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# 1 Introduction to York Region

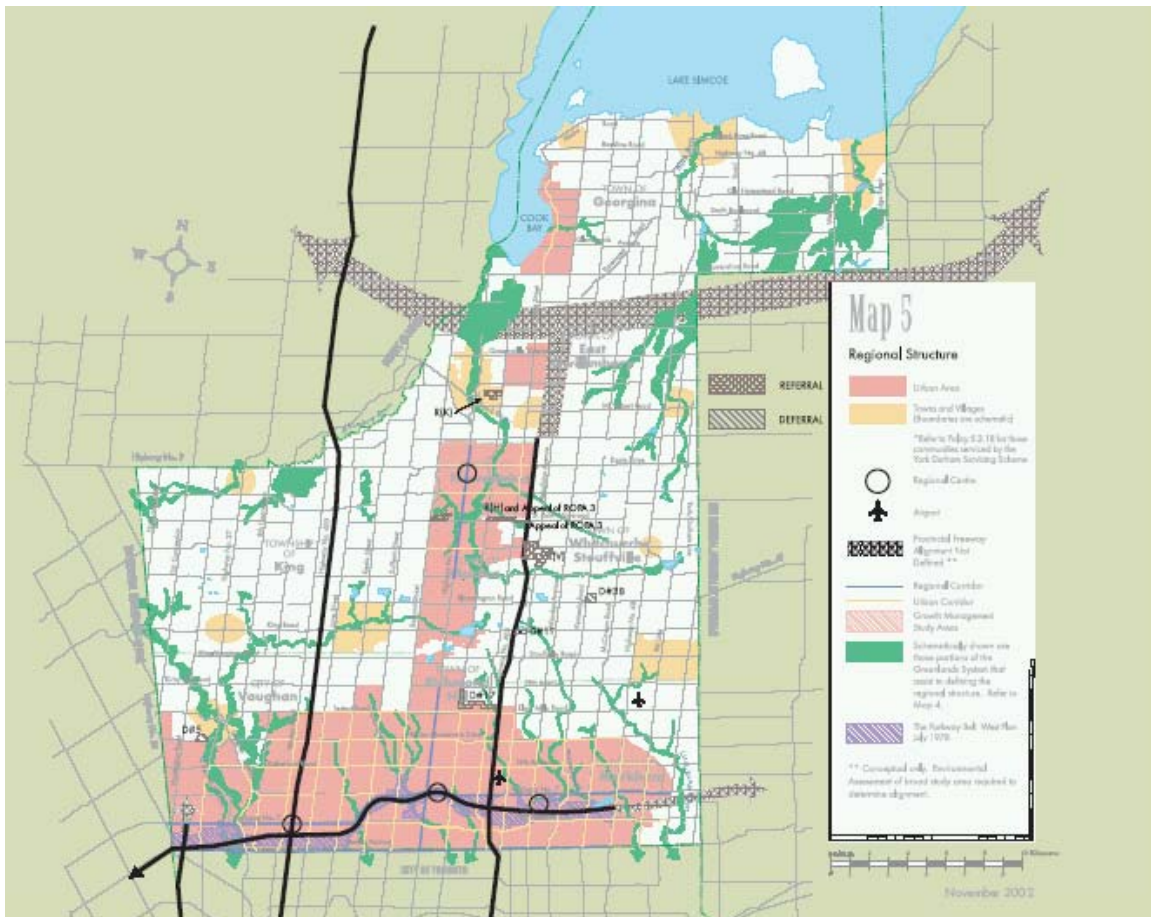
## 1.1 Regional Description

York Region is a two-tier municipality, comprising nine area municipalities (Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Whitchurch-Stouffville) and a regional council. The region covers over 1,756 square kilometres encompassing major parts of the Oak Ridges Moraine and parts of Lake Simcoe. These features are important water sources for the region's rivers. The land use split is 45% farm land, 40% rural and 15% urban development.<sup>1</sup> Since 1971, 160 square kilometres of prime farmland has been converted to urban use. This represents approximately one-and-a-half times the size of York Region in 1971.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 36.

Map 1: York Region Regional Overview. <sup>3</sup>

The regional population grew from 169,000 in 1971 to 713,000 in 1999; it is projected to reach 1.28 million by 2026 and 1.36 million by 2031. (See Annex 1 for table forecasting population and employment figures for area municipalities. This is an average annual growth rate of 2% (44.4% between 1991 and 2001), confirming its ranking as the sixth largest municipality in Canada. Over 70 % of the region’s population is concentrated in the three southern municipalities of Markham, Richmond Hill, and Vaughan. <sup>4</sup> Virtually all of the land south of the Oak Ridges Moraine, encompassed by these municipalities has been urbanized. The area north of the Moraine has been described as the “last frontier” for development in the region. <sup>5</sup>

Agriculture has historically been the primary economic driver in York Region, providing an important food source for an increasingly populated and industrialized area. As of 2004 there were approximately 50,000 businesses in the region employing 400,000

<sup>3</sup> York Region 2004. *Official Plan Office Consolidation (September 30, 2004)*, Map 5.

<sup>4</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 20–21; Neptis Foundation. 2004. *Simcoe County: The New Growth Frontier*, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> D.M.Fraster and B.P. Neary 2004. *The State of Greenlands Protection in South-Central Ontario* (Toronto: Neptis Foundation) pg.47.

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persons; employment figures are expected to nearly double by 2026. The region is seeking to attract knowledge-based activities as well as develop its manufacturing base.<sup>6</sup> Employment is expected to grow at a faster rate than population at approximately 2.2% per year.<sup>7</sup>

The region's rapid population and employment growth over the past 30 years<sup>8</sup> has been primarily new, auto-dependant residential development; non-automobile based transportation infrastructure has been limited.

The natural environment within York Region plays a determining role in the urbanization of the region including land-use density, design and location. A Regional Greenlands System has been designated to protect the natural areas.

The rapid growth in the region has resulted in increased road congestion due to residents' reliance on single occupancy trips. Poor air quality and increased commute times have led to calls for improvements.

## 1.2 Planning Direction

York Region's planning directions are defined through its official plan,<sup>9</sup> Transportation Master Plan,<sup>10</sup> and Vision 2026 document.<sup>11</sup>

York Region's planning direction is very much in transition, and the final outcomes are unclear. The region has been characterized by classic, low-density, automobile-dependent urban sprawl, with strongly separated land uses. However, a number of recent initiatives, particularly the Centres and Corridors Strategy, would seek to redirect the focus of development activities towards transit-serviced, higher-density, mixed-use locations, indicating a focus on the more urban portions of the region. At the same time, the region continues to support and undertake initiatives and directions that would continue its past patterns of outwards expansion onto greenfield sites.

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<sup>6</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 22–23.

<sup>7</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> York Region 2002, *Official Plan Consolidation*.

<sup>10</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 5, 42–54.

<sup>11</sup> Planning and Economic Development Committee. 2004. *Towards the Vision: Second Annual Report on Indicators of Progress for the Year 2003 and Alignment Workplan Update*, May 5, 2004 Meeting Minutes.

[www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/PEDC+rpt+5+2004.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/PEDC+rpt+5+2004.htm)

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# 2 Review of York Region’s Plans and Actions against Smart Growth Assessment Criteria

## 2.1 Development Location

<b>Smart Growth Principle: Development location</b>
Infill (brownfields and greyfields) versus Urban periphery (greenfields).
<b>Official Plan</b>
2.1 Regional Greenlands System — “Objective: To identify, protect and restore the Regional Greenlands system composed of natural areas and connecting links as an essential structural component of the Region.”
4.3 Housing — “Objective: To promote an integrated community structure and design that ensures a broad mix and range of lot sizes, unit sizes, housing forms, types and tenures that will satisfy the needs of the Region’s residents and workers.”
5.2 Community Building — “Objective: To develop diverse, self-sufficient, accessible, safe, green, economically vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, accessible communities through excellence in planning and urban design.”
5.5 Hamlets — “Objective: To retain the rural character of hamlets while permitting limited growth primarily through infilling.”

### 2.1.1 Historical Development Patterns

York Region has historically been dominated by sprawling low-density suburban development on former agricultural lands. Such development patterns are reflected in the fact that single family dwellings constitute more than 80% of the region’s housing stock. Since 1971, 160 square kilometres of prime farmland have been converted to urban use. This represents approximately one-and-a-half times the size of York Region in 1971.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 36.

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### 2.1.1.1 The Queensville Precedent

The approval of the Queensville development in East Gwillimbury is typical of the region's historical development patterns. The proposed plan, approved in 1998, would lead to the expansion of Queensville by 2021 to almost 1,200 hectares, with a population of 30,000, and providing 12,000 jobs. Despite an appeal by area residents to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), the proposal received the OMB's approval based on good planning and location. It was supported by the town, region, local school boards and provincial authorities.

Support came for the plan despite the fact that infrastructure services will be difficult to provide and are dependant on two external developments: an extension of the York–Durham Sewage System, which was assisted by the region's arrangement of a pre-paid development charge credit agreement, and an extension to Highway 404 to provide increased north–south capacity with the addition of two lanes to meet traffic demand. Without the extension of Highway 404 to at least Queensville (i.e. Ravenshoe Rd.), the development could not proceed. It was approved despite community objections, based on the rationale that due to comprehensive planning large-scale development is more efficient than small-scale development, and that existing settlements as locations for redevelopment, infill and intensification are inefficient because of decaying infrastructure.<sup>13</sup>

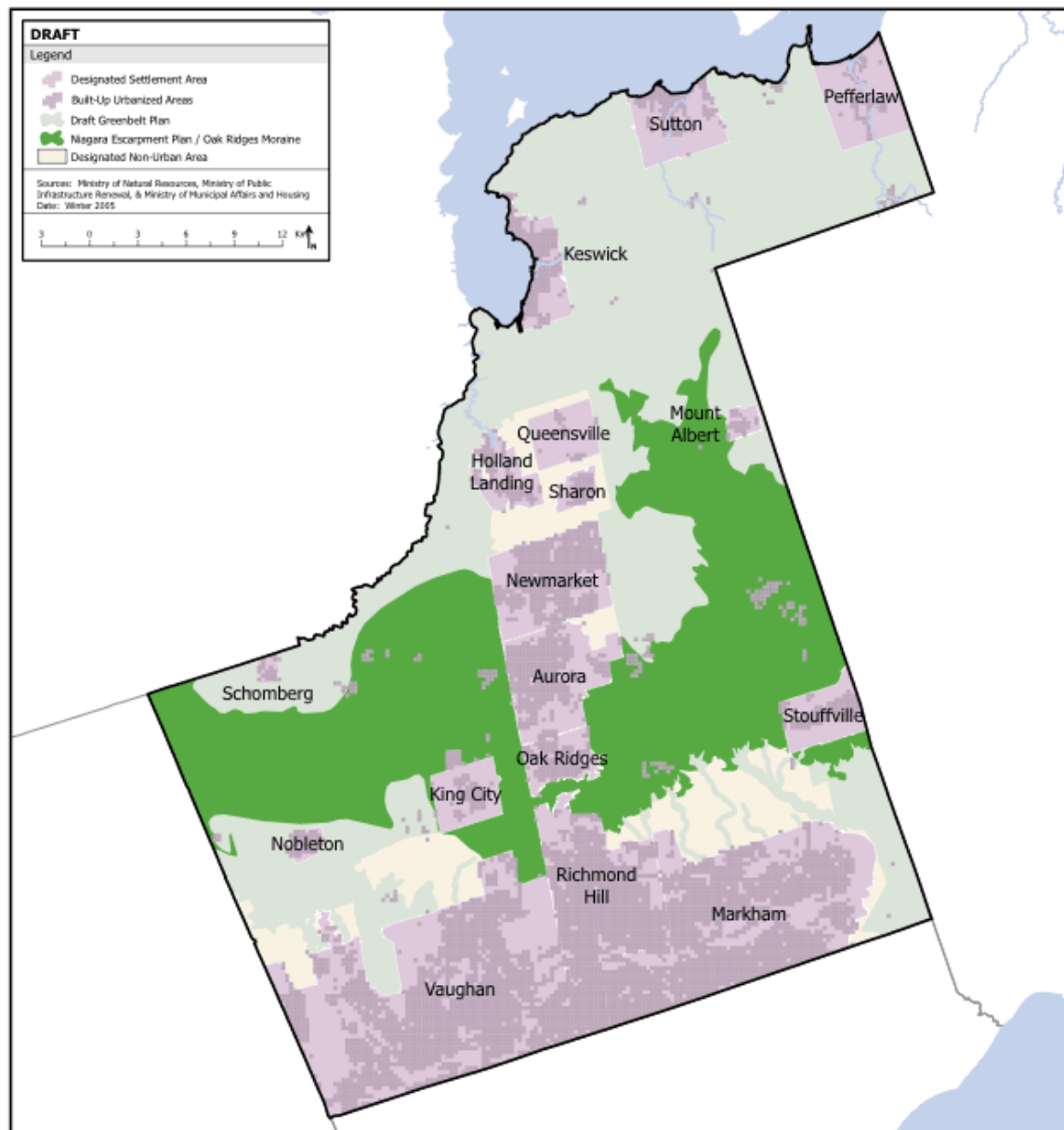
### 2.1.2 Greenfield Development

Recent research completed for the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal indicates that 22,946 hectares of land remain available for development within the region's designated settlement area of 63,133 hectares in total (2001 figures).<sup>14</sup> As shown the following map, developed by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, the designated settlement area includes large amounts of land in Vaughan, and area municipalities north of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

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<sup>13</sup> Neptis Foundation, 2004. *Simcoe County: The New Growth Frontier*, p. 50–51; Planning and Economic Development Committee. 2004. *Report No.2, OMB Hearing for 19T-03001, East Gwillimbury*, April 7, 2004 Meeting Minutes. [www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/PEDC+rpt+4+2004.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/PEDC+rpt+4+2004.htm)

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. 2005. *A Current Assessment of Gross Land Supply in the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. p. 31.

