

Item:



Committee of the Whole Report

DATE: Tuesday, May 07, 2019

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: METROLINX ACTIVITIES UPDATE

FROM: Zoran Postic, Interim Deputy City Manager, Public Works
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Management

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To provide a status overview of recent Metrolinx activities in the City of Vaughan related to the GO Expansion (formerly Regional Express Rail) project and the 2041 Regional Transportation Plan (2041 RTP).

Report Highlights

- Rutherford GO station: the procurement process was completed in December 2018, construction activities will soon commence, including construction of the Rutherford Road grade separation
- Kirby GO station: a Market Driven Approach (public-private partnership) is now required by Metrolinx to deliver this station. Opportunities to pursue this approach will be investigated in conjunction with the Transit Hub Special Study and the related Environmental Assessments (EAs)
- Proposed Concord GO Station: staff are investigating options for applying the Metrolinx Market Driven Approach to secure a potential GO station in the Concord GO Centre Mobility Hub Study area
- Barrie Rail Corridor Expansion: upgraded noise barriers are scheduled to be installed upon completion of the Rutherford GO station works for sections south of Rutherford Road. Timing for sections north of Rutherford Road are currently under review
- Bus Rapid Transit along Major Mackenzie Drive, Jane Street, Highway 7 West Extension and Yonge Subway Extension is being prioritized amongst other Regional transit projects to be advanced in the Frequent Rapid Transit Network as part of the 2041 Regional Transportation Plan (2041 RTP)

Recommendations

1. That Council re-affirm its support for Kirby GO station on the Barrie rail corridor, as per the original GO Regional Express Rail plan;
2. That Staff continue engagement with the Block 27 Landowners Group, York Region, and Metrolinx to begin exploring a Market Driven Approach for the development of the Kirby GO station in Block 27 as part of the Transit Hub Special Study;
3. That staff work with York Region and other potential partners to provide for the delivery of the Concord GO Rail Station through a Market Driven Approach, in conjunction with the Concord GO Centre Mobility Hub Study;
4. That Council support the Regional resolution on January 31, 2019 to confirm the priority of implementing Bus Rapid Transit along Major Mackenzie Drive West, Jane Street, Highway 7 West and Yonge Subway Extension in the 2041 RTP;
5. That Council request Metrolinx complete construction of upgraded noise barriers along the Barrie rail corridor at all locations adjacent to residential neighbourhoods, including along Ridgefield Crescent and Marlott Road, as soon as possible; and
6. That a copy of this report be forwarded to Metrolinx and York Region.

Background

Staff have been working with Metrolinx since 2016 on the Regional Express Rail (RER) Implementation Plan which includes the Barrie Railway Corridor Expansion

In 2016, the Barrie Railway Corridor Expansion broadly consisted of the following components within the City of Vaughan:

1. Track Expansion

- Widened rail bridge over Major Mackenzie Drive to accommodate a new second track with provision for a future third track
- New additional platform west of the railway tracks and underground tunnels to connect the platforms to facilitate all-day two way GO train services at Maple GO station
- New additional platform east of the railway tracks and both underground tunnels and overhead pedestrian bridge to connect the platforms to facilitate all-day two way GO train services at Rutherford GO station
- Land acquisition and upgraded noise barriers from south of Rutherford GO station to McNaughton Road

2. Station Expansions

Maple GO station

- Additional parking in the form of a 6-storey parking structure, which would add approximately 1,200 net new spaces to the station

- A new station building to complement the existing building
- An extension of Eagle Rock Way to accommodate additional bus stops

Rutherford GO station

- New multi-level parking structure, which would add approximately 1,250 net new spaces to the station
- New station building
- Upgrades to existing station layout including new pedestrian walkways to and from the station to Rutherford Road

3. Grade Separations

- Rutherford Road grade separation at the GO railway track will be constructed at the same time as the Rutherford GO station expansion project
- McNaughton Road grade separation Environmental Assessment Study anticipated to begin Q4 2019 / Q1 2020

4. New Kirby GO station

- A new station along the Barrie Railway Corridor consisting of station building, bus terminal, two platforms and an at-grade parking lot
- Proposed location west of the Keele Street and Kirby Road intersection

On October 8, 2018, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks issued a Notice to Proceed with Metrolinx's Barrie Rail Corridor Environmental Project Report Addendum which included construction of the new Kirby GO Station

Metrolinx completed the Barrie Rail Corridor Environmental (BRCE) Project Report Addendum and issued the Notice of Completion on August 2, 2018. The BRCE Project Report Addendum was prepared to address the changes to the BRCE project to include five GO stations on the corridor, including Kirby GO station. After posting the Addendum for a 30-day public review, the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks issued a Notice to Proceed on October 8, 2018 allowing Metrolinx to proceed to implementation and construction of all five new stations.

Procurement material was being prepared for the Kirby GO station in Fall 2018 and the Request for Proposals was scheduled to be released by end of 2018.

In late 2018, the City and the Region received a letter from Metrolinx stating the current delivery process for the Kirby GO station would be paused to determine opportunities for a "Market Driven Approach"

The City and the Region received a letter, dated November 29, 2018, stating that Metrolinx had been asked by the Minister of Transportation to assess the status of transit projects and the feasibility of applying a Market Driven Approach (Public Private Partnership) to the delivery of the new GO stations. This resulted in a pause on new station work on all new GO stations in the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area, including the proposed Kirby GO station in the City. In response to Metrolinx's letter, Regional staff provided an update to Regional Council in a memorandum to the Committee of the Whole on January 3, 2019.

At the Regional Council meeting held on January 31, 2019, Regional staff brought forward a report which provided information on the impact of a "Market Driven Approach" on the Region's 2016 Transportation Master Plan.

"On January 31, 2019 Regional Council made the following decision:

1. *Council confirms Metrolinx's prioritization of a development-driven approach to GO expansion stations at Kirby and Mulock on the Barrie Corridor, as per the original GO Regional Express Rail plan.*
2. *Council further requests that Metrolinx apply a development-driven approach to reconsider the following potential stations: Concord, 15th Sideroad on the Barrie Corridor, John Street, 16th Avenue, 19th Avenue on the Richmond Hill Corridor, and Denison/14th Avenue and Major Mackenzie Drive on the Stouffville Corridor, as per the Region's 2016 Transportation Master Plan.*
3. *Council specifically requests that Metrolinx ensures adequate parking is implemented at GO Stations as part of the GO Expansion program, to eliminate impacts on adjacent established communities.*
4. *The Regional Clerk forward this resolution to the Premier, the Minister of Transportation, and the MPPs from York Region."*

The 2018 Auditor General Annual Report, released in December 2018, recommended that the Ministry of Transportation conduct an independent assessment of Kirby and Lawrence East GO stations

In September 2017, the Auditor General conducted a value-for-money audit on the proposed Metrolinx GO stations at Kirby and Lawrence East. The Auditor General 2018 Annual Report made the following recommendations regarding GO Station Selection:

1. Metrolinx establishes a clear framework to support coordinated, accountable and transparent decision-making for transit investments in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

2. Ministry of Transportation's decision on whether the Kirby and Lawrence East GO stations should be built at this time should be based on independent assessment of whether these stations will benefit the regional transportation network.
3. Metrolinx improves the accuracy of the analyses which forms the basis of its future transit-planning decisions.
4. Metrolinx to help decision makers and stakeholders understand the expected benefits of proposed investments by using language that is clear and understandable in its reports to the Board and information for the public, and clearly disclose sensitivity analyses in its published business case results.
5. The government of the day review the Metrolinx Act, 2006, and determine whether greater clarity regarding Metrolinx's roles and responsibilities in the planning of the regional transportation system would benefit Ontarians.

Official groundbreaking for the Rutherford GO station expansion is anticipated at the end of May or in early June 2019

Metrolinx has been working with City Corporate and Strategic Communications to inform residents of the imminent construction. Communication activities include sending out letters to residents within close proximity of Rutherford GO station and placing notice on commuters' cars at Rutherford GO parking lot. Metrolinx is also working on a crisis communication plan and it will be circulated to York Region and the City.

