

August 27, 2021

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**Re: Towards a Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan  
Discussion Paper, June 2021  
ERO #019-3839**

Thank you for sharing the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) discussion paper *Towards a Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan*.

This letter outlines York Region staff comments on the discussion paper. Given timing constraints, we are unable to advise York Region Council of the MTO Plan before the August 28, 2021 comments deadline on the ERO posting.

The Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan (the Plan) discussion paper and York Region staff comments will be presented to Council in September 2021. Staff request MTO consider any additional comments that may be provided by Regional Council following the September Council meeting in addition to what is included in this response.

York Region staff is generally supportive of the vision, goals and objectives presented in the discussion paper, subject to specific details to be developed during the Plan's implementation phase including roles, responsibilities and funding.

Detailed comments follow and are organized under each of the three pillars: improving transit, improving highways and protecting goods movement. Our comments are centered around the need for alignment with Regional plans, continued consultation and engagement, and improved road safety, in particular protecting pedestrians and cyclists across highway interchanges.

## **York Region comments on proposed actions related to improving transit**

### Rapid transit corridors

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

It is not clear from the conceptual transit map presented in the discussion paper which corridors are being contemplated for new transit lines. York Region requests a technical meeting with MTO staff to better understand the new transit corridors being proposed. York Region also expects to be engaged as these rapid transit corridors are further defined through an update to the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan and detailed project planning through future transit project assessments.

In addition, the conceptual transit map presented in the discussion paper does not include the entire transit network identified in the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan and York Region's Transportation Master Plan. Several transit corridors within York Region are missing from the conceptual transit map, including Major Mackenzie Drive and Leslie Street/Don Mills Road. Please clarify how the conceptual transit map in the discussion paper fits into the context of the transit network developed by York Region and Metrolinx. A copy of York Region's current rapid transit plan is attached for reference. It should be noted that the Region's rapid transit network is being updated as part of our Transportation Master Plan update which is expected to be complete in 2022.

### Transit fare and service

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 region
- Establishing a Fare and Service Integration Provincial - Municipal Table
- Increasing the frequency of transit service to every 10 minutes across all urban areas
- Ensuring 24-hour public transportation access to better serve large employment nodes

It is recommended that ability to pay be considered and aligned through all of the transit systems. Travellers that are eligible for a discount based on income should receive lower fares on all transit systems. It is also recommended that MTO consult with Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

In addition, 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.

In developing this Plan and prior to the implementation of action items, it is recommended that Metrolinx Accessibility Advisory Committee, GTHA Transit Accessibility Advisory Committee and other municipal and Regional Accessibility Advisory Committees be consulted.

The Plan should clarify its relationship to other Provincial plans, such as the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan, and whether the Metrolinx Plan will be updated to reflect the outcome of the the Plan.

The Plan should provide some timing for achieving the “Near-Term” actions and include an overall stakeholder consultation plan, which could then be customized depending on the specific action item.

Additional detailed comments for consideration during planning and development of specific transit action items to achieve the vision include:

- Under new infrastructure – more and better-connected transit and walking and cycling paths
  - Identify need and develop a plan on how to deliver and pay for the infrastructure
- Under better transit services – including more frequent and convenient buses, trains, and on-demand shared vehicles
  - Identify need and develop a plan on how to deliver and pay for the service
- Under new policies – including policies that improve the transportation experience by creating seamless transit options, encourage new ways of getting around, harness technology and enable new transportation choices
  - York Region would expect to be engaged during the development of these new policies
- Increasing the frequency of local transit service to every 10 minutes, across all urban areas
  - Prioritize corridors based on need and in consultation with transit agencies
  - Coordinate cross boundary services
  - Establish sustainable funding to pay for increased service frequency
- Under fully integrating transit fares and services to provide seamless connections across the region.
  - Establish sustainable funding to subsidize local transit agencies for the additional cost associated with this initiative. Metrolinx in consultation with transit agencies identified that \$70 million is required to integrate all fares across the region

- Ensuring 24-hour public transportation access to better serve employees of the region's largest employment nodes.
  - Prioritize employment areas based on need and in consultation with employers, municipalities and transit agencies
  - Establish sustainable funding to pay for increased service

### Transit-Oriented Communities

The Plan 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 expects to be involved in Provincial planning to ensure specific actions align with policies of the Regional Official Plan and York Region's transit-oriented development planning. In preparing for the future with transit-oriented development, consideration should also be given to creating "smart" and green communities.