Map 2: York Region Land Supply, Winter 2005.<sup>15</sup>

The boundaries displayed in the map above are draft and illustrative only and should not be read to scale. They do not claim to accurately reflect approved land-use and planning boundaries. For more information on precise boundaries of Settlement Area, Towns, Villages and Hamlets, the appropriate municipality should be consulted.

In reviewing the region's development activities and stated intentions, it is apparent that the region is signaling a desire to move towards more concentrated urban development with the adoption of its Centres and Corridors Strategy. However the region has continued to propose OP amendments to identify potential areas for urban development

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. 2005. *A Current Assessment of Gross Land Supply in the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. p. 31.



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*outside* its current urban area designation (emphasis added).<sup>16</sup> The region also sought to have rural lands in Vaughan excluded from the province's proposed Greater Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt, and sought the inclusion of existing proposals for regional road and highway extensions in the Greenbelt Plan.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.1.2.1 Sewer and Water Infrastructure

Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill are connected to piped Lake Ontario water sources. The other area municipalities, particularly north of the Oak Ridges Moraine,<sup>18</sup> are supplied via groundwater wells operated by the region.<sup>19</sup>

It is estimated that in the vicinity of the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Yonge aquifer has dropped by forty metres over the last forty years. This is thought to be largely due to groundwater extraction resulting from the needs of York Region's rapidly growing population. Once it is used by households and businesses, most of the water is discharged into the York Durham Sanitary Sewer System (YDSS) and it flows all the way to the Duffins Sewage Treatment Plant in Pickering on Lake Ontario. This groundwater removal, use and piping to Lake Ontario, has been estimated to amount to a 50 Billion litre/year loss of water from York Region watersheds to the detriment of groundwater levels, wells, streams, wetlands and ecosystem function.<sup>20</sup>

In partnership with the Region of Peel and the City of Toronto, York Region is planning to access additional piped water sources from Lake Ontario.<sup>21</sup> Plans to pipe Lake Ontario water to York Region via Durham Region were abandoned in the face of strong public opposition to the construction impacts in Pickering.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, the York Durham Sanitary Sewer System (YDSS) (see Map) is being twinned and extended to accommodate 30 more years of growth in York Region. The estimated cost of this project is approximately \$870 million, with land-owners and developers providing 80% of the costs. Additional sewage would be piped from communities such as Aurora, Newmarket, King City, Queensville and East Gwillimbury

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<sup>16</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section 5.2, Part.16. Attachment 1 to the Commissioner's May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment. [www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

<sup>17</sup> Adler, Mike. 2005. "Leave Vaughan out of belt: York," *Stouffville Sun Tribune*, 1 January.

<sup>18</sup> Aurora, Newmarket, Holland Landing, Sharon, Queensville, Mount Albert, King City, Nobleton, Schomberg, Stouffville, Ballantrae, Musselman Lake, Kleinberg and Ansnorveldt.

<sup>19</sup> [www.region.york.ca/Services/water/Water+Supply/Watersupply.htm](http://www.region.york.ca/Services/water/Water+Supply/Watersupply.htm).

<sup>20</sup> Jim Robb, General Manager, Friends of the Rouge Watershed, Email communications. February 2005.

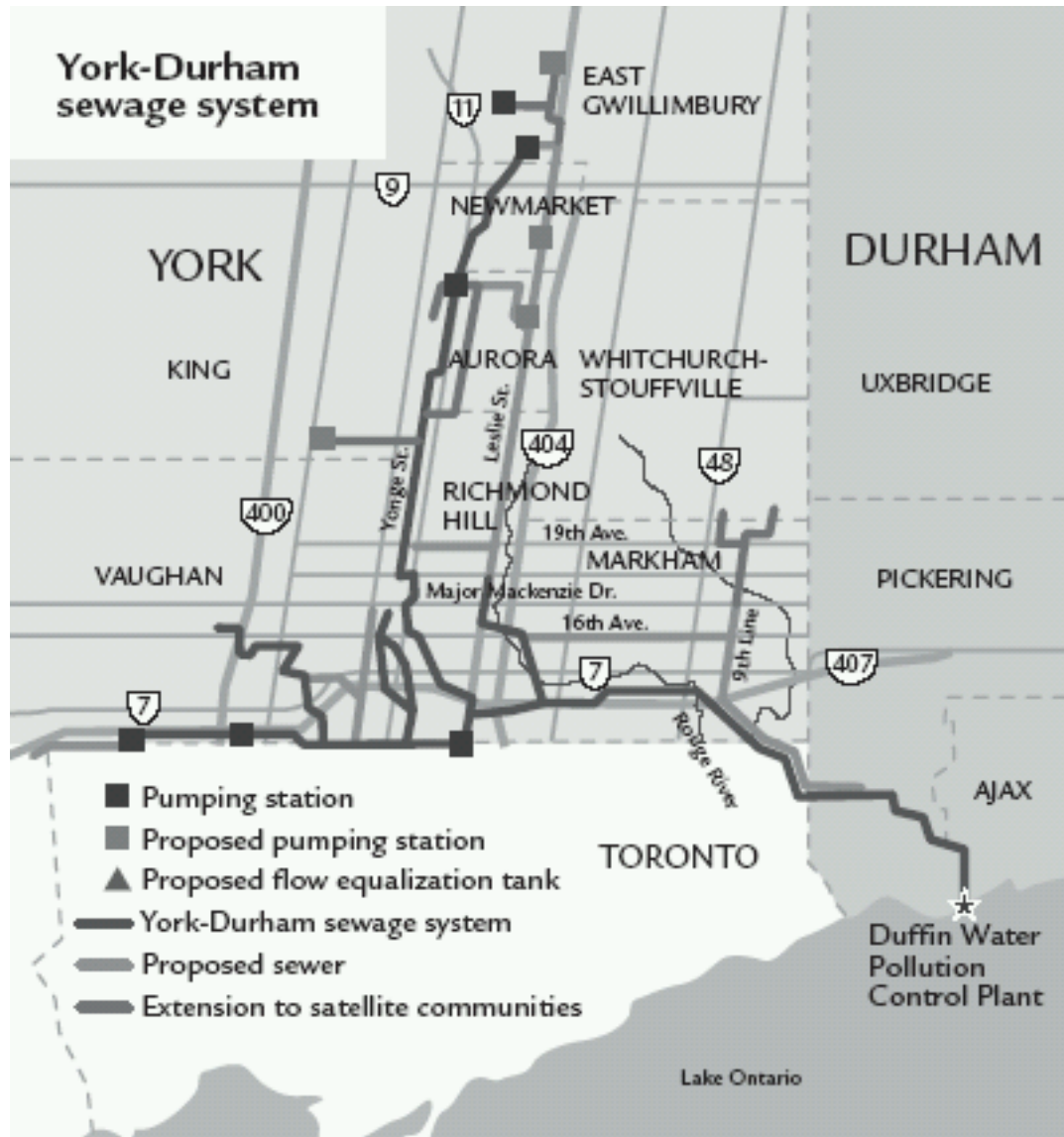
<sup>21</sup> Planning and Economic Development Committee, 2004, *OMB Hearing for 19T-03001 East Gwillimbury*, April 7, 2004, Meeting and Minutes.

<sup>22</sup> Jim Robb, General Manager, Friends of the Rouge Watershed, Email Communications. February 2005

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through the Oak Ridges Moraine more than 50 kilometres to the Duffin's Sewage Treatment Plant in Pickering on Lake Ontario. Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan would also discharge additional sewage to the twinned and extended system.<sup>23</sup>

**Map 3: The York Durham Sewage System**



In addition to its implications for future development in York region, particularly north of the Oak Ridges Moraine, the impacts of the construction of the sewer itself has been the subject of major concern. One federal prosecution and one private prosecution are already before the courts for damage to fish habitat contrary to the federal *Fisheries Act* associated with the construction of the system. As of December 2004, three other legal

<sup>23</sup> Gorrie, Peter. 2004. "Big pipe dwarfs King City's line," *Toronto Star*, 6 August. [www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article\\_Type1&c=Article&cid=1091743811834&call\\_pageid=968350130169&col=969483202845](http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1091743811834&call_pageid=968350130169&col=969483202845). See also Ferenc, L. 2004, "Close-up: The Big Pipe," *The Toronto Star*, January 3, 2004.

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investigations were underway by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Environment.<sup>24</sup>

York Region utilized simple Municipal Engineer Class Environmental Assessments to review, segment by segment, the inter-regional twinning and extension of the YDSS. As a result, it has been suggested that alternative sewage servicing systems were inadequately investigated and the impacts to water resources were significantly underestimated.<sup>25</sup>

The addition of a linkage to the YDSS for King City was approved by the province in August 2004. The link was justified as a required replacement of septic systems in the community, but had been widely criticized as being likely to facilitate and encourage urban development in the region.<sup>26</sup>

In October 2004, the Ontario Minister of the Environment responded to a request for a bump-up from several Class Environmental Assessments to one larger and more detailed individual Environmental Assessment for the overall YDSS twinning and extension. The Minister denied the bump-up for the 16th Avenue and Leslie Connector trunk sewers. However, additional conditions were imposed and individual EAs were required for the Southeast Collector and the Leslie Extension sections of the YDSS twinning.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.1.2.2 Provincial Highway Initiatives

Provincial infrastructure initiatives have significantly impacted the region's development patterns. The York–Durham Sewer System was originally a provincial initiative. More recently, provincial initiatives to extend the the 400-series highway network in York Region, particularly, as shown in the accompanying map, the northwards extension of Highways 427 and 404, the Bradford bypass and the eastward extension of Highway 407,<sup>28</sup> have had the effect of encouraging the outwards expansion of the region's urbanized area. The Queensville development is often cited as an example of this effect.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Adler, Mike. 2004. "Sewer construction may be delayed," *Markham Economist and Sun*, 25 September. [www.yorkregion.com/yr/newscentre/markhameconomistandsun/story/2234981p-2589585c.html](http://www.yorkregion.com/yr/newscentre/markhameconomistandsun/story/2234981p-2589585c.html)

<sup>25</sup> Jim Robb, General Manager, Friends of the Rouge Watershed, Email communication. February 2005.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Brennan, R., and Swanson, G., 2004, "Sewage link won't bolster sprawl, McGuinty Says, *Toronto Star*, 6 August.

<sup>27</sup> Jim Robb, General Manager, Friends of the Rouge Watershed, Email communication. February 2005

<sup>28</sup> See Winfield, M. 2004. *Towards Implementation: Building Sustainable Urban Communities in Ontario*. Drayton Valley, AB: Pembina Institute. Refer to Map 1 for an overview of the routes of these projects.

<sup>29</sup> See Neptis Foundation. 2004. *Simcoe County: The New Growth Frontier*, p. 50–51.

Map 4: Toronto Region Proposed 400 Series Highway Expansions



The Bradford bypass and extensions to Highways 404 and 427 were de-prioritized by the province in its July 2004 proposed Growth Management Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region, *Places to Grow*.<sup>30</sup> However, area municipalities pressed for the continuation of the extensions to support developments such as Queensville.<sup>31</sup> The February 2005 draft of the growth plan partially reinstated the 404 extension, as least as far as Ravenshoe Road,<sup>32</sup> as well as a short extension of Highway 427 in Vaughan.

