

## Committee of the Whole (1) Report

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**DATE:** Tuesday, September 14, 2021

**WARD(S):** 1; 3; 4

**TITLE:** MICRO-TRANSIT PILOT PROJECT

**FROM:**

Vince Musacchio, Acting Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Development

**ACTION:** DECISION

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### **Purpose**

To provide a status update on the Micro-Transit Pilot Project and to seek delegation of signing authority from Council to enter into agreements with York Region Transit and Metrolinx.

### **Report Highlights**

- In October 2020 the Federation of Canadian Municipalities approved a grant under the Green Municipal Fund to fund 50% of the Micro-Transit Pilot Project to and from the Rutherford and Maple GO stations.
- Metrolinx and York Region Transit (YRT) are both supporting partners, and YRT will be the service provider for this pilot.
- The City will be entering into partnership agreements with YRT and Metrolinx for the implementation of this pilot project, which will start in Q1 2022 for a duration of 12 months minimum.

### **Recommendations**

1. That a By-law be enacted authorizing the Director of Infrastructure Planning and Corporate Asset Management to execute the necessary partnership agreement(s) with York Region Transit and Metrolinx to facilitate the Micro-Transit Pilot Project; and
2. That the City Clerk circulate a copy of this report to York Region Transit, York Region and Metrolinx.

## **Background**

The City of Vaughan, in partnership with York Region Transit and Metrolinx, is planning to undertake a Micro-Transit Pilot Project (“Pilot Project”) to and from the Maple and Rutherford GO stations. The purpose of this pilot is to reduce the reliance on driving to these GO stations by offering more convenient ways to get to and from the stations. A feasibility study was completed in early 2020, which identified micro-transit as the preferred type of service and identified an implementation plan to deliver a 1-year pilot.

Micro-transit refers to on-demand, non-fixed route transit services which typically use smaller vehicles than conventional buses and are usually supported by a smartphone application (app). Pilot participants would download the transit on-demand app onto their mobile device. The app would allow the user to request a ride to one of the Rutherford or Maple GO stations up to one hour before needed, and the user would be able to see the location of the vehicle that will be picking them up in real time as well as an estimated time to arrival. Each rider would then gather at a pick-up location where there may be other customers in the neighborhood taking the same ride and wait to be picked up by the micro-transit vehicle.

The findings of the Shared Mobility Feasibility Study were presented to the Transportation and Infrastructure Task Force on June 3, 2020 and a staff communication was presented to Committee of the Whole on June 16, 2020. The completed feasibility study was also submitted to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to apply for a grant under the Green Municipal Fund. In October 2020, the City received approval from FCM for the grant to fund 50% of the pilot project. An official announcement was made by FCM on June 28, 2021 and the award letter is provided as **Attachment 1**.

## **Previous Reports/Authority**

[Staff Communication – Shared Mobility Pilot Feasibility Study Findings](#) June 16, 2020

## **Analysis and Options**

The goal of this Pilot Project to and from the Maple and Rutherford GO stations is to assess the effectiveness of micro-transit in reducing the reliance on driving to access these GO stations.

The objectives would be to:

1. Support the vision and transportation policies of the City of Vaughan, York Region and Metrolinx, particularly regarding equitable access to transportation,

reduced dependence on single-occupant vehicles, and supporting low-carbon mobility options.

2. Provide an economical means for the City to enable first and last mile transportation options for commuters who use the Rutherford and Maple GO stations.
3. Test the viability and potential market for this type of service.
4. Determine best practices for encouraging modal shift away from driving to micro-transit.
5. Estimate potential economic benefits both to users and to the broader society. These benefits include reduced traffic congestion, travel time, and environmental impact (reduction of greenhouse gas emissions).

The Primary Service Area (PSA) for the Pilot Project is roughly bounded by Weston Road, Bathurst Street, Major Mackenzie Drive, and Highway 7/Rutherford Road. The PSA covers a population of approximately 74,800 residents. This boundary provides a well-defined target area for the Pilot Project and was a key consideration in determining a preferred type of service and market size in the feasibility study.

### **The completed Feasibility Study established a solid foundation for implementation of the pilot**

Four practical solutions were assessed in the feasibility study. They were evaluated against a consistent set of factors which align with the City of Vaughan's goals for the service and were applicable to all solutions developed and applied. The solutions were evaluated against elements that would achieve strategic, financial, economic, and market-readiness goals. The evaluation concluded that micro-transit would be the preferred type of service for this Pilot Project.

The completed feasibility study provides a solid foundation for implementing the proposed Micro-Transit Pilot Project. It also provides a template for how the City can assess the potential to improve mobility at other key nodes that experience similar challenges of few first and last mile options and increasing traffic congestion, while addressing a growing desire by the City and its citizens to move toward more sustainable, inclusive transportation systems.

### **York Region Transit and Metrolinx support and agreed to be partners in implementing the pilot and agreements with these agencies would be needed**

Metrolinx and York Region Transit were consulted throughout the development of the Feasibility Study through regular status update meetings. Results and

recommendations from the study were presented to York Region Transit and Metrolinx. Both agencies were in support of implementing the recommended micro-transit service at Rutherford and Maple GO stations and provided letters of support in the City's application for the FCM grant.

York Region Transit has experience implementing similar forms of micro-transit in other municipalities and has agreed to be the service provider for this pilot. An agreement with York Region Transit as a service provider would be needed.

Metrolinx is also interested in partnering with the City in studying the effectiveness of micro-transit as a first and last mile option for commuters driving to and from GO stations. They will be partnering with the City by providing pick up / drop off areas for the micro-transit service, promoting the service at the GO stations and sharing data collected from the pilot. A data sharing agreement with Metrolinx would be needed.

Staff request that Council delegate signing authority for the two partnership agreements noted above to the Director of Infrastructure Planning and Corporate Asset Management for the purposes of this Micro-Transit Pilot Project.

### **Procurement for transportation project management and consultation and engagement services is underway**

The City requires the services of transportation project management and consultation and engagement professionals to assist with preparing and implementing the pilot which include:

- Overall project management, day-to-day planning, technical analysis, and performance monitoring of the pilot project, working collaboratively with City staff, York Region Transit and Metrolinx.
- Community outreach, engagement, and communications components of the pilot, which will build awareness and encourage adoption of the new micro-transit service, and survey users and non-users to collect feedback to drive continuous improvement of the service.

The procurement process is underway, and a consultant is expected to be onboard later this year.

### **Financial Impact**

**Planning, Operations, and Evaluation would span approximately 21 months, costing a total of \$725,000 with 50% funded by the FCM grant**

A detailed implementation plan has been prepared to serve as a blueprint for the deployment. It anticipates a 21-month process to plan, procure, market, deliver, and evaluate the pilot at a cost of \$725,000. Since the City secured 50% funding through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities under the Transportation Networks and Commuting Options Pilot Project Initiative grant, the net contribution from the City would be \$323,000. This portion was approved through the City's 2020 budget process.

### **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

The lack of first and last mile mobility options is often a key barrier preventing commuters from utilizing public transportation. With the COVID-19 situation, concerns around physical distancing, contactless payment, and flexibility in travel routes are added barriers towards taking public transit. Testing and understanding commuters' attitudes and preferences towards micro-transit services could eventually be used as a tool to address and help people transition back to taking all forms of public transit services.

The City's partnership with York Region Transit will allow commuters around GO stations to have more first and last mile mobility options, allow the City and YRT to test more flexible service options other than conventional fixed route bus service during a time of reduced ridership and continue to drive ridership for higher order transit services such as GO transit.

### **Conclusion**

The implementation of this Micro-Transit Pilot Project is just one early step in Vaughan's vision to enhance mobility at GO stations and beyond. It provides a solid foundation for the next steps of procuring and implementing micro-transit services in other areas of the City. It also provides a template for how the City can assess the potential to improve mobility in partnership with York Region Transit at other key nodes that experience similar challenges of few first and last mile options thereby increasing traffic congestion and builds on the growing desire by the City and its residents to move toward more sustainable, inclusive transportation systems.

Staff will provide status updates to council with progress and findings from the pilot.

**For more information**, please contact Michael Frieri, Acting Director, Infrastructure Planning and Corporate Asset Management.

### **Attachment**

1. Award letter from Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

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**Approved by**



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