



TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>1.0</u>	<u>INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND</u>	1
<u>2.0</u>	<u>TRANSIT PLANNING & POLICY INITIATIVES</u>	1
<u>2.1</u>	<u>York Region Official Plan Policies</u>	1
<u>2.2</u>	<u>Subsequent Transit Planning & Policy Initiatives</u>	2
<u>2.3</u>	<u>Progress to Date</u>	5
<u>3.0</u>	<u>TRANSIT SERVICE ISSUES AND OPTIONS</u>	6
<u>3.1</u>	<u>Context</u>	6
<u>3.2</u>	<u>Transit Markets</u>	9
<u>4.0</u>	<u>RANGE OF TRANSIT PLANNING AND POLICY OPTIONS</u>	14
<u>5.0</u>	<u>MOST PROMISING DIRECTIONS FOR CHANGE</u>	15
<u>6.0</u>	<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	18

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1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

This paper, as part of the Phase 1 review of current policy and funding issues, is intended to stimulate the discussion of transit planning and service issues and related options. It reviews transit planning issues in the context of the York Region Official Plan policies and plans, and explores related planning and policy options.

Current York Region transit services are provided by the area municipalities and GO Transit. Conventional transit systems serve Newmarket, Aurora, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Markham while specialized services are provided in the five urban municipalities as well as in Whitchurch-Stouffville and Georgina. Municipal transit services in York Region are operated by private contractors or, in the case of most north-south routes crossing Steeles Avenue, purchased from the TTC.

GO Transit operates three types of service in York Region: commuter rail service to downtown Toronto on the Bradford, Richmond Hill and Stouffville Lines, local bus routes on Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue, serving the Finch Subway Station, and a variety of inter-city coach type routes that connect communities in York Region and serve a variety of destinations in Toronto.

2.0 TRANSIT PLANNING & POLICY INITIATIVES

2.1 YORK REGION OFFICIAL PLAN POLICIES

The York Region Official Plan provides a transit-oriented policy framework for land use and transportation planning in York. The current Official Plan, which was first approved in October 1994 and has incorporated numerous amendments over the 1994-1999 period, includes the following objective:

“To provide transit service that is convenient, accessible and equitable to all residents of York.”¹

Further to this objective the Official Plan identifies a wide range of transit supportive planning policies. For example, these policies specify that:

- “...a fully coordinated public transit system” will be developed,
- York Region communities will be planned “...on the basis of significantly increasing public use of transit” including a thirty year target that “...one third of all peak period trips” be by transit in urban areas.
- higher transit usage will be achieved by:
 - “...supporting improvements in service, convenient access and good urban design” including “...minimizing walk access to anticipated transit stops...”,
 - “...providing bus bays, bus shelters, and bus loops where required” and
 - “...locating medium and higher density urban development adjacent to transit intensive urban arterial roads.”

¹ See page 68, York Region Official Plan – Office Consolidation, as of July 13, 1999.

- “...providing for and promoting provision of parking and drop off facilities for commuters at appropriate locations...”
- “...providing transfer facilities at appropriate locations;”
- “...providing continuous collector road systems that permit the linking of adjacent developments with direct transit routings;”
- “creating site plan control that gives priority to pedestrian access to transit over automobile access and parking in urban areas”.

In addition, the Official Plan specifies that the Region will coordinate with area municipalities, operating agencies and the Ministry of Transportation “...in the planning, coordination, integration and operation of existing and new transit services and to encourage increases in transit mode splits across the Region’s boundaries.” The Region will also “...support a consistent and equitable transit fare strategy throughout York Region and to ensure that this fare structure is integrated with transit services in adjacent regions as well as with GO Transit” and promote the implementation of a regional rapid transit network including specific GO Rail, TTC Subway, transitway and HOV elements.

As noted in the recent Neptis Foundation study on “The Evolving Physical Condition of the Greater Toronto Area: Space, Form and Change,” York Region’s Official Plan

“...is very proactive in its identification of a conceptual transit network in support of development in the region.”²

The proposed rapid transit elements of this conceptual network include the extension of the Spadina Subway to York University “...and possibly north linked to Highway 7”, and the extension of the Yonge Subway to Highway 7.

In relation to commuter rail services, the OP proposes that all-day two-way service be introduced on the three lines serving York Region, that the Richmond Hill line be extended to the Highway 404/Bloomington Road area, and that additional inter-modal stations be added to the existing GO Rail lines within York Region and Toronto.

In addition to rapid transit and commuter rail proposals, the York OP identifies additional higher order facilities, including a transitway in the Highway 7/407 corridor and “high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to facilitate bus movement in congested areas”.

2.2 SUBSEQUENT TRANSIT PLANNING & POLICY INITIATIVES

The higher order transit elements identified in the 1994 Regional OP have been subject to continued study and refinement through local, Regional, Provincial and GO Transit studies.

The 1995 York Region “HOV/Rapid Transit Study” fleshed out the rapid transit concept for the Region confirming the need for east-west and north-south rapid transit links and stressing the need to extend both the Spadina and Yonge Subway lines into York Region. This report also recommended the implementation of HOV lanes on selected arterial roads and Highway 7.

² Robert M. Wright, “The Evolving Physical Condition of the Greater Toronto Area: Space Form and Change,” Neptis Foundation, February 2000, page 39.

