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ENGINEERING AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

March 26, 2007

Katarina Cvetkovic
Program Manager
Transportation Association of Canada
2323 St. Laurent Blvd.
Ottawa ON K1G 4J8

Dear Ms Cvetkovic:

**Subject: 2006 TAC Sustainable Urban Transportation Award
Smart Commute 404-7, Markham, Richmond Hill**

The Town of Richmond Hill is pleased to nominate the Smart Commute 404-7 program for the TAC's Sustainable Urban Transportation Award.

We believe that this program should be recognized for its contribution to the development and enhancement of sustainable transportation. This program is innovative and enhances the sustainability of urban transportation through social, economic and environmental components within the Town of Richmond Hill and the Town of Markham.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our proposal and we look forward to hearing from you on the results.

Sincerely,

Marcel Lanteigne, B.A., C.E.T.
Manager of Transportation and Site Plans

GF:js
Attach.

TAC's Sustainable Urban Transportation Award

Application Form

NOMINATION BY

TAC Member Organization: Town of Richmond Hill
Key employee representative: Marcel Lanteigne

NOMINATION FOR

Title: Smart Commute 404-7

Program Project Process or Other

Please provide a summary paragraph about the initiative being nominated:

See attached

TAC Member Organization: Town of Richmond Hill

Contact Person: Marcel Lanteigne

Title: Manager Transportation, Traffic + Site Plans

Address: 225 East Beaver Creek Rd - P.O. Box 300

Telephone: 905-771-5448 Email: mlanteigne@richmondhill.ca

ATTACHED

- six paper copies of nomination submission (no longer than 7 pages - 8.5" x 11")
- one PDF electronic file of submission on CD
- supporting documents (diagrams, photos, etc.) if needed

Deadline: Friday, March 30, 2007

Send to: 2323 St. Laurent Boulevard, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4J8

Please note that information on the evaluation criteria and process are described at

www.tac-atc.ca

If you have any questions or need clarification, please call (613) 736-1350, ext. 227 or email kcvetkovic@tac-atc.ca.





reducing traffic congestion is just good business



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1.0 Background

On August 9th, 2005, the Town of Richmond Hill entered into a historic and innovative initiative with the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce (RHCO), the Markham Board of Trade (MBT), the Town of Markham, and the Regional Municipality of York to implement and operate Smart Commute 404-7 (SC404-7).

The purpose of Smart Commute 404-7 is to promote and support sustainable transportation solutions and to improve mobility and accessibility in Richmond Hill and Markham, with a particular focus on the corridors created by Highway 404 and Highway 7 and the Markham Centre. Smart Commute 404-7 is one of a network of local transportation management associations (TMAs) across the GTA- Hamilton delivering transportation demand management (TDM) programs and services. The umbrella group Smart Commute GTA-Hamilton is a joint municipal project of the Regions of York, Durham, Peel, and Halton and the Cities of Toronto, Hamilton and Mississauga.

TDM are measures that increase the efficiency of our transportation infrastructure whereby travel demand are optimized through measures that reduce vehicular travel, increase vehicle occupancies and promote the use of other alternative modes of travel. TDM provides services and programs that improve public transit use, carpooling, walking and cycling that leads to a reduction in single-occupant-vehicle (SOV) use.

In Richmond Hill and Markham, TDM is a necessary and important part of their transportation master plans. Increasingly, there is a need to provide immediate solutions to address traffic congestion and the associated green house gas emissions. There is clearly a need for infrastructure expansion to accommodate growth but these initiatives are long term and expensive. SC 404-7 and the TDM measures which are delivered are cheap and effective alternatives to SOV travel. With continuing rapid growth and major growth projected for Richmond Hill and Markham over the next 25 years, it is critical that Richmond Hill and Markham continue to support and enhance the availability of TDM through Smart Commute 404-7.

As part of the Transport Canada Urban Transportation Show Case Program, SC 404-7 was identified as one of the first TMA's to be established for the following reasons.

- Traffic Congestions was the number one issue to local business (Appendix I).
- SC 404-7 is located in a dense & developing high tech employment node.

- Local and regional government were looking at the existing and future demands on the road network and seeking more sustainable long term transportation solutions.
- The understanding from the municipalities and community is that we cannot always widen roads
- There was a need to change traditional ways of getting to and from work.
- Provide cost saving solutions to businesses related to their transportation needs.
- There is an immediate need to reduce GHG emissions and improve air quality.

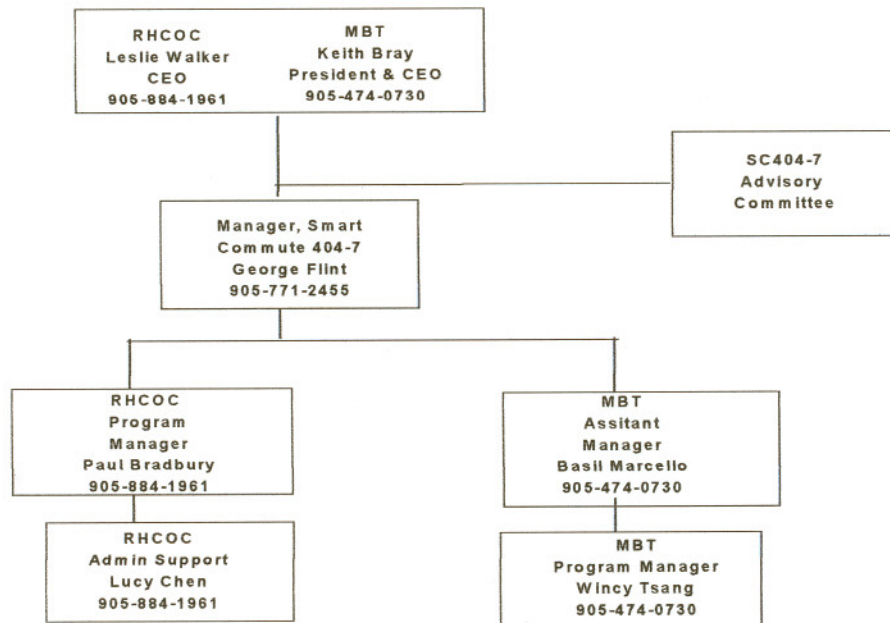
2.0 Smart Commute 404-7 Structure and Operating Model

Initially SC 404-7 was to be incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation including a governance structure and a business plan which was endorsed by both Richmond Hill and Markham's Council. However, at the final 404-7 Steering Team (made up of local business and Councillor's from Richmond Hill and Markham) implementation meeting of March 2005 to finalize the incorporation, it was determined that there would be a number of benefits to the Smart Commute 404-7 if it was operated under the umbrella of both the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce (RHCOC) and Markham Board of Trade (MBT). Also, there were concerns that Smart Commute 404-7 would have difficulties achieving funding through membership drives as it would try to compete with the MBT and RHCOC for similar dollars. Some of the key initial benefits of this organizational structure are as follows:

- Instant recognition;
- Familiarity with the Chamber and Board which is key to meeting and linking with business in Markham and Richmond Hill;
- Credibility and leadership.

The organization structure adopted (see Figure 1) provides for the implementation of SC 404-7 through offices of the CEO's of the RHCOC and MBT and is managed on a day to day basis by the Manager of SC 404-7.

Figure 1 Smart Commute 404-7 Structure



It is through this unique operating model that gives Smart Commute 404-7 the ability to work with the local business community as SC 404-7 has instant recognition and access to 1,800 MBT & RHCOC businesses representing approximately 42,000 employees and provided credibility and trust to local businesses. Businesses share common interests, issues, concerns & turn to outside organizations such as chambers to help which SC 404-7 does.

