

CHAPTER 3 TOWARDS A MORE SUSTAINABLE REGION

3.1 MOVING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

York Region is actively undertaking initiatives to improve Regional transportation. In addition to the current Transportation Master Plan Update, the Region has also begun its Viva initiative, and plans for a subway extension to the Vaughan Corporate Centre. These plans and initiatives demonstrate the Region's on-going commitment to sustainable transportation. This chapter summarizes some of York Region's key sustainable initiatives as well as identifies and describes policies and initiatives of other jurisdictions (federal, provincial, local municipal) that support the provision of pedestrian and cycling friendly communities.

Regional Official Plan

The York Region Official Plan (ROP) is a set of policies intended to help guide economic, environmental and community-building decisions affecting the use of land to 2026. The ROP provides two objectives that are related to cycling and walking:

- To ensure that roads are improved in a manner that is supportive of all modes of transportation including walking, cycling, automobile, transit and truck and that minimizes conflicts between these different modes; and
- To promote and facilitate walking, cycling and trails.

York Region's Vision 2026 strategy

York Region's Strategic Plan (Vision 2026) acts as a blueprint for York by outlining key areas of focus and providing the framework for more detailed plans that will be undertaken by the Region.

The vision statement for Vision 2026 is: "York Region: Creating Strong, Caring and Safe Communities". This vision statement is supported by eight goals, each of which are further supported by a number of action areas. The action areas related to cycling and walking, which are intended to be the focus of municipalities in York Region, include:

- Encouraging pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented neighbourhoods;
- Promoting alternative transportation methods that improve air quality, such as public transit and cycling;
- Supporting the efficient movement of people and goods in the Region through transportation enhancements;
- Ensuring mobility through accessible and affordable transportation;
- Encouraging the development of compact communities where people can walk to services; and
- Providing for alternative forms of transportation such as walking and cycling.

The Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan documented in this study report is consistent with York Region's vision 2026 Strategy.

The Region has demonstrated on-going commitment to sustainable transportation.

The vision statement for Vision 2026 is: "York Region: Creating Strong, Caring and Safe Communities".



The Sustainability Strategy outlines a number of actions to be taken by the Region. One of these actions is to promote the Region’s Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines to provide opportunities to shape urban form that is transit-supportive, mixed-use and efficient, and provides a sense of place to residents and employees. A second action is to prepare and adopt a York Region Pedestrian and Bicycling Master Plan, in order to further support sustainable transportation.

Draft York Region Sustainability Strategy (2007)

York Region has prepared a draft Sustainability Strategy (2007), intended to provide a long-term framework for making smarter decisions about growth management and municipal responsibilities that better integrate the economy, environment and community. The strategy underscores the importance of recognizing how choices of everyday life can have lasting impacts on sustainability. The Sustainability Strategy is guided by the following principles:

- Provide a long-term perspective on sustainability
- Evaluate using the triple bottom-line elements of environment, economy and community
- Create a culture of continuous improvement, minimizing impact and maximizing innovation
- Identify specific short-term achievable actions that contribute towards a sustainability legacy
- Set targets, monitor and report progress
- Foster partnerships and public engagement

- Raise the level of sustainability awareness through education, dialogue and reassessment
- Promote sustainable lifestyles and re-evaluate our consumption and expectations

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York Region Transportation Master Plan

The York Region Transportation Master Plan (TMP) is a strategic planning document designed to define a long-term transportation vision and integrated road and transit network plan that will support growth in York Region to the year 2031 and beyond. The TMP integrates transportation and land use planning and is founded upon Official Plan goals and policies.

The TMP provides a comprehensive Transportation Vision for the Regional Municipality of York, which is articulated in a set of desirable “end-states” dealing with:

- Reduced amounts of travel on a per person basis;
- Employer based Travel Demand Management (TDM) initiatives;
- Reduced dependence on automobiles;
- Universal access to public transit;

- Integrated transit services and fares among GO, TTC and other GTA transit operators serving York Region;
- Transit accessible human services;
- Efficient and safe movement of goods,
- Efficiently used infrastructure; infrastructure in a “state of good repair”;
- Strong protection for the environment;
- Adequate and dedicated long term funding sources; and
- Effective public consultation.

