



memorandum

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Item # 21 Report No. 7 CW

COUNCIL – FEB. 15, 2011

DATE: February 10, 2011
TO: Mayor and Members of Council
FROM: Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco
RE: **Additional Information – CW February 1, 2011 Item #21
407 Transitway Environmental Project Report**

As a follow up to the Committee of the Whole February 1, 2011 Item #21, 407 Transitway Environmental Project Report and the Concord West Residents Ad Hoc Committee's email requesting a modified resolution, please find attached some additional correspondence for your information.

Included in the package is a letter dated February 1, 2011 from the 407 Transitway Project Manager, Mr. Robb Minnes, in response to my submission letter of January 24, 2011. In this letter, Mr. Minnes makes mention of a December 8, 2010 letter provided to the Concord West Community Association regarding a full assessment and evaluation of alternate locations for the transitway station. I have also included a copy of this letter and the full assessment for your information.

Finally, I have also included an excerpt from the 407 Transitway Environmental Project Report regarding additional comments received regarding the Concord West Station.

I trust this information will address some of the questions that arose during Committee of the Whole discussion on February 1, 2011.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandra Yeung Racco', written over a horizontal line.

Sandra Yeung Racco
Councillor, Ward 4 (Concord/North Thornhill)

Ministry of
Transportation



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February 1, 2011

Ms. Sandra Yeung Racco
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City of Vaughan
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FEB 03 2011

WARD 4, COUNCIL OFFICE

Dear Councillor Yeung Racco:

RE: 407 Transitway from Highway 400 to Kennedy Road Environmental Project Report

We are in receipt of your letters of October 28, 2010 and January 23, 2011. We hope that this letter will help alleviate the community as well as your concerns while allowing the project to embark on its strategic initiative in implementing regional transit for the benefit of all.

The Ministry of Transportation has been planning and protecting land for the 407 Transitway over the past two decades. The Planning/Preliminary Design Environmental Assessment study was initiated by the Ministry in March, 2007. The study has been carried out with the participation of City of Vaughan staff and has included presentations to Vaughan Committee of the Whole prior to the two sets of Public Open Houses. The Plans for the Concord Transitway station were presented at these occasions.

Following completion of this phase of the study which incorporated the extensive stakeholder and municipal input and discussion, MTO issued a notice on August 29, 2010 that the EA was being transitioned to the new Transit Project Assessment Process to begin the statutory six month process period. As required under the governing regulation, the notice of completion was issued on December 23, 2010 and the 30 day consultation period commenced, ending on January 24, 2011.

The technical advisory committee (called the Technical Resource Group for this project) included representatives from a number of agencies including the City of Vaughan, the Town of Richmond Hill, York Region and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. These agencies participated regularly in meetings and presentations (six to date). In addition, as

mentioned, Public Information Centers were held for the project nearing the end of both Planning and Preliminary Design phases. The final public information centre was held in June of 2010 and was attended by representatives of the City of Vaughan.

Prior to these Open Houses special presentations were made to the Committee of the Whole of the City of Vaughan. These presentations, in May of 2009 and June of 2010 had shown the 407 Transitway Concord Station as a preferred station location.

The current proposed station location was first identified in the 407 Transitway Overview Study, 1989. Accordingly, property for the station has been protected for since that time.

Concerns with regard to the 407 Transitway Concord Station were first raised by the Concord West Community Association in July 2010. Since then, we have been engaged with the association and have met and exchanged correspondence related to their concerns. We have reviewed its proposals, assessed them both from an environmental, social and technical perspective, provided alternatives that were more feasible, practical and indicative of the objectives and evaluated them. This full assessment and evaluation was concluded in December 2010 and submitted officially by letter (MTO letter dated December 8, 2010) to the association and included in full detail in the Environmental Project Report.

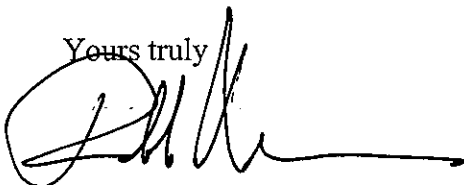
While the station could not be eliminated from its current location south of Highway 7, as requested by the association, as this would have compromised the objectives of this project, the Ministry of Transportation did commit to providing a safe and direct access through a grade separated pedestrian facility across the CN Railway to the valley lands and to improving access to the Marita Paine Park Trail via the new river crossing as requested in your letters.

