

Final Report on the Smart Commute Initiative funded by Transport Canada

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To:	Planning and Growth Management
From:	Director, Toronto Environment Office
Wards:	All
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SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the outcome of the three-year funding provided to the Smart Commute Initiative by Transport Canada's Urban Transportation Showcase Program ("UTSP") and the ensuing negotiations with Metrolinx to replace this funding.

The Smart Commute Initiative ("SCI") is a region-wide (Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area) program that seeks to curb traffic congestion and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Smart Commute promotes commuter options such as carpooling, transit, cycling and telework — an approach collectively known as transportation demand management ("TDM").

In 2002, the City partnered with the Regional Municipality of York to submit an application to Transport Canada's UTSP. This application was successful and the City of Toronto, as a partner in this initiative, allocated \$400,000 over three years to launch the Smart Commute Initiative. Transport Canada's contribution to the project ended in 2007 and was replaced by an ongoing commitment from Metrolinx (Greater Toronto Transportation Authority).

Over the period 2004 – 2007, Smart Commute successfully took 10,000 cars off the road per day, avoiding 17,400 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

As part of the Toronto Environment Office's 2008 operating budget, City Council has approved \$280,000 in expenditures of which \$150,000 will be funded by the City and up to \$130,000 by Metrolinx. Program staff are actively moving forward with plans to

expand TDM services across the city.

Financial Impact

The report will have no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the 2008 Toronto Environment Office's Operating Budget.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer have reviewed this report and agree with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of January 27, 28 and 29, 2004, Council adopted the report, "*Update on the "Smart Commute Initiative": An Application for Funding from the Federal Urban Transportation Showcase Program*" from the Commissioner of Urban Development Services, which led to Council approved funding for the Smart Commute Initiative in the amount of \$400,000 for the period 2004-2006 (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2004/agendas/council/cc040127/plt1rpt/cl008.pdf>).

At its meeting of September 25, 26 and 27, 2006, Council adopted a the report "*Update on the Smart Commute Initiative and the City's Efforts in Transportation Demand Management*" which reiterated Council's support for the Smart Commute Initiative and directed staff to explore expansion opportunities for the program. (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/council/cc060925/plt6rpt/cl004.pdf>).

At its meeting of July 16, 2007, Council adopted the recommendations of the *Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan*, including reiterating its support for an internal trip reduction program for City of Toronto employees and directing staff to develop a report on Sustainable Transportation Initiatives that support the Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/ex/reports/2007-06-25-ex10-cr.pdf>).

At its October 22, 2007 meeting, Council adopted the recommendations of the *Sustainable Transportation Initiatives - Short Term Proposals* report; approving the extension of the municipal Smart Commute Memorandum of Understanding and directing staff to report back on the status of negotiations with Metrolinx. (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pw/reports/2007-10-03-pw09-cr.pdf>).

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Smart Commute Initiative is a region-wide (Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area) project that aims to curb traffic congestion and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is achieved by promoting commuter options such as carpooling, transit, cycling and telework — an approach known as transportation demand management. The SCI is made up of a central agency, the Smart Commute Team at Metrolinx, which provides coordinating, communications and evaluation services to a number of local organizations

called Transportation Management Associations ("TMA"). These TMAs provide services directly to employers in the region.

The City of Toronto has been a leader in implementing TDM projects in Ontario, starting with the launch of the Black Creek Regional Transportation Management Association in 2001. In 2002, the City partnered with the Region of York to submit an application to Transport Canada's Urban Transportation Showcase Program. The application was successful and City Council thereafter allocated \$400,000 over three years in matching funds to launch the Smart Commute Initiative. Transport Canada's role in providing funding for the Smart Commute Association and the local TMAs ended on March 31, 2007. Federal funding has provided the impetus to implement a TDM strategy on a regional scale and given the opportunity to demonstrate the advantages that such a coordinated approach can bring.

The Smart Commute Initiative has been very successful and, reflecting this, it is the recipient of the 2008 Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)-CH2M HILL Sustainable Communities Award for Sustainable Transportation.

