

**Ministry of Infrastructure**

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**Ministère de l'Infrastructure**

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Date: April 8, 2022

Arvin Prasad  
Commissioner, Development Services  
City of Markham

**RE: Bridge Transit-Oriented Communities Proposal**

Dear Mr. Prasad:

Thank you for the correspondence directed to the Premier sharing the City of Markham's Council resolutions dated January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022. I appreciate the City of Markham providing the Council resolutions to the Province and I welcome the opportunity to respond.

The Province is committed to working collaboratively with the City of Markham regarding the Bridge TOC proposal. Since August 2021, the Province has been sharing plans and progressive details regarding the proposed TOC. As a result of the regular meetings between the Province, York Region, the City of Markham and the City of Richmond Hill, revisions to the Bridge TOC proposal were made to incorporate the feedback heard. These discussions have provided much appreciated critical guidance, and the Province looks forward to a continued, meaningful and, collaborative relationship as the Bridge TOC proposal progresses.

The TOC planned for Bridge Station, along the Yonge North Subway Extension (YNSE) provides a significant and once in a generation opportunity to build a vibrant, sustainable, mixed-use communities. These forward-thinking, walkable communities will be a neighbourhood that will benefit individuals and families for decades to come. The Bridge TOC will bring more jobs, housing, and community amenities closer to transit, making commuting easier, while increasing ridership and reducing congestion, as well as stimulating economic growth and lowering the cost of building infrastructure for taxpayers. This destination will be a place for people to come and explore, as well as a place to serve the residents who live, work, and play there.

We, at the Province, know that the lower-tier municipalities understand local needs best, and to that end, the Province has been working with the City of Markham to appropriately plan and account for those community needs in the Bridge TOC proposal. In the coming months and years, our intention is to work together to plan the Bridge community to offer an array of

community benefits which could include schools, libraries, shopping centres, grocery stores, health clinics, community centre and childcare spaces, amongst other important amenities and social infrastructure. Appreciating that the Bridge plan spans many years, the Province will work with Markham to identify near term site amenities this year, where possible, as well as ensure flexibility through the site-specific Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) to revisit community needs in the out years as the plan and commensurate needs become clearer and further refined.

### Planning Rationale

The Province began its planning for the Bridge TOC site by looking to the existing Langstaff Gateway Secondary Plan. The secondary plan identified the Bridge station area for significant growth, and the Province sought to reimagine this plan and build on the municipal vision to address the evolving context, which includes the new Bridge transit station (and its revised location), increased anticipated population growth and the current housing market. The Bridge TOC site has built on the foundation that the City of Markham provided by incorporating many of the key features into the Province's proposal.

For example, Bridge Park arose from the Langstaff Gateway Secondary Plan, where the idea for the park was first introduced. Work is currently underway to realize the Bridge Park opportunity, however, it should be noted that phasing of the park will be impacted by transit infrastructure construction. If, for any reason, Bridge Park be deemed infeasible, the Province will work with the Region and Markham to explore additional greenspace to support the community.

### Phasing Plans

The Bridge community will be developed over a 20–30-year period and will be phased appropriately. The density that the TOC proposal envisions at the site will be appropriate for what is required in coming decades to sustain the expected growth. The TOC site reflects the future needs of the Bridge station along the YNSE and will ensure there is adequate housing to meet the demands of the region as a whole. By encouraging a higher density, mixed-use site around the transit stations, the Bridge proposal can be part of how the anticipated growing housing need in the coming years is addressed, how municipal growth targets are realized, and will create the value required to fund and deliver Royal Orchard Station. As noted earlier, we are committed to working with Markham to ensure the expected growth aligns with all necessary infrastructure designed to properly support the TOC development.

Staff have provided a high-level phasing plan to the City of Markham for the Bridge TOC site and are committed to ensuring identification and implementation of community amenities is incorporated into the future phasing of the site. As the TOC development progresses, the Province will work together with the Markham to create a detailed phasing plan for the site that is suitable for all parties.

### Employment Use

Though COVID-19 has impacted the commercial real estate market, the Province has proposed a range of employment gross floor area (GFA) office space for the Bridge development to be able to reflect the evolving demands of the market when the development

proposal is realized downstream. The Province will take the advice of Markham into consideration as the TOC site proposal is reviewed and will revise the mix of use for the site, if required, as the site development progresses. Note that in response to input from the City of Markham and the Region, the Province would not seek to set an upper limit, within the bounds of global GFA limits, for employment uses at the Bridge TOC site.

### Consultations

The Province has also engaged with stakeholders and the public on the Bridge TOC site. We recognize that school boards are critical stakeholders with important perspectives to be incorporated into the Bridge TOC site and they will continue to be engaged through the Ministry of Education to determine the school site(s) required to service the planned growth in the area. The Province will also continue to work with the City of Markham to consult with the appropriate external stakeholders and the public on the TOC site as it develops. The Province hosted a virtual public engagement session for the Bridge TOC on December 14<sup>th</sup>. An engagement website with details about the project and opportunities to provide feedback went live on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and closed on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. The feedback received through the completed public consultations was generally supportive of the Bridge TOC and comments received were minor in nature. The Province has also provided briefings and outreach to elected officials throughout the advancement of the Bridge TOC proposal and has been sharing materials and working with the municipalities since August 2021 to advance these proposals.

