Region of Waterloo
Transportation and Environmental Services
Rapid Transit

To: Chair Tom Galloway and Members of the Planning and Works Committee

Date: November 17, 2015           File Code: D09-00(A)

Subject: Stage 2 ION: Light Rail Transit from Kitchener to Cambridge – Public Consultation Centre No. 1

Recommendation: For information

Summary:

In June 2011, the Stage 2 Light Rail Transit (from Kitchener to Cambridge) alignment/stop locations were endorsed by Council as part of the initial work done on Stage 1 Light Rail Transit (LRT). To proceed with Stage 2 LRT, an Environmental screening must be completed through the Transit Project Assessment (TPA) Process. The pre-planning activities for the TPA Process are underway and the schedule for TPA completion is proposed for the spring of 2017. The completion date is preliminary and the final schedule will depend on the challenges and opportunities to be assessed over the next six months. The public will be asked for their feedback prior to and throughout the TPA process. The first set of public consultation events are planned for November 18, 2015 and November 19, 2015 in Cambridge and Kitchener, respectively. At these events, the public will be asked for feedback regarding the alternative alignments and the evaluation criteria that will be used to confirm a preferred alternative for Stage 2 LRT. The draft 2016 Capital Plan includes $1 million in each of 2016 and 2017 to undertake the TPA work.

Report:

1. Background

In 2006, Regional Council approved rapid transit as the preferred transportation strategy for Waterloo Region as part of Phase 1 of the Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment. Rapid transit was embedded in the 2009 Regional Official Plan (ROP), providing a legal framework that required a transportation solution to manage growth (New ROP
approved in early 2015). In June 2011, the Stage 2 LRT (from Kitchener to Cambridge) alignment/stop locations was endorsed by Regional Council as part of the initial work done on the Stage 1 LRT (Attachment 1).

2. Stage 2 LRT – Kitchener to Cambridge Study Process and Structure

To progress with Stage 2 LRT, an Environmental Assessment study must be completed. This study was completed for Stage 1 LRT. There is a special process for Transit projects called the Transit Project Assessment (TPA) Process. The TPA Process is part of the provincial approvals required to implement Stage 2 LRT. The process can start once a preferred project has been identified and approved by Regional Council. The process is intended to ensure that any impacts of “provincial significance” are properly managed. This process includes opportunities for public involvement and input.

A technical team is guiding the project with oversight by the established Rapid Transit Steering Committee which includes Region Chair Ken Seiling, and Councillors Tom Galloway, Sean Strickland, Geoff Lorentz and Karl Kiefer. The technical team is being assisted by WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff and is comprised of staff from the Region of Waterloo, City of Cambridge, City of Kitchener, Grand River Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Transportation.

3. Pre-Transit Project Assessment Process Activities

Prior to the commencement of the TPA process, many pre-activities must be completed. Pre-activities for the Stage 2 Transit Project Assessment Process have been initiated. These include natural environment field work, background data gathering and initial scoping activities that involved re-introduction meetings with key stakeholders – Cities of Kitchener and Cambridge, Canadian Pacific Railway, Grand River Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario.

To confirm that the endorsed alignment is still the preferred choice an updated data and condition analysis is being completed. This analysis will confirm past findings and take into account new challenges and opportunities. It will provide an opportunity to confirm and validate the feasibility of the preferred alignment taking into account recent development, redevelopment and intensification initiatives. Re-examining the alignment that has been endorsed meets project objectives to maximize the opportunity for transit-supportive development and create the most cost-effective solution (both in terms of construction and operating costs). Details of some of the challenges and opportunities are described in Attachment 2.

The high-level alternatives being considered are shown on the maps in Attachment 3. There are four distinct sections. The central section along Hespeler Road is not being considered for any alternatives (from Eagle/Pinebush to the Delta). The other three
sections have a limited number of alternatives that are being investigated. The maps also include possible GO-LRT connection hub locations.

4. Public Consultation Plan

Before the official TPA Process begins, there will be ongoing meetings with key stakeholders and two formal public consultation events. The official TPA Process has specific consultation requirements that will be met. There will be in-person meetings, web activities along with ongoing social media outreach as is typical of the rapid transit approach to date.

