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The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Committee of the Whole
From: Commissioner of Finance and Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report: #2023-COW-11
Date: March 22, 2023

Subject:

Lakeshore East GO Extension and Transit Oriented Development

Recommendation:

That the Committee of the Whole recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That the Lakeshore East GO Extension and Transit Oriented Development update provided within Report #2023-COW-11 of the Commissioner of Finance and the Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development be received for information;
 - B) That the recommendations contained in Confidential Attachment #1 to COW Report #2023-COW-11 be approved; and
 - C) That the recommendations contained in the Confidential Attachment to Report #2023-COW-11 and the confidential presentation materials from the February 17th, 2023, Special Council Meeting be released publicly, with the exception of any Provincial commercially confidential information, at such a time as the Region's Transit Oriented Development strategy is no longer deemed to be confidential by the Region of Durham.
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Report:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Regional Council with an update related to the advancement of the Lakeshore East GO Extension to Bowmanville (the Extension), and the activities undertaken by the Region as it relates to the advancement of the Metrolinx Market Driven Strategy, Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) and Transit Oriented Development.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Extension has a long history dating back over 30 years when GO Transit carried out its first Environmental Assessment (EA) Study for heavy passenger rail train service to Bowmanville.
- 2.2 The benefits of the Extension have been well documented as a critical investment in region-building and community economic vitality while helping to reduce reliance on auto-oriented trips. The Extension and its associated stations are a catalyst for redevelopment, community improvement, place-making and an important opportunity for additional housing, including affordable housing. As a principal Regional priority, the Extension appears in numerous corporate plans including the Regional Official Plan, the Transportation Master Plan and the current Durham Region Strategic Plan.
- 2.3 Given the broad reaching economic, environmental, community and social benefits of the Extension, the Region advanced planning and related advocacy with Metrolinx and the province for new GO stations at Thornton's Corners and Ritson Road in Oshawa, and Courtice and Bowmanville in the Municipality of Clarington.
- 2.4 On June 12, 2019, Committee of the Whole considered report [2019-COW-19 GO East Extension Update and Transit Oriented Development Evaluation](#), which included information on the Metrolinx Market Driven Strategy. Under the Strategy, the province advised that it would no longer fund new GO stations, and instead would rely on third party funding of GO stations. The Strategy highlighted the importance of planning for transit-oriented communities by ensuring land use planning, economic development and revitalization opportunities offered by the stations were a fundamental consideration when evaluating rail alignment options.
- 2.5 On November 13, 2019, Committee of the Whole considered Report [2019-COW-26 Advancing Rapid Transit Implementation and Transit Oriented Development in Durham](#), which not only reaffirmed the Region's commitment to the Extension but further elevated its importance by accelerating the Municipal Comprehensive Review to support station implementation, and establish a TOD office to support implementation efforts. On November 27, 2021, Council resolved:
 - a. "That Metrolinx be advised that Durham Region supports the extension of all day GO train service along the Lakeshore East line, including new stations at Thornton's Corners, Central Oshawa, Courtice and Central Bowmanville.
 - b. That Regional Planning staff be directed to accelerate the review and development of policies, including delineations and density targets for Major Transit Station Areas under "Envision Durham."
 - c. That a Rapid Transit Implementation/Transit Oriented Development Office (RT-TOD Office) be established for Durham Region."

3. Approval of the Lakeshore East GO Extension

- 3.1 On December 14, 2022, Planning and Economic Development Committee considered Report [2022-COW-30 Update on the Approval of the Lakeshore East GO Extension to Bowmanville](#). This report included details on the provincial budget approval in August 2022, including the Extension to Bowmanville, the Preliminary Design Business Case details, Metrolinx RFP, and scope of work.

4. Metrolinx Market Driven Strategy

- 4.1 On December 14, 2022, Metrolinx updated Committee of the Whole, confirming the approval of the Extension and that procurement for a Construction Manager at Risk contract was underway and that Metrolinx was working with third parties to secure stations for the Extension.
- 4.2 As indicated in Regional Reports [2019-COW-19](#), [2022-INFO-38](#), and [2022-COW-30](#) Metrolinx is no longer paying for new GO stations along its service lines, including the four new GO station stops along the Lakeshore East GO Extension to Bowmanville.
- 4.3 The concept of the benefiter paying for the GO stations rather than the taxpayer reflects equity and fairness principles. One of the major challenges identified through the Metrolinx Market Driven Strategy, however, is timing. The delivery of the stations is now driven by the market and therefore there is no certainty around the timing of station delivery, and this can be problematic when trying to realize the benefits of TOD.

