



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: November 23, 2020

SUBJECT: Donald Cousens Parkway Extension Transportation Planning Study - Key Results (City-Wide)

PREPARED BY: Loy Cheah, Senior Manager, Transportation, ext. 4838
Joseph Palmisano, Manager, Transportation, ext. 6200

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report entitled “Donald Cousens Parkway Extension Transportation Planning Study – Key Results”, be received; and
2. That Council endorse the finding that no new road corridor and right-of-way west of Highway 48 is needed for the conceptual Donald Cousens Parkway Extension; and
3. That York Region be requested to remove the Donald Cousens Parkway Extension Corridor west of Highway 48 from the Region’s Official Plan 2010; and
4. That Map 10 and all associated policies of the City of Markham’s Official Plan, 2014 be amended to remove the Donald Cousens Parkway Extension Corridor west of Highway 48; and
5. That the City Clerk send a copy of this report and Council resolution to York Region and request York Region to confirm its concurrence; and further
6. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

This report presents the key results of the joint study conducted with York Region to determine whether a new corridor is required for the extension of Donald Cousens Parkway (DCP) west of Highway 48, or if existing road corridors can be expanded to accommodate future travel demands.

BACKGROUND:

Donald Cousens Parkway Corridor west of Highway 48 to Highway 404 is conceptual

The York Region Official Plan 2010, (Map 12 - Street Network) identifies the extension of Donald Cousens Parkway west of Highway 48 as a 43-metre wide corridor that will extend west to Highway 404. This conceptual alignment is also identified in the Markham Official Plan, 2014. The Donald Cousens Parkway extension is further

detailed in the 2016 York Region Transportation Master Plan as a potential 4-lane arterial road that will connect to a future Highway 404 interchange at 19th Avenue. See Attachment 1.

Donald Cousens Parkway Corridor west of Highway 48 impacts the Future Urban Area and development planning in north Markham

The status of the Donald Cousens Parkway west of Highway 48 requires clarification and definition in light of planning for future development in the North District, and the need to inform affected landowners and stakeholders with a greater degree of certainty on the right-of-way width and alignment requirements that will need to be protected. The lands impacted by the conceptual DCP alignment in north Markham includes the northern portion of the Future Urban Area Employment Block, particularly the lands adjacent to 19th Avenue (see Attachment 2). The Future Urban Area Employment Block is part of the Markham Innovation Exchange (MiX) district which extends from Highway 404 to Warden Avenue, and is seen as a distinct employment district containing innovative and knowledge-based employment activity.

Consequently, the Regional road network and its function in north Markham was the subject of a joint study

There is also increasing regional traffic to/from north and east of Markham, particularly to/from Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and Durham Region. The local road function of Elgin Mills Road and 19th Avenue is quickly evolving into a regional function with the changing travel patterns. The City currently has jurisdiction of Elgin Mills Road from east of Victoria Square Boulevard to York-Durham Line and 19th Avenue from Highway 404 to York-Durham Line. Both roads are expected to carry increasing proportions of regional traffic as a result of continuing growth and developments in Markham and surrounding municipalities.

In that context, on May 29, 2018, Council adopted the following resolution:

1. That Staff be authorized to engage York Region to jointly evaluate and address related environmental and financial matters necessary for the transfer of Elgin Mills Road into the York Region road system as per the Regional Road Assumption Policy Update (June 2014); and,
2. That Staff be authorized to engage York Region to conduct a joint Donald Cousens Parkway Extension transportation planning study in 2019 to re-assess the Regional function of Donald Cousens Parkway Extension and 19th Avenue; and,
3. That, upon completion of the Elgin Mills Road evaluation and the Donald Cousens Parkway transportation study, staff be directed to report back, on findings and recommendations.

Subsequent to the above Council resolutions, in Q4 2019 the City and York Region jointly initiated the “Transportation Planning and Preliminary Engineering Study for Road Network Improvements in the Donald Cousens Parkway Corridor between

Highway 48 and Highway 404” to re-assess the Regional function of Donald Cousens Parkway Extension and 19th Avenue.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Study approach involves testing alternative networks

The key objective of the joint study is to determine if the extension of Donald Cousens Parkway (DCP) west of Highway 48 in its own right-of-way is necessary or if widening of existing concession and arterial roads in the subject area could provide sufficient traffic capacity to meet future travel demands. The guiding principle here is the possible elimination of an arterial road corridor and its associated impacts on developable land, the Greenway System and development patterns.