Critical to the success of SC 404-7 was establishing an Advisory Committee which was created to provide input and guidance with regard to the operation of Smart Commute 404-7, and is represented as follows:

- CAA, IBM, Sheraton Parkway Hotel, Seneca College, GWL Realty, J.J Barnicke, iTrans Consulting, Marshall Macklin Monaghan Ltd.
- One Councillor from both Markham & Richmond Hill
- CEO's from RHCOC & MBT

- Technical Support Staff from Markham and Richmond Hill, York Region Transit and SC 404-7

The successes of SC 404-7 in providing sustainable transportation solutions to the community is attributed to innovative SC 404-7 organizational structure and operating model as it provides a good service that is marketed, branded, and delivered by a credible, trusted, and competent source. SC 404-7 has a strong and committed Advisory Committee who understands the challenges, the business community needs, provides the leadership and is focused on results. SC 404-7 aggressive marketing strategy with visibility at approximately 6-8 RHCOC & MBT events per month (Networking) and a synergy through partnership with government & business all contribute to the “buy in” from the business community.

Through this structure and operation, SC 404-7 is able to deliver and achieve results through the following process;

- Initiate a lead or contact through networking events
- Make presentations to key management outlining why SC 404-7 and its benefits to their organization and their employees
- Get Senior Management to endorse Smart Commute
- Conduct a no-charge employee commuter travel survey
- Provide summary report of employee travel patterns provided by 404-7
- Business assigns an in-house contact person
- Introduce Smart Commute Options to employees

SC 404-7 also has a unique funding partnership created through the Urban Transportation Show Case program. It is a financial partnership between Transport Canada, Town’s of Richmond Hill, & Markham, Regional Municipality of York, Chamber Membership Fees and sponsorships. In addition, Richmond Hill provides the Manager of Smart Commute 404-7 time to the program through an in kind contribution. All private sector involvement is also provided as an in-kind contribution to the program.

3.0 *Smart Commute 404-7 Achievements*

Smart Commute 404-7 is becoming one of the most successful Transportation Management Association (TMA) in the GTA. It markets its services to 1,500 businesses (representing about 42,000 employees) who are members of the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce and Markham Board of Trade. SC 404-7 is now engaged with 80 businesses representing approximately 25,000 employees

who are implementing traffic reduction programs, undertaking travel behavior surveys, and sponsorship initiatives.

SC 404-7 launched the Lunch Express on December 8, 2006, a pilot project to help reduce traffic congestion and address parking problems in the Beaver Creek and Commerce Valley Business Parks by offering a free bus service during the lunch hours two days a week (Appendix II, III, IV). Currently, 25 restaurants are participating, offering 10% discounts and gift certificates for riders. This commitment on behalf of the restaurant owners demonstrates their commitment to improving the parking and traffic problems that impacts their business and also the partnership they want to maintain. During the four months of operation, there were a total of approximately 520 people using the service, reducing traffic, parking and GHG emissions in the busy restaurant campus areas.

SC 404-7 is also working with York Region Transit to support the Region's Ridesaver pilot program (a 15% transit discount program for business employees who participate in the SC 404-7) by including the program's features and benefits when presenting the SC 404-7 program to businesses.

A key area of activity of the Smart Commute Initiative is the establishment of Carpool Zone, a free web-based ride-matching service, and the media promotion of carpooling. This activity is a perfect fit with the current Provincial program of implementing and expanding a high occupancy vehicle lane network across the Provincial highway system SC 404-7 has registered 840 carpool users (work and home based) in the area, which is 1/3 of the total registered carpool users in the GTA and Hamilton. This represents potentially 400 less vehicles on the roads in Richmond Hill and Markham during the peak hours resulting in a reduction of 12,289 vehicle-kilometers. By the end of the year, the reduction is expected to double. The functions and resulting benefits of the activities of the Smart Commute Initiative are complementary to a number of Provincial initiatives and areas of responsibility (Appendix V).

The SC 404-7 web site continues to see interest averaging 21,000 hits per month. An aggressive marketing strategy has been implemented through regular promotional events highlighted by the SC 404-7 Lunch in January 2006 which included a presentation by the Minister of Transportation and the SC 404-7 Hangar Party in August 2006. A CAA newsletter article on SC 404-7 is estimated to have reached an audience of 2 million. The media has provided frequent coverage of SC 404-7 events and achievements raising public awareness (Appendix VI).

