



April 29, 2019

To: Metrolinx Prioritization Review Panel c/o Metrolinx

Re: Project Prioritization for advancing the Regional Transportation Plan's Frequent Rapid Transit Network

York Region and the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation have participated in the Project Prioritization process set up by Metrolinx to advance the Frequent Rapid Transit Network in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Our participation has included staff at the Municipal Technical Advisory Committee, the Municipal Planning Leaders Forum and at the Regional Leaders Roundtable.

While we appreciate the complexity of developing a process to prioritize all the unapproved frequent rapid transit projects in the GTHA, we have a fundamental problem and cannot agree with the way Metrolinx has treated York Region's Viva BRT Network.

In 2008, as part of the original Regional Transportation Plan by Metrolinx, the Viva BRT Network and the extension of the Yonge Subway to Richmond Hill were two of the 15 transit priorities recommended by Metrolinx for implementation. The complete Viva BRT Network was approved as a network consisting primarily of BRT service on Highway 7 and Yonge Street. This approved BRT Network connected the 4 designated Urban Growth Centres in Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Markham and Vaughan. Since 2008, York Region has constructed approximately 50% of the BRT Network and is positioned to complete the remaining segments of the approved network at this time.

The entire Viva BRT was approved as a network. The Benefits Case was completed in 2008 and construction of the BRT Network commenced. The BRT Network must not, as proposed by Metrolinx, now be dissected and re-prioritized into pieces at this stage of implementation. The completed BRT Network is fundamental to service and support the designated Urban Growth Centres located along the BRT corridors in accordance with the Growth Plan.

We have attached a more detailed submission with our technical comments for your consideration.

Signed by,

Mary-Frances Turner  
President  
York Region Rapid Transit  
Corporation

Paul Jankowski  
Commissioner  
Transportation Services  
York Region

Paul Freeman  
Chief Planner  
Planning and Economic Development  
York Region

cc: Bruce Macgregor, CAO, York Region  
Phil Verster, CEO & President, Metrolinx  
Leslie Woo, Chief Planning Officer, Metrolinx

#9405986

## Comments

To: Peer Review Panel on Metrolinx's Project Prioritization for advancing the Regional Transportation Plan's Frequent Rapid Transit Network

From: York Region and York Region Rapid Transit Corporation

### **York Region supports the Frequent Rapid Transit Network, as illustrated on Map 6 of the Regional Transportation Plan for the GTHA**

Implementation of this forward thinking Plan will require a great deal of coordination and participation from all member municipalities if the Regional Transportation Plan is to be realized.

York Region and the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation (YRRTC) have participated in the municipal and agency consultation for the current process to advance the Regional Transportation Plan's (RTP) Frequent Rapid Transit Network (FRTN). Our participation has included staff at the Municipal Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC), the Municipal Planning Leaders Forum (MPLF) and the Regional Leaders Roundtable.

### **York Region also supports the In Development projects, as illustrated on Map 4 of the Regional Transportation Plan for the GTHA**

The 2018 Regional Transportation Plan contained wording that led York Region to believe that the projects identified as "In Development" (Map 4) would be the next priority projects to be implemented. The RTP specifically identified the In Development projects as *"The next generation of regional transit projects—those that are In Development (in advanced stages of planning and design)—are required to meet the needs of the region in the near term."*

York Region's understanding was that the projects identified as In Development had already been prioritized and would be the next projects to move forward to implementation. York Region was very surprised when informed by Metrolinx that the categorization of In Development had no bearing on project prioritization. That interpretation was not evident when the RTP was being reviewed and commented by municipalities.

### **2008 Regional Transportation Plan (The Big Move)**

This much-acclaimed forward thinking document identified the top 15 transit priorities in the GTHA. The majority of these priority projects have proceeded and are at various stages of the implementation process. In York Region the extension of the Yonge Subway to Richmond Hill and the Viva Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Network were two of the 15 transit priorities recommended by Metrolinx in 2008.

