

Survey of Residents' Attitudes

In October 2000 Environics Research Group was commissioned by the Regional Municipality of York to conduct a survey to investigate residents' attitudes and perception regarding transportation issues in the Region. The survey was comprised of a representative sample of 417 residents of York Region, which has a margin of error of plus/minus 4.8 percent 19 out of 20 times. The following provides some highlights from the survey. The full report is available on the study website (see "Get on the Information Super Highway")

There is a high dependency on the auto in York Region with nine in ten residents having regular access to a vehicle. Eighty-five percent drive to work and fourteen percent are a passenger for at least a portion of their trip.

Protecting the environment and reducing traffic congestion lead the list of transportation priorities for York Region residents. On the next tier are addressing the needs of a wide range of people, accommodating future growth in York Region, minimizing disruption to neighbourhoods, and supporting economic growth. Traffic volumes within York Region and travelling to and from Toronto emerge as the most serious transportation concerns. Large majorities believe that the Region is growing so fast that road construction is not keeping pace with demand and that York Region should encourage more concentrated developments in order to combat urban sprawl.

More frequent bus or train service and more frequent connections are seen as the most effective ways of encouraging alternate transportation habits; these are seen as more effective than increasing parking at transit stations or lowering transit fares. More than eight in ten support creating incentives to encourage people to carpool, walk, bike or take public transit instead of driving alone in their cars; and seven in ten support the ideas of dedicating special lanes along major roads and freeways for use of carpoolers and buses. Extending the subway lines into York Region and improved local bus and GO services are seen as the best ways of improving transportation in the Region.

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Message from Regional Chair, Bill Fisch

The message is clear - we have to get more people out of their cars and into buses and trains. Traffic congestion and air quality will not improve unless we take a proactive approach to meet our transportation needs over the next 30 years. "Transit Focus with Incentives" is the preferred strategic direction that has been developed for York Region following consultation with residents, employers, staff, and elected officials of York Region Municipalities.

We have an obligation to improve transit for our growing population. Here at York Region we have begun this process by creating, for the first time, one municipal transit service in York Region.

Along with 70 other stakeholders, I attended the January 8th workshop on Strategic Directions and can personally attest to the degree of consensus in favour of a transit-oriented direction for York. The direction for the ongoing 2nd phase of the TMP study is more apparent than ever: the people of York want to enhance their quality of life by expanding their range of travel choices and particularly by implementing viable public transit alternatives.

This is consistent with the conclusions of other municipalities and agencies in the GTA and the recent work of the GTSB, where complementary planning and funding initiatives are being addressed. The future for vastly improved transit in the GTA is bright and nowhere will it be more welcome than York Region.



I urge you to participate in the remaining phases of our master plan study, which will determine the key elements of the long-term plan and establish the top funding priorities.

Results from Public Consultation Centre 1

The first Public Consultation Centres were held in Vaughan, Richmond Hill, and the Regional Headquarters in Newmarket. Over seventy residents and representatives from businesses attended on the three evenings. Participants are to be commended for their enthusiastic ideas, responses, and questions. As part of the presentation, the consultants presented four broad strategic options to engage discussion. The comments received at all three sessions had the following consistent messages.

- While an emphasis on transit is preferable, the reality is that the car is here to stay. A more balanced combination of road and transit initiatives is more likely - recognizing that shifting in mindsets will take a while to achieve.
- First step towards improved transit is better-connected bus routes with higher frequency service during peak periods. Parking lot capacity is a huge issue for GO riders.
- Needs of both the rural and urban areas should be considered.

- Major increase in funding is needed for road and transit, and the Province needs to be involved. Where are the current road related taxes going?
- Need an overall coordinated system with a variety of choices.
- Need to eliminate existing bottlenecks - i.e., along Highway 7 and across the Highway 407 barrier.
- There is a lack of good east-west and north-south connections throughout the Region.
- Need to interconnect with Durham and Peel.
- Need to funnel transit to serve major employers, downtowns, and areas where key services are provided.
- The Region needs to plan for transit when building new roads - in the past there has been no real effort to make transit an issue - in the end you have to look at alternatives and as long as there is an emphasis on the car, then the car will be the preferred mode.

It was widely recognized that land use and transportation are closely related and that planning for both needs to be coordinated.

