

**SUBJECT:** VIA High Frequency Rail Project- Station Strategic Business Case

**PREPARED BY:** Loy Cheah, Senior Manager, Transportation, Ext. 4838  
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**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1) That the report entitled “VIA High Frequency Rail Project - Station Strategic Business Case” and presentation be received;
- 2) That staff engage the VIA HFR project office to present and submit the strategic business case for their consideration with Box Grove as the preliminary preferred station location; and further,
- 3) That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**PURPOSE:**

This report provides the findings of the [VIA High Frequency Rail \(HFR\) Project Station Strategic Business Case](#) that was undertaken by the City of Markham with the support of the York Region, and seeks Council direction to further engage the VIA HFR Office to present and submit the Strategic Business Case for review and consideration.

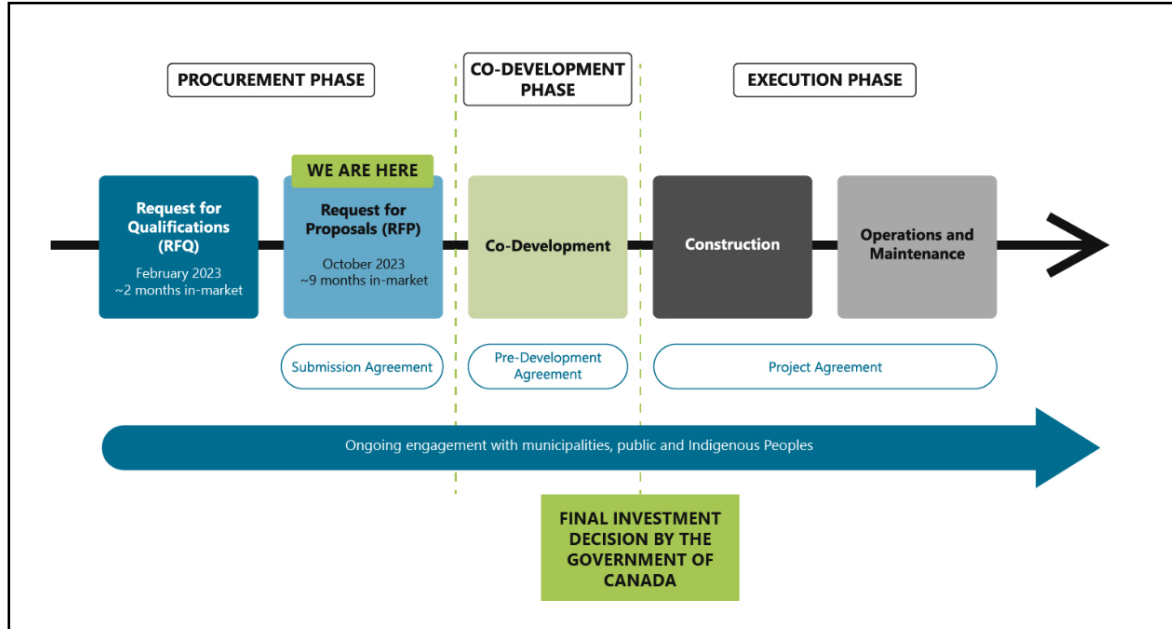
**BACKGROUND:**

The High-Frequency Rail project, initiated by the Federal Government through VIA HFR, a Crown corporation reporting to Parliament, aims to establish an electrified, high-frequency, and reliable rail service connecting major cities over 1,000 kilometers. The proposed HFR alignment, along the Havelock Subdivision, traverses through York Region and the City of Markham, but no station is currently identified in Markham within the project's scope. The closest proposed stations are in Peterborough and Eglinton in Toronto. The proposed HFR route, which remains subject to refinement, is shown in Attachment “A”.

The HFR project involves a multi-phased process that leads to the selection of a private partner to co-develop and deliver the HFR. The key project phases are shown in Figure 1.

The project is currently in the Procurement phase, with Co-Development and Executive phases to follow, timing of which are unknown.

