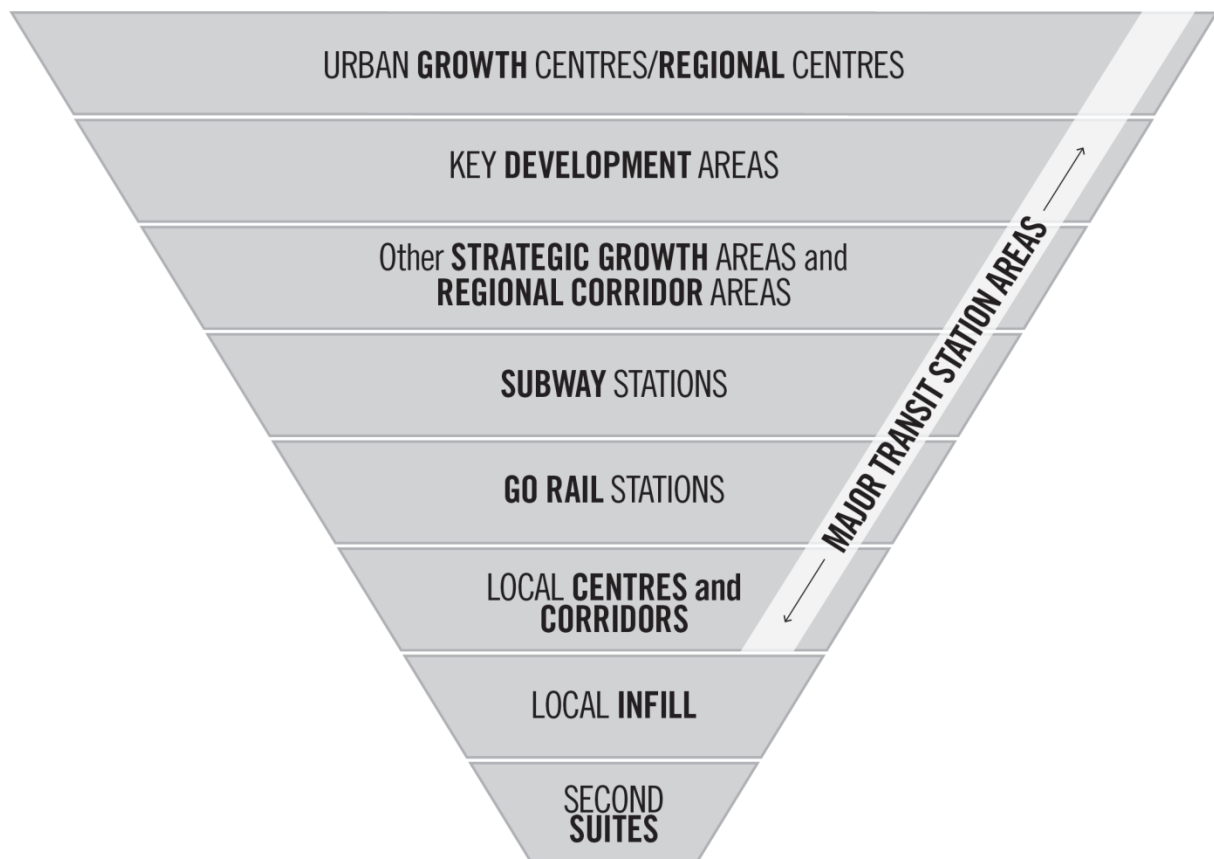
In [April 2019](#), Regional Council endorsed the Planning for Intensification Background Report which contains background analysis, proposing 70 major transit station area delineations and minimum density targets and 3 additional strategic growth areas.

Major transit station areas are part of a broader Intensification Strategy required by the Growth Plan

The Growth Plan requires the Region develop an Intensification Strategy to demonstrate how the Region’s intensification target will be achieved. York Region’s Growth Plan minimum intensification target is 50%, meaning that at least 50% of the Region’s annual residential development to 2041 is to occur within the delineated built-up area (see Attachment 1). MTSA’s will form a key component of the Region’s Intensification Strategy, providing locations along higher order transit corridors for higher density, mixed-use transit supportive development as well as higher density employment development within employment areas.

The intensification matrix (Figure 1) presented in the [April 2019](#) Planning for Intensification Background Report, sets out strategic locations for intensification within the Region. The matrix builds on the Region’s intensification framework established by the Centres and Corridors Strategy developed in the 1994 Regional Official Plan and the York Region Official Plan 2010. Major transit station areas include a number of different intensification areas.

Figure 1
York Region Intensification Matrix



Centres and Corridors are planned to achieve the most intensive and greatest mix of development in the Region, supported by over \$3.6 billion in transit infrastructure investment to date. Intensification in strategic areas provides important benefits including more efficient use of land and existing infrastructure, increased housing options, support for a range of transportation options, complete communities and fiscal benefits to the Region and local municipalities through aligning growth and infrastructure investment.