Towards Great Regional Streets (TGRS)

In 2006 Regional Council adopted a new Regional Road Standard for six-lane roads that resulted from a comprehensive study titled “Towards Great Regional Streets – A Path to Improvement”. The new standard is intended to be applied to roads that have been identified in the Region’s 10-year Capital Plan for widening to six lanes to accommodate improved transit service, on-road cycling as well as improved streetscaping and responds to the transportation demands of a rapidly growing region.

The TGRS study investigated a number of issues including road rights-of-way, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, access control, costs, bike facilities on Regional Roads and street tree health. The standard recommended by Regional staff and since adopted by Regional Council calls for a road right-of-way with two all-purpose travel lanes at 3.3 m, an HOV lane at 3.5 m and a dedicated cycling lane at 1.5 m per direction. The timing of when or if to implement the HOV and cycling components of the approved cross-section would be tied to an approved HOV strategy and the

Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan. The approach adopted by Council is to fund and implement a “convertible” six-lane cross-section standard that would allow for the implementation of HOV and bike lanes by simply adjusting or adding pavement markings and signing.

The recommended pedestrian and cycling routes and facilities presented in Chapter 5.0 of the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan incorporate the findings of the Towards Great Regional Streets Study.

In 2006, York Region introduced the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Policy (MSPP) as an addition to York Region’s streetscaping current practices and to provide a framework for structuring staff recommendations to Regional Council with respect to future requests from local municipalities.

The MSPP operates by York Region first approving a fixed amount of funding to be provided on an annual basis. Local municipalities then complete design studies for streetscape improvement projects on Regional roads. The municipalities must commit a portion of the funding required for each project prior to seeking financial assistance from York Region. The local municipalities prepare applications to York Region and submit these applications by the established annual deadline. Finally, the ‘York Region Streetscape Review Team’ evaluates each application and recommends qualifying applications for funding as part of the Roads Capital Budget for the coming year.



York Region's Greening Strategy helps ensure the Region's natural environment is healthy for current and future generations. The Strategy provides a context for Regional Decision making that affects the natural environment. It focuses on co-ordinating Regional initiatives and agency and private sector partnership efforts to improve our environment.

York Region's Greening and Land Securement Strategies

The Regional Official Plan in the early 1990's established a linked greenlands concept for the Region. In 2001, Regional Council adopted the Regional Greenlands Property Securement Strategy and has funded this program at \$1.25 million a year and has established the Securement Coordination Committee to help co-ordinate securement efforts among the Region's partners to most effectively leverage resources.

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The Greening Strategy's action areas include:

1. Information Management
2. Naturalization and Rehabilitation
3. Securement of Priority Greenlands

4. Education and Promotion
5. Regional Operations
6. Legislation
7. Urban Forest
8. Green Partnerships
9. Monitoring Results

York Region's commitment to land securement continues to grow. Historically land securement was considered the direct purchase of land. Today, the public's commitment to, and support of, the environment is being demonstrated through charitable actions including donating conservation easements and land. The Region's Greening and Securement Strategies proactively pursue these opportunities to protect a healthy and natural heritage system for current and future generations.

Municipal Pedestrian and Cycling Partnership Policy

The Municipal Pedestrian and Cycling Partnership Policy (PCPP) has been identified to help local municipalities and York Region work together with regard to cost sharing for pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Although many of the local municipal plans provide policies, guidelines, design standards and implementation measures for the development of both on-road and off-road local cycling and pedestrian networks, their plans do not specifically address the need for an integrated network throughout the Region because it is not within their mandate. In some cases, the projects proposed by the local municipalities support the goals of our Official Plan and Vision 2026, however the current policy does not provide the flexibility for York Region to participate financially in these projects. The intent of the PCPP is to provide a framework and policy for requests from

the local municipalities and other stakeholders with regard to funding municipal, conservation authorities and other agencies pedestrian and cycling infrastructure when these priorities match Regional priorities. This program is strictly for funding the capital expenditure of pedestrian and cycling facilities and not for ongoing operating maintenance cost of the same facilities. Retrofitting of regional roads to accommodate bike lanes may be incorporated as part of this program.