5. Transit Oriented Development

- 5.1 Transit Oriented Development (TOD) provides high density, compact development close to Higher Order Transit stations, and includes an integrated mix of uses such as office, residential, retail, community uses, and other uses that support transit ridership. The benefits of planning for TOD around rapid transit include:
- a. Building on the significant place-making opportunities surrounding transit stations, where pedestrian-oriented streets, parks, squares, and buildings become comfortable and desirable gathering places.
 - b. Enhancing housing choice and affordability through higher density housing types, where seniors, students and lower-income earners can benefit from access to transit as a priority mode of travel.
 - c. Providing focal points for density, where there is a reduced need to drive, and where parking requirements for new developments can be lessened so they may develop more efficiently.
 - d. Providing opportunities for strong connections to local transit service and supporting their evolution into major transit hubs.
 - e. Providing opportunities for developing focal points for bicycle and active transportation, with facilities and amenities that support these non-automobile forms of travel.

- f. Optimizing the value of transit and infrastructure investment around transit nodes.

6. Alignment with Municipal Comprehensive Review

- 6.1 The provincial Growth Plan (“A Place to Grow”) requires municipalities to delineate the boundaries of Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) and plan for a minimum density of 150 residents and jobs combined per hectare. The Region, in consultation with the lower tier municipalities, delineated the Major Transit Station Area boundaries.
- 6.2 On December 1, 2020, the Planning and Economic Development Committee considered a Discussion Paper through Report [2020-P-27 Major Transit Station Areas – Proposed Policy Directions](#) which established:
 - a. the vision, goals, and objectives of the MTSAs
 - b. Delineate the geographic extent of MTSAs
 - c. Identify housing types and built form that support intensification
 - d. Recognize best practices for TOD
 - e. Enable a variety of transit-oriented land uses
 - f. Prioritize active transportation
 - g. Optimize parking
 - h. Promote an inviting and pedestrian oriented public realm, to enhance connectivity, generate employment and guide residential growth; and,
 - i. Provide clear policy guidance to local area municipalities for inclusion within their respective official plan updates.
- 6.3 The Region continued to work with members of the public and stakeholders to refine the boundaries and policies of its MTSAs throughout 2021.
- 6.4 On December 7, 2021, Planning and Economic Development Committee considered Report [2021-P-26 Durham Regional Official Plan Amendment #186 to establish the policy framework for Protected Major Transit Station Areas](#) (PMTSAs) which established the policy framework for seven of the Region’s existing and future GO Train stations. Amendment #186 is before the Province for approval.

7. Metrolinx Market Driven Strategy Commercial Process

- 7.1 A Special Meeting of Council under closed session was held on February 17, 2023, to update Council on approaches to station delivery and commercial negotiations that Metrolinx has been engaged in under the Metrolinx Market Driven Strategy.
- 7.2 To further this discussion, commercially confidential information regarding the advancement of station delivery necessitates that a portion of this meeting must be held in closed session.

8. Relationship to Strategic Plan

8.1 The Extension will improve mobility and travel options, supports transit-oriented development in the Major Transit Station Areas and aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- a. Goal 1 Environmental Sustainability: Objective 1.5: Expand sustainable and active transportation.
- b. Goal 2 Community Vitality: Objective 2.1: Revitalize existing neighbourhoods and build complete communities that are walkable, well-connected, and have a mix of attainable housing.
- c. Goal 3 Economic Prosperity: Objective 3.3: Enhance communications and transportation networks to better connect people and move goods efficiently.
- d. Goal 4 Social Investment: Objective 4.1: Revitalize community housing and improve housing choice, affordability, and sustainability.

9. Conclusion

9.1 The Region will continue to collaborate with its municipal and provincial partners, through established Working Groups and Governance tables, seeking Council approval for matters as necessary.

10. Attachments

Attachment #1: Confidential Attachment

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner of Planning and
Economic Development

Original signed by

Nancy Taylor, BBA, CPA, CA
Commissioner of Finance

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer