



MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.
Commissioner of Public Works

Date: April 14, 2023

Re: York Region Rapid Transit Network – Coordinated Prioritization Update

This memorandum updates Council on the priority-setting framework staff are developing to identify priorities for implementation of the next phase of the York Region Rapid Transit Network.

Key Points:

- Building on the success of 34 kilometres of bus rapid transit (Viva rapidways) completed to date, remaining segments, totalling over 130 kilometres, are needed to complete the Region's rapid transit network of dedicated bus lanes as identified in the Region's 2022 Transportation Master Plan
- Identifying priorities for the next phase of bus rapid transit will allow York Region to prepare projects and be ready for implementation as funding becomes available from senior levels of government
- Setting out priority indicators including transit ridership, rapid transit network connectivity trip time savings, adjacent land use and future development, project readiness and cost to prioritize bus rapid transit within the Region. This is similar to the process Metrolinx uses to prioritize rapid transit projects throughout the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area
- Developing a rapid transit priority-setting process, that goes beyond the Metrolinx macro-level process and is more attuned to York Region needs, will guide investment of resources by prioritizing which bus rapid transit projects to advance into further planning and design prior to full funding commitments for construction from senior levels of government

Region's 2022 Transportation Master Plan identifies a 2051 Rapid Transit Network

York Region's 2022 Transportation Master Plan (TMP) was approved by Council in [September 2022](#). More information on the Plan can be found on [york.ca](#).

The TMP recommended a 2051 rapid transit network as shown in Appendix 1 which identifies rapid transit corridors to support York Region's planned growth needs. This network includes bus rapid transit, the Yonge North Subway Extension, and GO Transit expansion.

With a \$2 billion investment from Metrolinx, York Region completed construction of approximately 34 kilometres of bus rapid transit as shown in Appendix 2. Building on the success of bus rapid transit (Viva rapidways) completed to date, remaining unfunded segments totalling over 130 kilometres are needed to complete the Region's rapid transit network of dedicated bus lanes.

Province has a vision for rapid transit in Greater Toronto and Hamilton Areas

In March 2022, the Ministry of Transportation released [Connecting the GGH: A Transportation Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#) (GGH Plan).

The \$82 billion GGH Plan includes \$61 billion for transit with initial work underway. Current major projects at various stages of planning, design and construction include the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension with planned connections to Toronto Pearson International Airport, Ontario Subway Line, Yonge North Subway Extension and Scarborough Subway Extension. The GGH Plan identifies expanded services across the GO Rail network including frequent two-way, all-day 15-minute services on the Stouffville GO Line to Unionville station and Barrie GO Line to Aurora station. Metrolinx is leading construction of the GO Rail network projects. On the Barrie GO line, construction of the Rutherford GO station and road-rail grade separation was completed in fall 2022 and improvements at Maple GO station and the addition of a second track between Rutherford Road and McNaughton Sideroad are underway. On the Stouffville GO Line, the Steeles Avenue road-rail grade separation, major upgrades at Unionville GO station, and the addition of a second track to Unionville GO station are complete.

The GGH Plan sets out next steps on implementation in the areas of coordination and harmonization with municipalities on transportation planning and service integration.

More information on the Province's GGH Plan can be found in the [April 2022](#) memo to Council.

Metrolinx uses a prioritization process to inform business case sequencing for rapid transit projects in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Hamilton Area

Projects that rank higher through the Metrolinx prioritization process are advanced for business case development through the Metrolinx project development process. Projects located in York Region currently advancing in the Metrolinx process include:

- Yonge North Subway Extension – Business case is moving through the Metrolinx stage gate project management process and staff are closely engaged in advancing this priority project through the preliminary design phase
- Queen Street-Highway 7 West Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) extension – Initial Business Case was completed by Metrolinx in 2020 and the Preliminary Design Business Case is being prepared. York Region confirmed with Metrolinx that this corridor is not a funding priority for the Region at this time, as outlined in a memo to Council in [October 2020](#). York Region staff continue to participate on a technical advisory committee for this corridor.

Metrolinx’s Prioritization Framework uses a two-phase project evaluation process that is supported by an Annual Review. In Phases 1 and 2, three overall criteria are used to support the evaluation and grouping of projects:

- Benefit Cost Ratio
- Contribution to Network Optimization
- Readiness for Implementation

Each criterion is comprised of multiple metrics, such as future ridership, capital and operating costs, connectivity, land use data, funding status, and level of commitment by local and regional municipalities (for example projects have been identified in municipal TMPs and capital projects). Outputs of the prioritization exercise are used to inform what projects Metrolinx should consider next for business case analysis. Detailed information on the Metrolinx prioritization process can be found [here](#).