### 2.1.3 Redevelopment and Infill

Redevelopment is proposed as a tool for encouraging the transformation of single-use and under-utilized land to full service areas, including housing, with close proximity to transit. While there are no specific targets for housing redevelopment provided in the OP, it is council's policy to support the development of an average of 8,000 new housing units annually. These would be a range of housing types, sizes and costs to meet

<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. 2004. *Places to Grow: The Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Management Plan*, p.33.

<sup>31</sup> Adler, Mike. 2004. "Sprawl plan halts roads," *York Region Era Banner*, 15 July; Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. 2004. *Places to Grow*, p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> Adler, Mike. 2005. "Growth plan revitalizes highways", *The Liberal*, February 20. <http://www.yorkregion.com/yr/newscentre/liberal/story/2583148p-2994938c.html>

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projected population needs but their location (i.e., infill vs. greenfields) is not designated.<sup>33</sup>

The region has set a target that 20% of expected population growth will occur in existing built-up areas and redevelopment projects. A housing inventory shows that, over the last 13 years, the region has achieved an intensification rate of 17%.<sup>34</sup> Proposed amendments to the OP seek to raise this target to 30%, to be achieved in part through new areas of development within existing urban areas and transit guarantees.<sup>35</sup>

The provincial draft Growth Management Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region identified the Town of Markham as a “redevelopment success story.” The town’s planning focuses on intensification and redevelopment of its downtown core so there is no requirement for expansion of urban boundaries. According to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, “Markham Centre will become a vibrant, intensive, mixed-use centre with a distinctive character and a focus for the town’s many communities.”<sup>36</sup>

### 2.1.4 Changing Direction? The Centres and Corridors Strategy

Regional Official Plan (ROP) Amendment 43, the Centres and Corridors Strategy, adopted in December 2004,<sup>37</sup> attempt to focus future growth along a series of centres and corridors, and encourages concentrated, mixed-use, community development along mainstreets. As focal points, the centres provide for mixed-use residential, commercial, office and public services that are pedestrian-oriented and accessible, thus supporting the objective of increased working/living opportunities.<sup>38</sup>

The four regional centres are to be Markham Centre, Newmarket Centre, Bayview Glen in Richmond Hill and the Vaughan Corporate Centre. These centres are located within existing urban areas and are to be linked by regional corridors along Yonge Street,

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<sup>33</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 31–32.; York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section. 5.3., Part 7, Attachment 1 to the Commissioner’s May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment. [www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

<sup>34</sup> Urban Strategies Inc. 2005. *Application of a Land-use Intensification Target for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, Appendix 1. Toronto: Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

<sup>35</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section 5.2., Parts 4 and 7, Attachment 1 to the Commissioner’s May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment. [www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm); John Waller, Director of Long-range Planning, York Region, Interview on November 10, 2004.

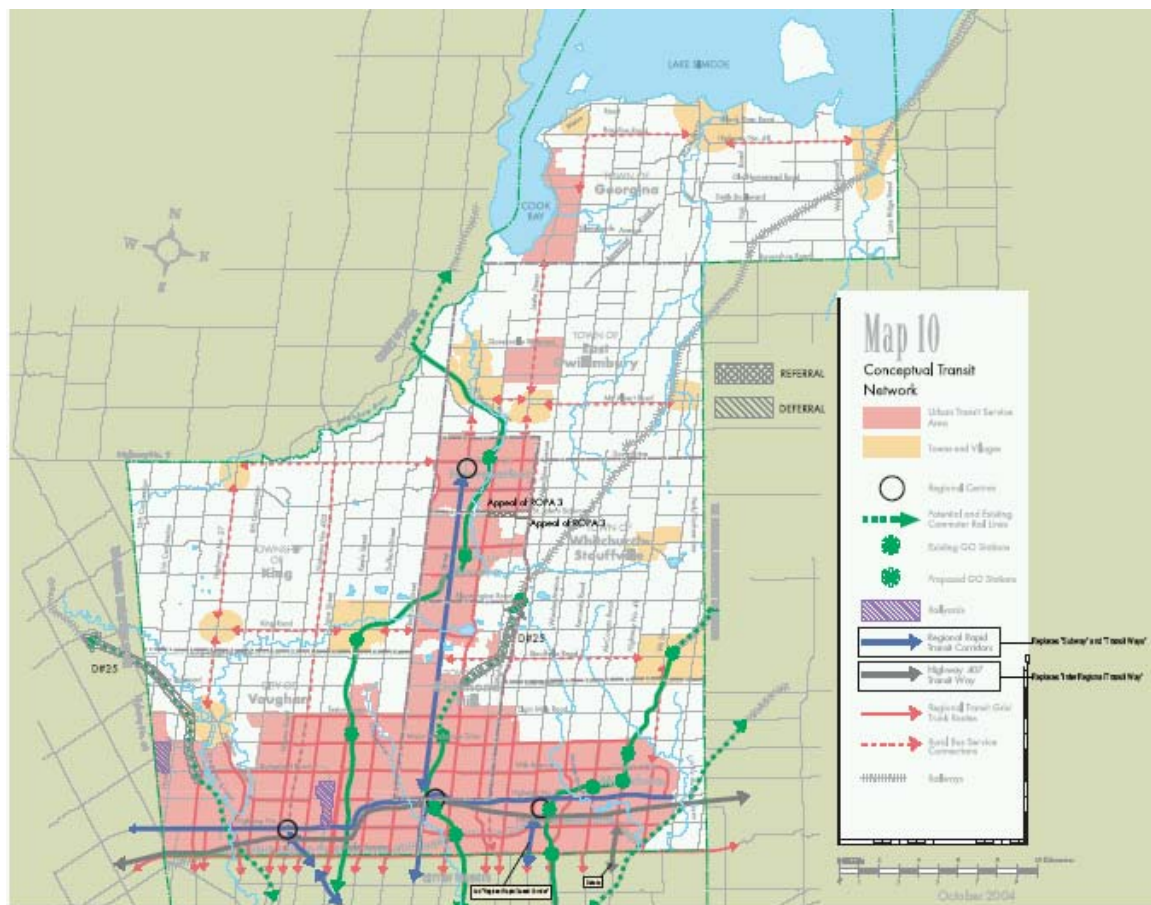
<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. 2004. *Places to Grow: The Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Management Plan*, p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> York Region. 2005. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, OP Amendment, January 6, 2005. [www.region.york.on.ca/About+Us/York+Region+Official+Plan/Regional+Official+Plan.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/About+Us/York+Region+Official+Plan/Regional+Official+Plan.htm)

<sup>38</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Attachment 1 to the Commissioner’s May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment dated March 17, 2004. [www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

Highway 7, and north–south corridors in Vaughan and Markham.<sup>39</sup> Proposed amendments to the ROP suggest that local centres will also be developed as elements of the urban infrastructure that will become focal points for local and regional transit. Key development areas are identified as “sub-centres” between the regional and local centres.<sup>40</sup>

**Map 5: Centres and Corridors Strategy<sup>41</sup>**



While the Centres and Corridors Strategy attempts to promote an alternative development strategy for the region that is reliant on public transit, it faces a number of key challenges in its implementation. These include the consideration that:

<sup>39</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section 5.5, Attachment 1 to the Commissioner’s May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment dated March 17, 2004. [www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

<sup>40</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section. 5.3, Part 11; Section. 5.4, Part.3.; Section.5.5, Attachment 1 to the Commissioner’s May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment. [www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

<sup>41</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Map 10.

- The absence of transit-supportive infrastructure at the initial stages of regional development, with the result that residents have developed transportation patterns that may not be altered easily should transit become available at a later date.<sup>42</sup>
- The current north-south focus of commuting patterns to and from Toronto, rather than east-west within the region
- The geographic dispersion of employment within the region, making the establishment of nodes of activity of sufficient intensity to justify higher order transit services.

More generally, it is unclear if the centres and corridors will result in sufficient densities and population concentrations to make transit services viable and thereby justify the extent of senior level government capital investments to implement the strategy.<sup>43</sup> As shown in Table 1, the current densities of the proposed centres are far below those of downtown Hamilton or Toronto, where high levels of transit use are prevalent. In fact, the population of one of the proposed centres, Newmarket Centre, fell by 1.4 % between 1996 and 2001<sup>44</sup>

**Table 1: Residential and Employment Density, York Centres and Downtown Toronto and Hamilton**<sup>45</sup>

Location	Residential Density (residents per ha)	Employment Density (jobs per ha)	Total Density (jobs and residents per ha)
Markham Centre	36.8	7.6	44.4
Newmarket Centre	27.8	11.1	38.9
Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway	22.3	10.7	33.0
Vaughan Corporate Centre	13.5	11.1	24.6
Downtown Hamilton	66.6	66.9	133.5
Downtown Toronto	57.3	176.1	233.4
Yonge-Eglington Centre	110.5	94.4	204.9

To effectively operationalize this strategy, the region has identified a number of key requirements, including significant infrastructure investment, a new set of financial tools, a new set of planning tools, and complementary supportive planning programs such as

<sup>42</sup> John Gorman, Markham Environmental Alliance, Interview on November 8, 2004.

<sup>43</sup> For detailed profiles of the proposed centres see Ontario Growth Secretariat, 2005. *Urban Growth Centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (Toronto: Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal).

<sup>44</sup> Ontario Growth Secretariat, 2005. *Urban Growth Centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (Toronto: Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal) pg.21.

<sup>45</sup> Data from Ontario Growth Secretariat, 2005. *Urban Growth Centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe*

TDM, that in combination will support the implementation of a new direction in urban planning.<sup>46</sup>

## 2.2 Land-use Density

### Smart Growth Principle: Land use density

Higher density, clustered **versus** Lower density, dispersed.

### Provisions of York Region's Official Plan

5.2 Community Building — "Objective: To develop diverse, self-sufficient, accessible, safe, green, economically vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, accessible communities through excellence in planning and urban design."

### 2.2.1 Historical Patterns

Although dominated by suburban housing developments, the density of residential development in the region has approximately doubled in the last ten years, and is currently estimated to average 8–12 units per hectare. Although an improvement over past practices, these densities remain well below those achieved in more urban areas, like Toronto and Hamilton,<sup>47</sup> that experience high levels of transit use.

### 2.2.2 Increasing the Density of Greenfield Development

York Region has historically comprised villages that focus attention on mainstreet activities, promoting a sense of community among residents. More recent developments have been low density as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Existing Density for Selected Municipalities in Greater Toronto Area (GTA)–Hamilton Area<sup>48</sup>**

	Population	No. of Dwellings	Area (Hectares)	Density (units per hectare)
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<sup>46</sup> John Waller, Director of Long-range Planning, York Region, Interview on November 10, 2004.

<sup>47</sup> Urban Development Institute. 2004. *Analysis of Land Supply in the GTA–Hamilton Area*. [www.udiontario.com/](http://www.udiontario.com/)

<sup>48</sup> Urban Development Institute. 2004. *Analysis of Land Supply in the GTA–Hamilton Area*. [www.udiontario.com/](http://www.udiontario.com/) Definition of gross density used in analysis: The density used in this analysis is a gross number and contains land uses not generally included in Official Plan definitions. These uses include regional road rights-of-way; highways, mixed use commercial, retail and office lands along with the typically included uses of all residential areas and schools, with the exception of parks, which were excluded due to mapping constraints. The only areas excluded from the measured urban areas would be: open space (valleys, woodlots, wetlands, cemeteries and parks), major institutional uses such as airports, railway yards and the employment/industrial lands. [Author's note: gross density could actually be lower given that open space and employment lands have been excluded from the calculation.]



Markham	208,615	61,618	6,250	9.9
Newmarket	65,788	21,589	2,607	8.3
Richmond Hill	132,030	41,966	4,374	9.6
Vaughan	182,022	54,359	6,141	8.9

The challenge for the development of the region is to capture the same characteristics of mainstreet development in new urban development as the region continues to expand.

The region is promoting higher-density housing types within regional centres, with density targets of 2.5 floor space index (FSI) over the long term.<sup>49</sup> There do not appear to be specific housing density targets established by the region.

### 2.2.3 Centres and Corridors

The regional Centres and Corridors Strategy provides a detailed implementation plan for growth through development of higher-density, mixed-use centres connected by a series of transportation corridors. The strategy provides a framework for municipal development and identifies sites suitable for compact development along regional centres and corridors. Site-specific public concerns have been raised with respect to density rates, building heights, and so on.<sup>50</sup>

## 2.3 Land-use Mix

### Smart Growth Principle: Land use mix

Well-mixed versus Homogeneous, not mixed.

