

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Planning and Economic Development
September 10, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

Major Transit Station Areas Endorsement Report

1. Recommendations

1. Council endorse for inclusion in the Regional Official Plan update, the boundary delineations, minimum density targets and preliminary policy directions for the 72 major transit station areas identified in this report.
2. The Province be requested to approve alternative density targets for two Provincially required major transit station areas: Highway 407 Subway Station and King City GO Station.
3. Regional staff delineate boundaries and set density targets for the future MTSA stations along Jane Street in Vaughan and report back to Council for endorsement.
4. The Regional Clerk forward this report and attachments to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and local municipalities.

2. Summary

This report proposes boundary delineations, minimum density targets and preliminary policy directions for Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) in the Regional Official Plan update being undertaken through the Municipal Comprehensive Review.

Key Points:

- Regional staff recommends Council endorse the boundary delineations and minimum density targets for 72 MTSAs shown in Attachment 2, of which 56 located on Provincial Priority Transit Corridors are required by the Growth Plan and 16 are located on Other Transit Corridors
- Proposed MTSA boundary delineations and minimum density targets presented in the [April 2019](#) Planning for Intensification Background Report and the [March 2020](#) Major Transit Station Areas Update Report have been updated based on consultation and feedback received from local municipalities, stakeholders and the public
- Since the [March 2020](#) Major Transit Station Areas Update Report, the 14th Avenue GO Station in Markham has been removed from the Region's proposed MTSA network as Metrolinx is no longer planning for a station at that location

- The Gormley GO Station MTSA in Richmond Hill has been added per Council direction
- Further to Council direction in March 2020, Attachment 2 identifies future stations along Jane Street BRT Corridor based on the Viva Network Expansion Plan for inclusion in the Regional Official Plan as MTSA's following finalization of station location and boundary delineation in consultation with City of Vaughan staff
- Additional MTSA's may be added, as appropriate, when the timing of future higher order transit corridors and station locations becomes certain
- MTSA's strengthen and enhance the Region's planned urban structure and advance city building initiatives set out in the Regional Official Plan and local municipal official plans
- Preliminary policy directions for MTSA's are set out in this report to inform updated Regional Official Plan policies

3. Background

Provincial Growth Plan directs the Region to delineate Major Transit Station Areas

Under the Growth Plan, upper-tier municipalities, in consultation with local municipalities, are required to delineate boundaries and set minimum density targets for MTSA's 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 reflect existing transit corridors as well as funded future transit corridors. In York Region, they consist of portions of Highway 7 and Yonge Street Corridors with funded Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Barrie GO rail line north to Aurora Station, Stouffville GO line to Markham Centre and three stations on the Spadina subway line located in York Region.

MTSA's are defined in the Growth Plan as areas within an approximate 500-800 metre radius of a higher order transit station and representing a 10-minute walk. MTSA's on Provincial Priority Transit Corridors are to be planned to have 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
- 150 residents and jobs combined per hectare for the GO Transit rail network

Planning for MTSA's is intended to be long-term. There is no timing requirement in the Growth Plan for MTSA's to achieve these densities; they can be achieved after the planning horizon, which is 2041 in the current Growth Plan and proposed by Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan to be 2051. Due to a number of factors including location, market demand, and others, some MTSA's will take longer to develop and this is appropriately reflected in the absence of a timing requirement in the Growth Plan.

MTSAs on Other Transit Corridors (see Attachment 2), are not subject to Growth Plan minimum density targets. Boundary delineations and minimum density targets have been proposed for all MTSAs identified in the Region, including those located on Other Transit Corridors.