3.2 POLICIES AND INITIATIVES OF OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Several key Federal, Provincial, and Local Municipal policies provide additional support to sustainable transportation in the Region and support the provision of pedestrian and cycling friendly land development in existing settlement areas. Highlights of these policies are presented below.

Federal

Transport Canada

Transport Canada released a report in 2005 titled “Strategies for Sustainable Transportation Planning: A Review of Practices and Options”. The purpose of this report was to provide a foundation on which to build a set of guidelines for incorporating sustainable transportation principles into municipal transportation plans.¹ Some of these principles include the creation of policies related to walking and cycling that can be used to develop effective, implementable transportation plans that promote sustainable transportation on a federal level. Some relevant strategies and

policies, including the focus-area of sustainable transportation under which they fall are listed below:

Integration with Land Use Planning

- Encourage desirable land use form and design (e.g. compact, mixed-use, pedestrian/bike-friendly) through transportation plan policies.

Environmental Health

- Identify strategies to mitigate the air impacts of transportation activities.
- Identify strategies to mitigate noise impacts of transportation activities.
- Identify ways that transportation systems influence the achievement of the community’s economic or social objectives. Provide support in the plan’s strategic directions.
- Recognize the importance of ensuring access to opportunity for disabled and low-income persons, recent immigrants, youth and the elderly. Set goals and objectives for reducing the need to travel, improving transit mobility, and preserving minimum levels of service on roadways. Identify related strategies.
- Address the transportation needs of persons with disabilities, notably with regard to public transit service and barrier-free design in public rights-of-way.
- Recognize the public health impacts of transportation activity arising through road safety, pollution and physical activity levels. Identify effective strategies to strengthen positive impacts and lessen negative ones.

¹ Strategies for Sustainable Transportation Planning: A Review of Practices and Options, Transport Canada, 2005

- Recognize the impact of transportation-related death and injury on quality of life and the economy. Set goals and objectives for multimodal road safety. Identify effective road safety strategies.

Modal Sustainability

- Identify strategies, policies, facilities and services to increase walking, cycling, other active transportation, transit, ridesharing and teleworking.
- Recognize synergies and tensions among different modes (e.g. potential for multimodal cycling-transit trips, potential for modal shift from transit to ridesharing). Address possible implications for transportation objectives.
- Include objectives, strategies, policies, facilities and services to make transit operations more sustainable.

The publishing of this document and the recommended policies and strategies identified within it illustrate the federal initiatives currently being undertaken to develop national standards and practices and improve conditions for walking and cycling across Canada.

Provincial

Bill 51 – (January 2007) Planning Reform

Bill 51 was approved and came in force in January of 2007 and reforms the Planning Act, which provides the legislative framework for land use planning in Ontario. Bill 51 incorporates changes to the planning process that are intended to support intensification, sustainable development and protection of green space by giving municipalities greater powers, flexibility and tools to use land, resources and infrastructure more efficiently. Bill 51 corresponds

with Ontario’s recent policy shift towards sustainable land use development and planning. For instance, it permits municipalities to require environmental sustainability design requirements for both individual buildings and entire neighbourhoods. It also adds sustainable development as a provincial interest in the Provincial Policy Statement.

Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) sets the foundation for regulating land use and development within the Province and supports Provincial goals. The PPS provides for appropriate development and protects resources of provincial interest. The vision of the land use planning system in the PPS is that the “long-term prosperity and social well-being of Ontarians depend on maintaining strong communities, a clean healthy environment and a strong economy”².

The PPS promotes transportation choices that facilitate pedestrian and cycling mobility and other modes of travel. The term “transportation systems” under the PPS means a system consisting of corridors and rights-of-way for the movement of people and goods and the associated transportation facilities, which include cycling lanes and park’n’ride lots. Policies pertaining to transportation, such as cycling, pedestrians and transit are dispersed throughout the PPS.

Municipal Act (as amended, 2007)

The Municipal Act gives municipalities a broad new flexibility to deal with local circumstances, and to react quickly to local, economic, environmental or social changes. It recognizes municipalities as responsible, accountable governments with

² Provincial Policy Statement, Ministry of Affairs and Housing, 2005

The PPS promotes transportation choices that facilitate pedestrian and cycling mobility and other modes of travel..

respect to matters with their jurisdiction³. The Municipal Act provides policies relating to the municipalities' jurisdiction over municipal highways and the maintenance of those highways, which has an impact on cycling.

