

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Transportation Services
December 3, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Transportation Services

Highway 48 Transfer Request 19th Avenue to Bethesda Sideroad Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and City of Markham

1. Recommendations

1. The Region defer consideration of a jurisdictional change for Highway 48 between 19th Avenue and Bethesda Sideroad at this time, pending completion of various planning and transportation studies in the area and further discussion with the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario.
2. Staff facilitate discussions with the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville to address development access issues and reflect the evolution of Highway 48 between 19th Avenue and Bethesda Sideroad from a rural highway to an urban street.
3. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, the City of Markham, and the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario.

2. Summary

The report is in response to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville request to transfer jurisdiction of Highway 48 between 19th Avenue and Bethesda Sideroad from the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO) to York Region.

Key Points:

- There are ongoing local and Regional studies that are assessing both land use and transportation impacts for Highway 48 as it evolves from a rural highway to a more urban corridor.
- Transferring this section of Highway 48 to the Region could simplify the development process by removing the MTO from access discussions for adjacent development.
- The estimated cost to the Region of assuming this portion of Highway 48 is more than \$10 million as Provincial policy requires the Region to pay fair market value for the road asset.

- Staff recommends further discussion with the MTO with respect to facilitating near-term development until the longer-term planning and transportation studies are complete.

3. Background

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has requested that jurisdiction of Highway 48 between 19th Avenue and Bethesda Road be transferred to York Region

On August 27, 2019, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Council passed a resolution requesting that jurisdiction of Highway 48 between 19th Avenue and Bethesda Road be transferred from the MTO to York Region. The Council resolution is provided in Attachment 1. A map showing the subject road section is provided in Attachment 2.

Highway 48 from Major Mackenzie Drive to the York-Durham boundary is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario

The MTO has jurisdiction over Highway 48 from Major Mackenzie Drive northerly to the York/Durham boundary and beyond, including the section from 19th Avenue to Bethesda Sideroad.

South of Major Mackenzie Drive to north of Highway 407, the former Highway 48 is now under City of Markham jurisdiction. From south of Highway 407 to Steeles Avenue, Markham Road is under York Region's jurisdiction.

The length of Highway 48, from 19th Avenue to Bethesda Sideroad is 4.0 kilometres. 3.6 kilometres is within the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and 400 metres are within the City of Markham. The road jurisdiction by segment and the municipal boundaries are shown in Attachment 3.

4. Analysis

Ongoing local and Regional planning studies will provide direction towards future development along the corridor and the role of Highway 48

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is currently undertaking a visioning exercise, in consultation with the City of Markham, to potentially expand the Stouffville settlement area boundary to include lands west of Highway 48. In April and October 2020, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing approved two Ministers Zoning Orders on the west side of Highway 48 (total of 190 hectares) within the whitebelt portion of the lands, subject to the visioning exercise.

Access to Highway 48 will play an important role for this corridor to transform from a rural commuter route to a multi-purpose urban street integrated with adjacent development. There

are concerns that MTO access control guidelines may limit the ability to provide road and access connections to Highway 48 to support the vision for the future corridor.

The Region is in the process of updating its Official Plan through the Municipal Comprehensive Review, and through this, the impact of growth and urban expansion on the transportation network will be assessed. Policy updates will be recommended through the Draft Regional Official Plan to align growth with infrastructure and support integrated streets that support all modes of transportation.

The Region has also initiated an update to the Transportation Master Plan, which will be ongoing through 2021 with targeted completion in 2022. As part of the update, the long-term role and function of Highway 48 will be explored within the context of Provincial projections for future population and employment levels in the Region. The update will include recommendations for future jurisdictional transfers. Highway 48 was not recommended for a jurisdictional transfer in the 2016 Transportation Master Plan.

Near-term development can be facilitated with further discussions between stakeholders until planning and transportation studies are complete

If the road were to be assumed by the Region, access would be subject to the Region's access guidelines, rather than the more restrictive MTO access guidelines. This would simplify the development process for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and adjacent landowners.

Staff recommends further discussions with the MTO and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville to address development access issues prior to considering a road assumption. This will allow for ongoing planning and transportation studies to inform long-term jurisdictional decisions for Highway 48.

Assumption of Highway 48 from 19th Avenue to Bethesda Sideroad does not meet Regional Road Assumption Policy criteria

If the section of Highway 48 identified by the Town were to be assumed by the Region, it would result in a four-kilometre gap in the Province's road jurisdiction on Highway 48. On its own, this section of the highway would not provide a logical connection in the Regional road network and would not meet the criteria outlined in the Regional Road Assumption Policy.

5. Financial

Based on preliminary discussions, MTO has no plans to change the jurisdiction of any portion of Highway 48 at this time. If this position was to change, and the Region were to assume any portions of Highway 48, MTO staff has advised the Region would be required to pay fair market value for the asset as per Provincial policy.

MTO staff has estimated the fair market value (capital cost) for Highway 48, between 19th Avenue and Bethesda Sideroad, to be approximately \$10.9 million. If the Region was to

assume the road, it would also be required to pay annual operating and asset management costs estimated at \$400,000 per year.

6. Local Impact

Staff will work with the MTO and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville to address near-term development access issues as work continues to plan for the evolution of the road into a more urban corridor. In lieu of recommending a road transfer of Highway 48 now, staff will work with the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and in consultation with the City of Markham to facilitate development on the lands west of Highway 48.

7. Conclusion

Staff recommends a decision on the jurisdictional change for Highway 48 between 19th Avenue and Bethesda Sideroad be deferred, pending completion of ongoing local and Regional planning and transportation studies. In the meantime, staff will facilitate further discussions regarding road access and issues and once complete, report back on the results with the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

For more information on this report, please contact Brian Titherington, Director of Transportation and Infrastructure Planning at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75901. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by: **Paul Jankowski**
Commissioner of Transportation Services

Approved for Submission: **Bruce Macgregor**
Chief Administrative Officer

November 18, 2020
Attachments (3)
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