#### Official Plan

3.3 Locations for Economic Development — “Objective: To create a range of potential locations for economic uses across the Region that support economic development.”

4.1 Human Development — “Objective: To develop communities where people of all ages, backgrounds and capabilities can meet their individual needs for human development through the various stages of their lives by providing opportunities for employment, learning, culture, recreation and spiritual, emotional, physical and social well-being.”

4.3 Housing — “Objective: To promote an integrated community structure and design that ensures a broad mix and range of lot sizes, unit sizes, housing forms, types and tenures that will satisfy the needs of the Region’s residents and workers.”

<sup>49</sup> Floor space index is a ratio of gross floor area to the lot area. York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section 5.3, Parts 4 and 7. Attachment 1 to the Commissioner’s May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment.

[www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

<sup>50</sup> Planning and Economic Development Committee. 2004. *York Region Centres and Corridors Strategy*, June 16, 2004 Meeting Minutes. [www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/PEDC+rpt+6+2004.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/PEDC+rpt+6+2004.htm)

5.3 Centres — “Objective: To create a well-designed system of centres to focus residential, institutional and business activities.”

### 2.3.1 Employment and Housing

Employment has traditionally been the primary reason for inter-regional travel as residents of York Region commute to jobs in downtown Toronto, and residents outside the region, for example, in the manufacturing sector, commute into the region. A recent report examining the employment sector has suggested a series of mismatches between commuters and their place of residence in part due to a lack of affordable housing options within the region.<sup>51</sup>

As indicated in Table 1, the ratio of jobs to residents in some York region centres is extremely low (e.g. Markham Centre).<sup>52</sup> The region is seeking to improve work/live opportunities for the local labour force and recognizes that achieving a balance between employment availability and access to housing will have mutual benefits for both local employers and employees, providing a ready supply of local labour and shortening travel times.<sup>53</sup>

### 2.3.2 Transit Access and Mixed Use

The OP recognizes that land use and transportation are inextricably linked. In designing employment centres, transit accessibility is identified as a specific criterion for inclusion, thus providing employees with an alternative to the automobile as a means of transportation.<sup>54</sup> This recognition also underlies the Centres and Corridors Strategy. Markham Centre, Newmarket Centre, and Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway are currently served by GO Transit and regional bus routes,<sup>55</sup> although their current densities raise questions about the viability of additional transit services.

The TMP proposes that “transit-supportive development and community/urban design guidelines” be drafted to support both the region and area municipalities in secondary planning and development proposal review.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> John Waller, Director of Long-range Planning, York Region, Interview on November 10, 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Other downtown areas in the region also have closer to a 1 to 1 ratio of jobs to residents (e.g. Downtown Kitchener/Uptown Waterloo, Downtown Cambridge, Etobicoke Centre, Downtown Guelph, Downtown Peterborough, Scarborough Centre, Downtown St.Catherines, Ontario Growth Secretariat 2005., *Urban Growth Centres*).

<sup>53</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 21.

<sup>54</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> Ontario Growth Secretariat, 2005. *Urban Growth Centres*.

<sup>56</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 37.

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Access to transit service is a key element of community design providing important contributions to business development and environmental conservation. Transit service guidelines for area municipalities are “no more than 500 metres (a 5–10 minute walk) for 90% of the residents and no more than 200 metres for 50% of residents.”<sup>57</sup>

### 2.3.3 Affordable Housing

Housing provisions reflect the demands in the housing market. Historically, single-family housing has dominated the region’s housing form, and, at present, 80% of the housing stock remains single-detached units. In designating land for housing and setting development targets, the region requires a minimum of 25% affordable new housing units in each of the area municipalities, and the need to promote higher-density residential housing in general.<sup>58</sup>

The region is now building at a 60:40 ratio of single detached homes to mixed housing, with a goal to achieve a 50:50 ratio over the next ten years.<sup>59</sup>

### 2.3.4 Big Box Retail

Municipalities are urged in the regional Official Plan to integrate retail facilities into the community by including in design proposals a system of roads and pedestrian access into the community, such that there is a mix of residential and commercial uses, integrated park land, buildings are positioned in relation to nearby streets, and large parking lots are avoided.<sup>60</sup>

However, within the existing OP, there are also provisions for large (greater than 30,008 square metres) retail facilities. While the region requires an impact analysis to assess transportation needs and transit access in an attempt to mitigate the significant negative impacts of large retail, it is difficult to integrate facilities of this size into community design. Big box retail facilities are monolithic; the fact that they are even being considered by the region raises the question of how the integrity of community design can be retained.

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<sup>57</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 40.

<sup>58</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 31

<sup>59</sup> In this context, mixed housing refers to multiple dwelling units, townhomes and other structures other than the traditional single-family detached homes. John Waller, Director of Long-range Planning, York Region, Interview on November 10, 2004.

<sup>60</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 25.

### 2.3.5 Community Design

In designing for regional and local centres as locations for future growth, area municipalities are tasked with reviewing their own OPs and developing secondary plans that focus on developing pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented locations, and that also include provisions for infrastructure investment for expansion or build-out. Provisions for regional centres assume a significant contribution to regional development while local centres support the immediate surrounding communities. Local centres would cover an area bounded by approximately 30.35 hectares including existing historical areas.<sup>61</sup>

The region's community development criteria incorporate many of the characteristics that promote concentrated, focused growth around a central area, alternate forms of transportation use, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes. This is accomplished through targeted population settlement using minimum target levels, transit-focused housing development and location, and creation of a system of walkways and bicycle paths that includes ample greenspace and parkland.<sup>62</sup>

## 2.4 Scale of Development

### Smart Growth Principle: Scale of Development

Human scale. Smaller buildings, blocks and roads. Attention to detail as people experience landscape up close, as pedestrians **versus** Larger scale. Larger buildings, blocks and roads. Less attention to detail as people experience the landscape at a distance, from cars.

### Official Plan

5.2 Community Building — “Objective: To develop diverse, self-sufficient, accessible, safe, green, economically vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, accessible communities through excellence in planning and urban design.”

5.9 Estate Residential Development — “Objective: To provide for a limited supply of estate residential lots, based on a demonstrated need and in a manner that will minimize the impact on the natural environment, on agricultural operations and on servicing costs.”

5.11 Resort/Recreational Development — “Objective: To provide for the development of prestigious, high quality, resort/recreational developments in the Rural Policy Area, based on a demonstrated need and in a manner that will minimize the impact on the natural environment, on agricultural operations and on servicing costs.”

<sup>61</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section 5.3, Part 9 and Section 5.4, Part 3, Attachment 1 to the Commissioner's May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment.

[www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

<sup>62</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 38–41.

Proposed amendments to the OP include the expectation that new areas of development within the existing urban area will reflect elements of the urban design criteria. The criteria include “street definition through building location and design, building interface with open space, pedestrian movement and connection, building design that complements existing neighbourhoods, and pedestrian scale and amenity.”<sup>63</sup> These criteria are meant to encourage development that is primarily pedestrian-focused.

Provisions in the OP limit estate development in recognition that this is exclusive housing with the potential for significant environmental impacts. Proposals for such development require an amendment to area municipality official plans, and must meet the following development criteria: conform to the local natural features, retain rural character, and be developed in an appropriate environmentally friendly manner following an assessment of long-term environmental impacts.<sup>64</sup>

Resort and recreational development land uses are dependant upon the natural features of the region for sustainability and attractiveness. Prior to approval of these types of development, the environmental and social impacts must be assessed in depth.<sup>65</sup>

The province’s recently adopted Greenbelt Plan, which covers much of York Region, prohibits estate residential development and adult lifestyle and retirement communities in the protected countryside of the greenbelt,<sup>66</sup> and places significant restrictions on resort and recreational development.<sup>67</sup>

## 2.5 Location of Public Services

### **Smart Growth Principle: Public services**

Local, distributed, smaller. Accommodates walking access versus Regional, consolidated, larger. Requires automobile access.

### **Official Plan**

4.1 Human Development — “Objective: To develop communities where people of all ages, backgrounds, capabilities can meet their individual needs for human development throughout the various stages in their lives by providing opportunities for employment, learning, culture, recreation and spiritual, emotional, physical and social well-being.”

5.3 Centres — “Objective: To create a well-designed system of centres to focus residential,

<sup>63</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section 5.2, Part 7, Attachment 1 to the Commissioner’s May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment. [www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

<sup>64</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 56–8.

<sup>65</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 60.

<sup>66</sup> Ministry of Municipal Affairs. 2004. *Greenbelt Plan 2005*, Section 3.1.4.

<sup>67</sup> Ministry of Municipal Affairs 2004. *Greenbelt Plan 2005*, Section 4.1.2.

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institutional and business activities.”
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Council policy provides that both new development and redevelopment must take into account the availability of and access to existing and proposed human services. A Human Services Plan for the region will be prepared that identifies service needs and priorities, and will be used by district health councils, area municipalities, consumers and others to draft service delivery strategies. Proposed plan amendments suggest that a strategy be developed that integrates human services planning with land-use and fiscal planning.<sup>68</sup>

Facilities for the arts, culture and recreation should be integrated with local business, health and social services, parks, and municipal services and be located in proximity to centres, whether regional or urban, as well as transit corridors.<sup>69</sup> This has been captured within proposed amendments to the OP:

*“Regional Centres should be the primary and priority locations for public investment including public buildings and investment supported community facilities and services. Major Regional buildings and facilities will be located in the Regional Centres. The municipalities will be encouraged to locate major public buildings and facilities in the Regional Centres.”<sup>70</sup>*

These provisions within the official planning documents suggest that access to public facilities will be concentrated in regional centres. The concentration of services in a handful of locations may encourage vehicle use to access services — the opposite of a distributed approach that encourages local access.

## 2.6 Transportation

<b>Smart Growth Principle: Transportation</b>
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Multi-modal supports walking, cycling and public transit versus Automobile-oriented, poorly suited for walking, cycling and transit.
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Official Plan
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5.4 Corridors — “Objective: To identify corridors as mixed use transit spines that link urban and regional centres.”
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6.1 The Road Network — “Objective: To plan and protect street and road corridors so that they can be developed in a manner that is supportive of the future urban and rural structure of York
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<sup>68</sup> York Region. 2003. *Official Plan Amendment 34*, Human Services Plan.

[www.region.york.on.ca/About+Us/York+Region+Official+Plan/Regionally+Initiated+Amendments+to+the+ROP.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/About+Us/York+Region+Official+Plan/Regionally+Initiated+Amendments+to+the+ROP.htm)

<sup>69</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 28–9.

<sup>70</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section 5.3, Part 8, Attachment 1 to the Commissioner’s May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment. [www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

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Region and that can accommodate future transportation demands.

To ensure that roads are improved in a manner that is supportive of all modes of transportation including walking, cycling, automobile, transit and truck and that minimizes conflicts between these different modes.

To increase the total person-carrying and goods-carrying capability of the regional street and road network in a manner that is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of this Plan.”

6.2 Transit Network — “Objective: To provide transit services that is convenient, accessible and equitable to all residents of York.”

6.6 Goods Movement — “Objective: To facilitate the movement of goods, improve the level of safety and minimize the risk associated with the transportation of dangerous goods.”

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### 2.6.1 Modal Split

Less than 8% of the region’s population utilizes the system on a regular basis, with 79% of trips being made by automobile.<sup>71</sup> Based on current morning peak period trips by residents of the region, it is forecast that the morning peak transit modal split will increase to 17% by 2031.<sup>72</sup> This projected increase in the modal split is based on full implementation of the transit initiatives outlined in the region’s planning documents.

In a business-as-usual scenario, transit modal share will remain low at 5.4% in the regions outside the City of Toronto.<sup>73</sup> Since the initial forecasting in 2002, the region has now updated its modal split targets to 33%,<sup>74</sup> which is more consistent with the expected outcomes from the implementation of its current transit planning.

### 2.6.2 Roads and Highway Expansion

The region retains jurisdiction over the road network that connects its area municipalities and is responsible for transportation planning. “Vehicle trip reduction strategies” are described in the OP that aim to reduce vehicle use through promotion of telecommuting and home-based businesses as well as flex-hours within a wider public education campaign emphasizing the benefits from walking, cycling and transit use. It is hoped that

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<sup>71</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p.9.

<sup>72</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 23–4.