COMMENTS

(A) Results:

Over the period 2004 – 2007, the region-wide Smart Commute successfully took 10,000 cars off the road per day, achieving an annual avoidance of 17,400 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. Other results include:

- prevention of over 100 tonnes of air pollution emissions;
- elimination of 75.7 million kilometres of car travel;
- elimination of nearly 1.3 million single occupant vehicle (SOV) trips;
- the development of "CarpoolZone.ca" – carpool ridematching service; and
- the development of "EmergencyRideHome.ca" – commuter 'insurance' in case of emergency.

(B) Relationship with Metrolinx:

In the fall 2007, Metrolinx announced that it would replace the funding gap left by the expiration of Transport Canada funding.

At the request of the municipal partners, including the City of Toronto, the Smart Commute Association ("SCA"), the unregistered non-profit that provided central coordination, communications and evaluation services to the project, was absorbed by Metrolinx. The employees of the former SCA are now full time employees of Metrolinx.

Metrolinx has committed to providing matching funding of up to \$130,000 to local TMAs. TMAs negotiate their contribution agreements directly with Metrolinx.

(C) Governance structure:

The end of the Transport Canada funding has necessitated changes to the governance structure of the project. The changes are as follows:

i) Advisory Group: The Advisory Group, consisting of transportation experts from across the region, has been disbanded.

ii) Steering Committee: The Steering Committee was responsible for overseeing the Memorandum of Understanding between the partner municipalities and was comprised of senior managers from each municipality. As Metrolinx is now negotiating with each TMA directly, negating the need for an MOU, the Steering Committee in its current form is no longer necessary. The Steering Committee will decide its future role and title at its final meeting in June 2008.

iii) Technical Committee: The Technical Committee is comprised of TMA managers and municipal staff who oversee TDM activities, such as employee trip reduction programs. The Technical Committee will continue its role as a forum for coordination and planning of TDM activities on a region-wide basis. The City of Toronto has chaired the Technical Committee since March 2007.

(D) Smart Commute in Toronto:

D1. Smart Commute North Toronto, Vaughan was launched in 2001 and is a Transportation Demand Management effort focused on employers in northwest Toronto and the City of Vaughan, centred around York University. The City of Toronto is a founding partner of this TMA, which a registered not-for-profit organization.

D2. Smart Commute Northeast Toronto was launched in 2005 by the City of Toronto and is TMA focused on employers in the Consumers Road area near Highway 401 and the 404/Don Valley Parkway. Smart Commute Northeast Toronto is managed by Smart Commute North Toronto, Vaughan and the City provides annual funding in support of this effort.

D3. City of Toronto Smart Commute is an employee trip reduction program for the members of the Toronto Public Service. This program was launched as a pilot for people working out of the North York Civic Centre in 2005 and expanded to other worksites in 2007. Its primary goal is to create a policy environment within the corporation that makes it easier for employees to choose more sustainable modes of travel for their daily commute and business travel. The program is reviewing existing policies (e.g. Transportation, Parking) and developing new policies (e.g. Telework, Emergency Ride Home) that are supportive of TDM goals.

For example, as part of the recommendations in the Sustainable Transportation Initiatives report, City Council directed the Executive Director of Human Resources to develop a Telework policy for the corporation.

D4.Smart Commute Central Toronto is an emerging effort and City staff are in the early stages of launching a new TMA for the central/downtown core of the City of Toronto. The borders of the TMA will correspond roughly with those of Planning District 1.

In early 2008 a feasibility study was conducted for the proposed TMA. The study consisted of consultation sessions with downtown businesses and property managers/owners and a data gathering and analysis exercise. It confirms highly favourable conditions for the development of a TMA in this area, providing the justification for moving forward. A proposal has been submitted to Metrolinx to provide matching funding in 2008.

CONCLUSION

The Smart Commute Initiative for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area has been very successful, resulting in significant reductions in single occupancy vehicle trips and avoiding the production of greenhouse gas and smog causing emissions. In March 2007, the three year funding for the initiative from Transport Canada ended but has been largely replaced by Metrolinx.

The existing transportation demand management efforts occurring in the City of Toronto are continuing and City staff are in the process of developing a proposal for funding from Metrolinx to establish a transportation management association for the central area of the City.

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ATTACHMENTS

Smart Commute Initiative: Effective Congestion Relief