

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Transportation Services
April 8, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Transportation Services

Transportation Services Capital Infrastructure Status Update

1. Recommendation

The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the local municipalities.

2. Summary

This annual report provides Council with an update on 2020 accomplishments and projects that will be delivered in 2021 under the Transportation Services Capital Program to service the Region's growing communities.

Key Points:

- Despite reduced traffic volumes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Regional transportation network continues to serve more than 543,000 commuters every day, including 15,000 who use York Region Transit services for some of or all their trip, providing travellers with safe and efficient access to work, home, schools and other destinations across the Region.
- In 2020, Regional Council invested \$272 million throughout the Region in roads and transit infrastructure, including advancement of construction on several major projects, bus purchases for fleet renewal and expansion programs, and continuation of pre-construction activities such as environmental assessment studies and detailed design projects.
- In 2021, \$355 million will be invested in roads and transit infrastructure programs for growth and asset management. Construction is planned at nearly 100 locations and pre-construction work will continue to prepare projects for delivery in future years.
- With the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, staff are actively monitoring and assessing trends to better understand the impacts of the pandemic on delivering transportation services including transit service levels and bus fleet procurement based on ridership needs.

3. Background

Travel by all transportation modes was significantly reduced during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic but has since rebounded

On a typical weekday prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, about 600,000 commuters used their personal vehicles for travel on the Regional road network. Approximately 35,000 daily commuters used York Region Transit services and GO Rail served about 14,000 daily commuters.

In early 2020, there was a steep decline in private vehicle travel and conventional transit ridership. By September 2020, when schools reopened, road traffic was close to 85% of pre-pandemic levels. However, there was a noticeable shift in traffic patterns as daytime volumes became more uniform. Transit ridership has been slower to recover, which is the pattern seen in transit systems across Ontario, including GO Transit.

Lower volumes of traffic early in the year allowed capital projects in some areas to be accelerated with less disruption.

Council is investing \$3.3 billion, the highest total to date, through the Transportation Services Growth and Asset Management Programs over the next 10 years to better serve the Region's growing communities

Transportation Services is responsible for delivering approximately 42% of the Regional 10-Year Capital Plan. The 2021 10-Year Roads and Transit Capital Program (Program), with a budget of \$3.3 billion, is comprised of a Growth Program valued at approximately \$1.82 billion, and an Asset Management Program valued at approximately \$1.44 billion.

This record investment, including an additional \$176 million from the Roads Capital Acceleration Reserve, reflects this Council's support of building road and transit system improvements and maintaining transportation assets to provide an efficient transportation network and enhance the traveller experience for daily commuters, including those who use York Region's transit services.

The Growth Program focuses on expanding the capacity of the Regional road and transit network to offer travellers a range of services and options

The Growth Program focuses on building system improvements to increase the capacity of the Regional road and transit network, including:

- Reconstructing and widening of roads and bridges
- Building new links in the Regional road network, including midblock crossings over provincial highways
- Upgrading intersection to improve traffic operations
- Installing active transportation facilities

- Building or expanding transit terminals and operations and maintenance facilities
- Expanding the transit bus fleet, including electric buses

The Growth Program also supports improvements to enhance the traveller experience, including:

- Streetscaping on key corridors
- Green infrastructure, such as street tree and landscape plantings, irrigation systems and other supporting technologies
- Transit traveller amenities including shelters, electronic signs to provide real-time information, waste/recycling receptacles and bike racks
- Technology on buses to improve pedestrian safety

The Asset Management Program focuses on rehabilitation and replacement of the Region's \$5.8 billion in existing transportation assets

Transportation Services manages more than \$5.8 billion in roads and transit infrastructure, including Regional roads, cycling lanes, bridges, traffic signal controlled intersections, transit terminals, fleet vehicles and maintenance facilities. The Region's investment in the Asset Management Program is increasing significantly, with \$1.44 billion planned to be invested over the next 10 years. This reflects the Region's priority to extend the life of Regionally-managed assets and reduce life-cycle costs.

