



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Arvin Prasad, Commissioner of Development Services

Prepared by: Policy & Research Group

Date: July 13, 2020

Re: City of Markham Comments on York Region's Draft MTSAs for Inclusion in the Regional Official Plan – Supplementary Information

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the memorandum entitled “City of Markham Comments on York Region’s Draft MTSAs for Inclusion in the Regional Official Plan – Supplementary Information” be received.

BACKGROUND:

On June 22, 2020, Development Services Committee (DSC) considered a staff report and presentation entitled “City of Markham Comments on York Region’s Draft MTSAs for Inclusion in the Regional Official Plan”. Staff were directed to report back to DSC on July 13, 2020 with further information about certain matters raised by Committee.

DISCUSSION:

The matters requiring further information are addressed below. No changes to the June 22, 2020 staff report are recommended.

1. Potential impact of Metrolinx’s proposed changes to stations on the Yonge North Subway Extension (YNSE) still to be determined

Metrolinx is currently evaluating various subway alignment and station location options to minimize costs and enhance transit benefits, but at this time, no final recommendations are available. Staff will report to Committee once Metrolinx or the Ministry of Transportation releases a decision.

2. Rationale for proposed Allstate Parkway, Woodbine, Montgomery and Enterprise BRT MTSA delineations

The Growth Plan 2019 changed the definition of MTSAs to being generally within 500-800 metres of a transit station. The Region's draft MTSAs were based on the Growth Plan 2017 definition of a 500 metre radius. In preparing the comments in the June 22, 2020 report, staff reviewed the boundaries of all the draft MTSAs considering the wider 800 metre radius, and concluded that only two MTSAs (i.e., Post BRT and Milliken GO Stations) warranted revisions to the boundary, mainly for the purpose of maximizing opportunities for inclusionary zoning. As requested, mapping for the Allstate Parkway, Woodbine, Montgomery and Enterprise BRT Stations illustrating the 800 metre radius is provided in Figures 1 and 2, and the staff rationale for not recommending further extension of the MTSAs is provided below.

Allstate Parkway, Woodbine and Montgomery BRT Stations

As indicated in the June 22, 2020 staff report, Regional staff's approach to delineating proposed MTSAs was based on a methodology that reinforced the planned regional and local municipal urban structure for accommodating growth through intensification (e.g., reflecting approved Centres, Corridors/Key Development Areas, local centres and local corridors), among other things.

The proposed delineations of the Allstate Parkway and Woodbine MTSAs are consistent with the boundary of the Woodbine/404 Key Development Area (KDA) in the Official Plan, which also closely reflects the original 500 metre radius. As shown in Figure 1, expanding the delineations of these MTSAs beyond the KDA boundary to the 800 metre radius would include additional employment lands, and in the case of the Montgomery Station, additional established low rise residential lands.

Staff are hesitant to add more employment lands to these MTSAs in light of recent proposed changes to the Growth Plan (see separate staff report to the July 13, 2020 Development Services Committee meeting), that would allow conversion of employment lands within MTSAs outside of an MCR, even if they are within Provincially Significant Employment Zones (PSEZs). Most of the employment lands within these MTSAs are identified as PSEZs. Therefore staff would recommend not including any additional employment lands within these MTSAs at this time in order to minimize the risk of accelerated conversion requests, which could potentially destabilize the larger employment areas. If the Province approves the proposed changes, staff will review the boundaries of all the MTSAs which contain employment lands within PSEZs, and provide any further comments through subsequent reports to Committee prior to Regional Council approving the MTSAs.

Committee also discussed whether the Allstate Parkway and Woodbine BRT Station MTSAs should be expanded to the north to include the anticipated redevelopment of the Buttonville Airport lands. Figure 1 illustrates that the lands are well beyond the 800 metre radius of the Allstate Parkway and Woodbine MTSAs. Given the distance from the Hwy 7 BRT, and also considering that the current owner of the Buttonville Airport lands is no longer proceeding with the redevelopment of the site, and future plans for the site are unknown, staff concluded that the lands should not be included within the MTSAs.

Enterprise BRT Station

In response to Committee's question of whether the property located at the southwest corner of Kennedy Road and Highway 7 (Peach Tree Plaza) should be included within the Enterprise BRT Station MTSA, Figure 2 illustrates that the plaza is located beyond the station's 800 metre radius. In addition, as the location of this station, as well as the Viva BRT alignment through Markham Centre, is being reviewed through the Markham Centre Secondary Plan process, staff concluded that the delineation proposed by the Region can be confirmed as part of that process.