Noise barriers along the Barrie Rail Corridor may not be constructed until 2022, and will not be constructed adjacent to all residential neighbourhoods

Metrolinx has advised that noise barriers will not be constructed on a portion of the west side of the Barrie Rail Corridor, adjacent to Marlott Road and a segment of Ridgely Crescent. Staff have confirmed that these two locations were previously identified in the Barrie Rail Corridor Expansion Environmental Assessment as locations where the existing fence would be upgraded to a noise barrier. Since the completion of the Environmental Assessment (EA), the noise barriers have been removed through an "optimization" exercise which evaluated the feasibility of all noise barriers identified by the EA. Staff have indicated to Metrolinx that the noise barriers in these two locations should be provided. To date, the noise barriers have not been reintroduced to the project.

Furthermore, Metrolinx staff have indicated that upgraded noise barriers are planned to be installed south of Rutherford Road after construction of the Rutherford station is completed in 2022. Previous correspondence with Metrolinx indicated that the timing for installation of noise barriers between Rutherford Road and McNaughton Road is being evaluated and is uncertain at this time.

Metrolinx's 2041 Regional Transportation Plan (2041 RTP), completed in March 2018, recommended the creation of a Frequent Rapid Transit Network (FRTN). Potential FRTN projects are now being prioritized for implementation

The FRTN presented in the 2041 RTP is Metrolinx's vision for the transit network in 2041. Most of these projects were identified in the previous Regional Transportation Plan, known as The Big Move, and they continue to be needed within the 2041 RTP's time horizon. Significant planning, design and construction work is already underway for many elements of this transit network. A rational pipeline of projects in a planning-ready state is required to ensure that the network is advanced efficiently and addresses evolving transportation system needs. Therefore, as part of Metrolinx's effort to prioritize projects to build the FRTN, municipalities and stakeholders are being engaged and involved in providing input through participation in the Municipal Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC).

Furthermore, on January 31, 2019, Regional Council passed a resolution with respect to York Region's rapid transit priorities as they relate to the prioritization and implementation of the Metrolinx 2041 RTP. Details of the resolution are as follows:

"Therefore, it be resolved that:

- 1. York Region Council confirms its rapid transit priorities as:
 - a. Yonge Subway Extension to the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway Urban Growth Centre at Highway 7.*
 - b. York Region's VIVA Bus Rapid Transit Network as shown in the 2041 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) on Yonge Street, Highway 7, Major Mackenzie Drive, Jane Street, Steeles Avenue, Leslie Street and McCowan Road.**
- 2. Council requests the Province of Ontario to continue to advance commitments made on the following:
 - a. Two-way all-day service on the Barrie GO and Stouffville GO rail corridors consistent with the service levels on the Lakeshore East GO and Lakeshore West GO rail corridors.*
 - b. Improved service on the Richmond Hill GO rail corridor."**

Previous Reports/Authority

Previous reports relating to Metrolinx related matters can be found at the following links:

[April 11, 2018, Committee of the Whole \(Item 9, Report No. 14\) – Metrolinx Draft 2041 Regional Transportation Plan and Regional Express Rail Initiatives Update](#)

[November 13, 2017, Committee of the Whole \(Working Session\) \(Item 2, Report No. 41\) - Metrolinx Draft 2041 Regional Transportation Plan](#)

[May 16, 2017, Committee of the Whole \(Working Session\) \(Item 1, Report No. 19\) - Metrolinx Regional Express Rail Update](#)

Analysis and Options

The City should maintain its commitment to the Kirby and Concord GO stations and continue to pursue them under the new circumstances, i.e. the introduction of a Market Driven Approach

Given the importance of the Kirby GO Station and the potential Concord GO Station to the future of the City, it will be necessary to maintain momentum on all of the current station related planning studies and to integrate the Market Driven Approach into the study processes. This would be consistent with Regional Council's resolution of January 31, 2019, which confirmed Metrolinx's prioritization of a Market Driven Approach to the GO expansion to Kirby Station; and its request that Metrolinx apply a Market Driven Approach to the reconsideration of the Concord GO station. Notwithstanding the nature of the delivery mechanism, it is critical that the Region and City preserve the opportunity for these critical stations.