Local transportation studies (in Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Markham) have generally supported the Regional OP by more or less adopting the Region's objectives. In many cases the Region's transportation planning recommendations have been translated into local policy. For example, Vaughan's OPA 400, June 1995), specified that the City of Vaughan "...in co-operation with both the Region and the Province, shall encourage a comprehensive and attractive transit service, capable of attracting and carrying 30% to 40% of the peak hour commuters to avoid the necessity of additional arterial lanes beyond those envisaged by the City-Wide Transportation Strategy."

In line with this general policy, Vaughan Council adopted specific policies intended to improve transit service, improve access to transit for local residents, and encourage higher density developments along arterial roads and at major intersections that are accessible to higher levels of transit service.

Similar initiatives were identified in Richmond Hill and Markham in the 1994-1996 period. Local transportation studies recommended transit supportive land use planning and policy measures but assumed ongoing Provincial government support for future transit operating and capital expenditures. Local municipalities also agreed to work with the Province and the Region to improve transit services.

2.2.1 Regional Transit

Since early 1998, the Region has been actively pursuing Regional Transit through the "Regionally Integrated Transit Task Force". This exercise has identified a variety of draft bus service proposals for discussion including short-term "Strategic Inter-Municipal Services" for the Highway 7, Major Mackenzie, Yonge, Bayview and Bathurst corridors, and "Other Short Term Improvements" (one to two years), "Medium Term Improvements" (Two to Five Years), and "Longer Term Improvements (Five + years). This initiative has also addressed fare integration strategies and customer information proposals, as well as improved service integration with GO and TTC services, and improved "Special Needs" transit services.

Since November 1999 the "Transit Implementation Committee" has been providing direction to the transition from the current municipal operation of local transit in the Region's five urban municipalities to the creation of a single integrated Regional transit system that is scheduled to be implemented on January 1, 2001.

2.2.2 Transit Funding

Following the Provincial election of 1995, there were major shifts in transportation policy including the downloading of Provincial transportation responsibilities to local government. This included the staged elimination of Provincial capital and operating subsidies to public transit. By the end of the 1990s, local governments were expected to fund public transit, including the operations of GO Transit in the GTA, from the property tax base. Development Charges are the only other current source of capital funds for transit, although current Provincial government policy specifies that such funds cannot be used to provide improved service levels. The Provincial Development Charges Act specifies that the planned level of service funded by Development Charges cannot exceed the average provided by the local municipality over the last ten years.

In 1999, the Region's "Transit Programme for 1998-2021 Development Charges Bylaw" was approved. This bylaw provides for partial funding for HOV lanes on north-south and east-west arterial roads cross the urbanized area, busway stations and sections for

Yonge Street (Steeles to Highway 9)³ and on Highway 7 (Highway 50 to York Durham line)⁴, and major transit stations at four locations.⁵

Concurrently with the downloading of transportation and other responsibilities to local government, the Province set up the Greater Toronto Services Board (GTSB). The GTSB came into being on January 1, 1999 "...to facilitate and co-ordinate decision making by the 30 local and regional councils with the Greater Toronto Area." While the GTSB mandate suggests that the organization will deal with the full range of services offered by local government in the GTA, the GTSB's major focus has been on transportation, including overseeing the operations of GO Transit, which had previously been an agency of the government of Ontario. While the GTSB has the responsibility to co-ordinate transportation decision making, it has no dedicated financial resources.

The issue of funding transportation in the GTA and Hamilton-Wentworth was addressed in an April 1999 report entitled: "Funding Transportation in the Greater Toronto Area & Hamilton-Wentworth." This report concluded that the area's transportation system "...is in trouble", but that the municipalities cannot fund the required road and transit improvements with their current financial resources (property tax plus development charges). The assistance of senior governments is required to maintain the quality of the GTA/H-W transportation system and maintain the competitive position of this area as well as the Province and the country.

2.2.3 Greater Toronto Services Board

In January 2000 the Greater Toronto Services Board report "Removing Roadblocks" recommended enhanced GO Transit commuter services, including full service on the Richmond Hill and Stouffville lines and extended rush hour services on the Bradford line. In addition, the GTSB report recommended enhanced "rapid transit services" in three York Region transit corridors: York University from the Vaughan Corporate Centre through York University to Downsview Station, North Yonge from Newmarket to Finch Station on the Yonge Line and Highway 48 from Markham to Scarborough City Centre. The report also supports the development of a higher-order transit service in the Highway 7/407 corridor through York Region providing inter-regional connections.

While the GTSB is looking at the long term transit service improvements across the GTA, the GO Transit 10 Year Capital Plan for 2001-2010 approved by the GTSB in June 2000, focuses on rebuilding Union Station, the system's central terminal, to accommodate "more trains and larger crowds," adding track capacity and rail equipment to increase capacity, and a variety of other state of good repair and service oriented measures.

The identified "corridor improvements" for York Region are limited to the addition of one new train for the Bradford corridor and two new trains in the Stouffville corridor. No service improvements or service extensions are planned for the Richmond Hill line and there are currently no plans within the ten year time-frame for all day service within York Region.

³ Not including HOV lanes between Highway 7 and Elgin Mills.

⁴ Not including section through Woodbridge.

⁵ Richmond Hill Centre, Markham Centre, Vaughan Corporate Centre and Newmarket Centre.

2.3 PROGRESS TO DATE

While the policies, plans and studies outlined above have supported the basic concepts and transit targets set out in York Region's OP, little progress has been made to date on achieving the policy objectives. Despite the calls for increased development densities (including nodes and corridors), improved transit access to residents through provision of mid-block collectors, and improved transit service levels, little has been achieved on the ground. Transit service levels have not improved, nor has the accessibility to transit and, therefore, transit mode splits have declined over the last decade.