### Transportation/Planning Studies

The Province worked with two consultants to complete initial transportation studies, based on the available data and plans for the Bridge station area. The consultants operated from a singular planning model that was developed in coordination with the Metrolinx project team and takes into account the traffic that is to be generated from both Bridge and High Tech TOC sites. As plans become more refined, and additional details are provided from the Metrolinx project team, the Province will undertake further analysis to ensure there is a comprehensive transportation plan for the area. At this time the Province does not anticipate significant change to the conclusions of previously-completed transportation studies based on the outcomes arising from further refinement by Metrolinx.

The Province appreciates the desire to undertake a “blue sky planning exercise” and that the City of Markham has an interest in commissioning the exercise; we would be pleased to review the results of the study if/when it’s completed. As a long-term phasing plan is to be developed in coordination with the municipalities, any additional information and analysis will be welcomed for consideration.

### Design Standards

The Province is committed to building the TOC sites to the prevailing standards at the time of construction, appropriate, feasible solution for the waste systems. We can confirm that the building partner is exploring district energy solutions. The Province is also committed to building residential units with appropriate separation from high voltage transmission lines and is committed to the safety of the residents of Ontario.

## Affordable Housing

The Province is committed to providing affordable housing and acknowledges the current housing crisis that is happening across Ontario. Affordable housing is a priority for the Province, York Region and the City of Markham and we will work with all parties on how affordable housing programs are designed and implemented for the Bridge TOC site. The Province is committed to looking for opportunities to include affordable housing into the TOC Program.

## Forthcoming Agreements and Municipal Requirements

The Province has been working with York Region, Richmond Hill and Markham to draft a TOC Programmatic Agreement-in-Principle (AIP). The AIP will outline that developments charges, taxes and community benefit charges will be provided to the municipality. The Province and the lower-tier municipality, through the site-specific MOU, will specify a maximum parkland contribution and this will be provided by way of land conveyance and/or cash-in-lieu. Outside of what is agreed upon in the MOU, the municipalities will not levy further cash-in-lieu payments on the TOC developments as additional parkland cash-in-lieu payments, at the discretion of the municipalities, could render the TOC developments financially infeasible. This would thereby make the addition of the Royal Orchard Station into the scope of the YNSE project infeasible as well.

## Parkland

The Bridge station TOC development is unable to accommodate 6ha of parkland, however, the Province has provided approximately 5ha of parkland within the site boundary (~29% of the overall site area). Due to the imposition of transit infrastructure and construction, phasing options for the development overall are restricted. The Province is committed to working with municipalities to determine the appropriate phasing for the TOC sites, including parkland, to ensure the timing for the implementation of community amenities aligns and is incorporated into the future phasing plans of the sites.

## Zoning Approval

The Province is exploring various tools to obtain zoning certainty on the TOC sites in an expedited manner. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) may consider a Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) and should an MZO be issued, the Province may retain provincial authorities under that instrument, including but not limited to inclusionary zoning. Note that an MZO cannot, at this time, deal with matters of subdivision control. As you are aware, draft MZOs have been provided to staff for an opportunity to review and the Province will consider their feedback in the finalization of the order.

With respect to the request to include the entirety of the Langstaff Gateway Secondary Plan area as part of the TOC planning for these sites, please note that the TOC Program mandate primarily focuses on the development of land required for transit purposes, and therefore, is outside the scope of the program. Upon request of Markham City Council, the Province could work with both the City of Markham and other landowners to assess how best to normalize planning between the TOC site boundaries – as defined by program mandate – and

neighbouring lands. We appreciate municipal desire to address inter-dependencies and look at opportunities to extract value.

At this time, burying the hydro transmission lines is also outside of the scope of the TOC Program mandate. Discussions about future uses for the hydro corridor should be channeled through other forums by the relevant municipality(ies).

The Bridge TOC site represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Province to build a complete and integrated community at and around the future Yonge North Subway Extension and to deliver critical transit infrastructure and housing along the alignment. Efficient delivery is key to transit construction and TOC Program success. The Province is hopeful that our governments can reach alignment in the coming days on the TOC Programmatic AIP to be brought forward to Markham Council and/or Committee meetings for approval. I want to thank you for the frank and productive discussions that we have had with you and your staff. These without prejudice conversations have imparted municipal knowledge that has been critically valuable to the TOC site at Bridge station.

The Province has been working with the City of Markham since August 2021 on the Bridge TOC site and is looking forward to continued collaboration and dialogue as the plan progresses. The Province welcomes any additional feedback at any time on the Bridge TOC proposal.

Once again, I thank you sincerely for sharing the City of Markham's Council resolutions.

Sincerely,



Mirrun Zaveri  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Transit Oriented Communities Secretariat

cc: Chris Giannekos, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Infrastructure  
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