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DRAFT REGIONAL TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) GUIDELINES

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The presentation by Sean Hertel, Senior Planner, be received; and**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report, May 17, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services, be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional staff continue consultations with and receive feedback from the local municipalities and other stakeholders throughout the Summer 2006 in order to prepare a final draft version of the Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines.
2. Regional staff present the final version of the Regional TOD Guidelines in September 2006, with an accompanying report, for the purpose of adoption by the Regional Planning & Economic Development Committee and Regional Council.
3. The Regional Clerk circulate a copy of this report and attachment to each of the nine local municipal planning departments for their information and further input, as appropriate.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the latest draft version of the Regional TOD Guidelines (“the guidelines”) to the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee and Council, attached to this report as *Appendix 1*. This will allow the Region to receive any additional comments that the local municipalities may have. Draft guidelines were circulated to the local municipalities on a preliminary basis by Regional planning staff on May 12, 2006. Regional staff through this report also seek direction to prepare and present a final draft of the guidelines for adoption by Regional Planning & Economic Development Committee and Regional Council in September 2006.

3. BACKGROUND

The current draft of the Regional TOD Guidelines is the result of a “Made-in-York” process that began in March 2005 with Regional Council adoption of five high-level

principles. Regional staff since that time have consulted extensively with stakeholders to develop and achieve consensus on a set of detailed draft guidelines.

3.1 Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

The concept of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is a widely-accepted approach to planning and design that recognizes the relationship between how a community grows and its ability to provide efficient and effective transit services. Although there are many interpretations of TOD across North America, it is commonly held that the objective of TOD is to shape the community in a way that meets the needs of existing and potential transit riders in order to generate a more frequent and, ultimately, higher quality transit service.

The key to successful TOD is the interdependence among development, transit ridership and transit improvements; each element having a direct impact on the other, as illustrated in *Figure 1*. This interdependence reinforces the need to support transit investments with appropriate development in terms of land use, density, scale and design.

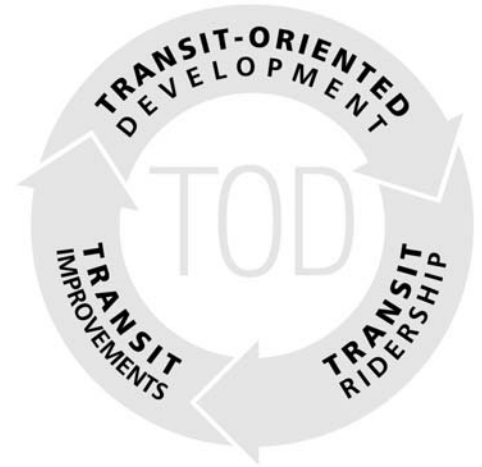
3.2 York Region Approach

Regional staff have taken a “Made-in-York” approach to TOD; one that recognizes and advances the Region’s planned urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors, served by rapid transit. Another important consideration, through this approach, has been to recognize the challenges, opportunities and community character unique to York Region and its communities.

The goal of the guidelines is not to “re-invent the wheel” or to create new policy, but to support and implement Regional and local policies and programs that are already in-place. These initiatives include Viva Rapid Transit, York Region Centres + Corridors Strategy: Making it Happen!, and local secondary plans.

A survey of existing TOD practices across York Region and North America has benefited the development of the Regional guidelines. Examples from the Town of Markham, Ontario Ministry of Transportation, and City of Calgary, in particular, have added value to the process of determining the approach and scope of the “Made-in-York” version. This has re-affirmed that the York Region approach is consistent with industry best-practices, yet unique enough to address the context and opportunities across the nine municipalities comprising York Region.

Figure 1 – TOD Relationship



The local municipalities have achieved a degree of success in shaping development that is consistent with the elements of TOD. In particular, many segments of and areas adjacent to the Highway 7 and Yonge Street corridors are attracting a significant number of well-designed infill and intensification projects at transit-supportive densities. For example, compact mixed-used buildings with underground parking are at various stages of development within the old core of Woodbridge, Markham Centre, Markham's Leitchcroft Planning District, and Richmond Hill's Bayview Glen Community.

3.2.1 Guiding Principles

Regional staff reported to this Committee in March 2005, recommending the endorsement of the following high-level principles to guide the creation of Regional TOD Guidelines:

- The massing, height and density of buildings
- Quantity and design of surface and above/below-grade parking
- Pedestrian safety and comfort
- The layout of streets, sidewalks and other pedestrian connections
- Distances and connections between transit stops and buildings

These principles were endorsed at that time and have served as the basis for guideline development and consultation over the past year.

3.3 Consultation

Staff from the Region, including York Region Transit/Viva, and each of the nine local planning departments have been, and will continue to be, engaged in the development of the Regional TOD Guidelines. The partnership of the local municipalities throughout this project, in particular, has been instrumental in ensuring that the guidelines are relevant, clear, and substantive enough to assist in policy implementation.