3. Rationale for not recommending additional MTSAs at potential John Street GO station and Centennial GO station

As indicated in the June 22, 2020 report, opportunities for additional MTSAs were analyzed on all of the future rapid transit corridors shown on Map 2 – Centres and Corridors Transit Network in the Official Plan, but staff recommended limiting additional MTSAs to those areas where there is anticipated funding for transit, or where there is already development interest. Although there is currently no committed funding for continuation of the Hwy 7 BRT east of Markham Centre, there is currently development interest in both the Markville and Cornell Centre Secondary Plan areas.

Centennial GO Station

The Centennial GO Station is located on the non-priority portion of the Stouffville GO Line, and is therefore not required to be identified as an MTSA. It was not identified as a separate additional MTSA by Regional or Markham staff because of the limited development/redevelopment potential north of the rail line (see Figure 3). In addition, all of the lands with redevelopment potential near the GO station are already captured within the McCowan BRT MTSA.

However, staff support asking the Region to identify the Centennial GO station on the McCowan BRT MTSA mapping, and to rename the MTSA to 'McCowan BRT/Centennial GO MTSA'.

Proposed John Street GO station (Richmond Hill GO Line)

With respect to a potential GO station in the vicinity of John Street on the Richmond Hill GO line, although a proposed GO Station is shown on Map 2 – Centres and Corridors and Transit Network in the Official Plan, staff felt the identification of an additional MTSA in this area is premature, given technical issues with upgrading service on this rail line (flood risk, required grade separation, priority of freight trains on CN York Subdivision) and limited redevelopment potential in close proximity to the station (see Figure 4).

A land use study for the Thornlea Employment Area immediately east of the rail line, initiated in early 2011, found the area to contain a mix of established, viable employment uses, some of which may not be compatible with adjacent residential uses. The report proposed a vision for the area transitioning from a predominance of heavier automotive repair uses to a broader range of service employment uses potentially including some office, service and appropriately scaled retail uses, but this transition would take time because the existing uses are generally viable businesses in operator-owned premises. West of the rail line there are some opportunities for redevelopment on the Shouldice Hospital lands west of Bayview Avenue, which is at the periphery of the 800 metre radius, and potential intensification

opportunities on the Thornhill Square shopping centre lands immediately east of the Thornhill Community Centre. As previously indicated, MTSAs can be added to the Regional Official Plan outside of an MCR, so the opportunity remains to identify an MTSA in this location at a later date, if conditions change.

4. Impact of relocating or expanding the centre point of the proposed Milliken GO and Unionville GO MTSA boundaries

Milliken GO Station

Committee discussed depicting the Milliken station as being extended to the entire length of the platform to Steeles Avenue to see what impact this would have on the lands included within the 800 metre radius. Figure 5 illustrates that under this scenario, additional lands to the north of Victory Avenue would fall within the 800 metre radius, whereas under the original scenario, the 800 metre radius did not extend beyond Victory Avenue. The June 22, 2020 staff report recommended including additional lands up to Victory Avenue (the original 800m limit) within the MTSA boundary to maximize inclusionary zoning opportunities. The staff report also noted that the MTSA boundaries could be confirmed through the Milliken Centre Secondary Plan study current underway, taking into account the potential for a second station/MTSA at Denison Street, which would also capture the additional lands.

Unionville GO Station

Committee discussed a scenario of moving the GO station further south to better illustrate the intent to provide direct connection to the proposed Highway 407 Transitway, and to capture lands south of Highway 407 within the Unionville GO MTSA. Figure 6 illustrates the impact of the shifted GO station location, which is to capture Parkway Belt lands immediately south of Hwy 407 as well as employment lands further south to 14th Avenue within the 800 metre radius. As requested by Committee, the draft 14th Avenue MTSA is also shown to highlight the distance between the two MTSAs, however, the Region is expected to remove the proposed 14th Avenue MTSA as Metrolinx is no longer planning for a station at that location.

The staff report recommends that the Markham Centre MTSAs be confirmed as part of the ongoing Markham Centre Secondary Plan update.

ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1: Allstate Parkway, Woodbine, and Montgomery BRT Stations

Figure 2: Enterprise BRT Station

Figure 3: Centennial GO Station and McCowan BRT Station

Figure 4: Potential John Street GO Station

Figure 5: Milliken GO Station

Figure 6: Unionville GO Station