



Office of the Commissioner
Transportation Services Department

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Ann-Marie Carroll
Acting Commissioner of Transportation Services

Date: August 16, 2021

Re: York Region Response – Ontario Ministry of Transportation Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan – Discussion Paper – ERO 019-3839

On June 29, 2021, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) released a discussion paper entitled "[Towards a Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan](#)" and requested public and stakeholder input by August 28, 2021. Input was sought through Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) posting [019-3839](#). A map of the Greater Golden Horseshoe study area is included as Attachment 1.

This memorandum summarizes the discussion paper and staff comments are included in Attachment 2. Due to the short consultation timeframe, it was not feasible to bring staff comments to Council for endorsement prior to submission; however, should Council have any additional comments, staff will forward them to the Province.

The discussion paper is intended to inform the development of a long-term transportation plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to 2051

Population in the Greater Golden Horseshoe is forecasted to grow from 10 million people in 2019, to 14.9 million people by 2051. This rapid growth will continue to add pressure to an already-congested transportation network.

The report estimates congestion costs the economy up to \$11 billion per year in lost productivity, and total hours lost in congestion are forecasted to more than triple by 2051 if action is not taken.

Following stakeholder comments on the discussion paper, the MTO is expected to release the Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan (Plan) by the end of 2021.

The Plan builds on the Province's original 2008 Regional Transportation Plan; The Big Move: Transforming Transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Development of the Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan is being led by MTO and goes beyond the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area limits included in the 2008 plan, to encompass the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe. MTO's development of the Plan also encompasses all elements of transportation.

The Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan is expected to be a guiding document for more detailed Provincial plans such as Metrolinx's rapid transit network plan and MTO's highways program.

The Plan's vision, goals and actions focus on three areas: improving transit, improving highways, including pedestrian and cycling safety, and protecting goods movement

The discussion paper identifies the vision of an integrated transportation system that provides a safe, seamless and accessible transportation experience for all users. Achieving the vision is organized around three pillars:

- Transforming the Greater Golden Horseshoe regional transit system from today's radial commuter network where most connections are centered on Union Station, to an expanded grid network with geographically dispersed transit connections throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe, together with new routes, more frequent services and more connections
- A resilient highway network that provides more capacity in the most congested areas, more efficient freight routes and more route alternatives
- An integrated, multimodal Strategic Goods Movement Network to better protect key facilities and connections to make sure the economy of the Greater Golden Horseshoe continues to grow

Three conceptual network maps are presented in the provincial discussion paper. Attachment 3 includes the Transit System Network, Attachment 4 the Future Highway Network and Attachment 5 the Goods Movement Network.

The long-term vision and goals of the Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan are supported by near-term actions

To make progress on the long-term vision and goals of the Plan, the discussion paper proposes a series of near-term actions.

The near-term actions identified in the discussion paper are organized under seven goals:

- Improve transit connectivity
- Relieve congestion
- Give users more choice
- Keep goods moving
- Safe and inclusive system
- Future ready
- Connections beyond the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The planning for many of the near-term actions is already underway and stakeholders are being engaged, including York Region. For example, York Region is a member of the Fare and Service Integration Provincial-Municipal Table (Table), with the goal of having fully-integrated transit fares and services to provide seamless connections. The Table was officially established in early 2021 with its inaugural meeting held in February, and is comprised of senior representatives from transit systems within the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area and the broader GO service area.

Other examples of near-term actions underway include the planning and design for highway expansion in York Region, such as the Highway 400–404 Link Highway, commonly referred to as the Bradford Bypass. The Region expects to continue to be engaged as the Province moves ahead with these kinds of projects.

Staff are generally supportive of the vision, goals and objectives presented in the discussion paper. The following staff comments are centered around the need for alignment with Regional plans, continued consultation and engagement, clarification as to planning and delivery responsibilities between MTO and Metrolinx, and improved road safety, in particular protecting pedestrians and cyclists across highway interchanges.

Pillar One, Improving Transit Connectivity, proposes a transformation from the current commuter transit network, with most trips centered on Union Station

The Plan includes exploring a new east-west, cross-regional transit connection between Burlington and Oshawa connecting existing GO Rail lines outside of Union Station, and exploring a new transit loop connecting the Ontario Line with new major transit hubs where regional services connect, including at Pearson Airport and Richmond Hill Centre.

Staff expect to be engaged by the Province as these rapid transit connections are further defined, likely through an update to the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan, and detailed project planning through future transit project assessments. Staff has requested additional consultation with MTO regarding the conceptual transit map presented in the discussion paper (Attachment 3). The map does not include the entire Frequent Rapid Transit Network identified in the Metrolinx 2041 Regional Transportation Plan, with several transit corridors within York Region missing, including Major Mackenzie Drive and Leslie Street/Don Mills Road. Staff are

seeking to clarify how the conceptual transit map in the discussion paper fits into the context of the Frequent Rapid Transit Network previously developed by Metrolinx in cooperation with municipalities, including York Region. The Region's future rapid transit infrastructure plan is generally consistent with Metrolinx 2041 Regional Transportation Plan (see map in Attachment 2).