The Yonge Subway Extension (YSE) is currently the subject of a Provincially funded detailed Engineering Design process that will lead to a 15% submission at the end of this month (April, 2019) leading to a 15%-30% submission in the Fall of 2019. Construction of the subway could commence as soon as that work is completed. The recent Provincial announcement is the next step in moving this important project forward.

The Viva BRT Network was approved as a network consisting primarily of BRT service on Highway 7 and on Yonge Street. The BRT Network links and connects the four designated Urban Growth Centres in Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Markham and Vaughan. YRRTC, on behalf

of York Region, has worked with the Province to construct approximately 50% of the approved BRT Network. The remaining 50% of the BRT Network is ready to proceed to preliminary engineering and construction.

At the time of the original funding approval, in 2009, it was proposed by the Province that funding for the Viva BRT network be assigned in two construction phases. The first phase of construction is nearing completion and it has always been York Region's understanding that Phase 2 funding would be available when Phase 1 is complete.

The current Metrolinx FRTN Project Prioritization Process puts a halt to the completion of the Viva BRT Network when it is only 50% complete. It has taken 10 years from the original approval to construct half of the approved BRT Network. York Region Council, staff of York Region and YRRTC are of the opinion that the BRT Network was approved as a bus rapid transit network and construction must continue to complete the network.

#### **The Prioritization Framework does not recognize the benefits of completing a phased implementation such as the Viva BRT Network**

When the decision was made to implement the Viva BRT Network in two phases, the segments with the highest benefit were implemented first. These were the segments that had the highest ridership, the most network connectivity and the greatest densities serving the four Regional Centres in Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Newmarket. If this entire network was again evaluated as one project in the prioritization framework, we have no doubt that it would have yielded results that are much higher. We have asked Metrolinx to conduct this evaluation as a sensitivity test of the prioritization framework, but to date this sensitivity test has not been carried out.

The prioritization framework does not seem to recognize the benefit that completing the network will have on the investment that has already been made in the segments currently under construction. The incremental benefits approach inherent in the current framework may result in other phased projects never being completed as well.

#### **York Region Council Continues to Support the Yonge Subway Extension and the Viva BRT Network as Regional Transit Priorities**

York Region completed a Transportation Master Plan (TMP) that was approved by Regional Council in 2016. The TMP maps out York Region's transportation priorities to the year 2041 and should be considered an overall prioritization of projects in York Region. During deliberations on the TMP, York Region Council reaffirmed that the extension of the Yonge Subway to Richmond Hill remains the number one transit priority in York Region. Completion of the Viva BRT Network is also a top priority for York Region Council.

#### **Addressing Road Congestion**

It is very important that we collectively address the issue of ever-worsening road congestion in the GTHA. Building new roads and widening existing roads to deal with car congestion is not the way to proceed towards 2041 (the target year for the RTP). The current methodology proffered by Metrolinx does not acknowledge this road related congestion problem as a priority. Without a good transit alternative, the public will have no choice but to continue driving single-occupancy vehicles. This continued use of private automobiles for the majority of trips will exacerbate an already bad road congestion dilemma.

The time is now to proceed to construction with as many transit projects as possible in the GTHA.

**Recommendation Re: YSE and Viva BRT**

York Region and YRRTC request that the Peer Review Panel recommend to Metrolinx that they continue with construction of the 15 transit priorities identified in the 2008 RTP and the 13 In Development projects identified in the 2018 RTP. Treat all of these projects as "In Delivery" transit projects. This will keep transit implementation progressing in the GTHA.

From a York Region perspective, the Viva BRT Network must be treated as one bundled project as originally approved with construction of the remaining phases continuing as soon as possible. The BRT Network must not be dissected into individual pieces, to be analyzed, as proposed by Metrolinx.

Detailed Engineering for Yonge Subway Extension Environmental Assessment must continue expeditiously with construction of the subway line to Richmond Hill completed by 2031.