

York fine tunes transportation plan

By Mark Pavilons

The road network in and around King Township will have a distinctly different look in the next 25 years.

York Region wants to be ahead of the game, and not forever playing catch-up. The Region is currently working on its Transportation Master Plan (TMP), which sets some clear goals and directions to 2041.

King Township staff and councillors heard from regional staff on the progress and direction of this major planning document.

Richard Hiu, manager of transportation planning with York, pointed out there's a comprehensive review of all of York's major documents, from its Official Plan and development charges bylaw, to its water and waste water plan. The transportation plan is part of a larger initiative to prepare for growth of some 700,000 people over the next quarter century.

Hiu explained that we are still very dependent on our cars ??81% of peak morning work trips are made by car in York. Less than 4% of trips within York are made using transit.

The idea is get people out of their cars. The TMP's objectives include creating a world-class transit system; developing a road network for the future; integrating active transportation in urban areas; maximizing employment areas and making the "last mile" work.

It's all about connectivity and helping municipalities make their collector roads more accessible, maximizing the ability of the road networks to carry as many people as possible.

The TMP looks at five main policy principles ??finer grid street network; corridor evolution; commuter parking management; goods movement, and boulevard jurisdiction.

Along with defining the requirements of Highway 400 crossings and ramp extensions, the TMP will look at policies relating to converting traffic lanes to HOV/transit lanes. New commuter parking lots in strategic areas of York are also planned.

For King, we won't see many major changes until 2041. By then, Highway 27, King Road and the 15 Sideroad (from Jane to Bathurst) will be expanded to four lanes.

Regarding the 15th, Mayor Steve Pellegrini asked about short-term plans. Hiu said nothing will likely happen within the next 10 years. He added the TMP is a long-term planning document and nothing is concrete. Widening of the 15th, when it occurs, will be phased in.

The mayor pointed out King council recently asked the Province to move ahead with the environmental assessment on the planned GTA West corridor (or 413) and York reaffirmed their support for this as well.

The draft network phasing plan will be presented to regional council this April and a draft TMP will be on the table by June. Public review of the strategy will run through the summer, with implementation slated for this fall.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer noted locally, we are trying to build complete communities that include walkability, parking, etc. While the concentration may be on roads, she pointed out we have to get people more reliant on public transit. She would like to see more effort and money go to public transit initiatives.