Planning Act provides for the protection of Major Transit Station Areas from land use planning appeals

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 identify all MTSAs in York Region as Protected MTSAs, including MTSAs on Provincial Priority Transit Corridors and Other Transit Corridors. This allows them to receive protection from appeals on MTSA policies and land use planning matters. For Protected MTSAs, the following cannot be appealed in both regional and local official plans:

- Protected MTSA policies
- MTSA boundary delineations
- Minimum density target in number of residents and jobs per hectare
- Maximum densities with respect to building and structures
- Minimum and/or maximum heights with respect to buildings and structures
- Approved land uses

Once MTSAs have been delineated in the Regional Official Plan, local municipalities will be required to update their official plans and secondary plans to conform with York Region MTSA delineations, density targets and policies. Local municipalities have discretion to determine appropriate land uses, specific densities, building heights and other planning considerations to achieve the overall minimum density target for each MTSA set out in the Regional Official Plan.

Regional Council endorsed the identification of 72 Major Transit Station Areas in March 2020, an additional Major Transit Station Area in Gormley and additional Major Transit Station Areas along Jane Street

In [April 2019](#), Regional Council directed staff to proceed with consultation on the Planning for Intensification Background Report which proposed 70 MTSA delineations and minimum density targets and 3 additional strategic growth areas. The background report also included guiding principles providing specific direction on how to delineate boundaries and set minimum density targets for MTSAs in the Region.

Earlier this year, Regional Council endorsed the identification of 72 MTSAs for the Regional Official Plan in the [March 2020](#) Major Transit Station Areas Update Report. Council also provided direction to include an MTSA at Gormley GO Station in Richmond Hill and future

transit stations along the Jane Street corridor south of Major Mackenzie Drive in the City of Vaughan. The March report also provided an update on the consultation process and results.

The identification of MTSAs, boundary delineations and minimum density targets are based on guiding principles developed by Regional staff further to Provincial direction, with input and feedback from local municipal staff. Throughout the past year, Regional staff consulted with various internal and external stakeholders, as well as the public on the proposed boundary delineations and density targets. Several adjustments to the proposed MTSA boundaries and minimum density targets were made as a result of the consultation process.

Major Transit Station Areas are key components of the Region's Intensification Strategy

The Growth Plan requires the Region to 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 at least 50% of the Region's annual residential units are to occur within the delineated built-up area (see Attachment 1). MTSAs 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 locations for higher density employment development within employment areas. Intensification in these strategic areas provides important benefits including 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 by aligning growth and infrastructure investment.

All levels of government continue to invest significantly in transit projects in the Region, including the Spadina subway extension to Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, the VIVA BRT System as well as road and streetscape improvements. In York Region, Centres and Corridors are planned to achieve the most intensive and greatest mix of development, supported by over \$3.6 billion in transit infrastructure investment to date. The majority of the Region's MTSAs are located in Regional Centres and Corridors supported by subway and/or BRT, with others located on GO transit corridors. MTSAs located within these key strategic intensification areas support the Region's planned urban structure, optimizing existing and planned transit infrastructure investments.

4. Analysis

Staff recommend boundary delineations and density targets for 72 Major Transit Station Areas be endorsed for incorporation into the Regional Official Plan update

Regional staff recommend endorsement of 72 MTSAs for identification in the Regional Official Plan as shown in Attachment 2, of which 56 are required stations along Provincial Priority Transit Corridors identified in the Growth Plan and 16 are located on Other Transit Corridors. Gormley GO Station has been identified as an MTSA in Richmond Hill based on Council direction. The majority of the Region's MTSAs are located in Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Vaughan. Nine of the stations are shared between adjacent York Region

local municipalities and three stations are shared with the City of Toronto. The detailed mapping for each of the 72 individual MTSA's, including proposed boundary delineations and minimum density targets, are shown in Attachment 3.

GO Transit, future BRT and subway corridors located outside of 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. Recommended MTSA's on Other Transit Corridors are generally located on a Regional corridor, have planned intensification potential, have station locations and have some certainty for approved or committed funding for higher order transit. The 16 MTSA's on Other Transit Corridors are located along the Davis Drive BRT Corridor, Highway 7 BRT Corridor, Richmond Hill GO Line, Stouffville GO Line, Yonge Street Subway Corridor and the Yonge Street BRT Corridor.

