

**REGION OF WATERLOO****PLANNING, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
Transportation Planning**

TO: Chair Jim Wideman and Members of the Planning and Works Committee**DATE:** January 10, 2012**FILE CODE:** D09-30**SUBJECT: INTER-REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING INITIATIVE**

RECOMMENDATION:

For information.

SUMMARY:

The Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) benefits from the regional transportation planning provided by Metrolinx, a Government of Ontario agency. Since Waterloo Region is not within the GTHA, inter-regional transportation infrastructure is currently planned on a project-by-project basis, making it more difficult to plan a comprehensive inter-regional transportation system. The Region has partnered with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO), the Cities of Brantford and Guelph, and Brant and Wellington Counties to conduct an inter-regional transportation planning study to identify current and future travel patterns, and determine transportation system improvements to meet these needs. The first phase of the study, expected to be complete by June 2012, involves multiple surveys to supplement available data. The proposed study directly supports Strategic Plan Action 3.4.2 (Active participation in MTO's long term strategic plan for South Central Ontario) and potentially affects a number of other Strategic Objectives. A copy of this report has been forwarded to all area municipalities in Waterloo Region, MTO and the external municipal partners of the study.

REPORT:

Metrolinx, a Government of Ontario agency created in 2006, champions and delivers mobility solutions for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). Metrolinx launched *The Big Move*, a regional transportation plan, in 2008 to define and direct future transportation infrastructure investments. Its partners include the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO), GO Transit, Smart Commute, and the municipalities in the GTHA, which extends as far west as Halton Region.

The Region of Waterloo is outside of Metrolinx's planning area and, historically, planning of inter-regional transportation infrastructure with MTO has been on the basis of individual facilities. While the planning of inter-regional transportation benefiting the Region is still possible within such a framework (attested to by the recent commencement of GO Rail service between Kitchener and Toronto), there are two shortcomings with this approach:

1. The comprehensive planning of inter-regional transportation networks is difficult when facilities are examined individually; and
2. There is a gap in region-wide strategic planning between Metrolinx's focus on the GTHA and areas to the west, such as Waterloo Region and the Cities of Brantford and Guelph.

MTO has agreed to work with the Region and other municipal partners on an inter-regional transportation initiative that will complement the work already done in the Metrolinx planning area.

The study area for this initiative is the Region of Waterloo, the Cities of Brantford and Guelph, and Brant and Wellington Counties. The study will examine all aspects of transportation within and between these areas, as well as to/from the GTHA. The study should help to identify current and future travel patterns, and determine transportation system improvements to meet these needs.

The first step in the study is data collection. The Transportation Tomorrow Survey will provide a foundation that will be supplemented by additional surveys. In total, five surveys are planned for the study:

- License Plate Survey
- Post-Secondary Travel Habits Survey
- Commercial Vehicle Survey
- Vehicle Classification Survey
- Public Transit Survey

The License Plate Survey will involve tracing the license plates of vehicles crossing study area boundaries and mailing surveys to a random sample of such vehicles. This is a standard MTO surveying method and will capture roughly 5% of all vehicles travelling to, from and within the study area along major roadways. This survey will likely be conducted in May/June 2012.

The Post-Secondary Travel Habits Survey will be an internet-based survey of the travel habits of a random sample of post-secondary students within the study area. Within the Region, students at the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University and Conestoga College will be surveyed. Angus Reid Consulting Inc. has been contracted to undertake the survey in January 2012.

The Commercial Vehicle Survey will involve identifying a random sample of commercial vehicles (i.e. trucks) and asking them about their origin, destination, payload type, etc. These surveys are often performed at vehicle inspection stations along major highways such as Highway 401. The Region is working with MTO to identify suitable temporary locations where commercial vehicles could be stopped safely and with minimal disruption to their schedules.

The Vehicle Classification Survey will involve the counting of all vehicles at various locations throughout the study area and classifying them by type. This information helps not only to identify overall traffic volumes, but also helps to determine areas of high commercial vehicle activity. This survey will be conducted in May/June 2012.

The Public Transit Survey will survey users of public transit to determine more detailed information about their travel habits. Both local (i.e. Grand River Transit) and inter-regional (e.g. Greyhound, GO Transit) transit users will be surveyed. The details of this survey are still being determined.

The data collected for this study will also supplement existing databases and will be beneficial for other transportation planning studies, such as MTO's Brantford to Cambridge Transportation Corridor study, and the next update of the Regional Transportation Master Plan.

Next Steps

Regional Transportation Planning staff will continue to work with MTO and their municipal partners to refine the survey designs, ensure that they are conducted on schedule, and analyze the data that is received. Regional staff will also continue to advocate for other options that Regional Council has supported, particularly GO and Via Rail, as most recently described in Report No. P-11-003.

Area Municipal Consultation/Coordination

A copy of this report has been forwarded to all area municipalities.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

The planning of inter-regional transportation potentially affects many aspects of life in the Region, and touches on many areas of the Strategic Plan. This study is directly relevant to Focus Area 3 (Sustainable Transportation), Strategic Objective 3.4 (Improvements to Intercity Transportation) and Action 3.4.2 (Active participation in MTO's long term strategic plan for South Central Ontario). Other objectives potentially affected by this study are as follows:

- 1.2 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality;
- 2.2 Develop, optimize and maintain infrastructure to meet current and projected needs;
- 2.3 Support a diverse, innovative and globally competitive economy;
- 3.3 Optimize existing road capacity to safely manage traffic through Waterloo Region; and
- 5.6 Strengthen and enhance partnerships with area municipalities, academia, community stakeholders and other orders of government

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The 2011 Transportation Capital Program includes funding allocation of \$466,000 for the Regional Transportation Master Plan, and funding for this study will be budgeted within this allocation. Regional Transportation Planning staff has been discussing the financial implications and potential cost sharing arrangements with MTO and the partner municipalities. These discussions are ongoing and project costs have not yet been finalized. The Regional contribution for data collection activities is currently estimated at \$75,000 for license plate, post secondary and vehicle classification surveys. The commercial vehicle survey is to be funded by MTO. The details of a public transit survey have not been determined.

Data Collection Activity	Estimated Cost
License Plate Survey	~ \$40,000
Post-Secondary Survey	~ \$15,000
Commercial Vehicle Survey	Funded by MTO
Vehicle Classification Survey	~ \$20,000
Public Transit Survey	TBD

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS / CONCURRENCE:

Transportation and Environmental Services has been apprised of this study.

ATTACHMENTS:

NIL

PREPARED BY: *Geoffrey Keyworth*, Senior Transportation Planning Engineer

APPROVED BY: *Rob Horne*, Commissioner of Planning, Housing and Community Services