Highway Traffic Act

Bicycles are defined as a vehicle in the Highway Traffic Act (HTA), and can operate on public roadways with the same rights and responsibilities as motor vehicles. However, bicycles are not permitted on controlled access freeways such as the 400 series highways and any roadway where bicycle use is restricted by municipal by-laws. The Highway Traffic Act contains a number of policies relating to bicycles, including bicycle lanes on municipal roadways, vehicles meeting bicycles, bicycles overtaken, and regulating or prohibiting bicycles on highways.

Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was adopted in June 2006 under the provisions of the proposed Places to Grow Act, 2005. This Act implements the Province's vision for developing stronger communities and managing the growth within those communities. The Growth Plan generally takes precedence over the PPS and municipal official plans. The Province requires municipalities to take into consideration the policies and directives of the Growth Plan in their planning activities. With respect to pedestrian and cycling, the Growth Plan envisions that "an integrated transportation network will allow people choices for easy travel both within and between urban centres throughout the region. Public transit will be fast, convenient and affordable. Automobiles, while still a significant means of transport, will

³ Ministry of Affairs and Housing: www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/mts_1_7748_.html

be only one of a variety of effective and well-used choices for transportation. Walking and cycling will be practical elements of our urban transportation systems. A healthy natural environment with clean air, land and water will characterize the Greater Golden Horseshoe"⁴.

The Growth Plan provides broad-level policies that direct more sustainable growth and development in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and specific targets for implementation among municipalities.

Greenbelt Plan

Ontario's Greenbelt Plan works complementary with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe by providing clear direction as to what areas should be protected from growth in Ontario. It builds upon the policy framework established in the Provincial Policy Statement, and includes the lands and builds upon the ecological protection provided by the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan, as well as supports and complements the Parkway Belt West Plan and the Rouge Park Management Plans.

The vision of the greenbelt presented in the plan is to provide for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses. The Culture, Recreation and Tourism goals for Ontario provided by the Greenbelt Plan related to cycling and pedestrian movement include:

- Provision of a wide range of publicly accessible built and natural settings for recreation including facilities, parklands,

⁴ Places to Grow, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Province of Ontario, June 2006

With respect to pedestrian and cycling, the Growth Plan envisions that "an integrated transportation network will allow people choices for easy travel both within and between urban centres throughout the region.

open space areas, trails and water-based shoreline uses that support hiking, angling and other recreational activities; and

- Enabling continued opportunities for sustainable tourism development.

Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

The Government of Ontario has set a clear policy framework for the protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine through the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP). Municipal planning decisions must conform to the Plan, which takes precedence over municipal official plans. The ORMCP builds on the efforts of the Regions of Durham, Peel and York, the Conservation Coalition, Moraine area municipalities and key stakeholders, to provide clarity and certainty with respect with the long-term protection and management of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Two of the objectives of the ORMCP pertaining to trails and recreation include:

- Providing for a continuous recreational trail through the Oak Ridges Moraine Area that is accessible to all including persons with disabilities; and
- Providing for other public recreational access to the Oak Ridges Moraine Area.

Greater Toronto Transportation Authority (GTТА)

In 2006 the Province of Ontario established the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority (GTТА) with a mandate to improve the coordination and integration of all modes of transportation in the region. One of the first priorities for the GTТА is to prepare a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton. The objective of this study is to develop

an integrated Regional Transportation Plan for local transit, GO Transit and roads for the GTA and Hamilton. “The GTТА is going to look at all the different ways people and goods move across the GTТА, and suggest ways things can move better. This isn’t just about trains, buses and cars. The GTТА will consider the other ways people get around, like on bicycle trails and on foot.” In addition to the RTP the GTТА is expected to produce an investment strategy to identify potential revenue sources to fund the Regional Transportation Plan. The Plan will likely have ideas that require funding. The GTТА will determine the costs of the various elements in the Regional Transportation Plan, and propose how to pay for them.

