



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Markham By-pass – Morningside Avenue: Individual Environmental Assessment

<b>Date:</b>	June 19, 2007
<b>To:</b>	Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
<b>From:</b>	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
<b>Wards:</b>	Ward 42 – Scarborough Rouge River
<b>Reference Number:</b>	Pw070051

#### SUMMARY

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The purpose of this report is to advise City Council on the discussions that have taken place with the Provincial Development Facilitator regarding the differing positions of York Region Council and City of Toronto Council regarding the planned Markham By-pass-Morningside Road link. This report also recommends a new City position with respect to the resolution of this matter.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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**The City Planning Division recommends that:**

City Council adopt the following position regarding the Markham By-pass – Morningside Avenue Link.

1. City Council does not support the project being divided into three sections as proposed by the Provincial Development Facilitator.
2. City Council will only support the releasing of Section 1, between highway 407 and 9<sup>th</sup> Line, conditional upon:
  - a) York Region supporting the City's preferred alternative west of 9<sup>th</sup> Line, via 9<sup>th</sup> Line, Steeles Avenue and the new alignment of Morningside Avenue

- b) York Region agreeing to evenly share with the City all costs related to improving and maintaining Steeles Avenue across the entire length of our boundary.
3. City Council direct City Planning Division to secure the Morningside Avenue 36 metre right-of-way between Passmore Avenue and Steeles Avenue as part of the Plan of Subdivision process when processing development applications by Manulife Insurance Company and Tap-Steele Investment Ltd in the Tapscott Employment District;
4. The appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

### **Financial Impact**

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

#### **City of Toronto Position**

City Council, on June 14, 15 and 16, 2005 took a position to advise York Region “that it strongly opposes and formally objects to the technically preferred alignment for the extension of Morningside Avenue south of Steeles Avenue East, as developed in the Environmental Assessment Study for transportation improvements in the Markham Bypass Corridor south of Highway 407”.

In addition, City Council informed York Region that it intends to keep Steeles Avenue, east of Markham Road, at its current width of two traffic lanes in keeping with its rural surroundings and that the City neither intends nor has it budgeted any funds to construct the recommended alignment south of Steeles Avenue.

City Council also requested York Region to re-evaluate the discontinuous alignment utilizing existing Ninth Line in York Region and a new road (Morningside Avenue) south of Steeles Avenue east of Tapscott Road. The attached map illustrates the technically preferred alternative from the Environmental Assessment and the City’s alternative from the Environmental Assessment and the City’s preferred alternative (Alternative C) of the EA document.

#### **York Region’s Position**

York Region continues to support the technically preferred alternative as recommended in the Individual Environmental Assessment. York Region has requested that they be given permission to construct the section of the preferred alternative linking Highway 407 to 9<sup>th</sup> Line to support the development of the Box Grove Community currently under construction.

York Region Council, among other resolutions, requested the Province of Ontario to declare a Provincial Interest in this project and to take an active role as co-proponent for this undertaking given their long-standing interest in protecting a high-order transportation corridor in this area. The Provincial Government informed York Region that they will not be a co-proponent of this project but they did request that the Provincial Development Facilitator (Alan Wells) get involved in this matter, and meet with the City, York Region and the Ministry of Environment to see if his office could facilitate a resolution to this matter.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

City Council has been very clear in its opposition to the recommended alignment for the Markham By-pass to Morningside Avenue. York Region is equally clear that it prefers the technically preferred alignment as shown on the attached map.

### **Provincial Development Facilitator Alternative**

The Provincial Development Facilitator has held meetings with staff from York Region, City of Toronto and the Ministry of Environment to discuss the varying positions of the two municipalities and attempt to facilitate a compromise that could unlock the current impasse. The Provincial Development Facilitator has suggested that the project be divided into three distinct sections, as illustrated on the attached map: Section 1 from Highway 407 south to existing 9<sup>th</sup> Line; Section 2 from 9<sup>th</sup> Line to Steeles Avenue and Section 3 from Steeles Avenue to the existing terminus of Morningside Avenue in the Morningside Heights Community.

The Provincial Development Facilitator has suggested that Section 1 proceed as the first phase to be constructed and the other two sections would be dealt with in the future. While it is clear that York Region wants this first section constructed as soon as possible as the land bounded by Highway 407, the CP Rail Corridor and 9<sup>th</sup> Line is currently being developed for residential uses, this would not resolve the alignment in Sections 2 and 3 between 9<sup>th</sup> Line north of Steeles Avenue and Morningside Avenue in the Morningside Heights Community.

## **COMMENTS**

City Staff has consulted with the area Councillor and his community, the Chair of Public Works and Infrastructure Committee and Senior City Staff and report that the City does not agree to the project being divided into 3 sections as proposed by the Provincial Development Facilitator. Releasing Section 1 between Highway 407 and 9<sup>th</sup> Line will result in a very poor traffic condition on Steeles Avenue that could not be mitigated.

