



Office of the Commissioner
Transportation Services

Memorandum

To: Committee of the Whole

From: Paul Jankowski
Commissioner, Transportation Services

Date: February 23, 2017

Re: **Metrolinx GO Regional Express Rail Program Update**

On [February 17, 2017](#), the Metrolinx staff presented the Metrolinx Board with the Regional Express Rail (RER) Level Crossings Strategy Report. That report identified Metrolinx's strategy for potential new grade separations (bridges) at level road/rail crossings and next steps within the context of the RER program.

This memorandum outlines Regional staff's position with respect to the status of ongoing discussions with Metrolinx staff regarding potential grade separation locations within York Region.

Transportation operations in the area of GO stations need to be carefully managed

In working with Metrolinx, staff has identified the most appropriate additional road, rail crossing design, access, and transit improvements in and around GO stations.

York Region retained a consulting firm to undertake a business case analyses of potential road improvement projects to support the delivery of the Metrolinx RER program in the Region. Two categories of road improvements were evaluated: road widening projects and road/rail grade separation projects.

Road widening improvements to support Regional Express Rail provide greater value for Regional investment compared to grade separation projects

The business case analyses concluded that, in general, there was greater value in the investment in road widening improvements to support the RER program compared to

grade separation projects. This is largely based on the significant capital and operating costs associated with grade separation projects, compared to the relatively short duration traffic interruptions resulting from the commuter trains crossing Regional roads at level crossings. The study did confirm however, eliminating the traffic impacts of trains at level Regional roads crossings immediately adjacent to GO rail stations provides significant transportation benefits. This is based on the significant additional time traffic is stopped on such Regional roads to allow for trains to arrive and depart from the stations.

The Metrolinx Rail Level Crossings Strategy has identified grade separations that Metrolinx considers necessary now to support the RER program

The Metrolinx Rail Level Crossings Strategy proposes immediate work on four grade separations of significance to the Region:

- Wellington Street, Aurora
- McNaughton Road, Vaughan
- Rutherford Road, Vaughan
- Steeles Avenue, Toronto

Over the next year, Metrolinx intends to further develop their plan to undertake proposed grade separations

The Metrolinx Rail Level Crossings Strategy identifies the approach Metrolinx staff recommends over the next year to design and construct the proposed grade separations. Upon receiving confirmation of municipal agreement of the proposed grade separations, Metrolinx will begin consultation with municipal partners, including York Region. At each proposed location, Metrolinx intends to undertake an Environmental Assessment in advance of design and construction of the grade separation. As shared infrastructure, this work will require completion of funding agreements with the respective road authorities.

Each of these grade separations, with the exception of McNaughton Road, which is on a local road (Vaughan), is likely to have a financial implication on the 10-year Roads Capital Construction Program. As agreements for these grade separations are finalized, staff prepare to include these projects for consideration as part of annual budget process(es).

Currently, only partial Regional funding for the proposed bridge works at Rutherford Road is included in the 10-year Roads Capital Construction Program.

Regional staff has identified potential benefits to grade separate additional road/rail crossings

As part of the 2016 Transportation Master Plan, a prioritized list of level rail crossings that would benefit from grade separation was developed. In addition to the locations identified by Metrolinx, other locations where bridges are being further considered include:

- Major Mackenzie Drive west of Highway 27, City of Vaughan
- Kennedy Road South, City of Markham
- Kennedy Road North, City of Markham
- Highway 7, City of Markham
- McCowan Road, City of Markham
- Elgin Mills Road, Town of Richmond Hill
- Green Lane, Town of East Gwillimbury
- Teston Road, City of Vaughan
- Mulock Drive, Town of Newmarket

Although Metrolinx staff have not currently proposed grade separating these crossings to the Metrolinx Board, staff from both agencies remain in discussions to identify potential cost-sharing arrangements for some or all of these crossings.

Regional costs for any of these grade crossing projects would have to be addressed through the Council-approved prioritization process for consideration within the 10-year Roads Capital Construction Plan as part of future annual budget processes. Early inclusion of these additional costs could be facilitated by additional funding from new revenue sources, partnership funding from other levels of government, and/or reallocation of funding from currently planned projects (resulting in deferral of such projects).

Staff will continue to work with Metrolinx to coordinate initiatives required to support the Regional Express Rail program in York Region

Staff concurs with the Metrolinx-recommended locations for immediate grade separations in principle, subject to further investigation of the engineering feasibility and approach to minimize community impacts. Staff continues to work with Metrolinx on the development and rollout of Regional Express Rail in York Region.

Metrolinx and Regional staff have identified the following challenges and are committed to resolving these over the next year, subject to Council approval:

- Cost apportionment for the grade separation projects
- Other works related to RER track expansion, including modifications to existing road/rail separations
- Supporting work for electrification
- Community impacts and consultation, particularly in areas impacted by several RER projects such as GO station modifications, grade separations and track widening

Staff plans to report back to Council with an update before the end of the year on the grade separation work once agreement has been reached with Metrolinx on cost apportionment, and the impact on the capital budget is understood. It is anticipated that Metrolinx will engage Regional and local staff to participate on their Community Advisory Committee for level crossings and will continue municipal discussions to work through the technical challenges and develop a plan to minimize community impacts.

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