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The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Committee of the Whole
From: Commissioner of Works and General Manager of Durham Region Transit
Report: #2025-COW-4
Date: January 15, 2025

Subject:

Update on Durham Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit (DSBRT) Study, Metrolinx's Funding of DSBRT and Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program

Recommendation:

Receive for Information.

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide Committee and Council members an update on the Durham Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit (DSBRT) Study that has been completed by Metrolinx;
- Inform Committee and Council members that Metrolinx has notified the Region that it will not fund the design or construction of the DSBRT project moving forward; and
- Provide an update on the Phase 1 construction work being completed through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP).

2. Background

2.1 In 2008, Metrolinx completed the Regional Transportation Plan entitled 'The Big Move' to improve mobility throughout the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), which set out a 25-year vision for supporting growth in the Region. A new

rapid transit line between Downtown Oshawa and Scarborough along the Highway 2- Ellesmere corridor linking Oshawa, Whitby, Ajax and Pickering to connect with the Scarborough's Rapid Transit (TTC's) line at the Scarborough Centre was identified as a Top 15 Priority Project in The Big Move.

- 2.2 The Region's 2010 Long Term Transit Strategy further confirmed the need for a rapid transit corridor along Highway 2, connecting to Scarborough Centre via Ellesmere Road. The Metrolinx DSBRT Initial Business Case was also completed in 2010 and concluded that the project would generate significant transportation, environmental and socio-economic benefits.
- 2.3 In 2010, as the first step into DSBRT implementation, through the Quick Win funding program the province provided \$82.3 million to the Region to support transit and the introduction of the PULSE BRT service between Oshawa and the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus.
- 2.4 Durham Region Transit (DRT) commenced operations of PULSE service along Highway 2 in Durham Region and Ellesmere Road in Toronto in June 2013 with high-frequency, high-speed service, with new buses, facilities, and road and traffic improvements, upgraded stops and branded shelters. The Phase 1 improvements (funded through the Quick Win and Public Transit Infrastructure Fund programs) implemented the Highway 2 Transit Priority Measures Environmental Assessment (completed in 2012, amended in 2014). This resulted in curbside bus-only lanes along sections of Highway 2 in Ajax (from Westney Road to Salem Road) and Pickering (from Steeple Hill to Whites Road; Liverpool Road to Glenanna Road; and Brock Road to Bainbridge Drive).
- 2.5 The current DSBRT Study was financed and initiated by Metrolinx in partnership with the Region of Durham and the City of Toronto in February 2017, with an Initial Business Case completed in Spring 2018. The Study then moved to the next stage of Preliminary Design. Demand for travel along the Highway 2 corridor will continue to increase, and a higher capacity form of transit will link communities and employment areas and mitigate vehicular congestion.
- 2.6 The DSBRT Study proposed approximately 36 km of dedicated transit infrastructure, connecting Oshawa, Whitby, Ajax, Pickering and Scarborough, building on the success of the existing PULSE transit service. The study then proceeded according to the TPAP framework.
- 2.7 In the broader context, the 2017 Durham Transportation Master Plan highlighted the key action to expand Bus Rapid Transit in the Highway 2 corridor, and in

2018, the Metrolinx 2041 Regional Transportation Plan identified DSBRT as a priority project for the GTHA.

3. Previous Reporting

- 3.1 On December 18, 2019, Durham Region Transit Commission Committee adopted minutes, including a Transit Executive Committee (TEC) report from the General Manager of DRT summarizing the project applications submitted by the Region for ICIP funding ([#2019-DRT-20](#)). The report identified fourteen (14) projects involving rapid transit advancement, fleet renewal, safety and accessibility improvements and modernization and innovation initiatives.
- 3.2 On October 28, 2020, Regional Council adopted October 13, 2020, Finance and Administration Committee Minutes, including report ([#2020-F-19](#)), which provided an update on the funding applications submitted by the Region and Durham Region Transit under the ICIP – Public Transit Stream that sought 2021 pre-budget approval for the financing required for the Region’s 2021 share of the project costs.
- 3.3 On December 16, 2020, Durham Region Transit Commission Committee adopted minutes including a TEC report ([#2020-DRT-20](#)) from the General Manager of DRT updating the project applications submitted by the Region for ICIP funding.
- 3.4 On June 23, 2021, Regional Council approved report ([#2020-F-19](#)), which endorsed the Preferred Technical Option for the DSBRT for Metrolinx to advance the TPAP.
- 3.5 On May 8, 2024, Regional staff presented an update on the DSBRT project to the Transit Executive Committee. The presentation provided an update on Metrolinx’s progress and outlined the project workplan being advanced through ICIP.