A further meeting was held with the association on January 10, 2011 to review the design and address any additional concerns. It was evident at that meeting that the community maintains its interest in relocating the station to north of Highway 7. The review of this option was clearly evaluated in the EPR and found unacceptable as it does not fulfill the requirement of seamless passenger transfers between the Transitway, GO Barrie Rail line and York VIVA services identified in the Metrolinx regional transportation network.

We are aware that the City of Vaughan has embarked on an official plan process for this area. The Ministry of Transportation looks forward to working closely with the City on this plan to help meet its objectives.

I trust that this clarifies our position.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robb Minnes', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robb Minnes
Project Manager

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Transportation



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December 8, 2010



RE: Concord West Association Proposal for 407 Transitway Concord Station

As indicated by George Ivanoff in his e-mail of November 26, 2010, MTO's consultants have completed their evaluation of your proposal for the 407 Transitway's Concord Station. The attached text and exhibit document describes the development and evaluation of four alternative configurations for the facilities necessary at the Concord intermodal node including yours.

In the course of this alternatives analysis, the study team has incorporated the Concord West community's alternative proposals where feasible, basically placing the Metrolinx/GO platform north of Highway 7 and the 407 Transitway station east of the river valley towards Centre Street as in the red alternative.

The suggestion to curve the GO tracks to the east with a station on the curve is not practical as it does not meet the Metrolinx/GO alignment and station placement standards. Also, placing a park-and-ride lot north of Centre Street between Highway's 7 and 407 is not feasible as this land is being protected for a potential future ramp to Highway 407 and any access to the lot would be unacceptably close to the existing Highway 7-Centre Street intersection. MTO has included an alternative lot location further west to overcome this shortcoming and make the proposal suitable for evaluation.

The evaluation matrix shows the response of each alternative in terms of the key indicators reflecting the project's basic objectives. The team's conclusion from the findings is summarized in the supporting text. While clearly optimizing the response to the seamless transportation

needs at this node, the preferred configuration (Black Alternative) allows opportunities to mitigate effects on the surrounding communities and improve access to the valley lands.

Specifically, in terms of natural features, most natural riverbank vegetation and the adjacent woodlot are preserved. In terms of improved access to the valley lands the project includes the construction of a safe pedestrian crossing of the rail line, which does not currently exist and continuous access through the facilities from the Concord West community to the valley lands. The estimated cost of this access to the project will be in the order of one million dollars.

One additional point I wish to raise is that this property has been retained by the Province solely for this planned future transportation infrastructure. If not required for this purpose the table land would be sold for other uses and community access to the valley at this location could be lost.

Should you wish any further clarification on the MTO's recommendation we would be pleased to discuss them with you.

