

## 6. POLICY INITIATIVES

New policy initiatives will provide the framework necessary to support and encourage the development and use of a rapid transit system. The five key areas of the policy strategy are:

- Protection of land for rapid transit corridors;
- Optimization of development along transit corridors;
- Support and designation of mixed-use land development;
- Urban design guidelines supportive of non-automotive travel;
- Development of a Parking Authority.

### 6.1 PROTECTION OF LAND FOR RAPID TRANSIT CORRIDORS

This initiative will help to ensure that rapid transit corridor lands are protected now so that they will still be available when the rapid transit network is implemented.

All bus transit routes in Markham and the Region currently operate in mixed traffic on the existing roadway network. Bus travel times and service frequency are currently determined by the amount of congestion on the roadways. As a result, transit is not as competitive an option as automobile travel.

Increased automobile travel will have little impact on rapid transit operations in dedicated transit corridors. These corridors can provide transit with a competitive advantage that will help to shift the “car-first” attitude. The rapid transit corridors will also be a powerful element in ensuring sustainable growth by providing not only a viable means of travel within the Town, but also on an inter-regional basis through connecting nodes.

### 6.2 OPTIMIZATION OF DEVELOPMENT ALONG TRANSIT CORRIDORS

Urban densities and rapid transit corridors are complementary elements of development that help to accommodate the pressure to expand urban boundaries without exacerbating road capacity requirements. Transit protects the environment and promotes health. Harmful automobile emissions damage air quality and contribute to the greenhouse effect.



***Dedicated transit corridors will provide transit with a competitive advantage that will help to shift the “car first” attitude.***



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From the perspective of land development, rapid transit can provide sufficient capacity and service frequency to accommodate the trip activity associated with mixed residential (apartment, condominium and townhouse) and commercial (office and retail location) uses. Urban development also contributes to maintaining a viable transit service since it can provide a concentrated ridership base that makes rapid transit service feasible from the onset.

As redevelopment adjacent to the dedicated transit corridor evolves, the increased ridership potential provides additional opportunities to finance the equipment, staffing and other costs associated with enhanced service frequency and capacity. The net result is a healthy urban environment that supports sustainable development by reducing dependence on the automobile as the primary mode of travel.

### 6.3 SUPPORT AND DESIGNATION OF MIXED-USE LAND DEVELOPMENT

Development which includes a balance of residential and employment uses will provide greater opportunities for people to both live and work in Markham, allowing residents to reduce the distance and time they spend commuting. Mixed-use development also helps to increase road capacity by creating a more balanced two-way traffic flow (with inbound travel to employment uses and outbound traffic from residential uses) than the one-way peak flows generated by urban sprawl.

### 6.4 URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT NON-AUTOMOTIVE MODES OF TRAVEL

Transit, walking and biking can be promoted by integrating design elements that encourage these modes of travel. Design guidelines can include such elements as the provision of sidewalks on both sides of the street, adequate lighting, bicycle paths and lanes, and reduced setbacks for buildings and houses to help encourage non-automotive travel. More substantial design elements include a grid network for streets (which facilitates reliable transit routes and service levels) and the incorporation of transit stops or stations into multi-use commercial developments (which fosters economic vitality by providing complimentary retail and office services while

***Mixed-use urban development helps to increase road capacity by creating more balanced traffic flow.***



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promoting the efficiency of transit use). Other ordinances could include a requirement that parking lots over three acres in size provide street-like features along major driveways (curbs, sidewalks, trees or planting strips) or provisions for the designation of residential parking districts.

### 6.5 DEVELOPMENT OF A PARKING AUTHORITY

A Parking Authority will be required to manage parking supply and demand. Prime land that is used for employee parking is very expensive for developers to build and owners to maintain. When valuable land is consumed by parking and not built form, this also results in increased costs to municipalities through a reduced tax base. Increased parking results in more automobile traffic and a reduction of road capacity. The resulting congestion provides even less opportunity for sustainable development.

Operated in conjunction with the municipality, a Parking Authority can be used as a mechanism to optimize land development potential. Markham has already undertaken a number of steps to educate and disseminate information on parking authorities.

During a special two-day session, an expert from Portland, Oregon was on hand to discuss both the positive attributes and the potential hurdles that can be encountered. The most significant issues for Markham include the planning policies required to convert the town from an essentially suburban environment with free parking to an urban one with municipal parking facilities providing the majority of supply under a user-pay system.

The key to a Parking Authority is its ability to look beyond daily revenue and maintenance issues and work with businesses and municipal departments (economic development, engineering and planning) to build a strategy that will foster mixed-use developments and economic vitality.



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### 6.6 MARKHAM CENTRE: A CATALYST FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Markham Centre is being planned as the new downtown core of Markham, and will be a catalyst for development that embodies all five policy initiatives. By building on the policies developed and implemented in existing and growing new urbanism areas, Markham Centre will incorporate mixed-use residential & commercial development that will support rapid transit. The key elements of the Markham Centre plan are:

- Optimization of land use;
- Mixed-use development to accommodate 17,000 jobs and a residential population of 25,000;
- A rapid transit corridor aligned through the core area and serving existing neighbourhoods via a bus feeder service;
- Parking facilities managed by a Parking Authority.

