
REPORT TO: Planning and Development Services Committee

MEETING DATE: Wednesday, June 24, 2015

SUBJECT: Local and Regional Partnerships
Niagara GO Mobility Hub Study Memorandum of Understanding

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) **BE ENDORSED** between Regional Council and the Town of Grimsby, Town of Lincoln, City of St. Catharines and City of Niagara Falls on the GO Mobility Hub Study (MHS);
2. That Regional Council **REQUEST** that each participating community (Town of Grimsby, Town of Lincoln, City of St. Catharines and City of Niagara Falls) endorse the Niagara GO Mobility Hub MOU; and,
3. That a copy of this report **BE FORWARDED** to all the local municipalities.

KEY FACTS

- In 2011 GO Transit completed the Niagara Rail Service Expansion Environmental Assessment (EA), which identified four transit station locations within Niagara Region.
- GO Rail expansion has been identified as one of Council's most significant priority projects.
- There is a two stage strategy for GO Rail service. Stage 1 is the GO Rail Business Case, which advocates for daily GO Rail service to Niagara Region. Stage two is the Niagara GO MHS.
- The purpose of the MHS for the four identified sites is to develop conceptual transit station designs and create a planning and transportation framework for the area surrounding each transit stations.
- Success of the MHS is contingent on formal partnerships with the Town of Grimsby, Town of Lincoln, City of St. Catharines and the City of Niagara Falls.
- Four MOUs have been drafted for each respective MHS area. Each individual MOU outlines the role of the Region and the participating municipality.

CONSIDERATIONS

Financial

A MHS will be undertaken with the assistance of a consulting team. It is anticipated that a Request for Proposal for the MHS will be released in August 2015. \$500,000 has been allocated in the Planning and Development departmental budget for the Niagara GO MHS. The project is expected to take approximately 24 months to complete.

Corporate

GO Rail expansion has been identified as one of Council's most significant priority projects. As a result, the Manager of Community Planning will be leading a cross departmental project team to ensure alignment with the GO Rail Business case. The project aligns with Council's strategic priority of moving people and goods.

Governmental Partners

Working in partnership with the members of the participating municipalities is essential to advance the GO MHS. For this reason, to drive the execution of this priority successfully, it is critical that the participating municipalities (Grimsby, Lincoln, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls) enter into an MOU with the Region.

Public and/or Service Users

The GO MHS project supports the efforts underway to secure a commitment from the Province for GO Rail expansion to Niagara. With station stops identified in Grimsby, Beamsville, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, the expansion of GO rail service into Niagara will provide a new level of direct transportation connectivity for Niagara residents and businesses to the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area. GO train stations will also act as the cornerstone for current and future local transit options, supporting enhanced transit alternatives and opportunities.

ANALYSIS

Background

In early 2015, Regional Council identified a number of strategic priorities to help move the performance dials on economic prosperity. Establishing a commitment from the Province to extend GO Rail to Niagara was identified as Regional Council's number one priority.

In support of the introduction of two-way, all-day GO train service between Niagara Falls and Hamilton's James Street North Station, Niagara Region is building upon the completed 2011 Niagara Rail Expansions Environmental Study Review (ESR) and undertaking MHS for the four preferred future GO Transit station areas (Mobility Hubs) (see Appendix I for the maps of the preferred station areas from the 2011 ESR). The four preferred areas are located in the municipalities of Grimsby, Lincoln, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls.

GO Mobility Hub Study

A mobility hub study is more than just the functional design of a transit station. A Mobility hub study includes the functional design of the transit stations and the planning and transportation framework surrounding area (approximately 800 metre radius of the station or the area that can be comfortably accessed on foot within a 10 minute walk). Hubs serve a critical function in the regional transportation system as the origin, destination, or transfer point for a significant portion of trips. They are places of connectivity where different modes of transportation – from walking to riding transit – come together seamlessly and where there is an intensive concentration of working, living, shopping and/or playing in a mixed use, higher density urban environment.

The Niagara GO MHS will examine and analyze the four hub locations in Grimsby, Lincoln, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. The current planning and transportation framework does not allow the existing land use designations to capitalize on close proximity to the future GO Stations nor does it identify actions to achieve a successful Mobility Hub in these four areas. Detailed analysis of the existing planning framework, transportation and infrastructure needs will inform the study. Detailed Mobility Hub plans and transit station functional plans for each station site will be developed in order to guide the planning and development for the short, medium and long term of the four sites.

Project Status

To date, Regional staff have met with staff and elected officials of Grimsby, Lincoln, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls to discuss the:

- GO MHS; and,
- roles and responsibilities of the local municipality and the Region.

The Region will be the project lead on the MHS and will be responsible for the overall coordination and management of the project. The participating municipalities will be key partners and will collaborate with the Region in the creation and approval of a mutually acceptable MHS.

Draft MOUs for each study area between the Region and the participating Municipality has been developed to formally establish the individual roles of the respective parties.

Next Steps

With input from the local municipalities and Metrolinx, Regional staff are in the process of finalizing the terms of reference (TOR) for the GO MHS. The TOR is intended to go out for competitive procurement in August 2015.

The lands surrounding the future transit stations in Grimsby, Lincoln, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls are experiencing development pressures. In order to ensure the lands are protected for development that is transit supportive, staff will be working with the four municipalities on an interim control by-law under Section 38 of the Planning Act. The purpose of the interim control by-law would be to protect the preferred station site and other adjacent lands to allow the Region and the Municipalities time to review and refine the land use policies and identify the necessary development controls required to be in place to maximize the full development potential of the site as a potential transit hub. Interim control by-laws can only be passed by the local municipality.

Interim control by-laws may be in place for up to 24 months. During this time it is expected that the MHS for each station will be conducted and completed within 18-24 months.

ALTERNATIVES REVIEWED

1. Approve the recommendations outlined in this report and enter into a formal agreement with the participating Municipalities on the MHS.
2. Not enter into a formal agreement with the participating Municipalities on the MHS. If this option is pursued, the Region runs the risk of allowing future development that would undermine the viability of the proposed GO transit stations and marginalize the potential land use of the area.

ORIGIN OF REPORT

This report is brought forward by staff to request Regional Council direction on formalizing the roles and responsibilities of the Region and participating Municipalities for the GO Mobility Hub Study.

OTHER PERTINENT REPORTS

N/A

Original copy signed.

SUBMITTED & SIGNED BY:

Rino Mostacci, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner
Planning and Development Services

Original copy signed.

APPROVED & SIGNED BY:

Harry Schlange
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared by Denise Landry, Planner and reviewed by Diana Morreale, MCIP, RPP, Manager of Community Planning, and reviewed by Mary Lou Tanner, MCIP, RPP, Director and Chief Planner.

APPENDICES

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| Appendix I | 2011 ESR Station Maps for Casablanca, Beamsville, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls | Page 6 |
| Appendix II | Draft Memorandum of Understanding: GO Mobility Hub Study Town of Grimsby | Page 10 |
| Appendix III | Draft Memorandum of Understanding: GO Mobility Hub Study Town of Lincoln | Page 14 |
| Appendix IV | Draft Memorandum of Understanding: GO Mobility Hub Study City of St. Catharines | Page 18 |
| Appendix V | Draft Memorandum of Understanding: GO Mobility Hub Study City of Niagara Falls | Page 22 |