Due the success of SC 404-7, staff was approached by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce and York Region to help start up and manage their Smart Commute

York Central TMA, for which SC 404-7 is now providing management services (on a fee for service basis). This clearly shows that the organizational structure and operating model of SC 404-7 is easily transferable to other communities and with proven results and is why other communities are now starting to implement programs or seeking information regarding SC 404-7.

As a result of SC 404-7 experiences, SC 404-7 is advising other GTA municipalities of our program and there has been increasing interest across the GTA and Canada (see attached marketing materials). SC 404-7 staff participated with Transport Canada and the Canadian National Transportation Demand Management Association in a Canada-wide webcast in late February 2007.

SC 404-7 plays a key role in providing local businesses with a comprehensive commuter options information package for their employees, which supports the business ability to recruit and retain employees and help address their transportation needs. In just over a full year of operation SC 404-7 has succeeded in raising the awareness of who SC 404-7 is, to what SC 404-7 can do to help reduce traffic congestion and GHG emission with proven results.

4.0 Conclusion

York Region (including Richmond Hill and Markham) and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton region has been experiencing significant and sustained growth over the last two decades and is projected to continue for the next 25 years as presented in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe region as part of Places to Grow.

York Region staff note in their Planning and Economic Development Staff report of January 23, 2007 that “this continuing growth has resulted in increasing traffic congestion across the entire Greater Toronto and Hamilton region. Implementing the necessary transportation infrastructure to manage traffic congestion has become a major preoccupation of the municipalities in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton region. However, overcoming the financial, environmental and other constraints in implementing transportation infrastructure has become difficult if not challenging. The single occupant vehicle or commuting alone in a car is recognized as the most intrusive of all travel modes while alternative modes such as public transit, carpooling, walking and cycling are the most acceptable modes.” Specifically in Richmond Hill and Markham, SC 404-7 ability to implement TDM programs is part of an overall plan for sustainability in Richmond Hill, Markham, and is consistent with York Region’s and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton region plans.

SC 404-7 programs are complementary to the work of the Provincial Ministries of Public Infrastructure Renewal and Long Term Health Promotion. Such programs as the Lunch Express and promoting employee transit discount programs with York Region Transit, carpool zone and walking and cycling to work are all forms of transportation that meet their objectives.

SC 404-7 can help local municipalities attract and maintain businesses in the municipality. SC 404-7 can help to reduce local GHG and air pollution from SOVs and improve air quality in general. The benefits to the Richmond Hill and Markham include reduced traffic congestion, increased mobility, road and parking cost savings, reduced traffic collisions, environmental protection, and livable communities. The social benefits to individual employees or commuters include reduced personal stress, improved physical health and travel cost savings is a “win-win” for all.

Most importantly it is the ability of SC 404-7 leadership, the stakeholders commitment, partnerships and the business champions that provides the added value, results and successes of SC 404-7. This is demonstrated in the following quote from one of the businesses which located in the SC 404-7 service area and is a member of the Advisory Committee.

“CAA is proud to support and partner with SC 404-7. We share its objectives and vision. Our members want solutions to gridlock that will improve their quality of life by reducing their commute times and transportation costs and that support the environment by reducing the emissions that harm the quality of the air we breath.”

Kris Barnier, Provincial Relations Specialist CAA Ontario

APPENDICES

Liberal News paper Oct 28, 2006

IAS

Local Politics

Gridlock problems escalate

Town needs help from others to reduce traffic

WE ALL ARE facing ever increasing gridlock. More and more, I hear of folks who take close to an hour to get from one spot in Richmond Hill to another in morning rush hour. Neighbourhoods are jammed with cars looking for alternative routes.



DAVID COHEN
Ward 3 councillor

The Region of York and the Town of Richmond Hill has been trying to address these issues in a few ways, improving bus service with VIVA, initiating "Smart Commute" with the Chamber of Commerce and through our own Gridlock Task Force. Ultimately, however, nothing significant is taking place to help.

In the GTA, not one metre of new train track is either being put down or is approved for construction. The GO people, who operate some trains in Richmond Hill, have no priority to start the north-south all day service we need so badly.