The approach taken in the study to determine the need for the DCP Extension is to test alternative road networks with and without the DCP Extension against a 2041 travel demand forecast. Details on this approach are contained in Attachment 3.

Results show that the baseline network can accommodate 2041 demand

While the westbound traffic movement is constrained, particularly between Warden Avenue and Kennedy Road, the results indicate that there will generally be sufficient network capacity, with appropriate road widenings, to accommodate future traffic demands in all tested networks including the baseline network. Therefore, it is concluded that the traffic capacity of the DCP Extension is not needed to meet future traffic demands as they can be accommodated by widening existing road corridors.

Costs and impacts of alternative networks cannot be justified

Although there are slight improvements in the projected traffic levels of service with the addition of the DCP Extension in testing alternative networks, a new alignment does not justify the significant costs and environmental impacts.

The DCP Extension will have impacts related to fish habitat, Provincially significant wetlands, fragmentation of environmental features, and crossing of Bruce Creek and many small streams which support regulated habitat of Redside Dace. As such, the environmental and cost impacts of the DCP Extension from Highway 48 to Highway 404 will very likely outweigh transportation and other benefits.

Baseline network without the DCP Extension is the optimal network scenario

The results indicate that the baseline network (Alternative 1) represents the most optimal scenario as it will accommodate the future 2041 travel demand without the more significant environmental impacts associated with the other tested alternatives and is the lowest cost network alternative.

Next Steps:**Protect 19th Avenue and finalize the study report**

The DCP Extension Transportation Planning Study follows a 2-stage review process. The transportation demand modelling and analysis undertaken represents the first stage of review, which aims to determine whether the extension of DCP west of Highway 48 is necessary. The findings of the first stage review provides the basis to proceed to the second stage which is the evaluation of widening of other roads in the baseline network, as the need for the DCP Extension cannot be justified .

Accordingly, it is recommended that the study proceed to define the alignment and right-of-way requirements for the future 19th Avenue and to document and finalize the study findings in a Study Report.

Jurisdiction of 19th Avenue to be the subject of a future report to Council

As noted above, 19th Avenue is a City street with an evolving Regional transportation function. Upon completion of the study, City and Regional staff will work towards a recommendation on jurisdictional transfer of 19th Avenue to York Region and will table a report to Council at the appropriate time.

Updates to York Region and City of Markham Official Plans

Subject to Council's endorsement of the findings that no new road corridor and right-of-way west of Highway 48 is needed for the conceptual Donald Cousens Parkway Extension, it is recommended that:

- a. York Region be requested to remove the Donald Cousens Parkway Extension Corridor west of Highway 48 from the Region's Official Plan 2010; and
- b. That Map 10 and associated policies of the City of Markham's Official Plan, 2014 be amended to remove the Donald Cousens Parkway Extension Corridor west of Highway 48.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Longer term financial implications of the recommendations of this report accrue to York Region as well as the City in that the DCP extension is a York Region project while 19th Avenue is a City road. Elimination of the DCP extension west of Highway 48 will eliminate the associated capital planning, design and construction costs for York Region, a potential cost savings of at least \$60M as estimated in the 2016 York Region Transportation Master Plan.

Similar associated costs for the future widening of 19th Avenue from Highway 404 to Warden Avenue would also be the responsibility of York Region if the jurisdiction of the road is transferred. An interchange with Highway 404 would be included in the future widening of 19th Avenue. A high level cost estimate of the 19th Avenue widening and interchange with Highway 404 is \$66M.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The recommendations of this report align with City's strategic focus on growth management, transportation and the environment.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Planning was consulted on the drafting of this report.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Brian Lee, P.Eng.
Director, Engineering

Arvin Prasad, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 - Conceptual Donald Cousens Parkway west of Highway 48

Attachment 2 - Future Urban Area and the Conceptual Donald Cousens Parkway

Attachment 3 - Analysis of Alternative Road Networks