



Office of the Commissioner  
Transportation Services Department

## MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Paul Jankowski  
Commissioner of Transportation Services

Date: September 18, 2020

Re: Metrolinx - Queen Street-Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit Update

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This memo updates Council on the Metrolinx – Queen Street-Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit project.

### **Metrolinx is nearing completion of the Queen Street–Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit Planning Study and Initial Business Case**

Metrolinx is nearing completion of the Queen Street–Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit Planning Study and Initial Business Case (Study), which is scheduled for public release fall 2020. The study area is shown in Attachment 1.

Metrolinx is moving forward with this project and Transportation Planning, York Region Transit and York Region Rapid Transit Corporation staff has been involved in the Study through a Technical Advisory Committee.

Metrolinx's next phase includes preliminary design, completing an environmental assessment and additional business case analysis. Staff is not aware of any capital funding commitment by Metrolinx beyond this next phase of project development.

Staff is supportive of the Queen Street-Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit project as long as significant capital funding contributions are not expected from York Region at this time. The Yonge Subway Extension is York Region's top rapid transit priority. Although additional investment in bus rapid transit along Highway 7 connecting to Brampton is considered beneficial, it is not the highest rapid transit priority for York Region.

## **Queen Street–Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit project is included in the Metrolinx 2041 Regional Transportation Plan**

Queen Street–Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit is included in the [Metrolinx 2041 Regional Transportation Plan](#) as an in-development rapid transit project, shown as #34 and #36 in Attachment 2.

The corridor extends along Queen Street from Mississauga Road in the City of Brampton, to Highway 7 west of Pine Valley Drive, in the City of Vaughan, terminating at the existing VivaNext rapidway on Highway 7 at Helen Street/Wigwoss Drive. The project will connect downtown Brampton to the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, which includes a connection to the Spadina Subway Extension.

The total length of the corridor through the City of Brampton is approximately 18.5 kilometres. Through the City of Vaughan to the terminus of the study area west of Pine Valley Drive, the corridor is approximately 5.5 kilometres. The total length is 24 kilometres.

## **The Queen Street–Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit Planning Study and Initial Business Case recommends proceeding to preliminary design phase**

The phases of the Metrolinx project process are as follows:

- Planning - includes alternatives analysis and initial business case
- Preliminary Design - includes Transit Project Assessment Process and preliminary design business case
- Design and Procurement Preparation - includes a full business case
- Procurement
- Construction, Commissioning and Delivery

With the release of the Study planned for this fall, the planning phase would be complete. Metrolinx's next phase includes preliminary design, completing environmental assessment requirements through the Transit Project Assessment Process and additional business case analysis.

## **The Study includes development of a preliminary transit service concept to determine ridership potential for each infrastructure option**

A preliminary transit service concept was developed to determine ridership potential for each infrastructure option. The concept extends east of the study area and connects a primary Queen Street-Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit trunk route to the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre subway station. The transit service concept also includes feeder routes to key destinations such as York University and Toronto Pearson International Airport.

The transit service concept will be further developed during the preliminary design phase, including consideration for combined York Region Transit and Brampton Transit services, in particular, a primary Queen Street-Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit trunk route west of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre subway station.

York Region Transit and Brampton Transit already integrate cross-boundary transit services between Brampton and Vaughan where feasible.

## **The Study recommends further assessment of the best performing infrastructure options for bus rapid transit**

The Study findings identify two infrastructure options as providing maximum transit priority across the corridor, including:

- Centre median bus rapid transit achieved through conversion of one general purpose traffic lane in each direction across the corridor
- Centre median bus rapid transit with the addition of a transit lane in each direction across the corridor, except in downtown Brampton where conversion of one general purpose traffic lane in each direction is planned

The Study recognizes that prior to making a determination on whether to convert existing traffic lanes to bus rapid transit lanes, or widen the corridor to accommodate new bus rapid transit lanes, more detailed analysis is required. Further, extensive community and stakeholder consultation, including with Peel Region who has jurisdiction over Queen Street, and York Region who has jurisdiction over Highway 7, will be required. The analysis will be completed as part of the preliminary design phase.

One of the options considered in the Study is to run transit in mixed traffic in constrained areas. This option was found to perform poorly compared to the median bus rapid transit option. During the preliminary design phase, if determined median bus rapid transit options involving either road widening or lane conversion are not possible in constrained areas, other options may be considered, including a reversible transit lane or transit priority measures.

Depending on the final design concept and extent of traffic lane conversion and road widening for new bus rapid transit lanes, the capital cost estimate presented in the initial business case is approximately \$500 million. This cost estimate will evolve as preliminary design proceeds.

## **The preliminary design phase is scheduled to begin in 2021**

Staff has been involved throughout the planning phase through a Technical Advisory Committee and expects to continue to be closely involved as the preliminary design phase begins in 2021. Transit agencies have also been involved, including Brampton Transit, York Region Transit and York Region Rapid Transit Corporation.

## **Advancement of this project does not address concerns raised by York Region on the Metrolinx prioritization process for rapid transit**

In [May 2019](#), staff updated Council on the Metrolinx process for prioritizing rapid transit projects included in the Metrolinx 2041 Regional Transportation Plan.

Staff noted concerns with the process since it revisited the prioritization of the Region's Viva Bus Rapid Transit Network segments in isolation, rather than prioritizing the Bus Rapid Transit Network in its entirety, as was envisioned when the original Benefits Case was approved in 2008 and staged construction of the network began.

Advancing the Highway 7 west segment of the corridor does not address concerns staff has with Metrolinx's prioritization process, but does advance the west segment of the Region's Viva Bus Rapid Transit Network, which is a positive step forward for this segment.

## **Additional investment in the Region's Viva Bus Rapid Transit Network is beneficial assuming no significant Regional funding is required at this time**

To date, the work with Metrolinx has not addressed how a future bus rapid transit connection between Brampton and Vaughan would be funded. The project has been identified as a priority for the City of Brampton and while it does provide some benefits for employment lands in west Vaughan, it is not the top rapid transit priority for the Region. Additional investment in bus rapid transit in the Region is considered beneficial as long as funding contributions are not expected from the Region at this time.

Local municipalities within York Region continue to advocate for their bus rapid transit priorities. The [City of Markham](#) recently requested the Region to bring forward a Regional Official Plan Amendment to include implementation of the Highway 7 bus rapid transit east section from the Town Centre Boulevard Station to the Cornell terminal.

Future rapid transit prioritization will be included as part of the Transportation Master Plan Update process. Given the significant costs of this infrastructure, these projects have historically been delivered in partnership with Metrolinx and the Province. This work will include consideration for the Highway 7 bus rapid transit west and east sections among other rapid transit priorities, such as Jane Street and Major Mackenzie Drive.

Staff will continue to work with Metrolinx to prioritize the remaining segments of the Region's Viva Bus Rapid Transit Network. In addition, during the preliminary design phase of the Queen Street–Highway 7 bus rapid transit project, staff will ensure the Region's bus rapid transit design standards are incorporated.

For more information, please contact Brian Titherington, Director of Transportation and Infrastructure Planning at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75901.

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Paul Jankowski  
Commissioner of Transportation Services

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Bruce Macgregor  
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments (2)  
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