<sup>73</sup> IBI Group in association with Dillon Consulting Ltd. 2002. *Toronto-Related Region Futures Study/ Interim Report: Implications of Business-As-Usual Development*. Toronto: Neptis Foundation.

<sup>74</sup> John Waller, Director of Long-range Planning, York Region, Interview on November 10, 2004.

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coordination among area municipalities, developers and the public will result in a “minimization of land required for roadways, and improving streetscapes.”<sup>75</sup>

Residents of the region are highly dependent on their vehicles; “more than 70% of the region’s households have access to 2 or more vehicles” averaging 2.6 trips per day per person.<sup>76</sup>

While the region’s planning documents have stipulated that reduced automobile dependency is a priority, the TMP has outlined a series of road improvements and upgrades that support transportation by road throughout the region. Council has supported the building of a series of roadways including,

- Highway 407;
- Highway 427 north; by a local official plan amendment and secondary plans that integrate land and transportation planning and development for the Regional Official Plan Amendment 19 area;
- Highway 404 north from Davis Drive with links to Highway 400 and to the Highway 7/Highway 12 junction;
- a high-capacity connection between Highway 407 and 401 in the eastern part of Markham and Metropolitan Toronto;
- The Greenlane-Herald Road extension to serve as a Highway 9 by-pass for the Town of Newmarket; and
- interchanges on freeways at regional and other arterial road crossings as development occurs in the area and the need is identified.<sup>77</sup>

In addition, while the region has proposed road improvements to facilitate transit initiatives, many of the provisions are for the development of non-transit road projects. High priority was placed on construction of the Markham bypass to support growth in the eastern portion of Markham. The bypass, which eliminates the need to drive through Markham’s downtown area, is an attempt to move heavier truck traffic off of Highway 48 between 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Major Mackenzie.<sup>78</sup>

Included in the list of proposed roadways is a transportation corridor running east–west mid-point through the region, referred to as the King City bypass, which would

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<sup>75</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 63–4.

<sup>76</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 9.

<sup>77</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 66–7.

<sup>78</sup> John Gorman, Markham Environmental Alliance, Interview on November 8, 2004.

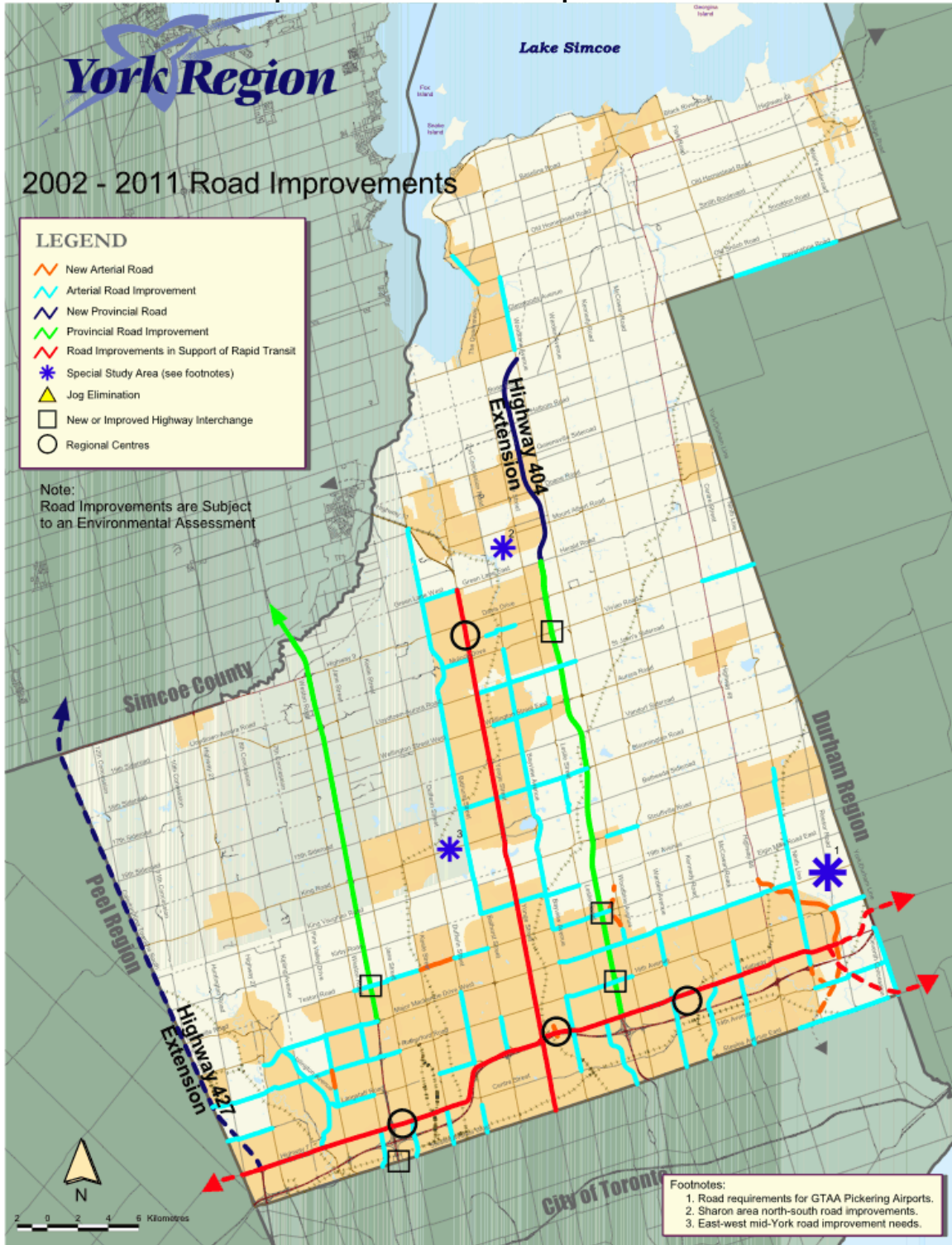


accommodate projected increased traffic. Significant community concerns were raised with respect to construction negatively impacting on the Oak Ridges Moraine. There has been no resolution or alternative proposed solution to the transportation capacity deficiencies noted in this area.<sup>79</sup>

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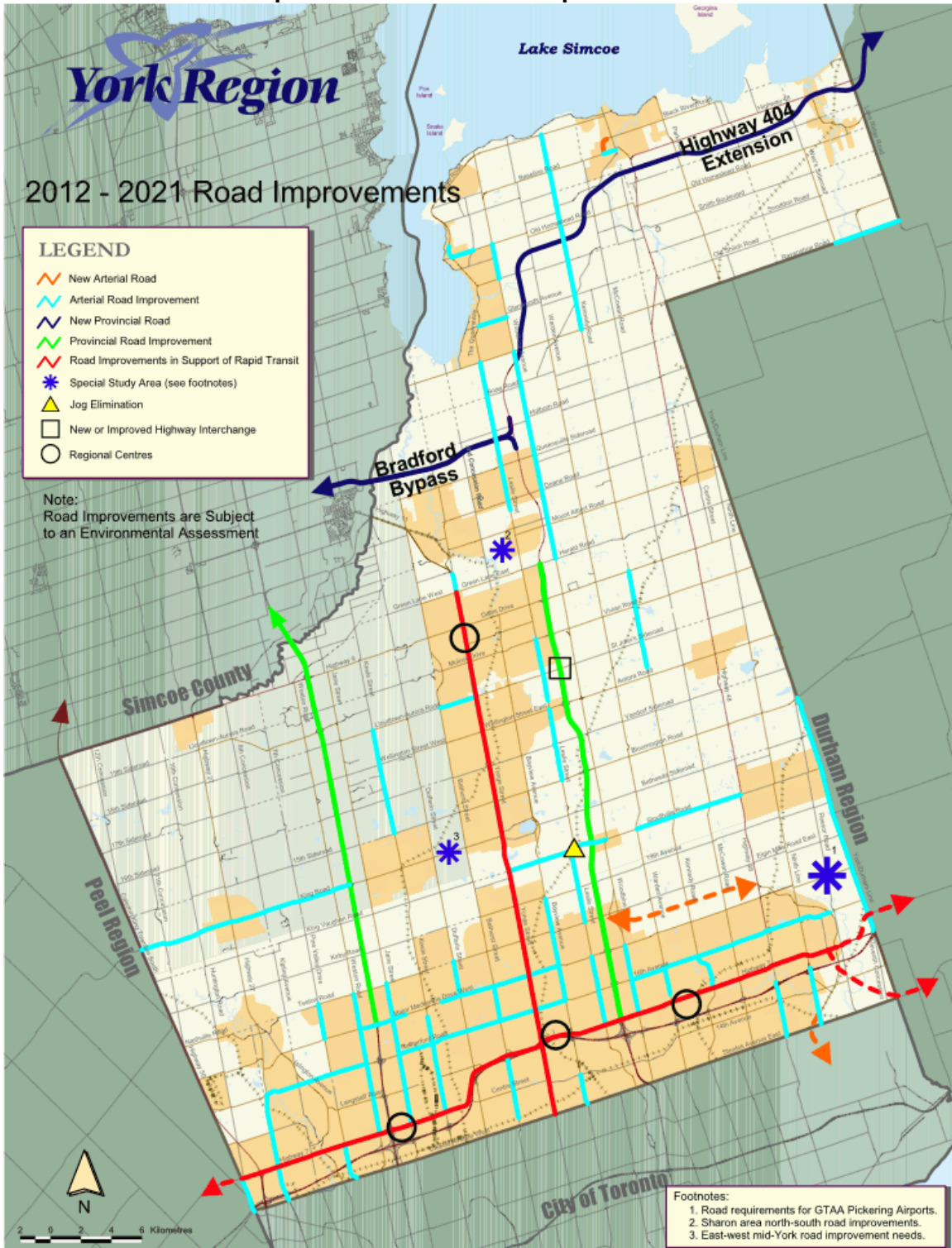
<sup>79</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 34.

Map 6: 2002 – 2011 Road Improvements<sup>80</sup>



<sup>80</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, Figure 22, pg.51.

Map 7: 2012 – 2021 Road Improvements<sup>81</sup>



<sup>81</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, Figure 24, pg.53.

More generally, the maps above show the road improvements proposed over the next 20 years and illustrate the development of parallel transportation routes to the corridors system with the potential to draw passengers away from the transit-based corridors to the parallel roadways.

Residents in Vaughan are challenging the building of a 30-metre high bridge over the Pine Valley which is a provincially protected forest. The bridge would connect the northern and southern parts Pine Valley Drive, crossing the Boyd Park Conservation Area.<sup>82</sup> The Conservation Area was added to the final version of the province's Greenbelt Plan.<sup>83</sup>

### 2.6.3 Transit Expansion

The region's Transit Service Strategy focuses transit planning beyond the five-year horizon with the goal of improving the modal split. The strategy would provide for further development of regional transit services and a user shift to transit based on the following concepts:

- Minimum service levels on all regular routes
- Rapid transit
- Regional feeder buses
- Shuttle transfer services to major employment areas not served by transit
- Express service on highways
- Improved inter-regional links.<sup>84</sup>

The region's strategy includes doubling peak period transit modal share as well as increasing auto occupancy rates through ride-sharing programs by 2031. This would be achieved by prioritizing (a) capital improvements related to transit over roads, (b) road widenings necessitated for transit, (c) quick implementation of transit improvements (in advance of demand), and (d) ride-sharing initiatives as part of an aggressive transportation demand management (TDM) strategy.<sup>85</sup> The region has implemented a number of successful TDM programs including the Black Creek ride-share program. The Town of Markham has dedicated staff to coordinate car-pooling in the private sector.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Adler, Mike. 2004. "New road will allow developers to exploit area, Berton tells crowd," *Vaughan Citizen*, 23 September. [www.yorkregion.com/yr/newscentre/vaughancitizen/story/2228284p-2582602c.html](http://www.yorkregion.com/yr/newscentre/vaughancitizen/story/2228284p-2582602c.html)

<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Municipal Affairs, *Greenbelt Plan 2005*, Schedule 4: Natural Heritage Areas.

<sup>84</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 35.

<sup>85</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 45.

<sup>86</sup> John Waller, Director of Long-range Planning, York Region, Interview on November 10, 2004.