The provincial and federal governments have provided some additional capital funding and I suppose I should say thank you, but mass transit needs a major boost.

I commend the funding of improved bus service through VIVA and I hope that people will try it where possible. Overhead walking bridges on Highway 7 would be appreciated and a safer set of stairs at Bayview and Highway 7 might cause an increase in riders.

Our Smart Commute program — a co-operative venture of York Region, Richmond Hill and Markham — is going out to area businesses to start altered work cycles, promote car pooling, encourage employer participation in buying bus tickets and to encourage reduced rush hour car volumes. These partners are also building a new overpass from East Beaver Creek, over Highway 404 into Markham. It is hoped this project will start in 2007.

But these strategies will not work because of growth without continued heavy financial assistance from the provincial and federal governments. The GTA is in a transportation crisis and we need help now.



All aboard the Lunch Express

Will a bus fix the 905's noon woes?

PETER CHENEY -

Saturday, November 11, 2006

As he bolted together his first Model T and dreamed of the day when internal combustion would replace the horse, Henry Ford probably didn't imagine the trouble his invention would cause more than 100 years later at Commerce Valley Drive and Minthorn Boulevard.

Here, on the boundary between Richmond Hill and Markham, the automobile is at the centre of a crisis that plays itself out in the middle of every working day as thousands of cars joust for lunchtime parking spots at a restaurant plaza west of Highway 404.

"It's insane," said Josh Abraham, a 23-year-old warehouse worker who recently made several circuits of the lot in his Ford Focus before finally slotting himself in and taking a seat at Hero Certified Burgers, one of nearly a dozen restaurants located in the mall.

The scene outside Hero's conjured up a mechanized invasion: Cars and SUVs were flooding in, but the parking lot had long since been filled. Dozens of vehicles were orbiting the lot like jets in a holding pattern, waiting to dive into the first opening. Other drivers had decided to go guerrilla-style -- the curb was lined with illegally parked vehicles (including a black Porsche and a rusted-out Toyota), blocking the fire lane.

Almost everyone had arrived in a single-occupant vehicle, making for a diner-to-vehicle ratio that was nearly one-to-one. The result: a giant, carbon-fuelled game of musical chairs.

"It's like this every time I come here," Mr. Abraham said. "It's ridiculous."

But the end may be in sight. Starting next month, suburban lunch-goers will be able to board the Lunch Express, a system designed to combat this noontime hell.

Planned and funded by the cities of Richmond Hill and Markham, the express will consist of two free buses that will shuttle diners around a 4.5-kilometre loop from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays -- the days when more workers go out for lunch.

Although it sounds modest, planners believe that the Lunch Express may play a key role in overcoming the area's growing traffic problems by introducing suburbanites to public transit. Statistics show that the average Richmond Hill household owns 1.9 cars -- nearly twice the rate of Toronto households. And during peak commuting hours, more than 75 per cent of the vehicles on the road hold one person each.

These numbers weigh heavily on George Flint, a traffic planner with the town of Richmond Hill.

"This is what happens every day," he said as he took in the scene during a recent lunch-hour rush. Mr. Flint, who manages a program called Smart Commute 404-7, spends his days trying to find solutions for

the suburb's traffic woes.

There are no easy answers. The area has very low density compared with downtown: Homes and offices are set far apart, with extensive stretches of greenery. There is an abundance of winding streets and cul-de-sacs, making it nearly impossible to design a comprehensive transit system.

To be carless here is to be marooned in a world of tarmac and vast distance. Many of the streets were built without sidewalks, and there are virtually no bike lanes or corner stores. Traffic pours out of the neighbourhoods and business parks onto major feeder roads such as Highway 7, which is now strained beyond capacity during the three daily rush hours (morning, noon and evening).

The traffic arrives with tide-like regularity. At 10 a.m., you can shoot down Highway 7 like Michael Schumacher. But an hour and a half later, as the lunch rush gets under way, the road turns into a virtual parking lot of cars and SUVs.

"It's an unsustainable way of life," Mr. Flint said. "It has to change."

After years of studying traffic in the area, Mr. Flint believes that an alternative to automobile transportation is critical.