As noted in the York Region Transit Project "Interim Report" (July 6, 2000): "Both the level and quantity of public service has not kept pace with growth." Levels of service per capita and per capita spending by the urban municipalities have all declined over the 1995-1999 period.

Reduced service levels and trends in travel and transit use have reduced overall mode splits, rather than moving the Region towards its goal. Whereas the Region's Official Plan has a 33% modal split target during peak periods in the urban areas by 2021, the current AM peak modal split for York Region residents is about 8%, based on the 1996 TTS survey, having declined from 10% in 1986. As noted in the interim report: "To meet the Regional modal split targets, public transit will have to handle as much as 50% of all new (AM peak period) trips made within the Region." Regional staff report that the rapid growth in auto traffic crossing the Steeles Avenue screenline between 1995 and 1998 suggests a continued decline in transit mode splits for travel between York Region and the City of Toronto.

The reasons for the failure to improve transit services relates primarily to economic and political factors. The 1990 recession forced cutbacks in government spending at all levels. Also, in 1996, following the change in government, major changes in the Provincial funding of urban transportation were introduced. This included changes in the allocation of responsibilities between the Provincial and municipal levels of government including the staged withdrawal of Provincial capital and operating subsidies for urban transit. These changes had a major influence on transportation planning and the development of improved transit services in York Region, Toronto and the rest of the GTA.

Our review of the current situation suggests that the appropriate policies and plans are in place. However, these policies and plans, including new rapid transit services and improved feeder-bus services, have not been implemented, primarily because of funding constraints. As spelled out in the "Funding Transportation in the Greater Toronto Area & Hamilton-Wentworth" report, the GTA municipalities do not currently have the wherewithal to fund new rapid transit lines or the expansion of local transit (bus) services without new funding sources.

3.0 TRANSIT SERVICE ISSUES AND OPTIONS

3.1 CONTEXT

The York Region Official Plan and subsequent studies have identified the strategic need for a transit solution to York's emerging transportation problems. It is estimated that the Region's population will grow from an estimated 1999 figure of 713,000 to 1,280,000 by 2026, an 80% increase while employment will increase by 83%. The South York Region municipalities (Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Markham) are expected to see a 79% population increase over this period. Given recent growth and development, major travel corridors are already congested and the opportunities for additional road capacity are limited. For example, the arterial road system is built to roughly 70% of its ultimate capacity in the southern part of the Region. In short, the road network will not be able to accommodate projected increases in travel demand, even with extensive transit demand management measures. Transit will have to play a much larger role in moving York Region residents to jobs in York Region and Toronto, and in moving Toronto residents to jobs in York Region.

The last ten years of study in York Region and the Greater Toronto Area has identified a wide range of possible transit service initiatives including commuter rail, rapid transit and surface transit options and supportive land use and transportation policies. While there is a great deal of agreement among the various players on the "long list" of possible service options including GO Rail and rapid transit elements and possible local transit service elements, there is little agreement on transit service priorities, beyond the Yonge Corridor higher order transit, (now the subject of an Environmental Assessment Study). Furthermore, there is little agreement on how to fund any specific capital improvements, beyond GO Transit's modest 10 year capital programme.

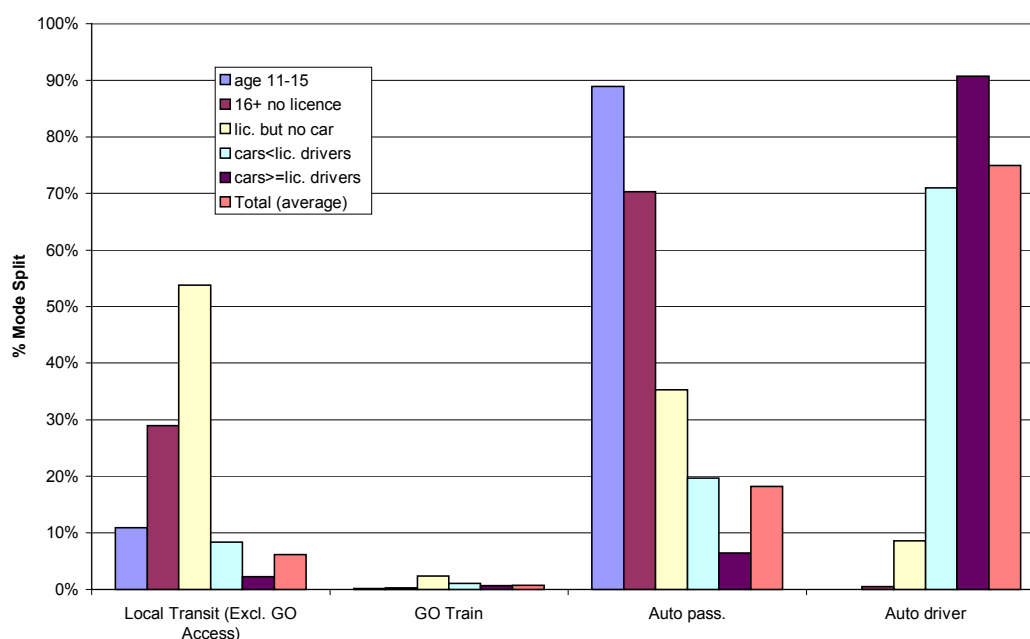
The transit challenge for the York Region Transportation Master Plan exercise is to identify the best ways to reverse recent trends in transit use and move toward the Region's target and define planning and programming priorities. What should be done and when should it be done?