The first public consultation centre is planned to ask the public for their feedback on the alternative alignments and the evaluation criteria that will be used to confirm a preferred alternative.

The detailed public information package is included in Attachment 3. The meetings will take place at the time and location below:

| Wednesday, November 18, 2015 – 2-8pm Cambridge City Hall – Bowman Room 50 Dickson Street, Cambridge, Ontario N1R 5W8 | Thursday, November 19, 2015 – 4-8pm Kingsdale Community Centre 72 Wilson Ave, Kitchener, Ontario N2C 1G5 |

Display boards will be presented covering the following topics:

- Project background, goals and objectives – a brief history of the Rapid Transit project, work completed to date, and the rationale for undertaking rapid transit
- Purpose of the Public Consultation Centre
- Why LRT? – Explain briefly why LRT is the preferred system
- Planning and approvals process – Stage 2 LRT is following the Transit Project Assessment (TPA) Process, just as Stage 1 followed the TPA Process. The process involves consultation with the Public and Agencies, and is concerned with “provincially significant impacts”
- Stage 2 TPA Process timeline
- Why consideration is being given to alternatives on specific sections of the Council-endorsed alignment.
- Evaluation criteria to be used to confirm the preferred alignment along with the overall process (input, screening, feasibility, evaluation criteria, and detailed assessment)
- Information collected to date
• Next steps in the process and how to stay involved


The schedule below is very preliminary and the final schedule will depend on the challenges and opportunities to be assessed over the next six months.

• November 2015 – First Public Consultation to present alternative routes and corresponding evaluation criteria to be used for the detailed assessment
• December 2015 to June 2016 – Incorporating comments from the first round of public consultation, the detailed assessment and preliminary selection of the preferred route
• Fall 2016 – Second Public Consultation – to present the preferred route, evaluation, impacts and proposed mitigation
• Late Fall 2016 - Preferred route presented to Regional Council for endorsement
• April to June 2016 – Business Case completion
• October 2016 – Commence TPA Process with the intent of receiving Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC, formerly MOE) approval of the TPA
• March 2017 – Completion of TPA Process

**Corporate Strategic Plan:**

Stage 2 ION: LRT Kitchener to Cambridge supports the Council Strategic Area:

**Sustainable Transportation: 2.1** Create a public transportation network that is integrated, accessible, affordable and sustainable.

**Objective 2.1.3** Complete the Environmental Assessment for ION Stage 2 and pursue funding from the Federal and Provincial governments.

**Financial Implications:**

The 2016 draft capital plan includes $1 million in each of 2016 and 2017 to undertake the TPA work. This project will be funded by the RTMP Reserve.

**Other Department Consultations/Concurrence:**

Regional staff from Planning, Development and Legislative Services has been consulted along with staff from the Cities of Waterloo and Kitchener, Grand River Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Transportation. Staff will present a project update to the City of Cambridge Council on the evening of November 17, 2015 for their information and feedback.
Attachments

Attachment 1: Map of Endorsed Stage 2 Rapid Transit (LRT)
Attachment 2: Stage 2 LRT Challenges and Opportunities
Attachment 3 – Public Information Handout

Prepared By: Paula Sawicki, Manager, RT Coordination

Approved By: Thomas Schmidt, Commissioner, Transportation and Environmental Services
Attachment 1: Map of Endorsed Stage 2 Rapid Transit (LRT)
Attachment 2: Stage 2 LRT Challenges and Opportunities

The following (in no particular order) are some of the identified challenges and opportunities;

1. ION LRT vehicles (under construction) cannot easily cross a heavy rail track at grade (height of Overhead Catenary System will not clear a double decker train). Therefore, grade-separation is likely a necessity in the vicinity of Eagle Street and the main CPR rail from Toyota and in a few other areas not anticipated.

2. With the renewed investment in Toyota by senior levels of government, Toyota rail traffic is slated to increase further in the next few years. Therefore, the full impacts on CP rail operations are challenging especially as there will not be any impact accepted to Toyota rail operations. Other rail challenges include traversing Fairway Road to access the CP corridor, sharing CP’s Waterloo Subdivision corridor including property arrangements and track relocation, Transport Canada concerns about new at grade crossings of rail lines with public transit. Transport Canada is not in favor of non-gated and skewed crossings as presently proposed at King Street at Fairway Road and on Eagle Street. An alternative alignment or strategy needs to be pursued to reduce rail operation impact.

