



REGION OF WATERLOO

PLANNING, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
Transportation Planning

TO: Chair Jim Wideman and Members of the Planning and Works Committee

DATE: April 4, 2006 **FILE CODE:** D10-20 /RT

SUBJECT: RAPID TRANSIT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT – PHASE 1 PUBLIC CONSULTATION CENTRE INFORMATION PACKAGE

RECOMMENDATION:

For information

SUMMARY:

On May 15, 2004, the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario and the Region of Waterloo jointly announced funding of up to \$2.5 million to complete the Regional Growth Management and Transit Initiative Technical Studies and an Individual Environmental Assessment.

The Technical Studies, which included a detailed cost-benefit analysis, were completed in November 2005 and submitted to the Provincial and Federal governments. They concluded that Rapid Transit is a feasible transportation alternative and a strategic financial investment that supports the Region's economy, competitiveness and prosperity over the next 30 years while meeting Provincial and Regional planning goals.

The Region of Waterloo is now embarking on the preparation of the Individual Environmental Assessment (EA) for the development of rapid transit in the Central Transit Corridor. The EA study, a three-phase process, will encompass the entire rapid transit corridor through the urban cores of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo.

The Phase 1 analysis, which examines alternative transportation systems including rapid transit, is well underway and two Public Consultation Centres have been scheduled on April 5, 2006 and April 6, 2006 for public input.

REPORT:

The purpose of this Rapid Transit Initiative is to provide greater transportation choice in Waterloo Region, through the introduction of rapid transit service within the Region's primary reurbanization area set out in the Growth Management Strategy. This area includes the entire area of the potential central transit corridor symbolically represented in the Regional Official Policies Plan. Furthermore, the rationale for the Rapid Transit Initiative is to provide a broad range of benefits, including urban revitalization and intensification, improved air quality, improved public health, a more balanced and integrated transportation system and protection of the environment and rural countryside expansion pressures.

An Environmental Assessment is a process used in Ontario to determine the possible impacts a project may have on the natural, social, cultural and economic environments so that the best possible decisions can be made. The Rapid Transit EA will fulfil the requirements of the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act* (OEAA) as well as the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA). This multi-phase process will proceed through the following phases:

- Phase 1: Assessment of the rapid transit initiative and alternative transportation strategies, including:
 - Baseline (do nothing)
 - Road Improvement and Expansion
 - Improved Conventional Transit
- Phase 2: Assessment of alternative methods of carrying out the preferred strategy; and
- Phase 3: Assessment of the preliminary design of the strategy and the preferred method for implementation.

PHASE 1

In order to evaluate and select a preferred transportation system strategy, the Rapid Transit Initiative and each of the alternatives were assessed based on their capability to achieve the goals of the Regional Growth Management Strategy. A set of 15 criteria (as outlined in Appendix 1) were developed to evaluate the ability of Rapid Transit and the alternatives to contribute to the quality of life in the Region. The Project Team is recommending that the Rapid Transit Initiative be carried forward to Phase 2 of the Environmental Assessment as the draft preferred strategy as it:

- Best achieves the goals of the Regional Growth Management Strategy;
- Is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and supports the Provincial Places to Grow Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe;
- Supports reurbanization objectives, downtown revitalization and innovative urban design;
- Increases transportation choice and transit ridership
- Is the least expensive form of motorized transportation when considering personal costs;
- Contributes to the Region's countryside protection goal by facilitating reurbanization and reducing the pressure to expand urban boundaries;
- Provides a safe mode of transportation and promotes an active and healthier lifestyle; and
- Utilizes the least amount of land and minimizes the impact on air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.

Two Public Consultation Centres are being held to provide interested members of the public an opportunity to provide input on Phase 1 of the Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment as follows:

Date: Wednesday, April 5, 2006

Open House: 4:30-7 p.m.

Presentation and Discussion: 7-9 p.m.

Location: Region of Waterloo Administration Building
150 Frederick Street, Kitchener

Date: Thursday, April 6, 2006

Open House: 4:30-7 p.m.

Presentation and Discussion: 7-9 p.m.

Location: The United Kingdom Club
35 International Village Drive, Cambridge

The information package that will be distributed at the Public Consultation Centres is attached to this report (please see Appendix 1).

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

The report supports several objectives of Council's Strategic Focus. These include:

- Focus Area 1: Manage Regional Growth to Enhance Quality of Life
- Focus Area 3: Protect and Enhance the Environment
- Focus Area 4: Ensure High Quality Transportation System

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Rapid Transit EA study will be cost shared by the Region and Province with 50% of the cost or up to \$1.0M to be funded by the Province. The Region's share (up to \$1.0M) will be funded through an approved budget allocation for this initiative in Planning, Housing and Community Services.

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:

Members of the Rapid Transit Project Team who have approved this Work Plan represent various Regional Departments including Corporate Resources, Finance, Transportation and Environmental Services, and Legal Services.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment – Phase 1 Public Consultation Centre Information Package

PREPARED BY: *Keren Adderley*, Coordinator of Communications and Marketing, Planning, Housing and Community Services

APPROVED BY: *Rob Horne*, Commissioner of Planning, Housing and Community Services