Answering this question requires the recognition of current travel market realities, as illustrated with reference to the 1996 TTS data for travel and transit use in York Region and the findings of the York Region Transit Project. The strongest indicator of the likelihood of using public transit in York Region is auto availability as illustrated by Exhibit 1 which shows mode splits for the residents of the 5 urban municipalities in York Region for five socio-demographic groups that have different levels of access to private automobiles. Those persons who have access to a car at all times (those living in households where the number of cars equals or exceeds the number of licensed drivers) are least likely to use transit and most likely to drive their own cars. In contrast, those persons who can drive but do not have access to a car (licensed but no car) have the highest transit modal splits.

York Region has relatively high car ownership with 1.8 vehicles per household and only 4% of households being without a car. In contrast, 26% of Toronto households have no car. Sixty-seven percent of York Region households have two or more cars. Therefore, the York transit market is overwhelmingly comprised of riders who have a choice of modes for most trips and especially for work trips. On average, there were 1.17 cars per worker for York Region residents. Meeting the transit challenge in York Region requires

developing transit services that will be competitive with the automobile for a higher proportion of the trips made by “choice” riders. This points to the need for improved transit services including extensions to the “rapid transit” system and improved “feeder bus” service supported by transit priority measures and transit-supportive land use and TDM policies, as proposed in the York Region OP and the other documents referred to above.

Exhibit 1 - Urban York Region Mode Shares Considering Availability of Driver's Licence and Vehicle Access 1996



Currently, Toronto’s downtown is the primary destination for “choice” travellers because this is where transit is most competitive in terms of accessibility, frequency of service and connectivity. Parking availability and cost is another important factor that influences mode choice. Where parking is limited and expensive, as in downtown Toronto, transit service is often a competitive option. On the other hand, when parking is extensive and free, the auto is favoured for those who have access to a car.

A recent TTC survey of cross-boundary travel (February, 2000)⁶ showed that only 11% of commute trips to Toronto from York Region used transit only, while an additional 14% used the car plus transit. The remaining 75% of trips from York Region were by car only. As noted in this survey, transit was most likely to be used where the trip destination is downtown, where trips are made during peak periods, where the traveller did not have access to a car and where there was no access to parking at the trip end. Where parking was not available at the trip destination, more than 60% of commuters chose transit. Where paid parking was available, the average transit mode split (for residents of all Regions) was 40%. In contrast, the average mode split for destinations in Toronto with access to free parking was only 8%. The widespread availability of free parking at suburban employment locations in Toronto and York Region will limit the competitive position of transit for travel to these destinations.

⁶ As documented in a TTC presentation entitled: GTA Cross-Boundary Study Overview.

An important indicator of current transit potential is the proportion of trips that are destined for downtown and other transit-oriented destinations, such as the inner city/mature suburban areas of Toronto. Exhibits 2A and 2B show the travel orientation of total vehicular trips (including transit, school bus, auto driver and auto passenger trips) and transit trips. Whereas about 60% of trips made by York Region residents are destined for York Region (same municipality or other municipality in York Region), and less than 10% of all trips are destined for downtown Toronto, more than 50% of all transit trips that start in York Region are destined for downtown Toronto. In this case downtown Toronto includes the core or CBD as well as mid-town (the Bloor-Yonge/Bloor-Bay area) and the University of Toronto. About 76% of all transit trips starting in York are destined for the City of Toronto.

The above percentages vary by municipality with about 4% of total travel by Newmarket residents and 42% of transit travel by Newmarket residents being oriented to Toronto Downtown. Whereas the average AM peak transit mode split for York Region residents is about 8%, mode splits for travel to Downtown Toronto exceed 50% and modes splits to the downtown core area served by GO Rail can exceed 70%. Note that the 1996 average from urban York Region to the downtown core was only 45% and the highest value observed for York Region municipality was 67% from Richmond Hill. Transit mode splits from parts of York Region to other destinations in the downtown, including the mid-town area and University of Toronto, are low relative to the overall average (48%) and to the mode splits achieved from suburban areas within Toronto. For example, the observed mode splits from Newmarket-Aurora and Vaughan (excluding Thornhill West) were about 40% in 1996, whereas observed mode splits from the northern suburbs of Rexdale, Downsview and Agincourt averaged 58%. The data suggest that it should be possible to achieve large increases in transit travel to downtown Toronto from York Region.

Toronto is the most important transit destination for York residents in the short-term, but accounts for only 35% of total daily travel by York residents – sixty percent of trips are to York Region and 5% to other destinations. In contrast, seventy four percent of all transit trips made by York residents were destined for Toronto, including 50% to downtown, and only 25% of transit trips are destined for York Region. Most AM peak transit trips destined for York are for school trips, rather than for work trips. Considering projected population and employment growth in York and Toronto and the changes in AM peak travel patterns observed over the 1986-96 period, fewer York residents are expected to work in Toronto in the future with more commuting to the developing job opportunities in York Region and to destinations in the neighbouring Regional municipalities. At the same time, however, more Toronto residents can be expected to work in York Region, creating even more pressure on the road system. Commute trips from Toronto to York Region are not well served by transit.