Yours truly

Robb Minnes
Project Manager

Cc Ms. Leslie Woo
 Mr. George Ivanoff
 Mr. Khaled El-Dalati

OBJECTIVE	INDICATORS	Black Alternative GO platform South of Highway 7 Transitway Station adjacent to GO Rail ROW	Red Alternative GO platform North of Highway 7 Transitway Station south of Centre Street Overpass	Brown Alternative GO platform straddling HWY 7 Transitway Station between West Don River bridges	Blue Alternative GO platform immediately N of Hwy 407; Transitway Station adjacent to GO Rail ROW
Improve Mobility	Transfer walking distances (m)				
	Transitway platform to GO platform:				
	Centre-Centre Minimum	275 130	560 305	445 380	75 30
	Park & Ride to GO platform:				
	Centre-Centre Minimum	55 25	460 300	360 25/160	320/520 110/330
	Park & Ride to Transitway platform:				
	Centre Ibt-Centre platform Minimum	275 130	465 320	155 30	320/520 275/480
	Viva stops on Hwy 7 to end of GO platform	250	215	220	465
	Viva Hwy 7 stops to Transitway platform (Viva platforms at proposed intersection)	100	75	20	340
	Number of park-and-ride spaces available	650-700	350-400	550-600	600
	Access to Park & Ride	35 m. long bridge over West Don R. tributary is required.	Not technically feasible from Centre St. due to traffic signal proximity. Lot SW of transitway station on Hwy 7.	Least access time to and technically feasible but internal queuing may be problematic	Second P&R lot requires bridge over West Don River tributary
	Convenience of passenger pick-up/drop-off (PPUDO)	Location very convenient	Not feasible due to intersection proximity	Feasible for Transitway; not feasible for GO	Location very convenient for Transitway but more remote for GO
	Convenience of local community shuttle bus access	Transfer platform adjacent to stations	Walk-in from on-street stops on Highway 7	Walk-in from on-street stops on Highway 7	Pick-up/drop-off in south parking lot remote from both stations
	Area of publicly-owned vacant table land property encroached.	55%	24%	24%	24%
Minimize adverse effects on social environment	Proximity of GO platform to publicly-owned table land property	260 metres alongside	280 metres north	70 metres north	180 metres alongside
	Proximity of GO platform to residential land use south of Hwy 7	Full length adjacent to residential community. Mitigation of visual and sound effects required.	Full length within new northern development remote from residential community	Southern half of platform fairly close to residential community	Northern half of platform opposite residential community
	Effect of GO Station on planned mixed-use development north of Hwy 7	No effects as station is south of Hwy 7	Requires walkway through park and internal street and mitigation of interface along platform	Minor effect at south end of development	No effects as station is south of Hwy 7
	Effect on access to valley lands/trails	Walkway through station site to valley and existing trail will be provided in site layout	Access only possible if table lands remain vacant or easement is provided in future uses	Access only possible if table lands remain vacant or easement is provided in future uses	Access only possible if table lands remain vacant or easement is provided in future uses
Minimize adverse effects on natural environment	Effect on West Don River and tributary flood plain/valley lands	Flood plain generally preserved. Single new crossing combining transitway and access road.	Flood plain generally preserved. Single new crossing for transitway	Flood plain generally preserved. Two new tributary crossings serving parking and for transitway	Flood plain generally preserved. Two new tributary crossings serving parking and for transitway
Offer a cost-effective way of moving people	Effect of Transitway station location on transitway profile	Current profile; depressed station with some retaining wall	Profile raised on high retaining walls to accommodate elevated station	Current profile; Station at grade.	Current profile; depressed station with some retaining wall
	Highway 7 pedestrian bridge requirements	Bridge over highway for Viva to GO platform transfer requested by York Region	Long protected walkway and bridge over Hwy 7 required between GO and Transitway platforms	None	None
	Effect on station area infrastructure costs	Assumed as baseline infrastructure cost	Moderately higher than baseline cost due to park & ride property acquisition, raised transitway profile and walkway/bridge requirement.	Moderately higher than baseline cost due to park & ride property acquisition and a GO platform location requiring a new Hwy 7 rail bridge	Marginally higher than baseline cost due to park & ride property acquisition

Alternative Station Layouts

Concord (GO-Barrie) Station

Based on the preferred more northern alignment described above, three primary transitway station locations were considered. These comprised use of either the vacant provincial land protected by MTO between the Metrolinx/GO right-of-way and the West Don River floodplain or a site east of the river and remote from the Metrolinx/GO Barrie Line. One of the eastern sites incorporated a station and facility location suggested by the adjacent Concord West community. The transitway station locations were combined with four potential locations for the GO Rail platform to generate the four site layout alternatives shown in Figure 5-10a and evaluated in terms of the project objectives in the matrix in Table 5-8. The red alternative layout represents the community's suggested locations for the stations with the unfeasible park-and-ride location north of Centre Street replaced by a lot on private land closer to the station south of Highway 7.

For the remote locations, the only possible transitway station locations were opposite privately-owned land south and on the curve of Highway 7 and further east between Highways 7 and 407 south of the Centre Street crossing. Both of these remote locations can only be served by parking and PPUDO access that is constrained in size and they would require a minimum 380-500 metre (450-560m average) walk by all transit users transferring between the 407 Transitway station and any of the GO Barrie rail service station locations (north or south of Highway 7).

In addition to this unacceptable, inconvenient transfer at a major network connection, the area between the flood plain and Highway 7 is not large enough for station ancillary facility needs (PPUDO, park-and-ride, bus transfer). Additional parking capacity can only be achieved by adding a lot on private land west of the river with a new river crossing to provide access. Walk-in distances from these parking facilities to northern GO Rail platform locations remain excessive. While all alternatives generally preserve flood plain and valley lands, an additional crossing is required to make parking either side of the tributary feasible.

