

CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT
Regional Planning Services Department

Staff Report to the Regional Planning Committee
Meeting of Wednesday, September 15, 2004

SUBJECT:

Regional Transportation Data Acquisition Program

BACKGROUND:

In 1991, the Region initiated data acquisition programs to develop a Regional Transportation Model (RTM) and to provide other information on the impacts of transportation at a regional scale. The RTM and related data have been a useful tools in aiding the development of the Regional Growth Strategy, the TravelChoices Strategy and aiding many agencies with their local transportation impact studies and policies.

The primary use of regional traffic data is for regional transportation studies. However, a major user of this data has been the member municipalities. Ever since the information was first developed in 1991, municipalities have requested the data for local studies. For most of the municipalities in the region, this is their only source of traffic data as they do not have the resources to collect this information. Due to interest in this data by the public and the business community, Regional Planning Services (RPS) introduced an online access tool to improve the accessibility to this data for all users.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this report is to summarize the findings of our review of the transportation planning data the region currently inventories, and the proposed changes we recommend to ensure that (RPS) can meet its mandate with this program.

With the adoption of the Regional Growth Strategy and completion of the draft TravelChoices Strategy, (RPS) initiated a review of the associated transportation data acquisition program as it looks to start its next five-year cycle of data acquisition.

The attached report provides full details of the existing and proposed transportation data acquisition program. It outlines the key topic areas that related to the acquisition of transportation data at a regional level, which are:

- Traffic Volumes (24-Hour)
- Classification & Occupancy Counts
- Transit Counts
- Cycling Counts
- Demographic Data
- Core Program Funding
- Origin and Destination Survey(s)
- Turning Movement Counts
- Data Management System
- Other Data
- Resource
- Other Core Program Benefits (Transportation Indicators)

The information developed by this program is used by planners, investors, developers, universities, municipalities, provincial agencies, the public and the region. Based on feedback from these users, the department identified a number of issues related to the existing program that included the quality of the data, its completeness, its timeliness and the availability of data from other sources. Our review includes discussions with professional engineers that have actually done transportation studies for the region or local municipalities and included looking at the current "Best Practices" of similar sized organization.

The report concludes that the existing program is no longer sustainable and the program needs to be changed. The proposed changes include improving the quality of the data and its frequency of acquisition; improving the methodology used for data acquisition; and, resolving the funding gap that has impacted the existing program.

For RPS to achieve its mandate with this program and respond to the changes proposed in the attached report, the region needs to establish annual funding of \$83,000 for this program. This amount enables the department to sustain most of the existing count program while increasing its frequency to a five-year cycle from a 10-year cycle and significantly improving its quality.

While the proposed new funding level will continue to be below levels needed to fully follow the best practices of other Regional Districts, it will provide acceptable information for most studies and transportation indicators used to track changes in travel demand in this region. The new program does:

- exclude adding new transportation data used by other regional districts as part of their transportation data programs (goods movement, pedestrian data or counting 10% of all major routes); and
- include eliminating up to 10% of the existing 24-hour count sites in this region (mostly sites where urban growth has slowed or volumes have been relatively low over the last ten years).

To include pedestrian counts, the recommended budget would need to be increased by an additional \$5,000 per year. Goods movement surveys could cost over \$100,000. This type of data is beneficial in planning long-term trucking policies, however trucking in this region is less than 2% of the peak hour travel demand and does not currently warrant this type of analysis.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Regional Planning Committee endorse the recommendation to improve the Regional Transportation Data Acquisition Program and that Regional Planning Services include as part of its 2005 Budget submission, a request to increase the funding for the acquisition of transportation data under the budget section "Contract for Services" from \$15,000 to \$83,000.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION:

As noted above and to be further addressed as part of the annual budget of the Regional Planning Services Department.

REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY CONSISTENCY:

Proposed program will support ongoing monitoring of the RGS and Travel Choices.

Larry Roberts, Manager
Regional Transportation Planning

Mark Hornell, Director
Regional Planning Services

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

W.M. Jordan, Executive Director

Attachment

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