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Through investments in the transit network, supporting policies and programs, and more transit-oriented land use, the region is focused on increasing transit usage and seeks to “level the playing field” between transit and private vehicle modes of travel.<sup>87</sup>

Establishing a “fully coordinated” public transit system in accordance with urban design principles requires proximity to transit stops, higher density development near transit access roads, development of inter-modal stations to accommodate different modes of travel as well as public transit rights of way.<sup>88</sup>

### 2.6.3.1 Expansion Plans

The Transit Network Plan describes specific areas of infrastructure and service improvements:

- Rapid transit services where light rapid transit is the preferred option
- Expansion of GO Transit commuter rail services with two new services eventually providing all-day service along five corridors
- Additional GO Transit rail stations on existing lines to improve accessibility
- Express bus service using high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes along the 400-series highways to improve service frequency
- Transit gateways comprising transit terminals, commuter parking lots, retail and other services providing connecting road and transit use
- Grid network of surface bus routes links with rapid transit services
- Rural commuter parking lots to support the transit network
- Rural bus service that connects to grid transit for rural municipalities
- Service in small outlying areas that feeds into rural bus routes and connects into the larger rapid transit network
- Low-floor buses that provide limited mobility access.<sup>89</sup>

All capital improvements to the rapid transit system will facilitate upgrading to light rapid transit or subway.<sup>90</sup> The capital cost of new buses for transit improvements is estimated at \$317 million (2001).<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 58.

<sup>88</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 68–70.

<sup>89</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 26–31.

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Higher-density residential development, preservation and development of mainstreets, employment growth and business development are recognized by the region as contributing factors to establishing regular transit service along the corridors.<sup>92</sup>

### 2.6.3.2 Centres and Corridors Strategy

A combination of existing road capacity deficiencies and few opportunities to increase road capacities, particularly across the York Region/City of Toronto boundary, suggests that transit is the best option for moving residents and maximizing person trip capacity. In order to increase transit modal share, the four regional centres and two regional corridors identified in the Centres and Corridors Strategy will become focal points for transit development.<sup>93</sup> Regional planning documents suggest that early implementation of rapid transit supports the development of the regional centres and corridors, which encourages transit ridership.<sup>94</sup>

Service areas include all four key corridors identified in the regional Centres and Corridors Strategy: Yonge Street, Highway 7, the Vaughan north–south corridor, and the Markham north–south corridor. Corridor EA reports are expected at the end of 2004 with implementation to begin in fall 2005.

The province has indicated its support for building urban transit such as the region’s BRT and longer-term extensions to Vaughan, Richmond Hill and other urban centres to facilitate movement among and between communities.<sup>95</sup> The region believes that if it is going to make an impact on changing the existing urban form, there has to be significant transit investment.<sup>96</sup>

In the short term (five-year plan) the region seeks to finalize its rapid transit implementation study by identifying the public/private mix of partners, creating an enabling environment for environmental and planning approvals, and prioritizing transit

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<sup>90</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, June, p. 46.

<sup>91</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, June, p. 49.

<sup>92</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, November, p. 47.

<sup>93</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 25–6.

<sup>94</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section 5.3, Part 11, and Section 5.5, Part 6, Attachment 1 to the Commissioner’s May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment.  
[www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

<sup>95</sup> Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. 2004. *Places to Grow*, p. 29.  
[www.placestogrow.pir.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts\\_2\\_20438\\_1.html](http://www.placestogrow.pir.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_2_20438_1.html)

<sup>96</sup> John Waller, Director of Long-range Planning, York Region, Interview on November 10, 2004.

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on the regional road network. If public/private partnership arrangements are not feasible as a development partner, the region has already decided that by 2011 BRT is the least expensive and recommended option for development in all four corridors.<sup>97</sup>

### 2.6.3.3 The Quick Start Program

The Quick Start program is considered to be the first phase of the York Rapid Transit Plan. The program combines a bus rapid transit (BRT) package of limited stops with local feeder bus routes that will operate in mixed traffic. A combination of traffic signal priority and right-turn-lane “queue jumpers” is expected to improve service delivery.<sup>98</sup> The Quick Start program will include 18-hour daily service with a minimum ten-minute service frequency during peak periods and expected reduction in transit travel times between 25 and 40%. In off-peak hours, service will run every 15 minutes in urban areas. Interconnections at transfer stations will facilitate links with GO Transit, Toronto Transit Commission service, airport shuttle service, and others. In March 2004, a fleet of 77 buses was purchased by the region including 22 60-foot vehicles and 55 40-foot vehicles for the purpose of implementing the Quick Start program.<sup>99</sup>

One of the drawbacks of the existing focus on bus rapid transit is that, as a surface transit program, it would be competing directly with automobile traffic as a means of transportation. Dedicated transitways are a potential solution. However, as is evident in Ottawa, conversion of the transitways to rail to meet increased rider demand is neither easy nor inexpensive.

York Region and the federal and provincial governments signed formal agreements in May 2004 to each invest \$50 million in the Quick Start program.<sup>100</sup>

### 2.6.3.4 Interregional Connections

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<sup>97</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 55–6.

<sup>98</sup> Regional Rapid Transit Public/Private Partnership Steering Committee. 2004. *YRTP-YRT Quick Start Draft Service Plan Status Report*.  
[www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/RTC+rpt+6+2004.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/RTC+rpt+6+2004.htm)

<sup>99</sup> Regional Rapid Transit Public/Private Partnership Steering Committee. 2004. *Progress Report York Rapid Transit Plan*, June 17 and May 13 Meeting Minutes.  
[www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/RTC+rpt+6+2004.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/RTC+rpt+6+2004.htm)  
[www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/RTC+rpt+5+2004.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/RTC+rpt+5+2004.htm)

<sup>100</sup> Ministry of Transportation. 2004. “Its full speed ahead for rapid transit in York Region,” *News Release*, 7 May.

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In order to implement its Transit Network Plan, the region requires service links with neighbouring municipalities including the City of Toronto, and Durham and Peel Regions. Joint initiatives with these existing services would facilitate seamless travel for York Region residents seeking to move throughout southern Ontario by transit.<sup>101</sup> Inter-regional transit links along Highway 407 for example have been proposed by the province as a means of integrating the transit needs of the population north of the GTA.<sup>102</sup>

## 2.6.4 GO Transit

A provincially run operation, GO Transit provides a variety of services in York Region including a commuter rail service linking downtown Toronto to Bradford, Richmond Hill and Stouffville; inter-municipal bus routes along Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue; and inter-city coach routes connecting York Region to Toronto destinations.<sup>103</sup> Across the province as a whole, it handles 44 million riders annually.

The provincial government recently announced a proposal for two-way, all-day GO train service, with inter-regional transit links in recognition of the growing population and employment in the region and elsewhere across the province.<sup>104</sup>

However, York Region has said the cost of GO Transit's proposals is too expensive; it finds unfair a provincial funding formula that has them contributing one-third of the expansion costs. The region has its own proposals for GO Transit expansion, including track work that would see all-day, two-way service on the Bradford, Richmond and Stouffville lines, as well as additional station and rail line construction. These proposals, along with a pedestrian walkway and commuter parking lots, total \$1.3 billion according to GO Transit. The issue of who will pay for the expansion remains an outstanding issue.<sup>105</sup>

The provincial government recently announced that it will provide \$1.05 billion jointly with the federal government and the region to improve efficiency on the GO Transit

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<sup>101</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 27.

<sup>102</sup> Adler, Mike. 2004. "Sprawl plan halts roads," *York Region Era Banner*, 15 July.

<sup>103</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 11.

<sup>104</sup> Adler, Mike. 2004. "Sprawl plan halts roads," *York Region Era Banner*, 15 July; Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. 2004. *Places to Grow*, p. 30. [www.placestogrow.pir.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts\\_2\\_20438\\_1.html](http://www.placestogrow.pir.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_2_20438_1.html)

<sup>105</sup> Adler, Mike. 2004. "GO plan not in region's interest, Fisch says," *Liberal*, 14 September. [www.yorkregion.com/yr/newscentre/liberal/story/2203512p-2553456c.html](http://www.yorkregion.com/yr/newscentre/liberal/story/2203512p-2553456c.html)



system. The funds will be used for expansion of bus and rail services aimed at reducing travel time, and increasing transit safety and accessibility.<sup>106</sup>

## 2.6.5 Cycling

To promote a more integrated transportation system, the region has recognized the need to promote walking and cycling as well as to construct appropriate facilities that enable citizens to adopt alternative means of transportation. The TMP lays out a four-pronged approach to accomplish this goal:

- amendments to OP policies so that they support the development of regional and municipal cycling networks, including on-street designations
- additional elements to the development process such that all secondary and transportation plans include pedestrian and cyclist safety, and site plan applications include pathways and other provisions that will foster walking and cycling
- modification to capital works programs so that cycling facilities are included in road rehabilitation projects
- introduction of a Bicycle/Transit Integration Program to provide for bus racks and lockers at major transit stations and community facilities.<sup>107</sup>

## 2.7 Connectivity

### **Smart Growth Principle: Connectivity**

Highly connected roads, sidewalks and paths, allowing direct travel by motorized and non-motorized modes versus Hierarchical road network with many unconnected roads and walkways, and barriers to non-motorized travel.

### **Official Plan**

5.4 Corridors — “Objective: To identify corridors as mixed-use transit spines that link urban and regional centres.”

The Centres and Corridors Strategy (ROPA 43) is intended to improve connectivity at the regional level. At a more local level more traditional suburban forms have dominated the region’s recent development patterns with poor connectivity from the perspectives of drivers, pedestrians and drivers, particularly within subdivisions, and between subdivisions and the wider networks.

<sup>106</sup> Ministry of Transportation. 2004. “More tracks, trains and seats for commuters thanks to funding agreement for GO Transit,” *News Release*, 7 May. [www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/news/provincial/2004/050704.htm](http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/news/provincial/2004/050704.htm)

<sup>107</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 38–9.

## 2.8 Streetscapes

### Smart Growth Principle: Streets

Designed to accommodate a variety of activities traffic calming versus Designed to maximize motor vehicle traffic volume and speed.

### Official Plan

5.2 Community Building — “Objective: To develop diverse, self-sufficient, accessible, safe, green, economically vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, accessible communities through excellence in planning and urban design.”

### 2.8.1 Streetscapes

The region is promoting healthy communities that meet the needs of its citizens. Provision of transportation choices that include walking and cycling within and between communities, as well as streetscaping that fosters pedestrian use, are outlined in the OP. Pedestrian orientation is mentioned repeatedly as a requirement for urban design plans, site plan submissions and zoning regulations.<sup>108</sup>

The region’s report *Regional Streets: Standards for Rights-of-Way and Boulevards* establishes road rights-of-way expected function and use. Maximum road widths have been established for road construction reflecting the individual character and use of each road. Smaller road widths through historical towns along with reduced posted speeds will provide for slower speeds and more pedestrian-friendly commutes as opposed to wider roadways with higher traffic volumes.<sup>109</sup>

The details on traffic calming are limited in the region’s OP and it is expected that much more detail on the issue can be found in the individual official plans of the area municipalities.

### 2.8.2 Highway 7 as a Mainstreet

Highway 7, which runs east–west across the top of the GTA, was originally built as a conduit for car and truck traffic and, for years, served as the northern boundary of the GTA. It has become rapidly congested as the city has continued to expand beyond it. As a regional corridor, the proposed amendments to the OP suggest that it become a “human-scale mainstreet” served by rapid transit.<sup>110</sup> Highway 7 is considered by the region to be a

<sup>108</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 41

<sup>109</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 63–4.

<sup>110</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section 5.5, Attachment 1 to the Commissioner’s May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment. [www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

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good example of proposed development that is transit and pedestrian-friendly and incorporates the needs of users in its planning. It is an area where high-density growth is occurring.

According to the Centres and Corridors Strategy Highway 7 will be characterized by mixed, high-density, residential and employment use.<sup>111</sup> Given that local residents have characterized the corridor as a “busy six-lane mini-highway” dotted with strip malls,<sup>112</sup> redevelopment in this direction may present significant challenges.

## 2.9 Planning Process

### **Smart Growth Principle: Planning process**

Planned/coordinated between jurisdictions and stakeholders versus Unplanned/little coordination between jurisdictions and stakeholders.

### 2.9.1 Stakeholder Consultation

The region has incorporated public consultation into its planning process and the development of the OP. Advertising, public meetings, open houses, householder mailings, and other approaches are used as a means of generating public participation and feedback on proposed amendments and development proposals.<sup>113</sup> The region also undertakes to consult and coordinate with neighbouring municipalities as well as other jurisdictions in the GTA.<sup>114</sup>

The public has been involved in developing the TMP through an assessment of existing conditions, identification of broad strategic directions and feedback on implementation plans. Consultation has included conducting a public opinion survey and disseminating information through the York Region’s Web site, newsletters, public consultation meetings, workshops and focus groups. Public feedback highlighted a desire to decrease automobile dependence in the region and an increase in more liveable communities.<sup>115</sup>

With respect to corridor development, public consultation is ongoing. This is due, for the most part, to the request by the Ministry of the Environment for revisions to the focused

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<sup>111</sup> Loy Cheah, Manager of Transportation Planning, York Region, Interview on November 12, 2004.