4. Analysis

Staff are recommending that 72 major transit station areas be identified in the Regional Official Plan

The Region is recommending a total of 72 MTSAs for identification in the Regional Official Plan as shown in Attachment 2, of which 57 are required stations along Provincial Priority Transit Corridors identified in the Growth Plan and 15 are located on Other Transit Corridors. The majority of these stations are located in Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Vaughan. Ten of the stations are shared between adjacent York Region local municipalities and three stations are shared with the City of Toronto.

Two new major transit station areas on Other Transit Corridors have been added

Based on feedback and input from local municipal staff, the 72 MTSAs include two new MTSAs since the [April 2019](#) Background Report. Draft boundary delineations and minimum density targets have been proposed for the two new MTSAs located at Richmond Hill GO Station shown in Attachment 3 and Royal Orchard subway station (future subway station) shown in Attachment 4.

Proposed Provincial legislation aims to expedite delivery of priority subway transit projects which will facilitate transit-oriented development communities in the Region

The proposed Bill 171 Provincial legislation introduced on February 18, 2020, Building Transit Faster Act, if passed, aims to: "...expedite the delivery of the four priority transit projects for the Greater Toronto Area, by removing barriers and streamlining processes that may result in delays to the timely completion of these projects, while enhancing coordination and engagement with and being fair to public and private sector stakeholders:

1. The Ontario Line
2. The Scarborough Subway Extension
3. The Yonge North Subway Extension
4. The Eglinton Crosstown West Extension."

Up to five of the Region's proposed subway MTSAs (Steeles, Clark, Royal Orchard, Langstaff/Longbridge and Richmond Hill Centre) are located along the Yonge North Subway Extension alignment (see Attachment 2). If the legislation passes, this may mean that the Province plays a greater role in planning for these areas to ensure transit-oriented development.

Potential major transit station areas outside of the Provincial Priority Transit Corridors were considered

GO transit, future bus rapid transit and subway corridors located outside of the Provincial Priority Transit Corridors were assessed and considered for their potential to be included as MTSA's. These corridors are identified as Other Transit Corridors in Attachment 1.

A total of 15 stations on Other Transit Corridors have been proposed to be included in the Region's MTSA network. Recommended MTSA's on Other Transit Corridors are generally located on a Regional corridor, have planned intensification potential, have some certainty for approved or committed funding for construction and/or have the potential to become a required MTSA through a future extension of the Province's Priority Transit Corridor.

Focusing growth and intensification in strategic locations with existing or planned transit infrastructure in place is key to maximizing return on transit investments. Including additional MTSA's in transit corridors with less certainty on timing, location and/or funding could potentially compromise the intensification of areas where transit supportive development is most needed. Moreover, additional MTSA's can be identified in the future, as appropriate, when the timing of the new higher order transit corridors becomes more certain. In the meantime, local municipalities can designate these future transit corridors in their official plans for higher density land uses.

Future major transit station areas and strategic growth areas can be added outside of a Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review

Transit stations with uncertainty around funding for rapid transit such as those along Jane Street in Vaughan and Major Mackenzie Drive in Markham are not proposed as MTSA's at this time. Additionally, potential or future GO Train Stations along the existing Barrie, Richmond Hill and Stouffville GO Transit Lines as well as the potential stations along the 407 Transitway and Peterborough GO Transit Line, without approved or committed funding, are not recommended as MTSA's at this time. Furthermore, the Gormley GO Station in Richmond Hill is not being recommended as a MTSA since it is a rural settlement area within the Greenbelt with limited development potential to achieve typical MTSA densities. Attachment 5 provides more detail on Regional staff's response on suggestions for additional stations along Other Transit Corridors.

Through the consultation process and based on feedback received, Regional and local municipal staff are in agreement that the three strategic growth areas (Vaughan Mills Primary Centre and Carrville Local Centre in Vaughan and the Yonge Street portion of the Aurora Promenade) beyond MTSA's contemplated in the [April 2019](#) Background Report do not need to be included in the Regional Official Plan. These areas may continue to remain designated as strategic growth or local intensification areas in local municipal official plans, if desired.

As per the Growth Plan, 2019, new MTSA's and strategic growth areas can be added outside of a Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review on an as needed basis as transportation infrastructure expands and/or when the anticipated level of intensification for specific transit corridors or areas increases.

Consultation on the proposed Intensification Strategy is underway

Regional staff consulted with internal and external stakeholders regarding MTSAs in York Region. The Update on Public Consultations for the Municipal Comprehensive Review report in [October 2019](#) provided an overview of the consultation methods used to inform and engage stakeholders on the Region's MTSAs. Since then, Regional staff attended additional consultation events to consult on the proposed MTSAs including:

- Mulock Station Area Secondary Plan Public Information Centre hosted by the Town of Newmarket;
- Yonge and Bernard Key Development Area (KDA) Open House hosted by the City of Richmond Hill; and
- Major Transit Station Areas Public Information Session hosted by the City of Vaughan.