Exhibit 2A - 1996 Vehicular Travel Orientation
 (Percentage Distribution of auto, transit and school bus trips originating in York Region Municipalities)

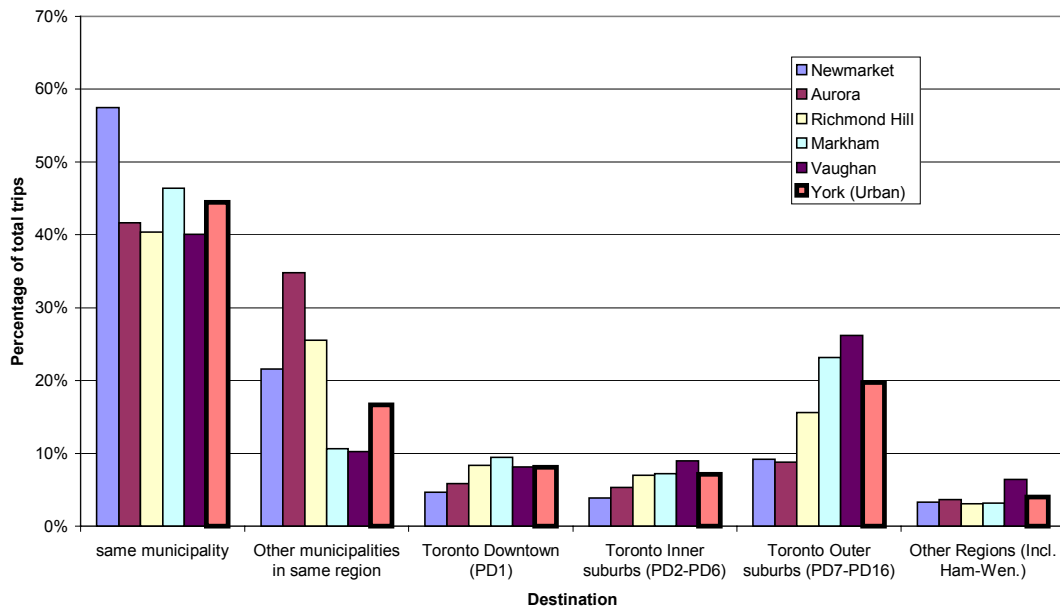
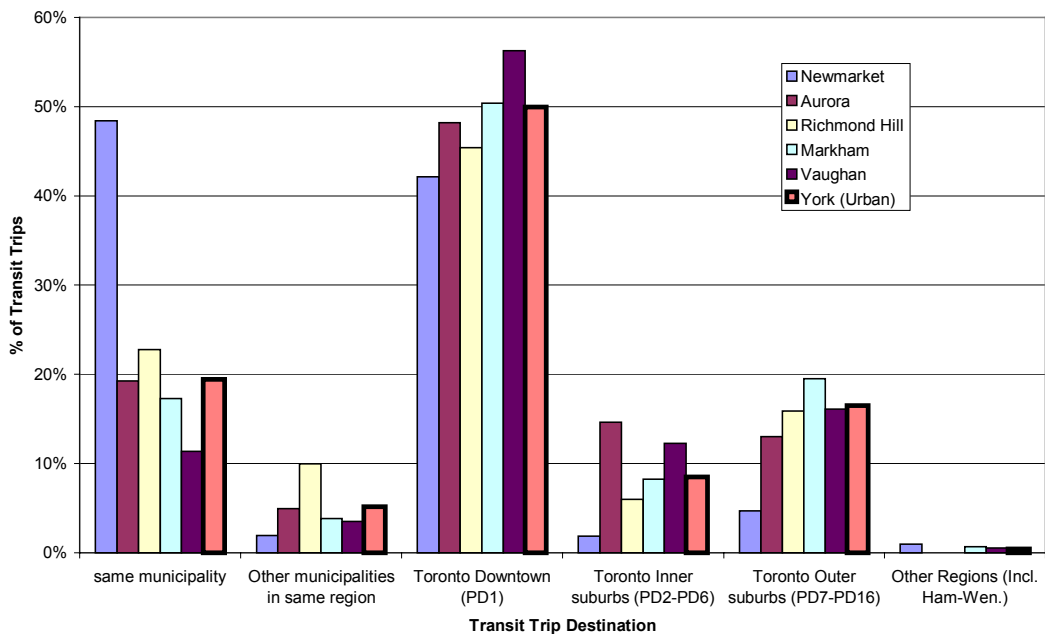


Exhibit 2B - 1996 Transit Travel Orientation
 (Percentage Distribution of transit trips originating in York Region Municipalities)



3.2 TRANSIT MARKETS

The market for transit services includes a variety of submarkets defined in terms of auto access/availability and travel patterns. Having established that the majority of York Region residents can drive and have access to private transportation, it is clear that transit will have to compete with the automobile for future customers.

Decisions as to where new services should be introduced and existing services enhanced must consider the ridership potential and service challenges associated with the different travel submarkets. Three major travel submarkets can be identified: Toronto oriented cross-boundary travel; internal travel within York Region and inter-regional travel (primarily to and from Peel and Durham Region).

3.2.1 Toronto Oriented Cross-Boundary Travel

The largest transit market today and for the next ten-fifteen years relates to travel between York Region and the City of Toronto. This market, in turn, is composed of a number of distinct submarkets including:

- York to Toronto core (or CBD);
- York to central area (outside core);
- York to north Toronto suburbs (eg. Vaughan to Rexdale/Downsview and York University, and Markham to Scarborough);
- York to Yonge corridor (North York City Centre, Yonge-Eglinton, Yonge-St. Clair);
- Toronto to York Region.

Table 1 summarizes current AM peak period travel patterns for York Region residents (urban York and total, including the rural municipalities) focusing on distinct destinations within Toronto. As shown, 94% of York Region residents are travelling to destinations in York Region or the City of Toronto during the AM peak with 60% travelling within York Region.