On August 24th, 2007 the GTТА Board of Directors announced moving forward on its vision for a seamless, integrated transportation system, and identified seven proposed projects to quickly improve service for commuters in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Among the seven “quick hit” projects was the following proposal to fund bicycle promotion initiatives

“Bicycle Promotion Initiatives \$2.1 million to \$3.2 million for safe/secure bike storage Installation of 1,000 new safe, secure, weather-proof bicycle storage spaces at strategic locations across the GO Transit inter-regional network, to complement current bicycle storage initiatives by GO Transit and the City of Toronto, City of Burlington, and City of Hamilton. \$1.0 million to \$1.8 million for expanded bike/bus rack program

In a move toward the goal of 100 per cent bicycle accessibility for all bus routes, bicycle-carrying devices will be installed on 1,000 new-order and existing municipal transit vehicles.”

(source: <http://www.gtta.com/en/news/070824.htm>)

Pedestrians and Cyclists First: The Vision is based on the principle of assigning more priority to walking, cycling, public transit, car pooling and transportation demand management initiatives.

The August 2007 announcement is clear evidence that opportunities exist for York Region to partner with the GTTA and the Province to fund pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and programming improvements.

With nine transit systems handling over 518 million annual passenger trips and more than two million vehicles on GTA and Hamilton roads, the Province expects that the GTTA will play a vital role in developing a plan to tackle congestion and coordinate and improve transit systems across the Toronto region.

Local Municipal

Official Plans

In the Regional Municipality of York, there are cycling, pedestrian, transit and alternative modes of transportation policies provided by the Official Plans of local municipalities.

The municipal Official Plans of the nine local municipalities were examined in preparing the York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan.

Bicycle Plans

Municipalities within York Region are creating or have established their own Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plans, including most recently the City of Vaughan (2007) and Town of Markham (2007). Initiatives like these illustrate the efforts currently being undertaken by various local municipalities within York Region to promote and enhance conditions for both walking and cycling and encourage a more active and healthy lifestyle for residents and employees in York Region.

3.3 A VISION FOR WALKING AND CYCLING IN YORK REGION

A vision for the Master Plan was developed with input from Regional staff, stakeholders and the public and is designed to support and complement sustainable land development and pedestrian cycling supportive policies and initiatives of York Region.

The Vision is based on the principle of assigning more priority to walking, cycling, public transit, car pooling and transportation demand management initiatives. This will provide a more balanced and sustainable transportation system that places less emphasis on single occupant motor vehicle trips and reduces each individual's carbon footprint.

The "Vision" for the York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan is "a pedestrian and cycling supportive environment that encourages both utilitarian and recreational travel by walking, cycling and using public transit through:

- Establishing promotional and educational policies and programs including a marketing strategy;
- A continuous system of sidewalks on Regional and local roads as well as a designated regional-scale network of cycling facilities; and
- A regional-scale network integrated with local municipal pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and public transit service that connects communities and people of all ages with where they live, work and want to go."

To help achieve the vision, a number of goals were developed. These goals are outlined in the following section.

A vision for the Master Plan was developed with input from Regional staff, stakeholders and the public. The purpose of the vision is to guide York Region through the framework and implementation of the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan.

3.4 GOALS

The comprehensive Regional-scale Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan that follows creates a connected cycling network of on and off-road facilities, identifies missing links in existing pedestrian systems, and recommends a strategy for improvements to encourage greater use of both travel modes. The primary goals of this Master Plan study are to:

- Develop an understanding of the elements that affect walking and cycling in York Region;
- Provide a range of alternative transportation choices that will benefit residents, employees and visitors in York Region by improving public health and air quality while reducing dependence on the private automobile;
- Improve conditions for walking and cycling for people of all ages through the provision of a continuous pedestrian sidewalk system and regional-scale cycling network;
- Integrate the improved sidewalk system and proposed cycling network with Regional transit; and
- Encourage more people to walk and cycle more often for utilitarian, recreational and health purposes.

While the preceding chapters have described what a Master Plan is and why such a Plan is needed for York Region, the following chapters detail specific elements of the Plan, including sections on outreach, improving conditions for walking and cycling, and recommends a Ten-year Implementation Plan and identifies the costs to implement the plan.

CAN-BIKE