Regional planning staff solicited comments from external agencies including Metrolinx, Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), Conservation Authorities (Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority) and local school boards (York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board). Attachment 5 provides more detailed feedback on the high-level themes received from each stakeholder group.

The public is generally supportive of increased density, mixed-use development and transit-oriented development within and around major transit station areas

From the consultation, residents and businesses are generally supportive of increased density, mixed-use development and transit-oriented development near major transit station areas. The public expressed support for increased transit capacity and increased options for active transportation within and around MTSAs. Residents also saw revitalization opportunities within certain MTSAs and the development of more walkable and environmentally friendly communities built with attractive urban form. Some concerns involved having densities that are too high at certain MTSAs, especially the impact on traffic congestion in the area and the need for additional community services. The Toronto Region Conservation Authority provided comments regarding the impact of flood plains and development potential. Metrolinx expressed support for including only existing or funded stations as MTSAs in the Region.

Feedback from local municipalities on boundary delineations and minimum density targets is important to refining major transit station areas

Local municipal staff provided detailed feedback on boundary delineations and minimum density targets throughout the consultation process. Local municipal staff were generally supportive of the proposed methodology used to delineate MTSA boundaries and setting minimum density targets outlined in the [April 2019](#) Background Report. Site specific concerns and proposed adjustments to selected draft MTSA boundary delineations and density targets were expressed through the consultation process.

MTSA adjustments may include:

- Minor technical boundary adjustments to some MTSA as a result of comments received from internal and local municipal staff, and stakeholders
- Expanding selected MTSA to account for the policy update in the 2019 Growth Plan which generally defines MTSA as the area within an approximate 500 to 800 metre radius of a transit station, as opposed to 500 metres in the 2017 Growth Plan
- Depending on the context, selected school sites located on the periphery of MTSA boundaries will be excluded due to their location from the transit station
- Inclusion of single-detached properties within the MTSA boundary will be minimized to those located in direct or close proximity to the transit station
- Certain natural heritage system features along the edge of MTSA boundaries will continue to be included to create a continuous mapping boundary or to eliminate any holes or gaps with adjoining MTSA
- Reducing the minimum density targets for a number of proposed MTSA to provide local municipalities with more flexibility in achieving the minimum density target
- Not assigning a density target to a MTSA until lands are removed from the Parkway Belt West Lands designation which prohibits development

Planning for growth and development in major transit station areas will require municipalities to implement local intensification strategies and on-going monitoring

The updated Regional Official Plan will set out policy directions for local municipalities to prepare intensification strategies and plans based on the Region's guiding principles, boundary delineations and minimum density targets established for MTSA. Once MTSA have been delineated in the Regional Official Plan, local municipalities will be required to update their official plans and secondary plans to be in conformity with the York Region MTSA policies. Local municipalities will have discretion to determine appropriate land uses, densities, building heights and other land use planning considerations to achieve the overall minimum density target for each MTSA that will be set out in the Regional Official Plan. MTSA will require on-going monitoring to ensure conformity with Regional policies and the Growth Plan.

Final major transit station area recommendations will be reported in Q3 2020

Draft MTSA boundaries and density targets presented in the [April 2019](#) Background Report continue to be refined based on the comments and feedback received and will be finalized in the coming months. Detailed mapping illustrating the updated boundary delineations and density targets for each of the proposed MTSA will be presented in the final Major Transit Station Areas report in Q3 2020.

5. Financial

The MTSA work and consultation process has been undertaken within the existing staff complement and budget of the Planning and Economic Development Branch.

6. Local Impact

Local municipalities are key partners in the ongoing development of the Region's MTSA and Intensification Strategy. York Region staff has consulted extensively with local municipal staff in the preparation and refinement of the draft MTSA delineations and minimum density targets. Local municipal staff are also consulted through one-on-one meetings and regular meetings of the MCR Local Municipal Working Group.

7. Conclusion

This report, along with the attachments, provide an update on the major transit stations area work and consultation completed to date as part of the Regional MCR.

Seventy-two draft major transit stations are proposed to be identified in the Regional Official Plan, including 2 new MTSA (Richmond Hill GO Station and Royal Orchard Subway Station) in addition to those identified in the [April 2019](#) Planning for Intensification Background Report. Input and feedback will continue to be gathered from stakeholders through the on-going consultation process that will be finalized in the coming months to further refine and update the draft MTSA boundary delineations and proposed density targets.

Detailed mapping for each MTSA will be presented in the final Major Transit Station Area report in Q3 2020, which will include the proposed final MTSA boundary delineations and minimum density targets, policy direction for updating the Regional Official Plan based on the Growth Plan policies, as well as an implementation strategy for the Region and local municipalities.

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Bottomley at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71530. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

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Chief Planner

Dino Basso
Commissioner of Corporate Services

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Chief Administrative Officer

February 28, 2020
Attachments (5)
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