The Plan also includes a number of transit service and fare actions including:

- Working with local transit agencies with the goal of having fully integrated transit fares and services to provide seamless connections across the Greater Golden Horseshoe (regional fare integration currently exists with project plans to further align fare and service opportunities)
- Establishment of a Fare and Service Integration Provincial - Municipal Table (currently underway)
- Increasing the frequency of transit service to every 10 minutes across all urban areas (currently part of the York Region Transit Frequent Transit Network planning and rollout)
- Ensuring 24-hour public transportation access to better serve large employment nodes

In addition to the above actions, there is a need to modernize the Presto fare card system to better facilitate cross-boundary travel and allow for other forms of traveller fare payment.

Staff recommend that further analysis on the recommendations noted above be completed, to identify demand for transit services and associated funding models to help implement these initiatives in the future.

The Plan also recommends developing transit-oriented communities at transit stations in strategic locations to provide more options for people to live and work near transit, increase housing supply, including affordable housing, increase transit ridership and reduce traffic congestion. York Region staff worked closely with local municipalities to delineate and set density targets for 78 Major Transit Station areas within York Region and policies for the development of transit-oriented communities are also proposed to be strengthened in the Regional Official Plan.

Staff will continue to engage the Province to ensure specific actions align with policies of the Regional Official Plan and the Region's transit-oriented development planning as these actions have potential to significantly impact York Region Transit service planning. In preparing for the future with transit-oriented development, consideration should be given to creating "smart" and green communities.

Pillar Two, Relieve Congestion, speaks to highway expansion and improving the traveller efficiency in the existing transportation network

The Plan includes a number of highway expansion action items, including:

- Completing route planning, preliminary design and environmental assessment work for the Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor
- Advancing engineering and environmental assessment work for the Bradford Bypass
- Expanding existing highways at strategic locations across the Greater Golden Horseshoe to relieve congestion, including sections of Highway 400, from Langstaff Road to Highway 9, and Highway 404, from Highway 7 to Stouffville Road.

York Region staff expect to continue to be engaged on new highway and highway expansion projects.

The discussion paper includes action items related to road safety and supporting cycling including:

- Planning, designing and managing the road network and rights-of-way to support safety and mobility for all users, regardless of age, ability or mode of travel
- Planning, designing and management of highway rights-of-way to support safety for active transportation users within expanding urban communities
- Creating a safe, connected and comprehensive active transportation network
- Improving local and regional cycling linkages by working with municipalities, Indigenous communities and agencies to connect existing and planned cycling routes, infrastructure and amenities with the province-wide Cycling Network

Staff seek engagement in any provincial actions relating to improving safety for all users, particularly vulnerable pedestrians and cyclists crossing highway interchanges. Staff request MTO take the lead in a best practice review and develop improved design standards that better accommodate safety of pedestrians and cyclists at existing and future highway interchanges. This is a critical issue for all expanding urban municipalities and current design standards need to be modernized to better reflect the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

There are also a number of non-400 series Provincial highways located within York Region, including sections of Highway 48, Highway 7 (east) and Highway 9. Most of these are within urbanizing communities and require a more urban approach to driveway access for adjacent land development as well as connections for pedestrians and cyclists. The discussion paper should address the need for these Provincial highways, which operate in a similar fashion to Regional roads, to adopt modern standards that allow for appropriate driveway spacing and improved pedestrian and cycling facilities.

Pillar Three, Strategic Goods Movement Network, focuses on the efficient movement of goods and cargo across the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The discussion paper recommends planning for and managing the movement of freight on key roads and highways, rail corridors, and air and marine facilities as identified in the Strategic Goods Movement Network (Attachment 5) so the Greater Golden Horseshoe remains economically competitive.

To coordinate freight planning and freight supportive infrastructure across the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Province proposes to work with municipalities to plan for and protect capacity of the routes, corridors and facilities identified in the Strategic Goods Movement Network by integrating consideration into relevant municipal land use plans and transportation studies.

All Regional roads are generally designed to allow for trucks. Staff expect to be consulted as policies around the Strategic Goods Movement Network are defined so that any impact to Regional roads can be better understood. Potential impacts may include truck-focused geometric design standards, dimensions and arrangement of the visible features of a roadway, for specific Regional roads that are identified as part of the Provincial network, or supportive policies for adjacent land use.

Staff will continue to keep Council informed on the Ontario Ministry of Transportation Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan

Staff will continue to consult with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and our local municipal partners throughout the process and will report to Council once the the Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan is released, which is expected by the end of 2021.



Ann-Marie Carroll
Acting Commissioner of Transportation Services



Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments (5)
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