



Memorandum

TO: Jin Wang, Ministry of Transportation
Robin Kortright, Ministry of Transportation

FROM: Loy Cheah, Senior Manager, Transportation
Joseph Palmisano, Manager, Transportation Planning

DATE: August 27, 2021

Re: **Towards a Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan – Discussion Paper, June 2021
Preliminary City of Markham Staff Comments**

Provided herein are staff comments on the Ministry of Transportation (MTO)'s June 29, 2021 Discussion Paper re: The Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan (GGHTP). It is staff's understanding that MTO is requesting feedback on the following key elements of the Discussion Paper:

- 2051 Vision for mobility in the Greater Golden Horseshoe; and
- Near-term actions consisting of work currently underway or planned and considered foundational to its long-term vision.

Please note that the comments herein are preliminary only. Formal comments will be provided in the near future through a report to the City of Markham Development Services Committee of Council.

Staff Comments

1. The three pillars of the 2051 vision as outlined by MTO in its Discussion Paper (released on June 29, 2021) envisions a range and mix of mobility solutions with the objectives of:
 - i. Getting people moving on a connected transit system through new infrastructure, services and policies.
 - ii. Enhancing capacity and performance on congested roads through new infrastructure, services, and policies.
 - iii. Efficiently moving goods across the Region.

The visions are compatible to the policies of the City of Markham's 2014 Official Plan and are supported by staff.

2. With respect to the first pillar ("getting people moving on a connected transit system"), staff acknowledge and support the vision of *transforming the regional transit system from today's radial commuter network with most connections centered on Union Station to an expansive grid without going through the core*. In this regard, City staff also support the proposed directions that are part of this vision, namely:
 - Elevating the Markham-Richmond Hill Centre node to a higher level at par with the Union Station and Pearson Airport nodes as GGH-level Conceptual Transit Hubs



- Exploring a new east-west, cross regional connection (the “Cross Rail” line) between Burlington and Oshawa (including Markham) that connects existing GO Lines
 - Exploring a new transit loop (the “Orbital Line”) that extends and connects the Ontario Line to new major transit hubs where regional services connect, including at Markham-Richmond Hill Centre and Pearson Airport.
3. Based on the above-proposed directions related to a connected transit system, staff suggest that priority be given to formalizing the elevated status of the Markham-Richmond Hill Centre node and implementing steps for the transit infrastructure and services connected to the Markham-Richmond Hill Centre node noted above through updates of the Provincial Growth Plan and Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan.
4. The Metrolinx 2041 Regional Transportation Plan includes plans for BRT on Leslie Street from Steeles Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive; however, this has not been identified in the GGHTP preferred transit network. Staff request that this be included in the GGHTP preferred transit network. Furthermore, in conjunction with higher order transit along Leslie Street and Major Mackenzie Drive, the need **for higher order transit along Woodbine Avenue** to service the significant employment development within Markham’s North Future Urban Area be considered.
5. With respect to the second pillar (“enhancing capacity and performance on congested roads through new infrastructure, services, and policies”), staff suggest that:
- an additional objective of maximizing and optimizing the highway and road system through exploring innovative use of existing off-peak direction traffic lanes for peak direction travel be considered;
 - in “supporting innovation and leveraging new technologies”, legislative and jurisdictional barriers be streamlined and funding be provided for pilot projects.
6. With respect to the third pillar (“efficiently moving goods across the Region”), staff note that it is inappropriate to include Markham Road through Markham Village as part of a Provincial Goods Movement Network. Markham Road operates as a slow, urban, main street and has a truck restriction. Donald Cousens Parkway (formerly Markham by-pass) is more appropriate to be designated as truck route to connect Highway 48 to Highway 407 and Highway 401. While the understanding through recent correspondence with the MTO is that Markham Road will be removed from the Goods Movement Network, Map 3 appears to still show Markham Road as a truck route.
7. The preferred transportation network includes the following projects within Markham:
- Highway 7 widening from Donald Cousens Parkway to York Durham Line
 - Highway 48 from Major Mackenzie Drive to north of the City of Markham municipal boundary

The timing and design of these projects will require further coordination with York Region and City of Markham.



8. Staff have previously highlighted the need to protect for Rapid Transit along Major Mackenzie Drive East in its comment on Metrolinx' Regional Transportation Plan and also as part of the Technical Advisory Committee on the GGHTP. The comment has been based on consideration of the development of Markham's North Future Urban Area and a potential future GO Station along Major Mackenzie Drive on the Stouffville Corridor (as per York Region's 2016 TMP). We request that rapid transit along Major Mackenzie Drive East be included in the GGHTP preferred transit network.
9. Note that in 2016, Markham Council requested that new GO stations be planned and implemented on the Stouffville GO line at Major Mackenzie Drive and at Denison Street to serve growth in the adjacent areas.

Staff would welcome future engagement on the above comments and a meeting to further discuss and understand the concepts and potential alignments of the projects referenced.