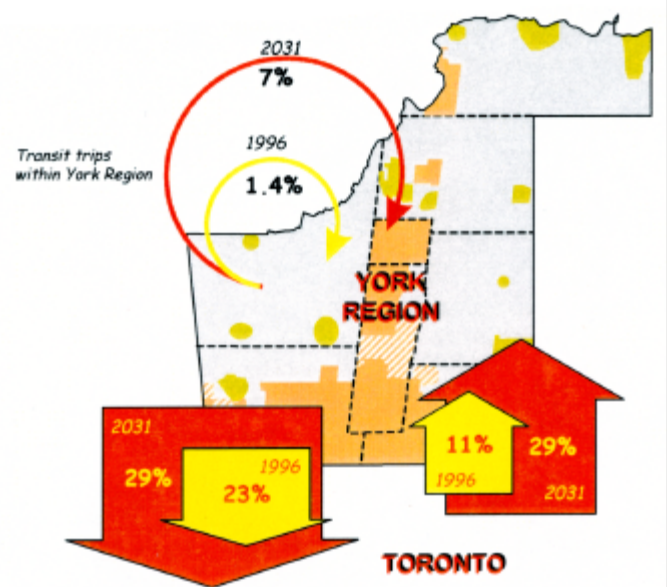
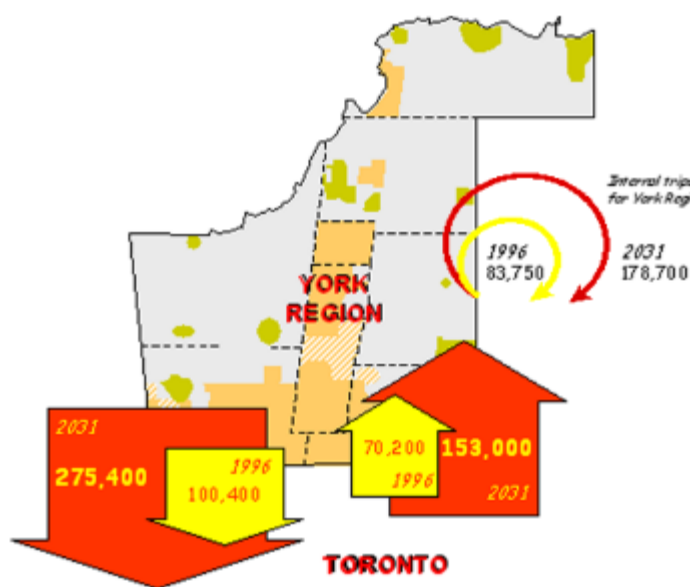
Changing Travel Patterns

A.M. Peak Period Trips

Substantial growth in travel is projected as the Region's population and employment expand. The growth in trips between York Region and the City of Toronto shows the magnitude of the challenge which the Plan must address.

Transit's Role will Increase Significantly

Transit must accommodate a much higher proportion of trips by 2031. The figure below illustrates the projected growth in a.m. peak period work trips by transit. Work trips from the majority of transit trips during the morning peak.



Preferred Strategic Direction

A major workshop on Strategic Options was held in January with over 70 participants representing the full-range of stakeholders. A discussion paper on Strategic Options and the results of the workshop are posted on the study website.

Based on the discussion paper and input from workshop participants and the general public, a preferred strategic direction has been developed, which recognizes the differences between Urban York and Rural York.

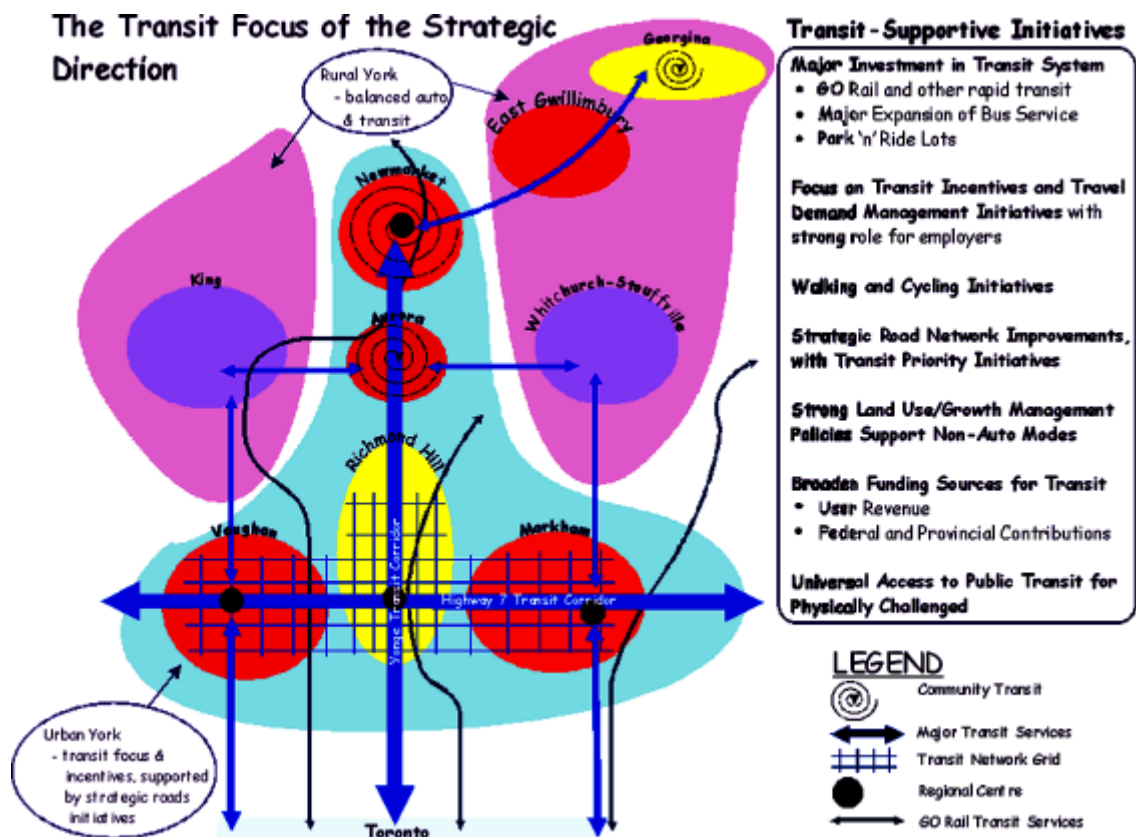
For Urban York: The preferred direction would see a major shift in investment emphasis from road to transit. GO rail services would be upgraded, the Yonge and Spadina subways extended, and transitways built in the Yonge and Highway 7 corridors. In addition, priority measures for buses would be implemented. Other incentives for transit and other non-auto modes of travel would also be put in place.