<sup>112</sup> Concerned Citizens of King Township. Email Communication. February 24, 2005.

<sup>113</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 86–7.

<sup>114</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 3.

<sup>115</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 15.

Terms of Reference (TOR) for the corridor environmental assessments that had previously been approved and formed the basis of completed EA study activities. This announcement followed a ruling by the Divisional Court in the fall of 2003 precluding the use of focused TORs.<sup>116</sup>

## 2.9.2 Measuring Progress

As part of its detailed Implementation Strategy for the TMP, the region has established a priority setting framework with which to measure the cost-effectiveness of proposed road and transit projects. The framework is intended to be an important tool for managing results and generating the greatest return on its capital investments.<sup>117</sup>

The framework is supplemented by a monitoring and review process that would track changes in land-use densities, employment growth, greenfield consumption, and modal split, assumptions about which led to the development of programs and policies. Detailed monitoring will enable staff to determine the degree to which policies and programs need to be strengthened or amended to meet established goals and whether new policies and programs should be adopted.

## 2.10 Public Space

### Smart Growth Principle: Public space

Emphasis on the public realm (streetscapes, pedestrian areas, public parks, public facilities) versus Emphasis on the private realm (yards, shopping malls, gated communities, private clubs).

### Official Plan

5.2 Community Building — “Objective: To develop diverse, self-sufficient, accessible, safe, green, economically vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, accessible communities through excellence in planning and urban design.”

### 2.10.1. Urban Design

According to the OP, effective community design that incorporates pedestrian accessible greenspace and local parks is at the heart of creating pedestrian-oriented, transit-friendly spaces.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Regional Rapid Transit Public/Private Partnership Steering Committee. 2004. *Environmental Assessment Update*, April 15, 2004 Meeting Minutes. [www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/RTC+rpt+4+2004.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/RTC+rpt+4+2004.htm)

<sup>117</sup> York Region. 2002. *Transportation Master Plan*, p. 54.

<sup>118</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 40.

Proposed amendments to the OP Plan suggest that public space can be improved by burying hydro lines, improving sidewalks and lighting, creating public gathering spaces, and greening the pedestrian environment.<sup>119</sup>

## 2.11 Natural Heritage Conservation

### **Smart Growth Principle: Natural Heritage Conservation**

Protection of key natural heritage, source water features, with strong connectivity versus Fragmentation/development of natural heritage, source water features with poor connectivity.

### **Official Plan**

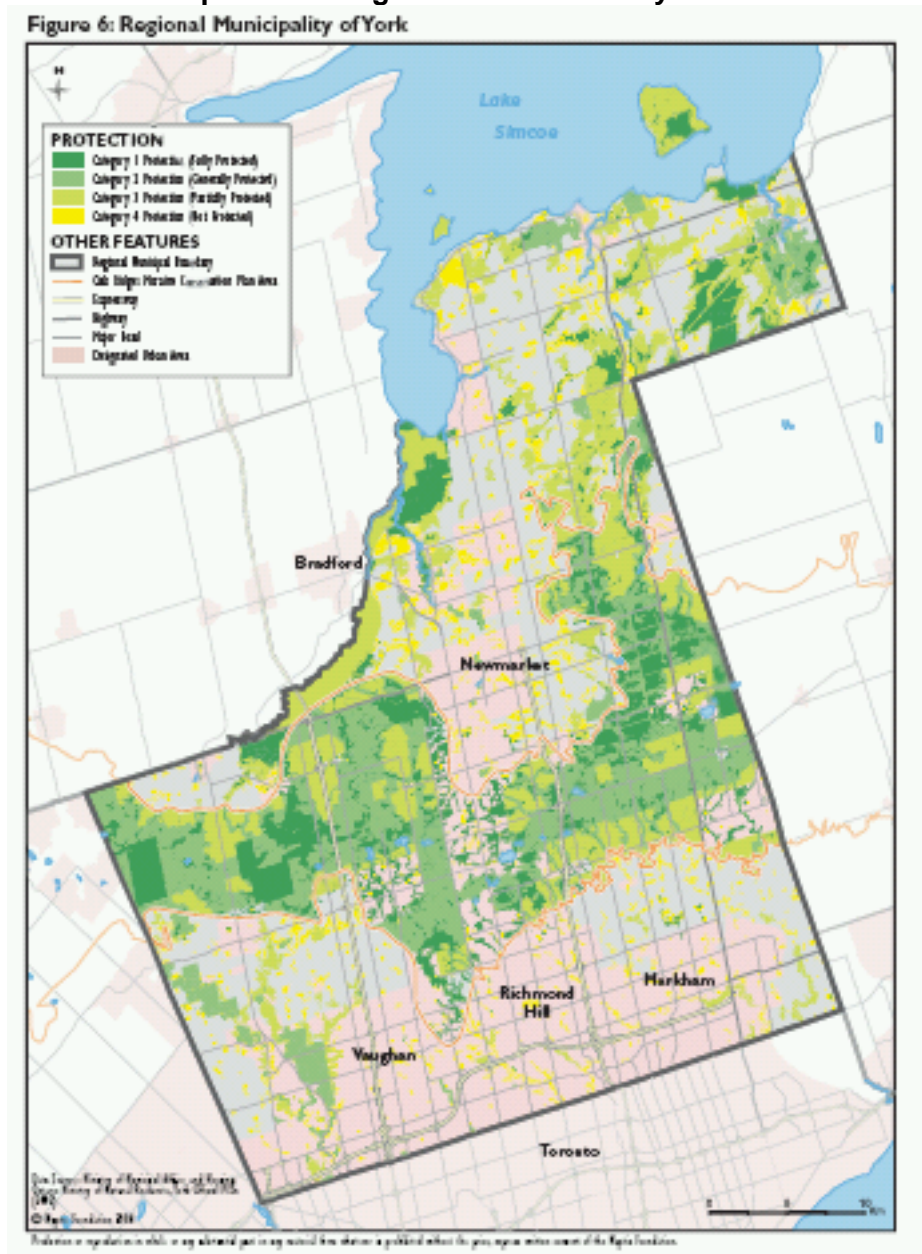
Section. 2.1 The Regional Greenlands System — Objective: “To identify, protect and restore the Regional Greenlands System composed of natural areas and connecting links as an essential structural component of the Region.”

### 2.11.1 The Regional Greenlands System

York Region contains a high portion of environmentally significant lands, totalling 44.2% of the region’s total land area. Of this total, 15.1% of the region’s lands are fully protected. Eleven percent of the region’s land is generally protected, meaning that development is not allowed to have any negative impacts, 14% has some minimal level of protection, and 4.1% of sensitive lands have no protection at all.<sup>120</sup> The region’s environmentally significant lands, and the levels of protection currently provided to them, are show in the following map developed by the Neptis Foundation.

<sup>119</sup> York Region. 2004. *Official Plan Amendment 43*, Section 5.6, Part 9–11. Attachment 1 to the Commissioner’s May 5, 2004 Report — Draft Amendment. [www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Centres+and+Corridors+.htm)

<sup>120</sup> Neptis Foundation. 2004. *The State of Greenlands Protection*, p. 6 and 47.

Map 8: York Region Greenlands July 2004.<sup>121</sup>

The various protective levels suggest that upwards of 29.1% of additional Greenland that could be developed. A case in point is proposed urban centre of Newmarket, which is surrounded by protected countryside. Expansions of Newmarket's urban boundaries to accommodate expected growth could be at the expense of the protected countryside.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Fraser and Neary, *The State of Greenlands Protection in South-Central Ontario*, pg.49.

<sup>122</sup> Concerned Citizens of King Township. Email communication. February 24, 2005.

According to the York Region OP, “greenlands are defined as natural heritage features such as woodlands, wetlands, valleys, watercourses, and waterbodies, as well as conservation areas, agricultural preserves, or Crown land. Agricultural areas are included only if protected by municipal policy.”<sup>123</sup> The Regional Greenland System was delineated in the region’s 1999 Official Plan.

Environmental policy areas, defined as “Environmentally Significant Areas, Life Science Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest, and Habitats of Vulnerable, Threatened or Endangered Species,” have been identified for protection within the Regional Greenlands System. These environmentally sensitive areas are recognized as having significance beyond the region to provincial and national levels as well.<sup>124</sup>

Environmental evaluation is a prerequisite when submitting development proposals either within, or in close proximity to, the Regional Greenlands System. The evaluation must assess the expected impacts and mitigations proposed to ensure that there are no adverse effects. Applications will not be approved where there are overall negative impacts on existing greenspace. Development cannot include establishing a pit or quarry of any type, asphalt plant, waste disposal site, coordination between public and private interests and establishing land stewardship options. Amendment 41 recognized mineral aggregate operations or wayside pits provided that they were in accordance with the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP).<sup>125</sup>

## 2.11.2 Oak Ridges Moraine

The Oak Ridges Moraine is an important greenspace; it is considered to be one of Ontario’s most significant landforms. Located north of Lake Ontario, it is a dividing point between waters draining south into Lake Ontario and north into Lake Simcoe and has recently been protected from extensive development by provincial environmental legislation.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Neptis Foundation. 2004. *The State of Greenlands Protection*, p. 6.

<sup>124</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 9–10.

<sup>125</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 7–8; Planning and Economic Development Committee. 2004. *Report 3 of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee Meeting Held on March 3, 2004*, Attachment 2: Regional Official Plan Amendment 41, p. 4. Adopted by Council March 25, 2004.  
[www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/PEDC+rpt+3+2004.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/Regional+Government/Agendas+Minutes+and+Reports/PEDC+rpt+3+2004.htm).

<sup>126</sup> The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) was enacted in 2001, and protects 92% of the moraine from development and limits development on the remaining 8%. Developers have argued that this and other legislation has limited the supply of available land (Neptis Foundation. Date. *Simcoe County: The New Growth Frontier*, p. 46); Planning and Economic Development Committee. 2004. *Report 3 of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee Meeting Held on March 3, 2004*, Attachment 2: Regional Official Plan Amendment 41, p. 6. Adopted by Council March 25, 2004.  
[www.region.york.on.ca/About+Us/York+Region+Official+Plan/Adopted+amendment+41+and+maps.htm#Adopted](http://www.region.york.on.ca/About+Us/York+Region+Official+Plan/Adopted+amendment+41+and+maps.htm#Adopted)

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As required under the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act*, the region adopted the Oak Ridges Moraine Conformity Amendment (ROPA 41) in March 2003.

A “land swap,” between the province and developers is intended to protect just over 405 hectares of land in Richmond Hill, which is the “only remaining undeveloped link between the eastern and western ends of the Oak Ridges Moraine.”<sup>127</sup> In return, the developers received 516 hectares of land in Seaton, near Pickering, currently owned by the province. Part of the deal also includes developers contributing \$3.5 million to the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation for park improvements. While the majority of the Seaton lands remain in the control of the province, there is concern that the portion slated for development will put increasing developmental pressure on the 1,214 hectares of provincial land in the Duffin–Rouge Agricultural Preserve in Markham.<sup>128</sup> Further details on the history behind the swap can be found in the Annex 2.

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<sup>127</sup> Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. 2004. “Government signs exchange agreement for park on Oak Ridges Moraine,” *News Release*, 23 September. [www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts\\_1\\_21829\\_1.html](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_21829_1.html)

<sup>128</sup> Adler, Mark. 2004. “Land swap complete for massive moraine park,” *Markham Economist and Sun*, 25 September. [www.yorkregion.com/yr/newscentre/markhameconomistandsun/story/2234973p-2589560c.html](http://www.yorkregion.com/yr/newscentre/markhameconomistandsun/story/2234973p-2589560c.html)



## 3 Overall Observations

York Region's development patterns over the past three decades have been largely defined by sprawling, automobile-dependent residential and employment land sprawl, with few mixed-use developments outside of existing town centres and downtown. These patterns are reflected in the dominance of single-family housing in the region, constituting 80% of the region's existing housing stock, and high levels of reliance on the automobile for transportation, with transit making up less than 10% of the current modal share. The poor mix of land uses, together with a lack of affordable housing, has created the need for extensive commutes to work for many of the region's residents. The region's current infill/redevelopment rate is estimated at 17%.