A priority-setting process has been in place for road capital projects since the 2002 Transportation Master Plan

A priority-setting process for road growth capital projects has been in place since 2002. The road projects priority-setting process was initially developed for the 2002 TMP which informs development of the Region’s annual 10-Year Transportation Capital Construction Program. The 2002 priority-setting process focussed on road link criteria including:

- Existing traffic volumes
- Future traffic volumes
- Pavement condition
- Collision prediction factor
- Overall community network benefit

Council has received periodic updates on the roads priority-setting process since 2002 including [April 2006](#), [October 2011](#), and [September 2017](#). Through these updates Council has approved a revised set of criteria for road capital projects to address evolving needs of the Region’s growing communities.

Table 1 summarizes the criteria and their relative weighting. While some of the priority-setting criteria have evolved over time to reflect better data sources and updated Provincial legislation, these criteria form the basis of the priority-setting model currently used to prioritize road segments in the 10-Year Capital Construction Program.

Table 1
Criteria for Prioritizing Road Projects in the 10-Year Capital Program

Criteria	Percentage Weighting
1. Existing Volume/Capacity	15
2. Future Volume/Capacity	5
3. Transit	15
4. Real Time Delays	5
5. Arterial Lane Connectivity/Capacity	5
6. Connectivity to a Provincial Freeway Network	10
7. Centres and Corridors	5
8. Development	5
9. Economic Development	5
10. Potential for Safety Improvements	10
11. Natural Environment Considerations	10
12. Pavement Conditions	10
Total	100

A rapid transit priority-setting process that goes beyond the Metrolinx macro-level process and is more attuned to York Region needs would be beneficial

The Region had not developed a priority-setting process for rapid transit projects because the Province historically funded and prioritized rapid transit projects to be constructed in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

The Metrolinx priority-setting process is appropriate at a macro level to decide which Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area rapid transit projects should advance into business case planning. With a GTHA scope the Metrolinx process focus is broad and does not allow for prioritization of emerging York Region rapid transit projects which may not be included in larger Provincial studies such as the GGH Plan.

York Region specific prioritization would allow for better advocacy with the Province (Ministry of Transportation, and Metrolinx) as the next phase of GTHA wide rapid transit priorities are advanced. As an example, Metrolinx's macro-level approach led to the advanced work on Queen Street-Highway 7 BRT, which is not a Region priority.

With limited resources and funding, the Region must prioritize which rapid transit projects to advance into planning and design. A York Region focussed prioritization tool will allow staff to better advocate for the Region's interests and mitigate any financial obligations to non-priority projects. This tool will also allow the Region to assess requests from local municipalities or developers for new rapid transit links not currently included in the Metrolinx process.

While the 2022 TMP lays out a 30-year plan, a York Region prioritization process will help identify priority projects for phasing and implementation using a balanced approach to address growth in communities across the Region. While rapid transit projects are advanced by the Province through Metrolinx, prioritizing Regional projects will help inform the provincial process as funding is limited.

Proposed criteria align with Metrolinx's process and are consistent with criteria approved by the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation Board in 2021

In November 2021, the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation Board approved criteria for prioritizing bus rapid transit projects. With the 2022 TMP now completed, this is a good time to develop a priority-setting process that builds on the focus area actions identified in the 2022 TMP (Focus Area: Reduce Car Travel, Especially During Rush Hours), and aligns with the objectives identified in the 2023 to 2027 Strategic Plan (Objective: Invest in a safe, effective transportation system that connects people, goods and services).

The draft criteria below are supportive of Metrolinx's evaluation process and align with criteria identified in the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation Board report:

- Transit ridership (existing and future)
- Travel time savings

- Network Connectivity (existing and future)
- Adjacent land use and future development
- Project readiness
- Project capital and operating costs
- Socio-environmental considerations (e.g. greenhouse gas reductions, equity)

Like the Metrolinx process, the proposed prioritization of bus rapid transit projects is not intended to be a ranked list of projects but rather ranked levels of prioritization such as high, medium and low priority. Each prioritization level could include multiple projects.

Although the first iteration of rapid transit priority-setting framework will be focussed on York Region's bus rapid transit network, the intention is ultimately to prioritize all rapid transit projects in York Region, including rail projects.

Identifying priorities for the next phase of bus rapid transit will allow York Region to prepare projects for implementation as funding becomes available

Yonge North Subway Extension is the Region's top rapid transit priority and funding commitments for this project are prioritized, making it cost prohibitive to advance other rapid transit projects without funding from senior level governments.

A rapid-transit priority setting process will assist in advancing environmental assessments and preliminary engineering for key rapid transit projects within the Region. Like the first 34 kilometres of bus rapidways, which were built over 10 years, the more than 130 kilometres of remaining unfunded bus rapidways will need to be constructed in phases.