York Region staff worked closely with local municipalities to delineate and set density targets for 78 Major Transit Station Areas, which includes five along the Yonge North Subway Extension, a Provincial priority subway project. Policies for the development of transit-oriented communities are also proposed to be strengthened in the Regional Official Plan, with the Regional Official Plan being updated concurrently with the Transportation Master Plan.

## **York Region comments on proposed actions related to improving highways**

### New and expanded highways

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 Highway
- Advancing engineering and environmental assessment work for the Bradford Bypass
- Expanding existing highways at strategic locations across the region 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 has been engaged with the Province throughout the planning and design phases of new highway and highway expansion projects in York Region and staff expect to continue to be engaged on these projects.

### Active transportation and safety

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 road network and rights-of-way to support safety for active transportation users within expanding urban communities
- To create 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

York Region expects to be involved in planning cycling routes, integrating the Region's planned network with the Province-wide Cycling Network and working collaboratively to maximize the efficiency of active and sustainable transportation options by leveraging under-utilized lands, such as hydro corridors and old rail lines.

York Region expects to be engaged in any Provincial actions related to improving safety for all users, particularly vulnerable pedestrians and cyclists crossing freeway interchanges. Staff request MTO take the lead in a best practice review and develop improved design standards and policies that better accommodate safety of pedestrians and cyclists at new and existing interchange crossings. This is a critical issue for all expanding urban municipalities and current design standards need to be modernized to better reflect and prioritize the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

There are also a number of non-400 series Provincial highways that are located within York Region, including sections of Highway 48, Highway 7 (east) and Highway 9. Most of these are within communities that are urbanizing and require additional site accesses to accommodate a more urban environment. The discussion paper should address the need for these highways, which operate in a similar fashion to Regional roads, to adopt modern standards that allow for closer access spacing and improved pedestrian and cycling facilities.

York Region recommends stronger policies and clarity for micromobility users in order to enable seamless first and last kilometre trips across the Province to maximize the efficiency of the road network and provide expanded sustainable transportation options.

### **York Region comments on proposed actions related to protecting goods movement**

The discussion paper recommends planning for and managing the movement of freight on key roads and highways, rail corridors and air and marine facilities. A conceptual map is presented in the discussion paper depicting at a high level the Strategic Goods Movement Network.

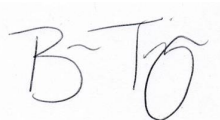
Towards a Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan  
Discussion Paper, June 2021 - ERO #019-3839

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

York Region staff expect to be engaged as plans and policies around the Strategic Goods Movement Network are defined so that potential impact to Regional communities and road corridors can be better understood.

We look forward to continuing to work with MTO on the Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the undersigned at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75901 or [Brian.Titherington@york.ca](mailto:Brian.Titherington@york.ca).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B-Titherington".

Brian Titherington  
Director, Transportation and Infrastructure Planning  
Transportation Services








Copy to: Bruce Macgregor, Chief Administrative Officer  
Ann-Marie Carroll, Acting Commissioner of Transportation Services  
Paul Freeman, Chief Planner

Attachment

#13195855

# York Region's Rapid Transit Network

34 km of dedicated lanes for bus rapid transit, bus terminals, and  
16 km of subway supporting growth and shaping York Region's future

-  Open Rapidways
-  Future Rapidways
-  Viva Curbside
-  Line 1 Extension
-  Yonge North Subway Extension
-  GO Expansion / Metrolinx
-  Terminals [current and future]



Map is not to scale. Last revised in Jun. 2021