4. Update on Project Activity

- 4.1 In 2022, Metrolinx completed the Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP) for the DSBRT study. Subsequently, Metrolinx completed an addendum to address the DSBRT connection to Scarborough Centre subway station and completed the Preliminary Design Business Case (PDBC).
- 4.2 To advance the first phase of the DSBRT through key segments in Pickering and Ajax, the Region has secured funding through the ICIP.

4.3 The proposed cross-section for the segments funded through the ICIP includes a comprehensive design to support multi-modal transportation. This cross-section features:

- Two general-purpose through lanes in each direction to accommodate vehicular traffic.
- Two dedicated centre median bus-only lanes to ensure efficient and reliable transit service.
- Off-road active transportation facilities, such as multi-use paths or cycle tracks, designed to promote safe and accessible options for cyclists and pedestrians.

4.4 Construction along the Regional Highway 2 corridor is anticipated to commence in 2025 and will cover the following segments:

- Steeple Hill to Merritton Road in Pickering
- Dixie Road to Bainbridge Road in Pickering
- Rotherglen Road to Harwood Avenue in Ajax
- Harwood Avenue to Wicks Avenue in Ajax

4.5 The remaining construction segment, which includes the intersection at Lake Ridge Road (Regional Road 23), is expected to begin in 2026. This work will be coordinated with the reconstruction of Lake Ridge Road, spanning from Dundas Street (Regional Highway 2) to Victoria Street (Regional Road 22).

4.6 In October 2024, Metrolinx publicly released the completed PDBC, marking a significant milestone in the DSBRT project's progression.

4.7 Metrolinx has notified the Region that it will not fund the design or construction of the DSBRT project moving forward. As a result, the advancement of unfunded segments will require alternative funding sources to proceed.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Highway 2 Bus Rapid Transit expenses included within the 2026-2034 capital forecast presented to Council as part of the 2025 Regional Business Plans and Budget include:

- a. \$23.5 million in 2026, with 73.33 percent funded using ICIP funding and the Region's share (26.67 percent) to be financed using development charge revenues, reserves and reserve funds;
- b. \$21.5 million in 2028, financed using development charge revenues and Regional reserves and reserve funds;
- c. \$50 million in 2029-2034, financed using development charge revenues and Regional reserves and reserve funds.

5.2 As significant risk is associated with forecasted development charge receipts, the forecasted BRT expenses beyond 2026 may require senior-level government funding to be prioritized for the projects to be advanced. In addition to the costs within the transportation capital forecast, it is estimated that a further \$385.1 million would be required to complete Highway 2 BRT. A funding source for these additional works has not been identified.

6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

6.1 This report aligns with the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- a. Environmental Sustainability
 - 1.5 - Expands higher order transit and active transportation options, connection housing to jobs and key destinations along Simcoe Street. Reductions in vehicle kilometres travelled translate to reduced CO2 emissions and carbon footprint.
- b. Community Vitality
 - 2.1 - Rapid transit revitalizes neighbourhoods and builds complete communities by improving accessibility, fostering mixed-use development, and enhancing connectivity. With efficient, affordable transportation, rapid transit reduces car dependency, making communities more walkable and encouraging active lifestyles.
- c. Goal 3: Economic Prosperity
 - 3.3 - Rapid transit enhances transportation networks by creating efficient, reliable connections that link people, goods, and services across urban and regional areas. By reducing traffic congestion and

providing alternative transit options, rapid transit improves travel times and makes it easier for people to access jobs, education, and essential services.

d. Goal 4 Social Investment

- 4.1 – Rapid transit has a proven history of revitalizing community housing and improving housing choice, affordability, and sustainability.

7. Conclusion and Next Steps

7.1 To advance future segments of the DSBRT project, the Region will actively advocate for financial support from the province. Efforts will focus on leveraging future opportunities, such as the Canada Public Transit Fund, to secure the necessary funding.

7.2 A copy of this information report will be shared with Pickering, Ajax, Whitby and Oshawa Councils.

7.3 For additional information, please contact:

- David Dunn, Director, Transportation and Field Services – david.dunn@durham.ca
- Lisa Lavery, Director, Rapid Transit and Transit Oriented Development – lisa.lavery@durham.ca
- Ramesh Jagannathan, Commissioner, Works – ramesh.jagannathan@durham.ca

8. Attachments

8.1 Attachment #1: Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program – BRT Construction Projects Along Regional Highway 2

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by:

Ramesh Jagannathan, MBA, M.Eng., P.Eng., PTOE
Commissioner of Works

Original signed by:

William Holmes
General Manager, Durham Region Transit

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by:

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer

Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program – BRT Construction Projects
Along Regional Highway 2



Rapid Transit Construction Schedule

Pickering

1. Steeple Hill to Merritton – Construction 2025
2. Dixie to Bainbridge – Construction 2025

Ajax

3. Rotherglen to Harwood – Construction 2025
4. Harwood to Wicks – Construction 2025
5. Lake Ridge Intersection – Construction 2026