"You can't just keep widening the roads forever."

Planners hope the lunch service wins over drivers by giving them a free taste of public transit. What remains to be seen is whether suburbanites will buy into it. As transit evangelists have learned, getting suburbanites out of their cars isn't easy. Last year, York Region Transit launched a bus-based rapid transit called Viva, but its routes are limited and it's still not the ride of choice for most commuters in the 905.

The Lunch Express will offer hard-core drivers an easy-to-access transit option. Buses will run about 10 minutes apart, and passengers will be able to hop on and off wherever they want. Although planners believe that the Lunch Express's convenience will be a sufficient drawing card, they have organized an added inducement by persuading some of the restaurants in the area to give riders a 10-per-cent discount.

"We want them to see the benefits of using transit," Mr. Flint said. "This will help them buy in."

The Lunch Express comes after lengthy consultation with area residents and business owners. "Everyone wants change," Mr. Flint said. "There's a lot of frustration out there."

Surveys have shown that road congestion is the No. 1 issue for businesses in Markham and Richmond Hill, since it creates a set of problems that afflict virtually every aspect of their operation. Customers can't find room to park, supplies and finished goods are hard to get in and out, and some potential employees have turned down jobs, citing traffic woes as the reason.

As Mr. Flint has learned, the suburb's massive traffic woes have compounded other problems. Richmond Hill hotel managers, for example, told him about the lifestyle Catch-22 that many of their service staff find themselves trapped in. The workers can't afford to live in Richmond Hill or own a car, but they can't get to work on public transit, either. Many are forced to take taxis from as far away as Scarborough, spending a high percentage of their incomes on transportation.

Those familiar with Richmond Hill and Markham say the growing traffic and parking problems are crippling the area.

"Fifteen years ago, there wasn't enough parking," said Jim Hood, a retired executive who spent his career designing retail locations for the Hallmark card company. "Then they put in more stores and restaurants and made it worse."

Although they agreed that the Lunch Express was a good idea, many who live or work in the area expressed doubts about using it.

"It wouldn't work for me," Mr. Abraham said as he lunched at Hero. "I come from too far away."

Software salesman Craig Keller also said he would probably forgo the Lunch Express. "My schedule's not regular enough," he said. "I'll still be driving."

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Take express for lunch, errands

Workers in the region's south end are urged to hop on the Lunch Express for the next four months. The towns of Markham and Richmond Hill and Smart Commute 404-7 have partnered for a pilot project to whisk workers in the Hwys. 404 and 7 area free of charge to local restaurants and shops during the lunch hour. The service is aimed at cutting air pollution, road congestion and leaving more space in parking lots.

It will operate in the Commerce Valley and Beaver Creek areas from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays during the next 16 weeks.

Gift giving in cards

A lot more retailers will be offering gift cards this holiday season.

BUSINESS TICKER

According to a Statistics Canada report, last year, 82 per cent of retailers offered cards, up from 53 per cent in 2003. Grocery and clothing stores are catching up to the electronics industry.

Almost 80 per cent of clothing shops now offer gift cards, more than twice the 36 per cent three years ago.

Grocery stores, many of which now offer more general merchandise, have also seen a spike to 70 per cent in 2005 from 57 per cent in 2003.

More than half of all retail sales in Canada this month are expected to be gift cards.

A dollar for a star can brighten a child's life

Every \$1 donation at Toys 'R' Us stores across Canada will go to Starlight Starbright Campaign of Wishes and Dreams.

This is the 10th year the franchise has undertaken the fundraiser.

The charity has granted more than 2,500 wishes, including trips and bedroom makeovers to seriously ill children during the past 17 years.

No more crossing picket lines?

Ottawa is discussing the merits of so-called "anti-scab" legislation.

In October, federal politicians voted in favour of a private member's bill to ban replacement workers during disputes.