Figure 1: VIA HFR Project Phases



### OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

#### **A number of strategic benefits were identified in the HFR Strategic Business Case.**

The addition of a passenger rail station in Markham on the Havelock Subdivision has been subject to past studies and renewed Municipal and Regional interest. In collaboration with York Region, an engineering consultant was engaged to develop a comprehensive business case encompassing strategic, economic, deliverability, and operational aspects. This analysis has highlighted the strategic benefits that a Markham HFR station could achieve, including:

- Providing new fast connections to employment centres;
- Expanding workforce talent that can easily access Markham and the surrounding York Region;
- Growing the Region's role as a knowledge centre and post-secondary destination;
- Supporting Markham's transit-oriented, city-building efforts including secondary plans and development areas;
- Creating development opportunities in Box Grove and Cornell;
- Supporting Destination Markham and Experience York Region;
- Increasing access to and usage of Rouge National Urban Park;
- Developing a 'Union Station Alternative' for easier access to VIA rail services;
- Growing the ridership of the HFR program; and,
- Improving regional travel times and sustainability.

#### **A station location analysis indicates feasibility of an HFR station in Markham.**

A reference station location was identified for performance assessment for the Strategic Business Case analysis. Three station locations within the boundaries of the City of

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Markham were considered for evaluation: Locust Hill, Box Grove, and Steeles Avenue. The map of these potential Markham HFR Station locations is shown in Attachment “B”.

These potential station sites were screened based on various criteria, including:

1. Existing Transportation Network Connectivity;
2. Future Rapid Transit Network Connectivity;
3. Proximity to Major Destination;
4. Existing and Surrounding Land Uses;
5. Development Potential; and,
6. Construction Feasibility.

Through the review of the six station assessment criteria, it was determined that Box Grove is the preferred preliminary site for the HFR station in Markham.

**The Strategic Business Case shows strong performance across strategic, economic and deliverability and operational considerations.**

The proposed station in the Box Grove neighbourhood would greatly enhance connectivity to the regional rapid transit network, offering efficient and sustainable travel options to major Canadian cities outside the Greater Toronto Area, ultimately saving transit and auto users travel time. A summary of the Markham HFR station strategic case is provided in Attachment “C”.

The total projected economic benefits for the proposed Markham HFR station ranges from \$15 million to \$226 million, with estimated project costs between \$32 million and \$92 million. This results in a Benefit-Cost Ratio ranging from 0.5 to 2.5 and a Net Present Value varying from a negative (-) \$17 million to a positive (+) \$134 million. A summary of the economic case is shown in Attachment “D”.

It is important to note that this analysis did not include a detailed financial case analysis. A more comprehensive financial case analysis will be required as the HFR project scope becomes better understood in the coming years.

Based on an initial examination of deliverability considerations, it was determined that the proposed station location is less likely to present significant construction or operational risks, provided the station facility remains situated on the west side of the rail corridor, as the Rouge National Urban Park abuts the east side. Further detailed investigation into deliverability and operational considerations will need to be conducted to confirm the initial findings of the Strategic Business Case.

**There are immediate next steps to further Markham’s interest.**

With Council direction, City staff will engage with the VIA HFR project office to present and submit the Strategic Business Case for their review and consideration. Discussions with the VIA HFR project office may lead to additional studies as the HFR project advances into the next implementation phase, including developing a more detailed station business case to support a formal submission and request for a Markham HFR station.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

There is no financial implication in adopting these recommendations.

**HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:**

Not applicable.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

The study aligns with the City's Strategic goal of building Safe, Sustainable, and Complete Communities.

**BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship was involved in the development of the HFR Strategic Business Case.

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

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Frank Clarizio, P.Eng.  
Director, Engineering

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Chris Rickett  
Director, Economic Growth, Culture and  
Entrepreneurship

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Arvin Prasad, MPA, RPP, MCIP  
Commissioner, Development Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- “A” – Proposed HFR Route
- “B” – Map of Potential HFR Stations
- “C” – HFR Station Strategic Case Summary
- “D” – HFR Station Economic Case Summary
- “E” – HFR Station Strategic Business Case Presentation