3. The proposed Canadian Pacific Rail / LRT road crossings are in close proximity to existing intersections (River Road, Riverbank Drive, and Fountain Street).

4. The impact on Eagle Street in the vicinity of the proposed Preston stop towards Speedsville Road (likely one side of Eagle will need to be attained to allow for facilities for LRT, automobiles and active transportation). This is in addition to the potential CP grade-separation in an urban environment at this location.

5. Direction in 2011 was given to staff to consider a future multi-modal transit facility in Cambridge to link to future GO service. Advocacy efforts to support new GO service have increased since then. Possible locations for a high quality, convenient GO-LRT hub connection will need to be identified and evaluated.

6. The consideration of the location of the Sportsworld stop in vicinity to King Street that has great potential for redevelopment (especially in the long term when the Highway 8 to 401 new westbound ramps are constructed).
Attachment 3 – Public Information Package

Stage 2 ION: Light Rail Transit from Kitchener to Cambridge

Public Consultation Centre No. 1
November 18 and 19, 2015

Public Information Package
Stage 2 ION: LRT Kitchener to Cambridge

Public Consultation Centre No. 1
November 18 and 19, 2015

Public Information Package

1. Light Rail Transit (LRT) in Waterloo Region
In June 2011, Region of Waterloo Council approved a staged approach to LRT from Waterloo to Cambridge. Stage 1 ION, which is currently under construction, includes LRT from Kitchener to Waterloo. Stage 1 ION also includes Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) between Kitchener and Cambridge, a service that was launched in September 2015. Stage 2 ION will see BRT converted by LRT, creating a continuous LRT system across the region's three urban centres.

When approving LRT in 2011, the Stage 2 ION route and stop locations between Cambridge and Kitchener were endorsed by Regional Council. The Region of Waterloo is now starting the detailed planning for Stage 2 ION and wants your opinion. With your input, the Region will determine which LRT route will be most effective and provide the greatest benefits.

2. What is the purpose of these Public Consultation Centres?
The purpose of this Public Consultation Centre is to:
- introduce the planning and approvals process that Stage 2 ION will follow
- present the criteria used to evaluate route alternatives
- get public input on the various LRT routes and stop locations

This input, along with the approved selection criteria, will be used to shortlist various route designs and stop locations. These will then be studied further to ensure they can be reasonably accommodated within the physical and environmental landscape created by roadways, rivers, bridges, and urban development.

3. What is the status of Stage 1 ION?
In 2014, Regional Council awarded GrandLing the contract to design, build, finance, operate and maintain Stage 1 ION LRT. Later that year, Stage 1 ION LRT construction commenced and is currently underway throughout Kitchener and Waterloo.

Stage 1 ION BRT service from Cambridge to Kitchener was launched in September 2015.

- ION project website: regionofwaterloo.ca/rapidtransit
- Phone: 519-575-4400 ext. 3095
- TTY: 519-575-4608
- Email: rtinfo@regionofwaterloo.ca
- Stage 2 website: www.stage2ION.ca
- Facebook: facebook.com/rideION
- Twitter: @rideIONrt
- Instagram: @rideION
4. Why does Waterloo Region need ION?
ION will:
- limit urban sprawl
- protect Waterloo Region’s farmland and environmentally sensitive areas
- shape the community by encouraging development in core city center areas
- move people by offering Waterloo Region residents a new transportation choice

5. What type of studies are taking place?
Currently the following activities are underway:
- existing baseline natural environmental conditions
- environmental and land use constraints
- LRT route investigation
- stop, intermodal locations
- expected environmental impacts (both positive and negative)
- proposed measures to mitigate potential negative impacts

Over the next six months, background studies, technical analysis, and consultation activities will occur. This includes travel demand forecasting, ridership forecasts, traffic impact analysis, noise and vibration studies, air quality studies, natural resource assessment, cultural heritage assessment, archaeological assessment, conservation plans, land use, and financial analysis.

6. What formal process will the study follow?
The study will follow the Transit Project Assessment (TPA) Process, a process under the Environmental Assessment Act. The TPA was also completed for Stage 1 ION. The activities listed above will need to be completed before the TPA Process begins.

