

2.1 Context

York Region is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada, with an extensive network of Regional roads passing through a wide variety of contexts

York Region is located in the heart of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and consists of nine cities and towns: Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Whitchurch-Stouffville. The Region covers 1,776 square kilometres, stretching from the City of Toronto in the south to Lake Simcoe and the Holland Marsh in the north, and from Peel Region in the west to Durham Region in the east.

York Region, like other regions in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, is experiencing a rapidly growing and aging population. It has grown from 169,000 people in 1971 to an estimated population of 1,160,000 in 2015. By 2041, York Region is expected to grow to a population of almost 1.8 million people and will support 900,000 jobs.

York Region is made up of a system of centres and corridors, surrounded by urban areas, rural towns, villages and hamlets, as well as significant natural heritage features and agricultural lands. One key objective of the York Region Official Plan (2010) aims to enhance the Region's urban structure through city building, intensification and compact, age friendly complete communities. In part, this is to protect the valuable natural features of York Region, which include Lake Simcoe and the Oak Ridges Moraine, an east-west rolling topography that consists of forested areas, wetlands and kettle lakes covering 500 square kilometres. Protecting these natural features requires designing transportation systems that are sensitive to climate change. For example, the urban heat island effect, greenhouse gas effect and temperature change is being managed in York Region through planning and design.

A significant component of age-friendly, complete communities is the road network, which is as diverse as York Region itself. York Region currently characterizes its street network based on the planned basic road width, ranging from 20 to 60 metres, rather than function or intended traffic volume.

Public transportation is provided by York Region Transit (YRT). Through Viva, the Region is expanding its bus rapid transit network to more efficiently serve riders and commuters of all ages and abilities. This involves constructing more than 34 kilometres of funded rapid transit routes, 28 kilometres of which will be completed by 2021. There is also an additional 32 kilometres of unfunded transit route upgrades, totaling 66 kilometres of planned transit upgrades. In response, the design of roadways is increasingly accommodating bus rapid transit infrastructure, with all levels of government committing to provide \$3.2 billion in total investment to the Regional rapid transit system by 2021. Other improvements include creation of a Frequent Transit Network, expansion of curbside Viva service, expansion of on-demand service, and scheduling optimization.

The following is a summary of major technical, Provincial, Regional and Municipal planning policy and strategic documents that affect Regional roads and adjoining lands. The guidelines and recommendations contained in this document are intended to support achievement of the objectives identified in this Section. These policy and technical documents should be referenced for further guidance on specific road network and design objectives.