For Rural York: Recognizing the greater dependence on the auto, a more balanced approach to road and transit improvements would be followed. Increases in travel demand would be largely accommodated through new and widened roadways. However, transit improvements for rural communities would also be made, but these would be at a more basic level. Transit should be a legitimate

travel option for commuting to Urban York and Toronto locations, and for access to higher order community services.

The following ten objectives were developed to guide the preferred strategic transportation direction:

- 1 Enhance public transportation opportunities, particularly in the Region's urban areas.
- 2 Refine existing land use and growth management policies to increase transit use and reduce auto travel.
- 3 Support the efficient and safe movement of goods.
- 4 Make strategic improvements to the Region's network of highways and roads.
- 5 Implement Travel Demand Management initiatives (e.g. carpooling) to minimize peak period congestion.
- 6 Develop and implement policies to support cycling and walking as alternative modes of travel.
- 7 Involve York employers in implementing the Region's Transportation Vision and Master Plan.
- 8 Ensure that transportation decisions protect and, where possible, enhance the environment.
- 9 Provide universal access to public transportation facilities for the physically challenged.
- 10 Gain authority from the Province to implement alternative funding sources for transportation projects.



How Can You Get Involved

Participate in shaping the future of transportation in York Region. Public Consultation Centres were held in November 2000 to gain input from the public. A public opinion survey was also completed in the fall of 2000. The public input has shaped the development of a number of alternative directions for future transportation in York Region. The Region wants to hear your views on the transportation opportunities and challenges. What do you think of the alternative solutions proposed? What further ideas would you like to see examined? The success of this Transportation Master Plan will depend largely on the input of the Region's citizens and businesses. Additional consultation opportunities are planned to further canvass ideas and options. These include:

- Newsletters;
- Public Opinion Survey (visit the study website for a review of the results);
- E-mail correspondence (tmp@region.york.on.ca);
- Internet (www.region.york.on.ca);
- Public Consultation Centres (three held last fall, four more planned for May 2001); and
- Media Articles and Study Updates.

Get involved by planning to:

- Attend the second Public Consultation Centres to be held at the end of May 2001;
- Respond to the Transportation Questionnaire available on the study website (see "Get on the Information Super Highway")
- E-mail comments and questions to tmp@region.york.on.ca

We Want to Hear from You

If you would like to be added to the mailing list so that you can receive the final newsletter, notice of upcoming meetings and study information, and updates, please write, phone, fax, or e-mail us.

Contact: Sean Hertel,
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Get On the Information Super Highway

To keep you informed, we've set up a study website at www.region.york.on.ca - click on the green Sustainable Transportation Initiatives tag to the right and then Transportation Master Plan. Throughout the duration of the study, the website will be used to disseminate key study products, including the eight policy papers and other background reports on the preferred strategic direction and vision options.

Please bookmark our site and visit often. Our goal is to use the internet not only to provide information to the public, but also to receive invaluable public input through interactive applications (eg. Comment Card & Public Opinion Survey). Should you have comments/suggestions on how the website can be improved, please contact us.

Upcoming Events

The second set of Public Consultation Centres will be held at the end of May 2001. The purpose will be to provide an update on the study progress, to review the preferred strategic direction and alternative options, and to receive comments from the public on transportation issues, challenges, and options to be considered. In order to provide convenient access to York Region residents, the Consultation Centres will take place at four different locations in the Region. Each Consultation Centre will consist of an open house session followed by a presentation and open discussion.

As the locations and dates are finalized, they will be posted on the study website. In addition, advertisements will be placed in the local newspapers. Keep an eye on each to remain informed!

Consulting Team

To assist in preparing the Transportation Master Plan, York Region has retained a multi-disciplinary team of specialists led by Consult Limited and Marshall Macklin Monaghan. Other team members include Tranplan Associates, Dalton Consulting, R.M. Soberman, Hemson Consulting, and Cumming + Company.