To From	Urban York	York Region	Toronto Core	Other Central Area	Yonge Corridor	North Suburbs	Total Toronto	Peel	Other (Barrie/ Simcoe)
Urban York	56%	58%	4.2%	5.3%	4.5%	13.4%	37%	3.5%	1.0%
York Region	54%	60%	3.9%	5.0%	4.1%	12.3%	34%	3.3%	1.2%

In contrast to total travel, transit travel is heavily oriented to Toronto. Whereas 34% of total AM peak travel from York is destined for Toronto, 76% of trips involving the use of transit end in Toronto. Most of these trips, 54%, are destined for downtown Toronto, including the core and the rest of the central area (which includes the mid-town, Bloor-Yonge/University, and the University of Toronto).

Toronto Core

The Toronto core submarket is the best-served transit market, given the availability of GO commuter rail services that compete with the car in terms of convenience, speed and cost. This market accounts for only 4% of total AM peak trips from urban York Region, but represents 26% of all AM peak transit trips made by urban York residents. While the current average AM peak transit market share (mode split) to the core for residents of the urban areas within York Region is about 55%, AM peak transit mode splits as high as 75% were observed from parts of York Region in 1996.

The core market still has substantial potential for growth and this potential cannot be ignored, given the expected growth in travel demands to the core and the difference between current and potential mode splits (from 55% to 70-80%). Realizing this

potential will involve the addition of peak period trains, added stations and parking capacity of stations and improved feeder bus services. The major challenges associated with increasing transit's share of total travel to the Toronto core and reducing related traffic, relate to current funding limitations, which will make it difficult to keep up with York Region's growth. It will also be necessary to intercept GO riders earlier, given that most drive their cars long distances before accessing GO Rail services.

Toronto Central Area (Not Including Core)

The central area accounts for about 5% of all AM peak travel from York Region and for about 28% of all transit travel in this period. Substantial increases in transit market shares for trips from York Region to the central area are feasible, based on the comparison of current mode splits from York Region municipalities to the central area outside the core. Whereas mode splits as high as 60% have been observed for travel to the central area, transit market shares from York Region vary from 40% to 50% (and average about 45%). Furthermore, a high proportion of central area transit trips involve the use of an auto to drive to a subway station. Therefore, these trips add to the traffic congestion of the Region's roads and the Provincial highway network.

Higher transit use to the central area outside the core will require improved transit services, including both rapid transit (ranging from TTC subway to "rapid bus" concepts using bus-only lanes, busways) and improved feeder bus services supported by a range of transit priority measures (HOV, signal pre-emption or queue jump lanes).

Yonge Corridor (North York City Centre, Yonge-Eglinton, Yonge-St. Clair)

The Yonge corridor currently accounts for about 5% of total AM peak trips originating in York Region, but for about 8% of all transit trips. Whereas the current average mode split for AM peak travel from York to the Yonge corridor is about 16%, a 33% mode split target appears to be feasible within the next ten years. In the longer term, it may be feasible to increase mode splits for travel from York to this area to 50% or more.

North Suburbs

The northern suburbs of Toronto account for approximately 13% of all travel from York Region and for about 8% of all transit trips from York Region. While current mode splits from York to the north suburbs average about 5%, future mode splits of 15-20% should be feasible in the medium to long term. The achievement of the 15-20% target will require improved transit service levels, especially to major trip generators such as York University, and other transit supportive land use and transportation policies, as envisaged in "A Transportation Vision for the City of Toronto Official Plan." This travel market will benefit from improved connections to TTC subway and improved north-south bus services.

Toronto to York Region

As shown in Table 2, AM peak travel to York Region is also dominated by York Region Municipalities and the City of Toronto. Twenty-seven percent of total trips to urban York Region originate in Toronto, but this area accounts for 53% of all AM peak transit travel to the five urban municipalities in York Region. Urban York Region contributes 61% of total travel and 27% of transit travel that is destined to the urban areas of York in the AM peak period.

**Table 2: AM Peak Travel To York Region
(Percent of 1996 AM Peak Period Trips made to York Region – TTS)**

From	To	Urban York (5 Urban Municipalities)	York Region (Total)
Urban York (5 municipalities)		55%	52%
York Region		61%	62%
Toronto Core		0.1%	0.1%
Other Central Area		0.7%	0.7%
Yonge Corridor		2.3%	2.2%
North Suburbs		11.6%	10.8%
Total Toronto		27%	25%
Durham		3.9%	4.0%
Peel		4.9%	4.7%
Halton		0.7%	0.6%
Other		3.3%	3.5%

Based on recent trends and projected growth, AM peak travel from Toronto to York is another rapidly growing travel market which will contribute to increased traffic congestion on north-south roads crossing Steeles Avenue. While the current mode splits for trips to York from all origins averages only 2%, the average for Toronto origins is about 10% with above average mode splits from the central area (28%) and the Yonge corridor (12%). Improved transit services crossing Steeles Avenue will benefit those Toronto residents who work or study in south York Region and support a modal shift from auto to transit.

Toronto Market Summary

Service improvements in the Yonge corridor, within the Region, will support substantial increases in transit market shares for travel to both the central area and the Yonge corridor within Toronto. Such transit improvements would also improve service for the remaining cross-boundary markets, although the benefits of such services would tend to be limited to those origins and destinations that are accessible to transit services that are accessible and offer direct and convenient services.