The stakeholders have been engaged through formal and informal means, including discussions through the York Region Planning Commissioners/Directors Group, circulations of the draft guidelines at various stages of formulation, and a staff workshop held in Richmond Hill on February 22, 2006. Regional staff propose to continue this consultation, as appropriate, throughout the Summer 2006, as outlined in section 4.4 of this report.

3.3.1 Key Messages

The consultation to date has generated excellent feedback. In particular, the February workshop led to a general consensus among stakeholders on key components of the draft guidelines, including:

- A stronger emphasis needs to be placed on supportive land uses.
- Implementation is a challenge and needs to be addressed.
- Guidelines at the Regional level need to have substance, and be consistent with local policies and programs.
- Building orientation and design needs to consider pedestrians first.

This feedback builds on the “Made-in-York” approach to TOD, and has shaped the six themes or “lenses” of the current draft, which are described in section 4.3.2 of this report.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The development and adoption of Regional TOD Guidelines will assist in the implementation of the Region’s planned urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors, served by rapid transit. Using guidelines, as a tool to implement this urban structure, supports the Region’s long-term investment in transit, assists local municipal community-building initiatives, and represents good planning. The current draft is consistent with Provincial, Regional and local planning objectives.

4.1 Provincial Policy

Recent and anticipated changes to Provincial Policy impacting planning and development within the Greater Golden Horseshoe reinforce the importance of linking transit investment with supportive development within municipalities.

Proposed changes to *Section 41* of the *Planning Act* under *Bill 51*, in particular, to broaden scope of municipal site plan review is consistent with those draft TOD guidelines that relate to the exterior design and orientation of buildings. Providing further support for the adoption of municipal TOD guidelines are the Ministry of Transportation’s 1992 “Transit-Supportive Land Use-Planning Guidelines.”

Strong emphasis is placed under *Section 1.6.5* of the 2005 *Provincial Policy Statement* on the relationship between transportation infrastructure and land use planning, including:

- “A land use pattern, density and mix of uses should be promoted that minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and support the development of viable choices and plans for public transit and other alternative transportation modes, including commuter rail and bus” (*Policy 1.6.5.4*).

The draft guidelines are consistent with existing Provincial Policy and are envisioned by proposed enhancements under *Bill 51*. Further, the Province’s 1992 guidelines set a standard for TOD at the municipal level.

4.2 Regional Official Plan

The Regional Official Plan (ROP), further supported by the Centres + Corridors Strategy, provides a policy context for transit-oriented development and related guidelines. Specifically, the policies of Chapter 5 – Regional Structure and Growth Management, and Chapter 6 – Regional Infrastructure reinforce transit-supportive land use patterns and design, and provide detailed descriptions of key TOD elements. These policies are

referenced throughout the draft guidelines to provide a larger context and policy basis for each guideline.

Particularly instructive to the Regional TOD Guidelines is *Policy 6.2.6* of the ROP. This policy clearly sets out the planning and development requirements to support transit, as follows:

“(It is the policy of Council) To achieve higher transit usage by supporting improvements in service, convenient access and good urban design. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- a) Minimizing the walking distance to anticipated transit stops through such measures as the provision of walkways and more direct road patterns. In urban areas, the distance to a transit stop of generally no more than 500 metres (a 5-10 minute walk) for 90% of the residents and no more than 200 metres for 50% of the residents.
- b) Providing bus bays, bus shelters and bus loops where required.
- c) Locating medium and higher density urban development adjacent to transit-intensive urban arterial roads.
- d) Providing for and promoting the provision of parking and drop-off facilities for commuters in appropriate locations and as close as possible to commuter trip origins by developing and implementing Regional commuter parking and carpool parking plans.
- e) Providing transfer facilities at appropriate locations.
- f) Providing continuous collector road systems that permit the linking of several adjacent developments with direct transit routings.
- g) Creating site plan control that gives priority to pedestrian access to transit over automobile access and parking in urban areas.”

The draft guidelines are consistent with ROP policies and will serve as both an information and implementation tool to advance those policies.

4.3 Draft Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines

The draft Regional TOD Guidelines are an information and implementation tool to support existing planning policies and programs at the Provincial, Regional and local municipal level. The draft guidelines are not new policy, but are a tool to assist the Region and its nine municipal partners implement planning for well-designed, pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive development. And although the guidelines are oriented to development within the Regional Centres and Regional Corridors, staff foresee that local

municipalities outside of these areas will be able to adapt these guidelines to address their unique planning objectives and community context.