Sing Tao Newspaper
Dec 19, 2006

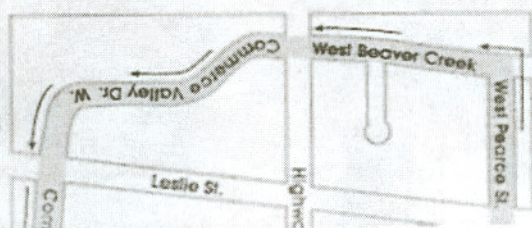
紓緩交通擠塞 減低廢氣污染

萬錦與烈市推出午膳快線



圖為萬錦市市長卞家平(右一)昨中午率一班萬錦市及烈市市議員及區域議員，登上免費《午膳快線》巴士前往午餐。

午膳快



本報記者

【本報記者報導】中萬萬錦市市長卞家平、烈市市長文、市議員及約克區議員等，昨(八)日在烈市市議會，試乘該市週四及週五午膳時段都會循環行駛、每8分鐘免費接載萬錦市上班族一族的烈市食肆進線的巴士新服務。

該項名為《午膳快線》免費巴士試乘計劃的經理羅特(George Fint)指出，該項為期16個月的試行計劃早於上月30日已於烈市、至明年3月23日為止，之後萬錦市府、烈市市府及其組織會研究此計劃

的效用，然後決定會否擴大此計劃的服務日數及地點。

他表示此試行計劃現時只會在每星期四及周五，早上11時30分至下午2時30分午膳時間高峯期，安排兩部約克區巴士在奈斯利街至401號公路一段的7號公路南北兩端，即 East Beaver Creek 與 Commerce Valley Dr 循環試行(路線如圖)。

試驗計劃為期16周

萬特稱推行該試驗計劃目的是欲減少上班族在午膳時段使用汽車，減低該地段汽車排氣污染之餘，亦可紓緩此地段中午時期的交通擠塞問題。

他解釋目前到上班一族或會擔心免費《午膳快線》巴士班次問題，萬特指出該服務免費巴士會沿上述路線循環行駛，外出進線的上班族相信只要在巴士站等候約8分鐘就可登上巴士，抵達位於7號公路北面的食肆。當被問到為何會選擇此路段及只

周四周

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他稱一旦試行計劃免費巴士替代駕車，則及擴展服務範圍。管理協會成員之一的萬特午膳時間以免費巴士好市買場(Markham)及

Carpoolers to get more lanes

HOV lanes working, commuter advocate says

BY DAVID FLEISCHER
Staff Writer

If you're a commuter who has noticed things have been moving a little faster on Hwy. 404 lately, you're not wrong.

Provincial officials are patting themselves on the back, touting the success of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and promising more to come.

Cars with at least one passenger are permitted to make use of the "diamond lanes" on highways 404 and 403.

"I am delighted to say that HOV lanes are an unqualified success," said Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield. "People are enjoying a faster, more reliable commute."

While the temptation for lone drivers to use the lanes seems great, the OPP says the reality for misuse on the 404 is only about 2.5 per cent.

They estimate they hand out approximately 250 tickets per month for misuse on both highways.

A new northbound lane between the 401 and Hwy. 7 will open next summer, joining the southbound lane already in use.

Smart Commute 404-7 manager George Flint has been leading the efforts

to get commuters either out of their cars or at least into carpools. The organization has been up and running for nearly a year, working with businesses in the congested 404-7 district to create carpool networks.

'Everybody I'm talking to is saying they like them and it's saving them time and money.'

"The number of registered users has been increasing since the launch of the carpool lanes," Mr. Flint said.

Smart Commute now has 850 regis-

tered users — an impressive percentage of the 3,500 carpool users throughout the GTA.

A lot of legwork still needs to be done, but local business and its employees are hearing the message and showing interest, Mr. Flint said.

There is no question, he said, the HOV lanes are working.

"Everybody says how great the lanes are."

The province is also adding lanes on highways such as Ottawa's 417 and is considering adding to the Queen Elizabeth Way.

It has been determined there is no room to add lanes to the regularly congested 401 through Toronto.

Some riders exempt from transit fare hike

Some bus fares in York Region will go up in the new year.

To generate an additional \$2 million in revenue and offset the region's \$75-million operating cost for transit, York Region council has approved an increase for select transit fares, effective Jan. 1.