To a major extent, success in the York-Toronto cross-boundary markets will depend on co-operation with the City of Toronto. The key to success in these markets is to ensure that improved transit services are extended from Toronto into the growing York market and all transit services within South York Region are effectively integrated with TTC and GO Rail services. It will also be necessary to encourage Toronto to increase development in areas where transit is competitive and to improve transit services to those locations which offer the best chance of attracting increased ridership in the short to medium term.⁷

3.2.2 Internal York Travel

While York Region is the destination for 60% of all AM peak trips made by York residents, this destination accounts for less than one quarter of all transit trips made by

⁷ A related issue is how best to serve Barrie area residents who currently drive through York Region. What is the best way of serving these commuters and minimizing the traffic implications of the continued growth of the Barrie area on York Region?

York residents. Most of these local transit trips are made for school rather than work purposes, using local transit.

Currently most transit use within York Region is for intra-municipal travel and is served by current local transit services within the five urban municipalities. There are also a number of inter-municipal routes that service internal cross-boundary travel. The planned Regional Transit System should allow the full development of inter-municipal services and increases in local transit market shares.

Currently, the average mode split for internal AM peak travel within York Region is in the 3-4% range. Given that current (1996) transit mode splits of up to 10% have been achieved within York (for travel from Richmond Hill to the Thornhill area which is served by GO Bus services on Yonge and Bayview), this might serve as a reasonable short-term target for internal travel in major transit corridors such as Yonge and Highway 7. In the longer term, however, transit will only be competitive if York Region and the GTA succeed in developing a network of competitive transit services which will facilitate travel between a much wider range of origins and destinations. This implies the operation of frequent service on routes operating on north-south and east-west arterial roads. During peak periods policy headways of 10 minutes or less are desirable for all arterial routes. Minimum policy headways of 30 minutes are desirable during off-peak periods.

In the short to medium term, the challenge is how best to develop the required Regional transit network, given current fiscal realities and the need to recover as much revenue as possible from the farebox. The current study should identify areas within York Region where transit can be made more competitive in the short to medium term and develop this competitiveness through a combination of improved services, improved access to this service (intensification to concentrate development in designated nodes and corridors) and, where feasible, transit supportive policies.

3.2.3 Inter-Regional Travel

As of 1996, only 6% of AM peak period trips originating in York Region were destined for the Regions and areas north of York Region, with most of this travel (between 3 and 4%) being oriented to Peel and about 1% being destined for Barrie/Simcoe County.

York Region attracts substantial AM peak travel from the Regions. Durham, Peel and Halton contribute 4%, 4.7% and 0.6% respectively of the total AM peak trips destined for York Region. Other origins, mostly the Barrie/Simcoe area, account for 3.5% of AM peak trips to York Region.

The only existing east-west inter-regional transit service operates between Finch Station and Brampton via Highway 7/Centre Street and Yonge Street. The current transit mode split between York Region and Peel is less than 1%, while the mode split for trips between Peel and York is about 3%. Most of this transit travel involves commuting by persons who live in Brampton and work in Vaughan employment areas that are accessible to Highway 7.

Improved east-west services, particularly in the Highway 7/407 corridor can be expected to attract increased ridership in this growing market, but potential increases in mode split are limited, in comparison with the "York-Region – Toronto" travel market because of the dispersed nature of travel patterns and the fact that employment areas in York Region include extensive areas of free parking. Nevertheless, the size of absolute increases in

transit ridership using east-west services could be substantial, especially if the Region's transit network develops to the point where it is convenient to transfer between north-south and east-west services.

4.0 RANGE OF TRANSIT PLANNING AND POLICY OPTIONS

A wide range of transportation planning and policy options have been identified in the Region's Official Plan and the long list of studies that have been produced over the last fifteen years by York Region municipalities and other agencies.

The aim of the current study, with respect to transit, is to identify transit solutions and priorities (considering specific travel markets, ridership potential and strategic importance), establish realistic short and medium term goals, and flesh out the details of specific projects and/or programmes included the development of service plans and staging strategies. Given current fiscal and political realities, it is important to focus initially on those travel markets that will be successful in the short to medium term and that justify the development of improved service levels.

For discussion purposes, five basic transit options can be defined, as follows:

- A. focus on downtown Toronto (core plus central area);
- B. focus on major Toronto destinations (core, central area, Yonge corridor and northern suburban areas);
- C. focus on urban York and major Toronto destinations;
- D. focus on urban York, plus Toronto and the neighbouring Regions; and
- E. focus on entire York Region plus Toronto and the neighbouring Regions.

Downtown Toronto remains the single location where transit is competitive with the automobile. As noted in section 3.2.1, transit mode splits from York Region to the core and central area remain low, in comparison with the mode splits observed from other trip origins and, therefore, it should be possible to achieve substantial short-term increases in ridership to these areas. A thirty to thirty-five percent increase in transit mode splits for AM peak travel from York Region to Toronto's central area should be possible given the proposed improvements in GO Rail service, possible extensions to the TTC rapid transit system, and improved feeder bus services to the TTC subway system.

While focusing on travel to downtown Toronto should offer substantial short-term growth opportunities and justify improved service levels on certain north-south routes, it limits York Region's transit potential because less than 10% of York residents commute to this area (with about half of all trips to the core area).

Extending the scope for improved services to all of Toronto offers much greater potential for a larger modal shift from auto to transit. Toronto destinations outside of the central area and core account for about 28% of AM peak trips originating in York Region and two-thirds of these trips are destined for the Yonge corridor (including North York City Centre) and the northern suburbs (Rexdale, Downsview, Willowdale and Agincourt). Assuming improved cross-boundary services and supportive policies, it should be possible to double current transit mode splits for destinations in the Yonge corridor north

of the central area and to triple mode splits for cross-boundary travel from York to suburban areas in Toronto north of Highway 401.