Fundamental to the Market Driven Approach would be Public Private Partnerships, built on sound business cases to deliver the stations to Metrolinx in accordance with its standards and specifications, at no cost to Metrolinx. It is expected that Metrolinx will be issuing guidelines in Q2 setting out its expectations of the process. Each business case will be station-specific. The private sector partner would be the primary, if not exclusive funding partner. The City and the Region would have potential participation insofar as their roles in land use regulation, servicing, the arterial and local road networks and the supporting transit services and facilities.

The City is currently well-positioned to integrate the Market Driven Approach into the on-going planning exercises. Many of the building blocks of the new strategy can be developed through the Transit Hub Special Study (Block 27 Secondary Plan) and the Concord GO Centre Mobility Hub Study/Transportation Master Plan. Fundamental to these studies will be identifying all the potential partners and the roles that they will play. It is expected that there will be varied approaches to these studies based on the nature and need of each station. Therefore, staff will continue to pursue both studies and will

work with the landowners to support the development of the case for each station. It is too early to speculate on the exact nature of any potential partnership until Metrolinx has provided more detail on how its Market Driven Approach will operate. Staff will continue to engage Metrolinx to seek further clarification.

The City should explore public private partnership opportunities with the Block 27 Landowners Group and Metrolinx in delivering the Kirby GO station

Since Metrolinx has adopted a Market Driven Approach in delivering future GO stations, the City should explore the potential of a public private partnership with the Block 27 Landowners Group (Block 27 LOG) in determining the Kirby GO station. A Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) was signed by the City, Metrolinx and the Block 27 LOG in July 2015 (Attachment No. 5) for the purpose of exploring the potential for the development of the Kirby GO station. As such, the City should work with the Block 27 LOG and Metrolinx to deliver the GO Station based on the guiding principles set in the MOC.

Planning for infrastructure to support the lands surrounding Kirby GO station should continue

While the timing of Kirby GO station is uncertain as it undergoes MTO's independent assessment and proposed "Market Driven Approach" for delivery, the following projects are still needed to support the development of the North Vaughan and New Community Areas:

- Kirby Road widening from Jane Street to Dufferin Street, including a grade separation at the Barrie rail corridor. Regardless of the decision for a GO station, the Barrie rail corridor is still part of the GO Expansion program that will provide all-day, two-way services with a potential increase in train frequency to 15 minutes. As a result, with new development in the surrounding area, and the future traffic demand on Kirby Road, there continues to be a need for a grade separation to improve the safety and operations of Kirby Road.
- A collector road network in support of the development of Block 27 is still required to facilitate the development of the Block and provide connectivity to the wider transportation system including the future planned Highway 400 North Employment Area and North Maple Regional Park.

Staff are continuing to investigate options for applying the Market Driven Approach to secure a potential Concord GO Station in the northeast quadrant of Keele Street and Highway 7 through the Concord GO Mobility Hub Study

As directed by York Region Council in its notice of decision dated April 23, 2015, through the approval of Amendment No. 8 to the Vaughan Official Plan (Concord GO

Centre Secondary Plan), staff are currently undertaking a Mobility Hub Study to implement the Concord GO Centre Secondary Plan for the purposes of realizing a GO Station in the northeast quadrant of Keele Street and Highway 7. The purpose of the Mobility Hub Study, prepared within the context of the Metrolinx Mobility Hub Guidelines, is to facilitate the development of a complete community that would function as a Mobility Hub, while providing the appropriate mix of land uses, densities and pedestrian-friendly amenities to support a GO Station. The City has retained Dillon Consulting to undertake this work, which is currently on-going, with an anticipated completion of Q4 2020.