Future transit stations along Jane Street in the City of Vaughan have also been identified as MTSA's on Attachment 2 as per Council direction but additional work is required to confirm station locations, delineate boundaries, and propose density targets. These MTSA's will be brought forward for endorsement through a separate report. Additional transit corridors with no committed rapid transit funding such as Major Mackenzie Drive in Markham do not include proposed MTSA's at this time. 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 also not recommended as MTSA's at this time.

Regional staff will continue to work with local municipal staff to identify and recommend additional new MTSA's as transportation infrastructure expands, when the anticipated level of intensification for specific transit corridors or areas increases and when station locations become more certain.

Feedback from local municipalities on boundary delineations and density targets informed final proposed Major Transit Station Areas

Since the outset of planning for MTSA's in 2018, Regional staff have worked closely with local municipal staff on MTSA identification, delineation and development of minimum density targets. During the consultation process, local municipal staff provided detailed feedback on site-specific boundary and density targets reflecting local conditions.

Comments consisted of suggestions for technical boundary adjustments, the removal of existing low density residential lands, school sites, storm water management (SWM) ponds and natural heritage system (NHS) lands, and adjustments to proposed density targets for select MTSA's. While refinements have been made on the periphery of MTSA's, single-detached homes within close proximity to the transit station have been included in the delineation to allow for potential long-term redevelopment of these key lands close to higher order transit. By including these areas within protected MTSA boundaries, protection from appeal is also afforded to these lands. School sites, NHS lands, SWM ponds located in close proximity to the transit station have generally been included to provide a diverse range and mix of land uses which support the creation of complete communities and to promote a contiguous boundary and/or eliminate any holes or gaps within the MTSA.

A summary of the comments and feedback provided from local municipal staff and local Council, Regional staff's response to the comments, as well as the updates to the MTSAs can be found in Attachment 4.

Stakeholders have been generally supportive of the proposed Major Transit Station Area boundaries and density targets

Public consultation feedback suggests residents are generally supportive of the increased density, mixed-use and transit-oriented development contemplated for MTSAs in urban areas. Residents expressed support for increased transit capacity and options for active transportation as well as the development of more walkable communities built with attractive urban form. There were some concerns regarding the potential impact of increased traffic in MTSAs and the need for additional public service facilities such as police and fire protection services, schools and community centres.

Regional staff also consulted external agencies including Metrolinx, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), Conservation Authorities (Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority), York Region Rapid Transit Corporation (YRRTC), local school boards (York Region District School Board and York Region Catholic District School Board), the Building Industry and Land Development Association, and the Planning Advisory Committee on the Region's MTSAs. More details on the consultation events and methods used to inform and engage stakeholders on the Region's MTSAs can be found in the [March 2020](#) Major Transit Station Areas Update Report.

A summary of comments and feedback on the high-level themes received from external stakeholders and the public with Regional staff's responses and recommendations used to guide the proposed MTSA boundary and density target refinements can be found in Attachment 5.

Gormley GO Station has been added and 14th Avenue GO Station has been removed from the Region's MTSA network since the March 2020 update report

Based on direction from Council and input received since the Major Transit Station Areas Update Report in [March 2020](#), the Gormley GO Station in Richmond Hill has been added. The 14th Avenue GO Station originally proposed has been removed as a proposed MTSA as Metrolinx is no longer planning for a station at that location. City of Markham planning staff are in agreement with removal of this station from the Region's MTSA network.

Gormley GO Station is located within the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Greenbelt Plan, Gormley Heritage Conservation District Plan and part of the West Gormley Secondary Plan. With very limited development potential due to Provincial policy restrictions based on its location in a rural settlement and conservation district area, a minimum density target of 10 residents and jobs per hectare is proposed for Gormley GO Station. An alternative density target request from the Province is not required for Gormley GO Station as it is not located on a Provincial Priority Transit Corridor and therefore not subject to Provincial minimums.