While improving transit services to all Toronto destinations and for travel from Toronto to York Region should attract substantial increases in transit patronage in the short to medium term, the key to longer term success is developing a competitive transit network for travel within York Region. Urban York Region accounts for 56% of all the AM peak trips originating in York Region and this percentage can be expected to increase in the future. Current mode splits are low and it will be difficult to achieve large increases in transit use for travel within York Region, given the high levels of car access and the availability of abundant free parking. Nevertheless, the achievement of substantial increases in transit use in York will require large increases in transit use for travel within York. A two to three-fold increase in current mode splits for travel within urban York Region, from 4% to 8-12%, appears to be a reasonable target for the medium to long term.

Higher transit service levels will have to be provided on east-west routes within York Region which will not be justified by demand levels in the short to medium term, if the Region's transit system is to offer convenient connections to multiple destinations. This would require that minimum peak and off-peak headways be established for all bus routes, so that transferring between north-south and east-west routes is an attractive option. Also, measures must be taken to make transit travel times more competitive with the auto by providing appropriate transit priority measures, including HOV or bus-only lanes, traffic signal priority, and /or queue-jump lanes in locations that experience recurring and severe traffic congestion.

Options D and E involve extending transit services to areas with less ridership potential. Transit potential for peak travel between the rural and urban parts of York is probably limited to school trips, which are currently served by school buses, for the most part. In relation to the Region's concerns about traffic congestion, there would seem to be little benefit to pursuing Option D. As discussed, the inter-regional travel market included in Option E is growing but has limited short to medium term ridership potential.

5.0 MOST PROMISING DIRECTIONS FOR CHANGE

For the short to medium term (to 2016) Transit Option C is preferred because this option includes the largest and most promising travel markets. These include the core, central area, Yonge corridor and north Toronto suburban areas, as well as travel within urban York Region. Considering all travel markets included in Option C, the maximum transit mode split that could be achieved in the AM peak period for travel originating in York Region would be in the 20% to 25% range by 2026, compared to 8% in 1996. The addition of rural and inter-regional markets, assuming resources were available to offer competitive transit services in these markets, would not increase the average mode split significantly.

Option C calls for a variety of transit service changes involving GO Rail, TTC subway, additional higher-order transit services and enhanced feeder bus services and cross-boundary bus services. In the medium to long term it calls for the development of complete network of transit services covering all of the urbanized areas of the Region.

In relation to GO Rail services oriented to the core, there is a need to expand the system, adding GO stations and increased parking opportunities within York (to improve accessibility) and improving service frequencies. Increasing the number of GO Stations within Toronto would increase the number of locations within Toronto where GO services may be competitive with the auto but this would also increase travel times. Therefore, the benefits and costs of adding GO stations must be carefully considered before making any specific recommendations.

Given transit market opportunities, the Yonge corridor within York Region stands out as the top priority for transit investment in the short term. Higher-order transit services in the Yonge Corridor would serve the major existing Toronto transit markets (core, central area, Yonge corridor) and major activity centres in the Region which will encourage increased transit use for travel between the Yonge corridor communities (Newmarket, Aurora, Richmond Hill and Thornhill).

The Vaughan Corporate Centre (VCC) to York University and Highway 7/407 corridors are the most significant new transit opportunities and will be important elements of the ultimate York Region Transit network. Extending the Spadina Subway to York University and ultimately the Vaughan Corporate Centre will improve transit access to York University and to all other destinations within Toronto that are accessible to the subway system. It will also improve transit access from Toronto to job opportunities in Vaughan.

The Highway 7 corridor will be important to developing improved transit access and connectivity within south York Region. This corridor serves the entire width of South York Region providing transit links to the Yonge and Spadina-VCC corridors. The Highway 7 corridor can also provide links to transit service in Peel and Durham, as illustrated by Vaughan/Brampton Route 77 (connecting Brampton and Vaughan).

Improved north-south bus linkages between south York Region and the TTC system will also be very important as will improved east-west service connections. This will include better connections to the TTC rapid transit system and higher levels of service on north-south and east-west bus routes.

The elements of the required transit strategy to improve service to Toronto and within York have been identified in previous studies. Also, long term plans to guide the development of the York Region transit system already exist. Therefore, the focus of this study should be the development of a framework for evaluating the individual elements, prior to the identification of long term rail and rapid bus initiatives and the development of supportive land use and transportation policies.

Such a framework could consist of the following four elements:

1. development of Yonge, Spadina to Vaughan Corporate Centre, and Highway 7 corridors as principal transit spines within York Region⁸;
2. transit priority on a significant portion of the Regional road system serving the urban areas;

⁸ The Yonge and VCC corridors would benefit from the GTSB plan for ongoing subway construction in addition to the completion of the EAs for the VCC and Yonge subways.

3. establish minimum service levels (policy headways) for all north-south and east-west bus routes serving York Region to support the development of a Regional transit network; and
4. improved transit access by penetrating residential and employment areas to collect and distribute transit trips.

This framework should be supported by a wider range of planning and policy initiatives including the following:

- improved pedestrian and cycling access to local transit services including provision of sidewalks on both sides of all regional roads in urban areas and walking paths to provide access to transit stops;
- provision of commuter parking in association with new express bus routes, primarily serving the Toronto market (persons commuting to destinations on the Yonge and University Subway lines);
- improved inter-regional bus services on Highway 400 and new services on Highways 404 and 407;
- concentrated new residential and non-residential development to support higher levels of service in major corridors and along arterial road;

The future success of transit in York Region will require the development of an integrated network of services that includes the four elements listed above, reinforced with strong planning and policy support.

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