The hike does not apply to tickets for students, seniors or children.

As well, the fare increase does not affect Ride to GO tickets or GO monthly sticker passes.

Increased bus fares range from 25 cents for cash tickets to \$10 for adult monthly passes for two-zone travel.

Each year, York Region Transit does a fare structure review to make sure the system remains competitive in the marketplace, Tracy Smith, a York Region communication officer said.

Ms Smith pointed out the price of a monthly bus pass remains well below the cost of purchasing individual tickets on a daily basis.

The Liberal Newspaper
Dec 17, 2006

SMART COMMUTE 404-7 LEADING EFFORTS TO GET COMMUTERS OUT OF OWN CARS

Networks feed HOV success

BY DAVID FLEISCHER
Staff Writer

If you're a commuter who has noticed things have been moving a little faster on Hwy. 404 lately, you're not wrong.

Provincial officials are patting themselves on the back, touting the success of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and promising more to come.

Cars with at least one passenger are permitted to make use of the "diamond lanes" on Hwys. 404 and 403.

"I am delighted to say that HOV lanes are an unqualified success," Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield said. "People are enjoying a faster, more reliable commute."

While the temptation for lone drivers to use the lanes seems great,

the OPP says the reality for misuse on Hwy. 404 is only about 2.5 per cent.

They estimate handing out 250 tickets for misuse on both highways per month.

A new northbound lane between Hwys. 401 and 7 will open next summer, joining the southbound lane already in use.

Smart Commute 404-7 manager

George Flint has been leading the efforts to get local commuters out of their cars or at least into carpools.

The organization has been up-and-running for nearly a year, working with businesses in the congested 404-7 district to create carpool networks.

"The number of registered users has been increasing since the

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Legwork still ahead

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launch of the carpool lanes," Mr. Flint said.

Smart Commute now has 850 registered users — an impressive percentage of the 3,500 carpool users throughout the entire GTA.

A lot of legwork still needs to be done, but local business and its employees are hearing the message and showing interest. There is no question the HOV lanes are playing its part in

helping, Mr. Flint said.

"Everybody says how great the lanes are. Everybody I'm talking to is saying they like them and it's saving them time and money."

The province is also adding lanes on highways such as Ottawa's Hwy. 417 and is considering adding to the Queen Elizabeth Way. It has been determined there is no room to add lanes to the regularly congested Hwy. 401 through Toronto

BY THE NUMBERS

According to Ministry of Transportation statistics on Hwy. 404:

▶ HOV lane users are now travelling from Highway 7 to the 401 in nine minutes, when it used to take them 26. And with those drivers out of the way, general traffic is also moving 11 minutes faster.

▶ Carpool use has risen from 16 per cent of cars in 2004 to 37 per cent during morning rush hour.

▶ The average rush hour speed in HOV lanes (on a road with 100 km/h limit) is 70 km/h, while the rest of traffic moves along at 50 km/h.



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Appendix VI

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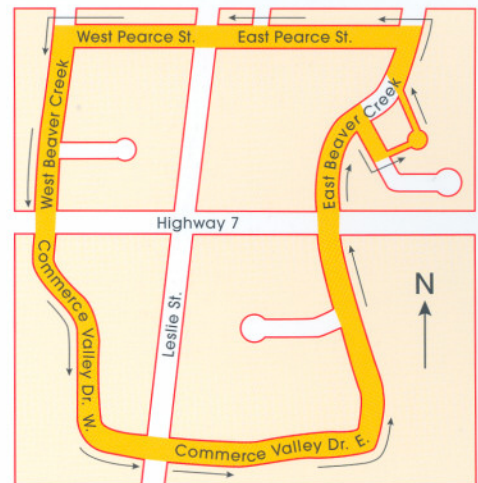


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Smart Commute 404-7 is a joint venture between the Markham Board of Trade and the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce. Funding for the LunchExpress has been contributed in part by the Markham Environmental Sustainability Fund and the Town of Richmond Hill.

Partnered by: Smart Commute 404-7, Markham Board of Trade, Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce and York Region Transit.



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