Considering all factors assessed in the evaluation, the preferred Transitway/GO Rail platform configuration is the Black Alternative, with station support facilities on the protected provincial land immediately adjacent to the existing rail right-of-way. Development of this site configuration:

- Minimizes the walking distances for passengers transferring between the Transitway and GO Rail, the seamless north-south to east-west connectivity essential at this node;
- Places PPUDO and park-and-ride facilities conveniently close to platform access for both transit systems;
- Provides a reasonable parking capacity without intruding into the West Don River flood plains;
- Allows most of the natural riverbank vegetation and the adjacent woodland to be preserved;
- Requires a support facility layout that minimizes effects on natural vegetation;
- Permits mitigation of noise and visual effects on the residential community west of the GO Line as discussed in Section 7;
- Preserves access from the residential areas to the valley lands by means of defined walkways through the station support facilities;
- Provides improved access to the Marita Paine Park Trail via the new river crossing.



Public Comments	Study Team Responses
	<p>Route 87 operated by YRT);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be reached from the residential areas via collector and arterial roads such as Autumn Hill Blvd., Summeridge Drive, Bathurst Street, Thornhill Woods Drive, Highway 7; and, • complements the access from the western growth areas provided by the GO Barrie Rail Station by serving the more eastern growth areas.
Concerned over the transitway's interference with a local place of worship.	After review of the proposed plan in the area, the member of the public was satisfied with the proposed plans.
Improve point-to-point travelling by introducing shorter but more frequent bus (mini-bus) routes that extend into residential areas from the transitway.	The introduction of mini-bus routes would be an ideal method for improving point-to-point travel to and from the transitway and enhancing the connectivity of the transit system. Such service would typically be facilitated or provided by other local transit services such as YRT. The scope of the current 407 Transitway study includes the fully grade separated infrastructure planned. Demand forecasting for the transitway has assumed the provision of convenient, frequent feeder services to the transitway stations by other local transit agencies.
Improve bike traffic, especially that crossing Highway 404 by introducing dedicated bike lanes along the transitway;	A bike and ride parking facility will be provided at each of the planned seven stations. However, due to the limited ROW for the transitway itself, the inclusion of a bikeway (a part of the ROW set aside for the preferential treatment of bicycle traffic, made up of one or more bicycle lanes) along the transitway is not practical. The transitway is a fully grade separated facility designed for high-speed (100km/h plus) standards, not compatible with freeway bike lanes running alongside. Unless continuous barriers were provided and the numerous structures were widened, parallel bike lanes would pose potential safety concerns for bicycle riders and transit passengers alike.
Platforms should be built at bus stops along the transitway to facilitate boarding and alighting; the platforms should be built in a way to be easily converted for use by future light rail transit.	The MTO's Transitway Design Standards require platforms to be installed at each transitway station and provision will be made for future conversion LRT.

Additional Comments Received

The Concord West Residents Ad Hoc Committee made up of residents in the residential area between Highway 7 and Highway 407 and Keele Street to Centre Street, submitted a letter to MTO on September 27, 2010 presenting an alternative location for the GO Barrie (Concord) Station. The alternative presented by the Committee was to locate the station north of Highway 7 in and around the Concord Floral lands. A response letter dated December 8, 2010 indicated that evaluations of four alternative configurations including the committee's proposal were conducted. An evaluation matrix and drawings were presented (see **Appendix A**). It was concluded that the technically preferred preliminary design alternative, which was developed in consultation with the TRG members, was the most suitable option for the transportation needs at this location. The preferred alternative allows opportunities to mitigate effects on the surrounding communities and improve access to valleylands. It includes the construction of a safe pedestrian crossing of the rail line, which does not currently exist and continuous access through the facilities from the Concord West community to the valley lands. The committee also presented to the MTO a recent sighting of the Blanding's Turtle at the GO Barrie (Concord) Station area. The Blanding's Turtle is regulated under the provincial *Endangered Species Act* and the federal *Species at Risk Act*. The preferred alternative maintains a riparian corridor for turtle and other wildlife migration, as habitat for

Blanding's Turtle is not believed to be present at this location. The preferred design also maintains an adjacent woodlot. Further investigations to confirm the presence/absence of Blanding's Turtle and its habitat will be carried out during the Detailed Design Stage. The response indicated that the lands in question have been retained by the Province solely for this planned transportation infrastructure. It was noted that if not required for this transportation infrastructure, the lands would be sold for other uses and community access to the valley at this location could be lost.

MTO received a reply from the Committee on December 16, 2010. MTO has offered to meet with the Concord West Residents Ad Hoc Committee at their earliest convenience to determine if there is any additional mitigation possible to address their concerns.