

RGS REVIEW OPTIONS

OPTION# 1: RGS UPDATE

This option is a variation of the Interim Update process, proposed for 2007. Initiatives would include the following:

- Mapping updates
- Terminology updates (e.g. reflect change to Forest Land Reserve)
- Update Economic Development chapter to reflect Board decisions made regarding the Economic Development Blueprint and related actions.
- Update the Transportation chapter to reflect the completion and adoption of the TravelChoices Strategy; the availability of gas tax funding; the development of the TIIP; and GHG reduction targets (now a requirement of the province)
- Update the housing affordability chapter to reflect the completion and adoption of the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy and the creation of the housing trust fund.
- Update population and dwelling unit information
- Update growth rate, allocation and projection information
- Review the area included within the RUCSPA based on new projections and analysis
- Add the provision for the Multi-Party Servicing Agreement to address the issue of water extensions beyond the RUCSPA.

The basic structure of the RGS is retained, but policy is clarified and the data and initiatives are updated.

Anticipated Timeline: Minimal as much of the work, except for the Agreement, is already done. The region may want to engage a demographer to update the population and housing projections. There should also be inter-municipal consultation process around this issue – to develop agreement on the projections and the likely allocation of population and development.

Anticipated Cost: Staff time and mapping already included in core budget. Cost of demographer included within core budget (assuming modest project scope).

OPTION #2: RGS POLICY AREA REVISION

This option would include much of the work outline above in the RGS Update, but would include a two-phased approach: Phase One would include the updates mentioned in Option #1; Phase 2 would include a more detailed approach to improving policy direction pertaining to the existing RGS policy areas, such as the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area (RUCSPA), Resource lands (ALR & forest), rural lands, and the unprotected greenspace policy.

Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area (RUCSPA): The information received to date through the RGS amendment process has shown that there is wide-spread public support for the containment boundary, but it has also highlighted some of the limitations of the RGS servicing provisions and the amendment process. Efforts need to be made to develop a clear, defensible, and fair process for sustaining a meaningful growth boundary and for addressing servicing extensions. Background work will include research into best practices, a range of implementation tools and agreements, and cost-of-growth considerations.

Additional analysis would include:

- Background work involving the integration of the transportation and land use modeling
- Clarification of the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area (RUCSPA) boundary based on OCP designations, population projections and growth trends
- Development of Implementation Agreements addressing servicing and infrastructure extensions, and RGS updates and amendments.
- Development of an implementation chapter which clarifies legislated requirements and provisions of the Regional Context Statements.

Anticipated Timeline: Approximately 12 months assuming a reasonable level of municipal participation in providing input to the approaches and review of implementation agreements.

Anticipated Cost: Much of the work to be done through 2008 is included in the core budget, although additional consultant expertise may be required to complete the project in a timely manner. This would come forward to the Board in an additional report and project terms of reference, or may be addressed in the 2009 budget. Consultation work through 2008 is assumed to be modest and targeted mainly to the affected local governments. Additional budget would be required for broader public engagement.

OPTION #3: COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY/ REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

The intent of this option is to broaden the scope of the RGS to address environmental, economic, social and cultural sustainability. It would incorporate many of the steps listed above, but would include a more comprehensive policy development approach; the assessment of growth scenarios and alternatives; and more extensive public engagement process. Proposed elements could include:

Stronger Transportation Focus: To better reflect the regional priorities established through the Board, the RGS could develop a stronger emphasis on regional transportation; identifying the regional multi-modal corridors and suggesting policy to support the network through complementary land use patterns such as transit hubs, nodal development, transit-oriented development, and mixed-use main streets.

Climate Change Response: To be responsive to emerging provincial policy, the recommendations of the Community Energy Plan, and scientific evidence, the RGS could address greenhouse gas reduction, carbon neutrality, and adaptation approaches that pertain to regional settlement patterns and transportation.

Social & Cultural Sustainability: The Regional Housing Affordability Strategy (RHAS) was developed as a sub-strategy of the RGS, but was adopted well after the RGS was completed. This section of the RGS needs to be updated, and more work needs to be done to better integrate the housing affordability considerations with other aspects of “smart planning”. People require affordable and accessible living environments – in addition to affordable units.

There are a number of emerging policy issues that contribute to social and cultural sustainability that could be considered through the review. Issues include: food security, archeological assets, healthy communities, and building more resilient communities. Addressing these issues would provide opportunities to engage a broad range of stakeholders including First Nations, Post-Secondary institutions, NGOs, and community-based groups.

A More Responsive Strategy: This revision option could also include a change in emphasis to the Regional Growth Strategy – to emphasize the sub-strategies and implementation agreements. Because the RGS legislation is so rigid, it is difficult to use the RGS to respond to emerging issues or priorities. While the principles and overall policy direction of the RGS should have some permanency; the more detailed initiatives, targets and priorities should be kept current. As such, consideration should be given to the appropriate division of content between the RGS and supportive documents.

The emphasis would also change to focus on implementation, rather than just RGS consistency. The RGS and the sub-strategies could be supplemented with:

- Implementation agreements
- Servicing agreements
- Project priority frameworks (such as TravelChoices Implementation and Investment Plan)

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- Partnership agreements
 - Funding agreements
 - Demonstration and pilot projects
 - Sustainability checklist
 - Guidelines and Best Practice Guides

Anticipated Timelines: at least 24 months

Requires the commitments and committees mentioned above, plus additional stakeholder groups associated with sustainability.

Anticipated Cost: The first year's work would be similar to options #1 and #2. In the second year, there would likely be a requirement for additional consulting work and consultation support. Actual costs would depend on project scope, the extent of consultation desired, and depth of analysis. This request would come forward in subsequent reports to Committee and the Board.