The Gormley GO Station is located within the Protected Countryside designation as per the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. In accordance with Council direction, staff have

delineated a boundary for the MTSA which conforms with the Growth Plan (see Attachment 7 for more details). This includes lands within the Settlement Area that are within an 800 metre radius of a transit station, representing about a 10-minute walk. The proposed MTSA boundary also includes a small portion of the West Gormley Secondary Plan area which currently provides the only developable lands within the 800 metre radius of the station. Lands within the Gormley hamlet and Heritage Conservation District are not expected to provide opportunities for redevelopment. Further development of lands within the vicinity of the station would require amendments by the Province to the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan to permit a Settlement Area designation. If the Province were to amend provincial policies in this regard, a revised MTSA boundary could then be proposed. Until then, current Provincial Plan designations apply.

Identification of four future subway stations and two future GO stations as Major Transit Station Areas are contingent upon final approval from Metrolinx

The precise location of four subway stations (Steeles, Clark, Royal Orchard and Langstaff-Longbridge subway stations located along the Yonge North Subway Extension) and two GO rail stations (Kirby GO Station in Vaughan and Mulock GO Station in Newmarket) are subject to final confirmation from Metrolinx. Delineations and density targets for these six MTSA's may require refinements depending on final decisions on these future stations from Metrolinx.

Two Major Transit Station Areas require an alternative density target

Two MTSA's in York Region require alternative minimum density target approvals by the Province as they will not be able to meet Growth Plan minimum density requirements. Alternative minimum density targets are proposed for the Highway 407 Subway Station in Vaughan and King City GO Station MTSA's.

Development potential in the Highway 407 Subway Station MTSA in Vaughan is restricted due to its location in the Provincial Parkway Belt West Plan area. The lands in the MTSA are currently reserved by the Province for Provincial infrastructure and complementary uses. City of Vaughan staff are in agreement with Regional staff that an alternative density target of zero should be proposed for this MTSA until these lands are removed from the Parkway Belt West Plan designation by the Province. Once the lands are removed, appropriate density targets will be proposed for the Highway 407 Subway Station MTSA.

King City GO Station in the Township of King will not be able to meet the Growth Plan minimum density target of 150 residents and jobs per hectare for GO stations. An alternative density target of 80 residents and jobs per hectare is proposed to be requested for the King City GO Station MTSA as it is surrounded by mainly existing low density residential uses, buildings with heritage designations and natural heritage features which offer limited opportunity to consolidate parcels for higher density intensification. The alternative density target assumes the potential for redevelopment of selected parcels to stacked townhomes and low-rise apartments and was determined in collaboration with Township of King planning staff.

Regional planning and transportation staff continue to work with City of Vaughan staff to advance identification of Major Transit Station Areas along the future Jane Street Bus Rapid Transit Corridor

Further to Council direction in March 2020, Attachment 2 includes 6 potential station locations along the future Jane Street BRT Corridor as per the 2016-2020 Viva Network Expansion Plan for inclusion in the Regional Official Plan. Staff, in consultation with City of Vaughan staff and Regional transportation staff, have confirmed that further technical information and analysis is required to identify the precise future BRT stations locations along the corridor in order to delineate them as MTSA's and propose density targets.

Regional planning and transportation staff will continue to work in collaboration with City of Vaughan staff to advance the identification of MTSA's along Jane Street Corridor and bring them to Council for approval through a separate report.

Regional Official Plan Preliminary Policy Directions are proposed to guide future growth and development of Major Transit Station Areas

Regional staff have proposed preliminary policy directions to introduce a new framework for the Regional Official Plan to guide how future growth and development will be accommodated within MTSA's in York Region. MTSA's should provide an appropriate mix of land uses and high quality, transit-supportive development and support the planning of transit-oriented communities, and the significant financial investment in transit infrastructure in the Region's Centres and Corridors. Table 1 summarizes the preliminary policy directions categorized under six theme areas. These policy directions will be used to develop policy for the Regional Official Plan update. More details can be found in Attachment 6.