7. Why re-examine the Council endorsed route?
An updated data and condition analysis is being completed, which will examine past findings and take into account new challenges and opportunities. It will provide an opportunity to confirm and validate the feasibility of the preferred route, taking into account recent development, redevelopment and intensification initiatives. Re-examining the endorsed alignment meets project objectives to maximize the opportunity for transit-supportive development and to create the most cost-effective solution (both in terms of construction and the operating costs).

8. Alternative routes and stop development
Reasonable alternative routes for Stage 2 ION were identified using the following principles:
- connect potential stops in a relatively direct manner to minimize transit travel times and delays
- minimize the potential disruption through environmental sensitive areas and mature, stable neighbourhoods

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Twitter: @rideIONrt
Instagram: @rideION
have a reasonable right-of-way width to accommodate LRT
provide flexibility to accommodate a possible future GO-LRT hub

The alternative routes, stop locations, and possible GO-LRT hub locations under consideration are shown on the included maps. To simplify the comparison of alternative routes, Stage 2 ION study area is broken up into four sections:

- Kitchener
- North Cambridge
- Central Cambridge
- South Cambridge

The Central Cambridge section along Hespeler Road (Pinebush to the Delta) is the only section for which alternatives are not being considered.

9. How will the routes be evaluated?
Your input at this Public Consultation Centre, along with other criteria, will be used to evaluate the list of possible routes and stop locations in the Study Area. To evaluate the alternative routes, many criteria will be used, including:

- transportation
- social and cultural environment
- natural environment
- economic impact

The evaluation process and evaluation criteria include measures such as:

- ridership potential
- system performance
- benefits to traffic patterns
- ability to serve residential, employment, business and institutional transportation needs
- contribution to public health
- potential environmental and ecological impacts
- estimated capital and operating cost
- impact on existing development

10. Has the Region received any feedback on Stage 2 ION to date?
The Region has already received and reviewed a significant amount of valuable feedback about alternative LRT routes between Kitchener and Cambridge as part of the ION planning and approvals process. The Region recognizes prior involvement and contributions, especially for those who have commented previously.

Some common themes that emerged previously, include:

- the importance of major destinations such as downtown cores, transportation centres, commercial centres, employment centres, schools, residential centres etc.

The feedback identified the most important characteristics of rapid transit as:

- accessibility, speed, frequency, flexibility, connectivity, affordability, environmental sustainability and limited stops

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11. What are the next steps?
The TPA was established to allow a proponent (i.e. The Region) to obtain approval for a transit project in as little as six months after the completion of all background studies. The schedule below is preliminary. Actual timelines will depend on the number and magnitude of issues and concerns raised over the next few months.

- **November 2015** – First public consultation to present alternative routes and corresponding detailed assessment evaluation criteria
- **December 2015 to June 2016** – Incorporate comments from the first round of public consultation, detailed assessment and preliminary selection of the preferred design concept
- **Fall 2016** – Second public consultation to present the preferred route, evaluation, impacts and proposed mitigation
- **Late Fall 2016** - Present preferred option to Regional Council for endorsement
- **April to June 2016** – Business case completion
- **October 2016** – Commence TPA process
- **March 2017** – Completion of TPA Process (Notice of Completion, Environmental Project Report published for public review)

12. How do I stay involved?
Please sign-in tonight or sign-up at the website (www.stage2ION.ca) to be notified of future meetings. There will be more public consultation meetings throughout the study and the results of each assessment and evaluation will be provided for public input.

The public consultation process will also provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions of the project team about Stage 2 ION and the Environmental Assessment process. At the conclusion of the public consultation process, feedback received will be considered, and a preferred Stage 2 ION LRT route will be presented to Regional Council for their consideration.
13. Contact Info / Get Involved

Public consultation is a critical and ongoing part of the environmental assessment process. The previous consultation material, endorsed maps, and other study information is available on the Region’s website at www.regionofwaterloo.ca/rapidtransit

Stage 2 ION documents are available at www.stage2ION.ca. If you would like to have your name added to the project mailing list, please sign-up online at www.stage2ION.ca, or provide your name, postal address, e-mail address and any group affiliation to:

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