The 2023 – 2026 Council approved budget for York Region Rapid Transit Corporation includes approximately \$35 million for bus rapid transit. These funds are allocated for environmental assessments and advancing preliminary design for priority bus rapid transit segments while pursuing and securing funding commitments for final design and construction with senior levels of government.

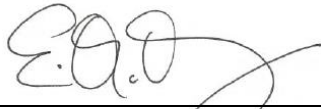
Extension of subways beyond Highway 7 and GO Rail expansion require discussion with senior levels of government

The proposed approach addresses prioritizing bus rapid transit projects which are within York Region's ability to manage, subject to senior government funding, similar to implementation of the first phases of viva rapidway.

Extension of subways beyond Highway 7 and GO Rail expansion are included in the 2022 Transportation Master Plan and are important to York Region. Prioritizing these initiatives will need to be discussed with senior levels of government due to their magnitude which extends beyond York Region boundaries.

Update to Council on Bus Rapid Transit Prioritization in fall 2023

Public Works staff will continue to work with the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation to develop a priority-setting framework to prioritize remaining segments of the planned bus rapid transit network and report back with results in fall 2023.



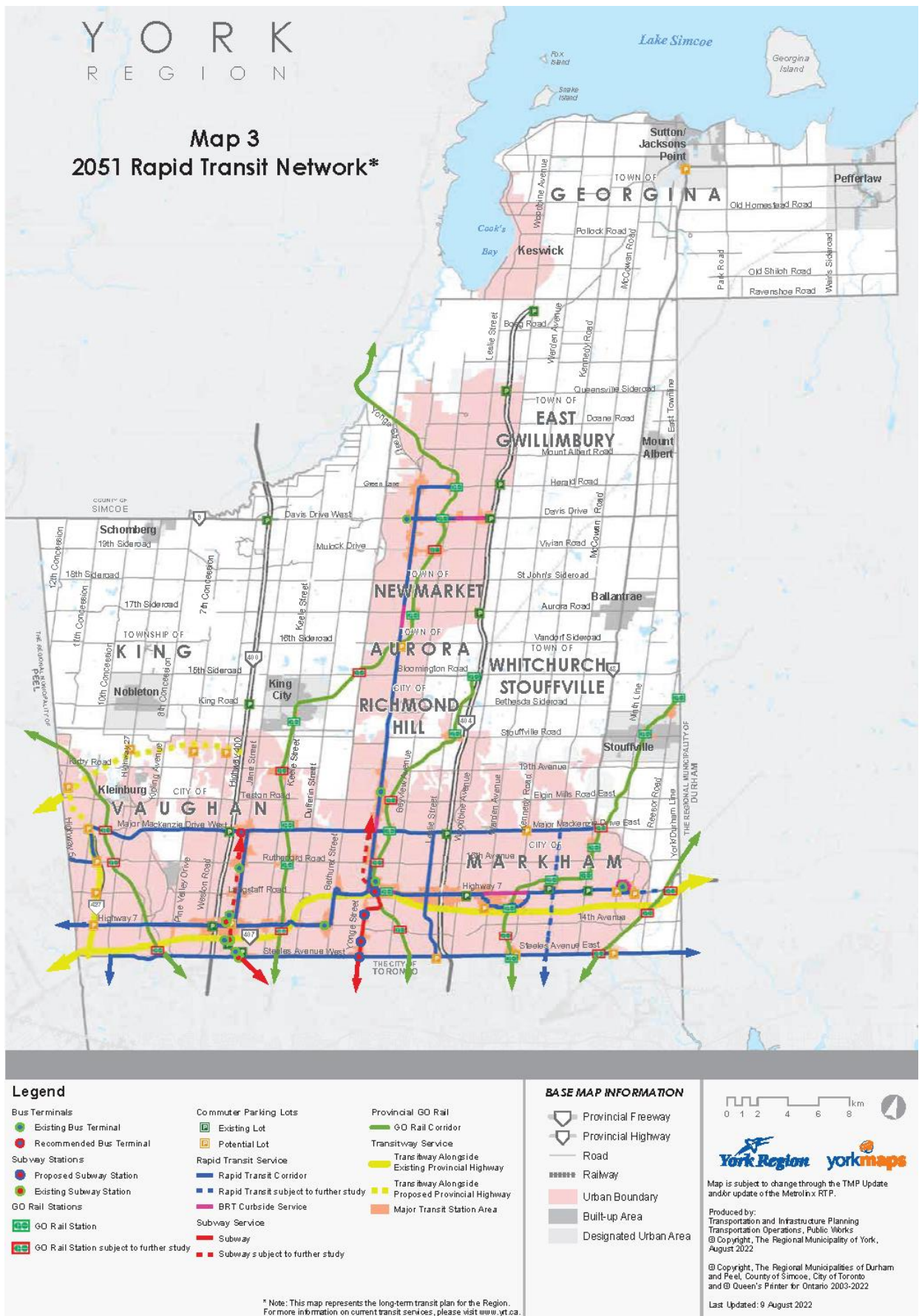
Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.
Commissioner of Public Works



Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

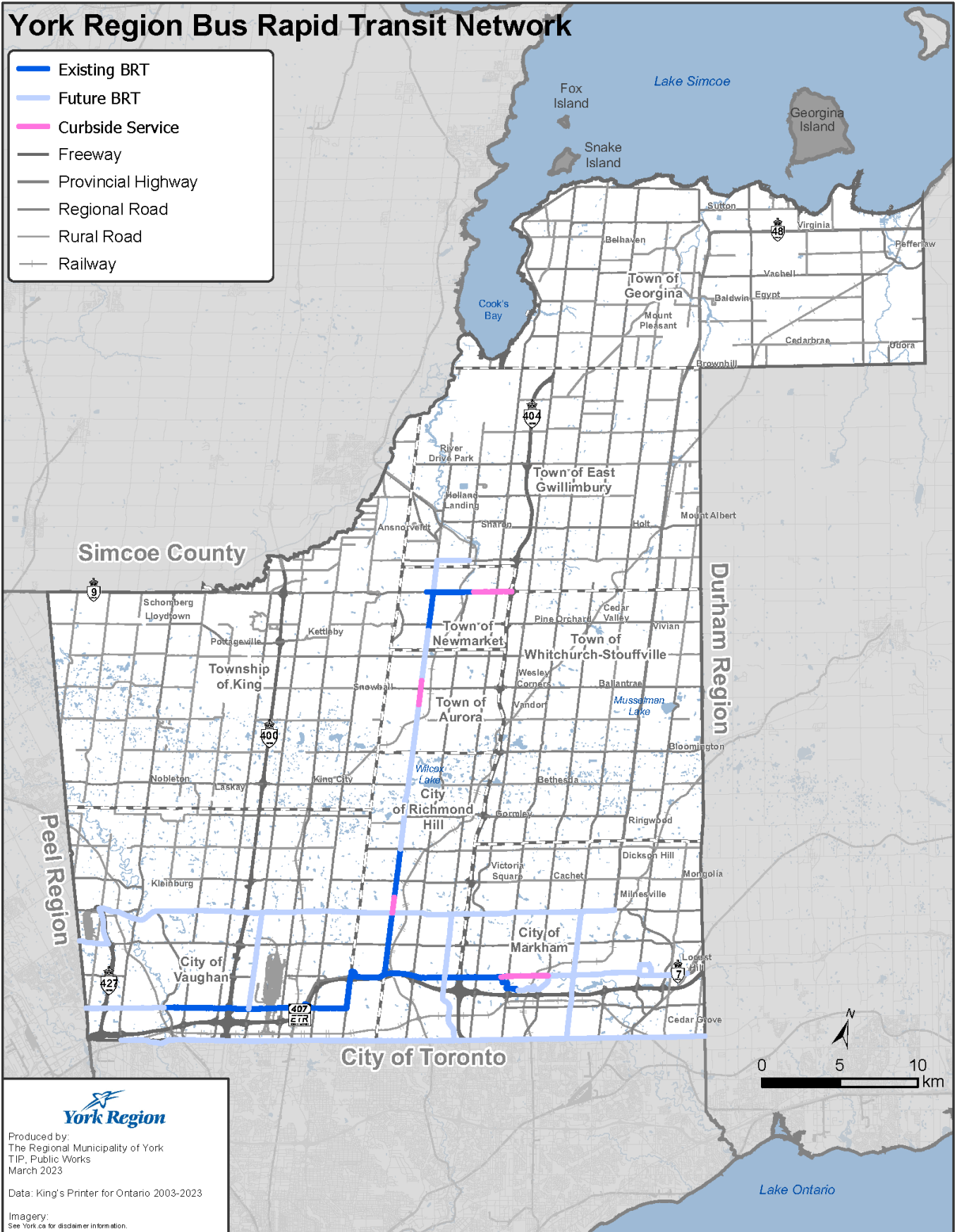
14684283

Appendix 1 - York Region 2051 Rapid Transit Network
Appendix 2 - York Region Bus Rapid Transit Network



York Region Bus Rapid Transit Network

- █ Existing BRT
- █ Future BRT
- █ Curbside Service
- █ Freeway
- █ Provincial Highway
- █ Regional Road
- █ Rural Road
- █ Railway



York Region

Produced by:
The Regional Municipality of York
TIP, Public Works
March 2023

Data: King's Printer for Ontario 2003-2023

Imagery:
See York.ca for disclaimer information.