The Asset Management Program focuses on rehabilitation and replacement of existing transportation assets, including:

- Pavement repair, preservation and rehabilitation
- Bridge and culvert rehabilitation or replacement
- Roadside safety device improvements
- Intersection improvements, including reconstruction of traffic control signals and upgrades to meet *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* requirements
- Transit terminal, station and bus stop maintenance, repair and rehabilitation
- Transit fleet midlife overhaul
- Transit fleet retirement and replacement

4. Analysis

Regional transportation projects have been deemed essential and work continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, construction projects that support the operations of, or provide new capacity in, municipal infrastructure have been deemed essential work. While the Region continues to deliver capital projects, the health and safety of staff, contractors and residents is a priority and new guidelines have been implemented. Contractors are required to follow the provincial government's guidance on the health and safety of construction workers during COVID-19 and increased sanitation and physical distancing are being practiced on all Regional construction sites.

Staff continue to monitor traffic volumes and construction progress to balance moving people and goods throughout the road network and implementing infrastructure improvement in our communities. As the COVID-19 pandemic reduced traffic volumes on Regional Roads, extended lane closures were permitted on some construction projects allowing contractors to work extended hours, resulting in some advancement in construction schedules. Delivery plans were adjusted to take advantage of this as much as possible and most projects finished on schedule, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, work was advanced on many infrastructure projects to provide residents with a better and more efficient Regional transportation network

With an investment of \$272 million in 2020, better and more efficient access to work, home, schools and other destinations across the Region was provided to residents through a number of roads and transit projects, including road widenings, intersection improvements, addition of cycling lanes and an enhanced suite of transit services. A list of 2020 accomplishments is included as Attachment 1.

Throughout the pandemic, staff continued to manage Transit service levels based on ridership needs. This included the ongoing assessment of fleet procurements included in the capital program. In 2020, the procurement of nine buses was deferred based on ridership uncertainties resulting from the pandemic.

In 2021, construction is planned at nearly 100 locations across the Region

In 2021, Transportation Services will continue to build and maintain infrastructure to ensure its transportation network is safe, reliable and responsive to needs. While there has been a noticeable shift in traffic patterns, traffic volumes have returned to approximately 85% of pre-pandemic levels, reinforcing the ongoing need to connect travellers to freeways and transit options.

With an investment of \$252 million in the Growth Program, construction will continue on 14 major capital infrastructure projects and work will commence on five new projects. The projects include:

- Road widenings, such as the continued expansion of Major Mackenzie Drive from Highway 427 to Pine Valley Drive and from Highway 400 to Jane Street
- Major intersection improvements to add lanes or eliminate jogs, such as the improvements planned for Teston Road from Pine Valley Drive to Weston Road
- Rail bridge replacements on Highway 27 at the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks and Keele Street at the CN Rail tracks
- Road/rail grade separations, such as the Rutherford Road/GO Barrie Rail grade separation
- A new bus terminal opposite the new Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital

Under the Asset Management Program, \$103 million will be invested in roads and transit infrastructure and fleet. Construction is planned at more than 80 locations throughout the Region to keep road and transit assets in a state of good repair including:

- Road rehabilitation, such as 14th Avenue in the City of Markham and Bayview Avenue/Prospect Street in the Town of Newmarket
- Bridge and culvert rehabilitation or replacement, such as The Queensway culvert replacement in the Town of Georgina and the McCowan Road culvert replacement in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville
- Intersection improvements, such as new traffic signals at The Queensway South and Richmond Park Drive in the Town of Georgina
- The purchase of six electric buses under the Fleet Retirement and Replacement Program

Attachment 2 shows the locations of current road projects, apart from some asset management projects. Projects to be undertaken under the program in 2021 are summarized in Attachment 3.

Due to decreased ridership and the uncertainties resulting from the pandemic, the procurement of 51 buses planned for 2021 has been deferred and will be re-assessed during the 2022 budget process. Staff are looking into a joint cooperative procurement with TTC and possibly other transit agencies on electric bus purchases.

Pre-construction activities are being undertaken to prepare projects for construction in future years

On average, it takes eight to ten years to deliver major capital infrastructure projects. Before construction can commence, environmental assessment studies need to be undertaken, projects designed, permits and approvals/agreements from regulatory authorities obtained, property acquired and utilities relocated. Staff are already working on pre-construction activities for numerous growth and asset management projects in preparation for

construction in future years. The pre-construction work being undertaken in 2021 on 27 growth projects is summarized in Attachment 3 and locations are shown in Attachment 4.