More recently, the region has been signalling a desire to move in a different direction. The Centres and Corridors Strategy (OPA 43), adopted in December 2004, reflects an attempt to redirect some growth into higher-density, mixed-use patterns for which transit will be a viable and attractive option. The region also has aggressive targets to improve transit's modal share (to 33% of peak hour trips) and to increase its infill/redevelopment rate to 30%.

At the same time, however, the region has continued to support the outwards expansion of the provincial highway network in the region, and has continued outwards expansion of the York–Durham sewer systems. Both initiatives seem likely to induce and encourage additional low-density, automobile-dependent development onto greenfield locations. In a similar vein, the region opposed aspects of the province's Greater Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt Initiative, and sought to have a number of road and highway corridors included in the plan.

## Annex 1

### Regional Population and Employment Growth Rates<sup>129</sup>

	1996	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026
<b>Aurora</b>						
Population	36000	49000	56000	63000	69000	75000
Employment	14600	19000	22000	26000	30000	33000
<b>East Gwillimbury</b>						
Population	20400	27000	32000	41000	51000	60000
Employment	4600	7000	9000	12000	16000	20000
<b>Georgina</b>						
Population	35900	45000	51000	59000	67000	74000
Employment	7500	10000	13000	16000	20000	22000
<b>King</b>						
Population	18800	22000	25000	29000	32000	35000
Employment	6100	7000	8000	10000	11000	12000
<b>Markham</b>						
Population	179100	253000	281000	304000	326000	348000
Employment	97600	148000	169000	185000	200000	212000
<b>Newmarket</b>						
Population	59000	79000	87000	91000	95000	98000
Employment	27200	37000	41000	43000	45000	46000
<b>Richmond Hill</b>						
Population	105100	171000	191000	204000	212000	219000
Employment	43100	79000	94000	106000	115000	119000
<b>Vaughan</b>						
Population	136900	221000	254000	281000	305000	330000
Employment	83300	151000	172000	188000	202000	215000
<b>Whitchurch-Stouffville</b>						
Population	20500	27000	31000	35000	38000	41000
Employment	7500	10000	12000	14000	16000	17000
<b>York</b>						
Population	611700	894000	1008000	1107000	1195000	1280000
Employment	291500	468000	540000	600000	655000	696000

Note: These figures have been updated for York Region in a recent report “Growth Outlook for the Greater Golden Horseshoe” produced for the Government of Ontario.<sup>130</sup>

Date	Population (000's)	Employment (000's)
1981	260	110
1991	520	250
2001	760	390
2011	1060	590
2021	1310	700
2031	1530	780

<sup>129</sup> York Region. 2002. *Official Plan Consolidation*, p. 37.

<sup>130</sup> Hemson Consulting. 2005. “Growth Outlook for the Greater Golden Horseshoe”, p. 57 and 58.

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## Annex 2

### Box Grove OPA<sup>131</sup>

Until recently, Box Grove was a small hamlet of a few dozen homes located at 9th Line and 14th Avenue just beyond the eastern boundary of Markham's urban area.

The prime farmland around Box Grove was purchased by the Ontario Government in the 1970s as part of a greenbelt plan to separate Markham and proposed developments further east in Pickering such as a federal airport and a new community in Seaton.

In the late 1990s, the Ontario Realty Corporation, a provincial agency, sold the Box Grove lands to a developer. Ontario's Environmental Commissioner criticized this land sale because it was done without proper public consultations and environmental assessment. Between 2000 and 2001, at the urging of the Province, York Region and the Town of Markham, Hwy 407 East was extended 15 kilometres from Markham Road past the 9th Line and through the prime farmland and greenspace of the Rouge and Duffins watersheds to just past Brock Road in Pickering. Between 2000 and 2005, a large extension of the York Durham sewer was built beneath the 9th Line to service developments in Markham (Cornell) and to eventually service Stouffville and a quadrupling of its population.

The Markham and York Region Official Plans placed rural designations on most of the lands east of Box Grove. Although the local and regional Official Plans stipulated only modest hamlet growth around Box Grove, Markham Council and York Region Council amended their Official Plans in 2003/04 to allow several hundred acres of relatively low density residential development on the prime farmland and greenspace. To make matters worse, the ecological planning principles developed through the Rouge Park North Management Plan (1997-2002) were not applied to this urban expansion between the Little Rouge and main Rouge Rivers.

York Region and the Town of Markham utilized the Box Grove development to gain developer funding for a portion of the Markham Bypass between Hwy 407 and the 9th Line. This reliance on development charges for the funding of regional and local infrastructure creates a vicious circle of costly sprawling infrastructure and more urban sprawl.

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<sup>131</sup> Jim Robb. General Manager, Friends of the Rouge Watershed. Email communication, March 2, 2005

## **Annex 3**

### **Interviews and/or email communication:**

Mr. Loy Cheah, Manager of Transportation Planning, York Region.

John O-Gorman, Markham Environmental Alliance.

Jim Robb, General Manager, Friends of the Rouge Watershed

Mr. John Waller, Director of Long-Range Planning, York Region.

Concerned Citizens of King Township

**Summary Table: York Region**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Official Policy</b> (e.g., OP, Infrastructure, Growth Management, Transportation Plans)	<b>Implementation</b> (what's happening on the ground)
<b>General Comments</b>	<p>Historic pattern of extensive automobile dependent low-density sprawl (80% of housing stock detached single family dwellings).</p> <p>Centres and Corridors Strategy (ROPA 43) represents significant effort to re-direct development focus.</p> <p>Centres and Corridors strategy intended to promote more concentrated urban development.</p> <p>Region continues to identify potential areas of urban development outside of urban designations.</p>	<p>Contradictory signals: continued support for outward expansion of highway and sewer and water infrastructure raises questions re: commitment to focus development in corridors and centres.</p> <p>Capital financing and ongoing viability of Centres and Corridors Strategy transit initiatives unclear.</p> <p>Current housing stock is 80% single family dwellings.</p> <p>Support for Queensville development reinforces questions re: focus on Centres and Corridors vs. outward sprawl.</p> <p>Submission on provincial greenbelt initiative indicates continued focus on outward sprawl onto agricultural and natural heritage lands.</p> <p>Direction of large infrastructure projects (roads-400 series highway extensions, and sewer and water-twinging of YDSS and "big pipe") contradict Centres and Corridors Strategy focus.</p>
<b>Development Location:</b> <b>Boundary expansions and new development</b>	<p>Regional goal of 30% for new development in existing urban areas.</p> <p>Council policy to develop 8,000 new housing units annually, but there are no targets re: the split between greenfields and/or infill locations.</p> <p>Centers and corridors strategy focuses growth and concentrated development in regional centres and corridors.</p> <p>Centres and Corridors Strategy includes density target of 2.5 ratio of floor space to lot area in Regional Centres.</p> <p>No other specific targets in OP.</p>	<p>Current infill/redevelopment rate is 17%</p> <p>Town of Markham as "redevelopment success story." but not representative of overall regional dev trends.</p> <p>Lack of transit supportive infrastructure and sufficient population densities.</p> <p>Has doubled existing density rates to 8-12 units/ha in the past 10 years. Densities, even in proposed "centres" remain low relative to urban centres with high levels of transit use.</p>
<b>Development Location (b)</b> <b>Intensification</b>	<p>Centres and Corridors Strategy (ROPA 43) intended to</p>	<p>New urban development dominated by single use, detached or</p>
<b>Land Use Density (a) Specific targets</b>		
<b>Land Use</b>		

<p><b>Density (b) Increased density</b></p> <p><b>Land use Mix (a) Mixed Use</b></p>	<p>produce higher densities in these areas.</p> <p>OP Recognizes effective land-use mix supports economic and human development and improved work/live opportunities.</p> <p>Regional Centres and Corridors Strategy (OP Amendment 43) encourages mixed-use growth along series of centres and corridors serving regional and local development.</p>	<p>semi-detached housing.</p> <p>Historically poor match between employment location and residence with implication of need for extensive commuting.</p> <p>At present, 80% of the housing stock is single, detached homes.</p> <p>All designated urban centres have low employment to housing ratios (particularly Markham Centre).</p>
<p><b>Land Use Mix (b) Big box</b></p>	<p>Provisions for very large scale retail remain in OP.</p>	<p>Extensive big box/strip mall retail development.</p>
<p><b>Land Use Mix (c) Transit/Land Use</b></p>	<p>Transit access to employment centres is key element of corridors and centres strategy.</p> <p>OP includes guideline of 90% of residents within 500m of transit stop and 200m for 50% of residents.</p>	<p>Current mix poor. Strong separation of housing and employment areas.</p>
<p><b>Land Use Mix (d) Affordable Housing</b></p>	<p>Region now has 25% affordable housing target, with higher targets for the future.</p> <p>The Region has set a goal of 50/50 split between single detached housing and mixed housing split over the next 10 years.</p>	<p>Lack of affordable housing in region identified as significant factor in housing/employment location mismatches.</p>
<p><b>Scale of Development</b></p>	<p>Urban design criteria encourages pedestrian-focused development.</p> <p>“Human scale” mainstreet redevelopment for Highway 7.</p> <p>Area municipalities encouraged to preserve traditional mainstreets.</p>	<p>Mainstreet redevelopment of Highway 7 presents significant challenge. Highway 7 has been characterized as “busy six-lane mini-highway”.</p>
<p><b>Public Services</b></p>	<p>Regional centres focus on municipal activities and public investment.</p> <p>Human services plan to be drafted.</p>	<p>Linking services to Centres and Corridors Strategy suggests concentrated rather than distributed approach to service access. Will require automobile or transit trips for access for those living outside of regional centres.</p>
<p><b>Transportation (a) Transit</b></p>	<p>Regional corridors for mixed-use transit link between</p>	<p>Lack transit options in existing developments.</p>

	<p>regional and urban centres. Regional Centres and Corridors to be focal points for transit development.</p> <p>Transit Service Strategy goal to improve modal share.</p> <p>Region expecting significant increases in transit modal share to 33% by 2031.</p> <p>TMP provides for cycling networks and bike racks.</p>	<p>Unclear if proposed centres and corridors will have sufficient population and density to support higher-order transit. Population of Newmarket Centre, for example, in decline.</p> <p>Transit modal share less than 10%.</p> <p>Aggressive TDM strategy includes car-pooling program in Markham.</p> <p>Implementation of bus-rapid transit (Quick Start program) along all four corridors for Fall 2005 with federal, provincial and municipal funding, but limitations include limited expansion options, competition with existing traffic.</p> <p>Outstanding cost sharing disputes between GO Transit and Region.</p>
<p><b>Transportation (b) Road expansion</b></p>	<p>Region continues to support major road expansions, including 407 and 404 extensions, and Markham, Newmarket and King City by-passes.</p> <p>Parallel transportation routes to the transit corridors are proposed in planning documents.</p> <p>Centres and Corridors Strategy will require major capital investments</p>	<p>Resident vehicle dependence: 70% of population own 2 or more vehicles for an average of 2.6 trips per day.</p>
<p><b>Transportation (c) Funding</b></p>	<p>Centres and Corridors Strategy provides framework intended to improve connectivity.</p>	<p>Capital funding for Centres and Corridors infrastructure unclear.</p> <p>Initial federal-provincial and regional commitments to “Quick Start” in place.</p> <p>Current development patterns heavily automobile dependant with poor connectivity.</p>
<p><b>Streets</b></p>	<p>Transportation choice and pedestrian orientation are identified as regional priorities.</p> <p>Road rights-of-way standards linked to form and function</p>	<p>Historically strong automobile focus except for historic town centres.</p>

	<p>Highway 7 "Mainstreet" initiative attempts to introduce more mixed-used, pedestrian orientation.</p> <p>Wide-ranging public consultation will be incorporated into planning process.</p> <p>Transportation Master Plan includes monitoring and review process.</p>	
<b>Planning Process</b>		Public seeks more livable communities.
<b>Public Space</b>	<p>Accessible communities include Greenspace.</p>	
<b>Natural Heritage</b>	<p>High portion of environmentally significant lands in region (44.2%).</p> <p>Regional greenlands system in place.</p> <p>The Region adopted an Oak Ridges Moraine Conformity Amendment (ROPA 41) in March 2003.</p>	<p>15.1% of region's lands fully protected from development.</p> <p>"Big pipe" and other regional infrastructure, and continued infrastructure development seen to threaten greenlands system.</p> <p>Development pressures on provincial land near Markham resulting from regional land exchange.</p>