The guidelines will also serve as a useful tool for elected officials, residents, businesses and the development industry. The guidelines will help inform, in a clear and easy-to-read format, the public's understanding of Regional and local planning objectives and the importance of public transit. Further, the guidelines can be regarded as a customer service tool for prospective developers and property owners within the Regional Centres and Regional Corridors.

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4.3.1 Guideline Organization

The draft guidelines are designed to be substantive enough to be effective implementation tools, while being written and organized in a clear and easy-to-read manner. Further, visually-appealing graphics and photos are used throughout the document to illustrate the content and meaning of each guideline. To that end, the guidelines are organized in the following manner, as shown in *Figure 2*.

4.3.2 Guideline Elements

The guidelines are organized into six key elements, as shown in *Figure 2*. These elements or “lenses” are based on the adopted principles outlined in section 3.2.1 of this report, and reflect the challenges and opportunities discussed through consultations with Regional and local staff. These elements or “lenses” and related guidelines are:

1. Pedestrians – Encourage access, safety and comfort
 - Accommodate people with disabilities and special needs
 - Promote safety and comfort through building and site design
 - Locate activity-generating land uses at street level
2. Parking – Provide well-designed, attractive facilities that put transit first
 - Recognize that once people get out of their cars, they are pedestrians
 - View existing surface existing parking lots as placeholders for future development
 - Reduce the prominence of surface parking

- Adjust the quantity of parking to reflect the level of transit services available
 - Link parking supply to Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs
 - Encourage on-street parking where possible
 - Encourage shared parking arrangements among neighbouring properties
3. Land Use – Attract the right type, intensity and mix of land uses
- Mixed use development is encouraged to generate a variety of activity and convenience for people
 - Concentrate people-serving uses along transit corridors
 - Employment-generating uses should be located along transit routes, or clustered around stations
 - Introduce transit services at early stages of development
 - Discourage inappropriate land uses along transit corridors and around stations
 - Recognize the redevelopment potential of sites
4. Built Form – Address transit through appropriate massing, density and height
- Buildings should be compact, and maximize the site
 - Integrate buildings into the surrounding area, using appropriate scale and design
 - Enhance the pedestrian-scaled environment at street-level
 - Orient buildings and building entrances to the street
5. Connections – Link buildings and the spaces in between them to transit
- Connect transit stops directly to sidewalks and buildings
 - Explore opportunities to harmonize lighting, sidewalk and road improvements within Regional rights-of-way
 - Minimize walking distances between sites and transit stops
6. Implementation – Apply TOD approaches throughout the planning process
- Local municipalities have an important role in planning implementation
 - Create site plan checklists to gauge TOD elements of proposed development
 - Transportation Demand Management (TDM) initiatives can advance the TOD principles of development

4.4 Next Steps

Regional staff propose to continue to refine, as necessary, the draft guidelines over the Summer 2006 through further consultation with local municipal staff and Regional departments, including York Region Transit/Viva. There is also an opportunity to consult with York Region development industry representatives through the Urban Development

Institute – York Chapter. Regional staff propose to present a final version of the guidelines for the adoption of Regional Committee and Council in September 2006. Printing and distribution of the document would follow in the Fall 2006.

The adoption of Regional TOD Guidelines will be a step forward in the implementation of the Regional Official Plan, as amended by ROPA 43 in 2005; which enhanced the Plan's Centres and Corridors policies. A further amendment to the Plan may be appropriate to enshrine the guidelines as Regional Policy. Staff may report to Regional Committee and Council in 2007, as appropriate, to discuss the benefits of and options for such an amendment.

4.5 Relationship to Vision 2026

The development and adoption of Regional TOD Guidelines to advance the implementation of the Region's planned urban structure is consistent with all eight goal areas of Vision 2026, specifically "Infrastructure for a Growing Region," Quality Communities for a Diverse Population," and "Managed and Balanced Growth."

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The Regional TOD Guidelines and related consultation process has been undertaken with the in-house staff resources of the Regional Planning and Development Services Department. No additional staff or financial resources are required.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipal staff have been engaged in the development of the draft Regional TOD Guidelines, and will be instrumental in the implementation process through the administration of local official and secondary plans, zoning by-laws, and site plan control. The local municipalities have made significant strides in planning for and attracting development that is well-designed, pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive. The adoption of Regional TOD Guidelines will serve to assist local municipalities in these efforts.

7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report is to present the latest draft version of the Regional TOD Guidelines for information, and to serve as the basis for further consultation with the local municipalities and other stakeholders throughout the Summer 2006. The development and adoption of Regional TOD Guidelines will further the implementation of the Region's planned urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors, served by rapid transit.

The draft guidelines are consistent with Provincial, Regional and local policies and programs to advance transit-supportive development, and represent good planning. Regional staff propose to present a final version of the guidelines for adoption by Regional Committee and Council in September 2006.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is included with this report.)