Recognizing travel patterns and behaviour have changed in response to public health and economic recovery measures put into place to adapt to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, staff are actively monitoring and assessing these trends to better understand the impacts of the pandemic on delivering transportation services. The findings will be incorporated into the planning of the future transportation network and the Region’s Transportation Master Plan Update.

5. Financial

\$355 million will be invested in roads and transit programs in 2021

Council approved a Regional investment of more than \$355 million in 2021 for transportation growth and asset management projects. The Growth Program is funded predominantly from development charges, while the Asset Management Program is funded from the asset management reserve.

Reflecting uncertainty around the timing and extent of recovery in ridership, YRT has accelerated a shift to conventional Mobility On-Request service, which uses smaller vehicles, and has reduced planned bus purchases for the next several years. These efforts are aimed at operating cost-effectively while maintaining flexibility in meeting demand for transit services.

Table 1 shows the 2020 actuals and 2021 capital budget for Roads and Transit.

Table 1
Roads and Transit 2020 Actuals and 2021 Capital Budget

| Program | 2020 Actuals* (millions) | 2021 Budget (millions) |
|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Roads | \$201.6 | \$275.3 |
| Transit | 70.2 | 79.6 |
| Total | \$271.8 | \$354.9 |

*2020 Actuals are unaudited

As the Region makes increased capital investments in the Growth Program, there will be a corresponding need to increase operating budget to routinely maintain new infrastructure. Options to minimize impacts to operating budget are carefully considered during the design phase.

An additional \$118 million is also being invested in rapid transit infrastructure in 2021

In 2021, \$118 million is being invested in rapid transit infrastructure and \$355 million in other transportation infrastructure. Investment in rapid transit infrastructure is funded by the Region and Metrolinx.

The planning, design and construction of Regional roads and transit infrastructure is undertaken by Transportation Services while investment in the Region's rapid transit network and related infrastructure is led by York Region Rapid Transit Corporation.

Total investment in the Region's transportation infrastructure is shown in Table 2 (2020 actuals and 2021 budget).

Table 2
Transportation Infrastructure 2020 Actuals and 2021 Capital Budget

| Program | 2020 Actuals (millions) | 2021 Budget (millions) |
|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Transportation Services | \$271.8* | \$354.9 |
| York Region Rapid Transit Corporation** | 139.0** | 118.0** |
| Total | \$410.8 | \$472.9 |

*2020 Actuals are unaudited

**YRRTC Actuals and Budget include York Region and Metrolinx funding

6. Local Impact

Staff continue to work closely with local municipal staff to ensure concerns are addressed and local municipal infrastructure requirements such as watermains, sewers, streetlights, sidewalks, streetscaping and multi-use paths are included in Regional projects where possible. In 2021, over \$12 million in local municipal infrastructure is included in Regional projects. This work is funded by the local municipalities and has been rolled into Regional projects to gain efficiencies and provide local municipalities with cost or time savings and reduce the overall impact to travellers.

While the COVID-19 pandemic brought about major changes, some of which may have long-lasting impacts, transit remains a cornerstone of sustainable growth. Rehabilitation programs support continued delivery of safe and reliable transit service and amenities to travellers in the Region. Transportation Services will continue to adjust service levels to meet demand and operate efficiently.

Travellers in the Region's growing communities need safe, reliable and efficient services. This is a priority for the Region and construction is being managed to proactively minimize disruptions to travellers while building and maintaining a world-class transportation network. The Region has comprehensive communication plans to keep residents, businesses and other stakeholders informed.

7. Conclusion

The Region continues to make significant investments in the expansion and maintenance of Regional road and transit system improvements, with several large projects underway that will be advanced or fully delivered during 2021. The shift in travel patterns due to COVID-19 is being monitored and the long-term impact is unknown at this time. This will be a key consideration as Transportation Services continues to look for ways to provide travellers with a range of travel options to maximize road network capacity, while ensuring the Region's assets are properly maintained in ways that are financially sustainable.

For more information on this report, please contact Salim Alibhai, Director, Capital Planning and Delivery, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75229. 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

March 23, 2021
Attachments (4)
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