Given its strategic location along the Barrie rail corridor, the potential Concord GO Station will provide direct multi-modal transit connections to the existing Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit service and the future Highway 407 Transitway. The potential Concord GO Station is identified in York Region's 2016 Transportation Master Plan, the 2010 York Region Official Plan, and the Vaughan Official Plan 2010. Staff will continue to work with York Region, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation and Metrolinx, in the context of the Concord GO Mobility Hub Study, to investigate options to apply the Metrolinx Market Driven Approach to secure the Concord GO Station.

Staff have received a number of complaints regarding noise from increased GO transit service on the Barrie rail corridor

As the construction of the GO Expansion project proceeds, and as service along the Barrie Rail Corridor continues to increase, the noise impacts on adjacent neighbourhoods will continue to increase. Metrolinx's Barrie Rail Corridor Expansion Environmental Assessment study originally identified noise barriers were required for all neighbourhoods adjacent to the Barrie rail corridor. However, in the latest optimization work completed for the noise barriers, portions of Ridgefield Crescent and all of Marlott Road, south of City Hall, were omitted from receiving new noise barriers.

Staff feel that this omission, while potentially technically justified, will impact the residents that abut the existing noise fence. As a result, staff recommend that Council request Metrolinx to complete the noise barriers as originally proposed in the Barrie Rail Corridor EA.

Bus Rapid Transit on Major Mackenzie Drive West, Jane Street, Highway 7 West, Steeles Avenue and the Yonge Subway Extension are part of the FRTN prioritization

Metrolinx staff have held two MTAC meetings in 2019 to gather data from municipalities, review comments, refine metrics, and test project grouping approaches. Metrolinx has

presented changes made in the evaluation criteria in response to the comments received and have updated the project scores.

The 2041 FRTN includes heavy rail, subway, light rail, bus rapid transit and priority bus projects totaling 106 projects within the GTHA. The evaluation and prioritization exercise focus on 75 projects that are in development or proposed. The evaluation criteria were developed based on three main considerations:

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

There are 18 York Region projects being evaluated and prioritized for FRTN implementation. Bus Rapid Transit on Major Mackenzie Drive West, Jane Street, Highway 7 West, Steeles Avenue and Yonge Subway Extension are amongst the projects within Vaughan that are under consideration. Staff consider the continued expansion of transit important to meeting the goals of the 2012 Transportation Master Plan.

Financial Impact

Kirby GO station will now be delivered under a Market Driven Approach. As such, Metrolinx is investigating potential partnerships with the private sector, which may also involve the City, to fund Kirby GO station.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Without the Kirby GO station to support the development of the new communities and the Highway 400 Employment Lands, the deployment of York Region Transit's Frequent Transit Network along Kirby Road, Jane Street and Weston Road should be expedited to continue to provide convenient sustainable transportation options in these areas. Staff will continue to work with York Region to ensure appropriate sustainable transportation options are reviewed for implementation in these areas.

Conclusion

Metrolinx is currently investing in a significant amount of transit infrastructure within the City. It is important that the City's interests are effectively presented to Metrolinx so that they can be incorporated into the on-going planning and delivery processes.

The proposed Kirby and Concord GO Stations, the proposed Bus Rapid Transit Corridors within the City, and the Yonge Subway Extension are priorities for the City and form the backbone in meeting the needs of commuters today and tomorrow. City staff will continue to work with Metrolinx, the Region and transit agencies to protect and advocate for sustainable and safe transportation in the City.

Supporting the recommendations of this report re-affirms Council's support for planning and building critical transit infrastructure projects in the City, contributing to a more sustainable transportation system.

For more information, please contact: Vince Musacchio, Director, Infrastructure Planning & Corporate Asset Management or Bill Kiru, Director, Policy Planning/Environmental Sustainability

Attachments

1. Municipal Partner TOD – Market Driven Approach, Metrolinx, November 29, 2018
2. [December 5, 2018, Auditor General 2018 Report, Chapter 3: Metrolinx – GO Station Selection](#)
3. [York Region Council Report, January 31, 2019](#)
4. Metrolinx Barrie Rail Corridor Expansion Project – Proposed Noise Barrier Locations (Maple GO to Rutherford GO)
5. Memorandum of Cooperation dated 23rd July, 2015.

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