The City will only agree to the first section of the Markham By-pass being released conditional upon York Region supporting the City's preferred alternative via 9<sup>th</sup> Line, Steeles Avenue and the new alignment of Morningside Avenue and, York Region

agreeing to share all costs related to improving and maintaining Steeles Avenue across the entire length of our common boundary.

The issue of completing an inter-regional north-south road link in the Morningside Avenue – 9<sup>th</sup> Line area has been discussed for almost 30 years. At one time the Province planned to build an expressway link between Highways 401 and 407, known as the East Metro Freeway. This freeway proposal was terminated when the Province announced the creation of the Rouge Park in the early 1990's and declared that there would be "no new roads in the Rouge Park south of Steeles Avenue". The Rouge Park boundary was later expanded to include the Morningside Tributary south of Steeles Avenue. Therefore, in keeping with the policy direction on no new roads in the Rouge Park south of Steeles Avenue, it is desirable to have no new roads cross the Morningside Tributary south of Steeles Avenue.

### **Development in Vicinity of the Planned New Road**

In 1999, the OMB approved residential and employment uses in the Morningside Heights Secondary Plan area. The approved Plan provided for the extension of Morningside Avenue in a 36 metre right-of-way through part of the Morningside Heights land. The OMB, as a condition that an Environmental Assessment study for the northerly extension of Morningside Avenue be submitted for approval by December 31, 2005. The subject EA was completed by York Region and submitted to the Ministry of Environment within the timeline.

Development of the land both north and south of Steeles Avenue in the vicinity of the proposed Markham By-pass – Morningside Link has, for all intent and purpose, eliminated all realistic options for a high-order direct road connection in this portion of the GTA.

The Tapscott Employment District, in the City, has within its boundary two large parcels of undeveloped land bounded by Tapscott Road on the west, Steeles Avenue on the north, Passmore Avenue on the south and the CP Rail line on the east. This land can now be serviced and is ready to be developed. The mutual property boundary of the two development parcels creates a desirable location for the extension of Morningside Avenue between Passmore Avenue and Steeles Avenue. This planned 36 metre road allowance would facilitate a 4-lane road that would provide both local and non-local traffic.

In York Region development of the Boxgrove Residential Community is currently underway and has been designed to be accessed via the Markham By-pass between Highway 407 and 9<sup>th</sup> Line. York Region would like to have this new road opened in the near future as the residential community is currently being occupied.

City staff is of the opinion that there is an indirect road alternative that is both realistic and achievable while respecting the Environmentally sensitive Rouge Valley. This alternative is a version of Alternative C that was one of the alternatives identified in the

Environmental Assessment completed by York Region but rejected in favour of their preferred (direct) alternative.

### **Steeles Avenue**

To accommodate future traffic volumes on Steeles Avenue between 9<sup>th</sup> and Markham Road with the City's recommended alignment of the new road link, Steeles Avenue would need to be widened to a 6-lane cross-section. City Council has earlier resolved that Steeles Avenue remain as a 2-lane road through the Rouge Park in keeping with its rural surroundings. The existing 2-lane cross-section could still be maintained east of 9<sup>th</sup> Line in the Rouge Park. It should be noted that an Environmental Assessment was approved for Steeles Avenue in the early 1990's, consisting of a 4-lane rural cross-section (ditches versus curbs) through the Rouge Park.

City Staff's recommended alignment consists of a 4 – lane road constructed in Section 1 (north of Steeles Avenue) linking the interchange at Highway 407 to 9<sup>th</sup> Line, follow existing 9<sup>th</sup> Line to Steeles Avenue; a 6-lane cross-section on Steeles Avenue between 9<sup>th</sup> Line and Markham Road; and a 4-lane road centred on the common property line between employment land owned by Manulife Insurance Company and Tap-Steeles Investment Ltd., that would link Steeles Avenue with Passmore Avenue and ultimately to the existing terminus of Morningside Avenue on the west boundary of the Morningside Heights community.

### **Community Public Meeting**

On June 11, 2007 Councillor Cho hosted a public meeting in the Morningside Heights Community to discuss the Markham By-pass-Morningside Avenue Link. Approximately 50 members of the community attended the meeting. City staff attended the meeting and presented the various road alignment options.

Those in attendance generally supported the alignment preferred by City Council (Alternative C). The majority of those in attendance preferred the ultimate Steeles Avenue cross-section to consist of 4 lanes between 9<sup>th</sup> Line and Markham Road versus the City staff position of a 6-lane cross-section in this section of Steeles Avenue.

There was also support to keep the existing Morningside Avenue cross-section at 4 lanes and not to be widened in the future.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Ted Tyndorf  
Chief Planner and Executive Director  
City Planning Division

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: [MAP]

# Attachment 1: MAP



MARKHAM BYPASS EXTENSION TO MORNINGSID AVENUE LINK

Legend	
<span style="color: red;">—</span>	Recommended Alignment
<span style="color: black;">—</span>	Discontinuous (Toronto) Alignment