
MEMORANDUM

CSC-C 14-2019

Subject: Niagara GO Station Strategy

Date: August 7, 2019

To: Corporate Services Committee

From: Matt Robinson, Director

This memo provides Committee with the rationale for the proposed Niagara GO Station Development Strategy presented in confidential report CSD 17-2019, which outlines a strategy for Niagara to invest in the GO train station sites along the CN Rail-owned Grimsby Subdivision, also known as the Niagara corridor. The GO Station Development Strategy outlined in CSD 17-2019 will allow Niagara Region and our local municipal partners to fully leverage and maximize the resident and visitor experience at these key gateways by creation of multi-modal mobility hubs. The customer experience is vital to the continued growth of GO Train service in Niagara, the growth of municipal and regional transit, and tourism in the region.

Niagara has taken considerable time and resources in the strategic planning for transit and GO Train service, including establishing premier transit-supportive policy sets to ensure the foundation for future transit growth and that development is clear, focused and appropriate. The following sets out the policy regime already in place to enable and fully leverage investments in station areas in Niagara Region.

The 2017 Niagara Region Transportation Master Plan (TMP) is what guides the Region's transportation capital investments, and creates the blueprint for growth. The TMP presents a long-term strategy to guide the planning, development and renewal of a multi-modal transportation system in a manner that is consistent with projected needs, aligned with the region's growth, and with the overall vision for a sustainable Niagara.

The following foundational policy has provided the direction to invest in the station areas:

"Continue to support the expansion of GO Transit passenger rail service to Niagara Region, and the development/ redevelopment of rail stations to serve as major transit station areas, to support needs of communities along the corridor, and to commuters and tourists moving in both directions between Niagara Region and the GTHA."

This policy clearly demonstrates the strategic planning and critical integration these station areas have in the long-term transportation network and growth of the region. Other initiatives in place that have led to this GO Station Development Strategy as the logical next step in Niagara's GO Expansion Implementation include:

1. Niagara Region Official Plan policy objectives for the urban areas that includes: *“to actively support the continuation and improvement of the railway system for the movement of both passengers and goods”* clearly indicating that Niagara Region has long supported investment in rail as a travel mode for passengers and believes there is an active role for the Region to play in delivery of this objective;
2. Significant investment in transit including seamless connection all 12 of Niagara’s local municipalities, and expansion of transit service hours over the next three years;
3. 2011 “Niagara Rail Service Expansion Environmental Study Report GO Transit” by RJ Burnside which concluded that the existing rail stations were keys to GO’s expansion and that there would be a new station built in Grimsby;
4. Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Lincoln, Grimsby, and Niagara Region have set out a vision for the station areas through the Secondary Plan process. Unanimously approved and adopted into the respective Official Plans in each community, these transformational GO station area visionary plans laid out the future development, capital improvements and next generation land use around the train station sites, establishing a full suite of transit-supportive policies that enable full maximization of the land densities, station accesses and transportation network upgrades necessary to ensure these stations remain at the core of the transportation network and the areas evolve into dynamic mobility hubs.

Investing in the station areas further enables the implementation of the mobility hub vision by providing integrated transit connectivity and public investment. This investment will act as a catalyst for further development and redevelopment by the private sector in these station areas. The Region is best positioned to fully capitalize on the existing potential of the station areas as transit hubs, which will be a benefit for all parties and future transit users. At Committee of the Whole July 4, 2019, these and other elements of the overall GO Station Development Strategy were presented (attached Appendix 1).

Respectfully submitted and signed by,

Matt Robinson
Director, GO Implementation Office