Table 1
Summary of Preliminary Policy Directions for MTSA's

Theme Area	Summary of Theme Area and Preliminary Policy Directions
MTSA Mapping and Density Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Growth Plan requires MTSA's to be identified and mapped with minimum density targets in the Regional Official Plan. • Provincial requirements including definitions and mapping for MTSA's and Provincial Priority Transit Corridors, minimum density targets and detailed mapping of boundary delineations for the Region's MTSA's as well as general policies relating to future refinements will be provided.
Local Municipal Planning for MTSA's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regional Official Plan will provide guidance for local municipalities to plan for MTSA's by specifying clear roles and responsibilities. • Policy directions will include clarifying the role of local municipalities, which include providing the detailed land use

Theme Area	Summary of Theme Area and Preliminary Policy Directions
MTSAs within Employment Areas	<p>planning for MTSAs, including official plan designations, zoning standards, height, and inclusionary zoning provisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTSAs within employment areas are planned to provide high density employment uses along higher order transit corridors. • Policy directions will include clarifying that employment area designations would continue to apply within MTSAs to protect employment lands for higher density employment uses.
Transit-Oriented Development in MTSAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTSAs will be designed as transit-oriented communities and accommodate a range of land uses supporting a high level of transit-usage and active transportation. • Policy directions will include policies for local municipalities to create high-quality transit-oriented communities relating to urban design, public realm and active transportation.
Monitoring Progress in MTSAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive monitoring and on-going assessment will help York Region measure the success of growth and development within MTSAs. • Policy directions will include working with local municipalities to monitor and report on planning and development activity within MTSAs.
Prioritization and Optimization of Infrastructure Investments for MTSAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizing growth and intensification in locations with existing and/or committed infrastructure such as MTSAs will maximize return on investment. • Policy directions will include working with local municipalities to provide transit facilities and amenities that support existing and planned transit infrastructure.

Final Major Transit Station Area delineations, minimum density targets and a Major Transit Station Area policy framework will be incorporated into the Region’s updated Official Plan

Regional staff will continue to work in close collaboration with local municipal staff to develop the Region’s Intensification Strategy. MTSA delineations, minimum density targets and policy will be incorporated into the Region’s updated official plan. A draft Regional Official Plan is scheduled for completion in mid-2021.

5. Financial

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

6. Local Impact

Local municipalities are key partners in the development of the Region's MTSA delineations, minimum density targets and policy framework. Extensive consultation with local municipal staff and consideration for local municipal council decisions informed recommendations on the recommended MTSA boundary delineations and density targets. Local municipal staff are also engaged through one-on-one meetings and regular meetings of the York Region MCR Local Municipal Working Group. Regional planning and transportation staff will continue to work with City of Vaughan staff to finalize MTSA along the Jane Street corridor.

7. Conclusion

This report, along with the attachments, provide Regional staff's recommendations on the proposed MTSA boundaries, minimum density targets and policy directions as part of the Regional Official Plan update in keeping with Provincial direction.

MTSAs are a key component of York Region's Intensification Strategy, which play a vital role in strengthening and further enhancing the Region's planned urban structure and advancing the Region's city building initiative. Seventy-two Major Transit Station Areas with detailed mapping of boundary delineations and minimum density targets presented in this report are proposed to be identified in the Regional Official Plan. The Gormley GO Station MTSA in Richmond Hill has been added based on Council direction and the 14th Avenue GO Station in Markham has been removed from the Region's MTSA network; Jane Street BRT MTSA for endorsement will follow pending finalization of station locations. Two MTSA will require Provincial approval of alternative targets, which includes the Highway 407 BRT Station and King City GO Station MTSA. New MTSA will be added, as appropriate, when the timing of future higher order transit corridors and stations becomes certain.

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

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Attachments (7)
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