

Region of Waterloo
Transportation Services
Rapid Transit

To: Planning and Works Committee
Meeting Date: August 15, 2023
Report Title: Stage 2 ION Business Case Scope and Schedule

1. Recommendation

For information.

2. Purpose / Issue:

The purpose of this Report is to update Council on the Stage 2 ION schedule to complete the south terminus re-evaluation and the initial business case, both with updated alternatives according to Regional Council direction.

3. Strategic Plan:

The Stage 2 ION project supports the 2019-2023 Corporate Strategic Plan Sustainable Transportation Objective 2.1: Enhance the transit system to increase ridership and ensure it is accessible and appealing to the public, and Sustainable Transportation Action 2.1.3: Complete the detailed planning for Stage 2 ION.

4. Report Highlights:

- Committee has directed staff to add to the south terminus evaluation an alternative T4 located in south-east Cambridge in the vicinity of Dundas Street and Main Street, and to provide information on the feasibility of adding a route down Dundas Street to the T4 alternative.
- For a south terminus alternative T4 at or near Dundas Street and Main Street the only viable connecting route runs along Dundas Street from Beverly Street.
- The south terminus re-evaluation process is currently under way, but will be modified to include the T4 alternative. It is now expected to be completed by December 2023.
- The business case is expected to commence in early 2024 and be completed by mid-2025.

5. Background:

On May 24, 2023 at a special meeting of Planning and Works Committee staff were directed to add to the south terminus evaluation an alternative T4 located in south-east Cambridge in the vicinity of Dundas Street and Main Street (see Appendix A). Council also directed staff to provide information on the feasibility of adding a route down Dundas Street to the T4 alternative.

Station location alternatives are always paired with a specific route for evaluation purposes. To evaluate T4, a terminal station in south-east Cambridge, a connecting route must be identified. Region staff have reviewed various potential routes connecting to a T4 alternative and screened out routes that are not direct and/or did not reduce impacts. This approach is consistent with previous evaluation processes. The only viable route connecting to T4 runs along Dundas Street.

In April 2023 the Region started a process to re-evaluate the Stage 2 ION south terminal station location. This re-evaluation was initiated because the Region has new information since completion of the previous evaluation in 2018. The Region also has experience operating an LRT system since opening the ION system in 2019. For more details refer to report TES-RTS-22-01 dated August 9, 2022.

Although the south terminus re-evaluation process is under way, it can, and will, be modified to include the additional T4 alternative. Adding T4 to the on-going south terminus re-evaluation process will ensure a consistent approach and will provide an objective comparison to other terminus locations. The modified process will consider the feasibility of the Dundas Street route. This feasibility information and the south terminus re-evaluation results will be presented to Council by December 2023.

The south terminus re-evaluation process will recommend a preferred system alignment and affect the scope of the business case. The business case will start after completion of the south terminus re-evaluation. As directed by Regional Council the Stage 2 ION business case will include:

- An independent, standalone project alternative with LRT from the Preston station to the south terminus;
- A south terminus T4 alternative, pending Council's endorsement of the south terminus re-evaluation results; and,
- Consideration and costing of bus rapid transit (BRT).

The business case can start in early 2024, following completion of the south terminus re-evaluation, and is anticipated to be completed by mid-2025.

6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public:

Area Municipalities: The City of Cambridge and the City of Kitchener have been key

partners throughout the Stage 2 ION project. City of Cambridge staff are members of the south terminus re-evaluation Technical Agency Committee. City of Cambridge input on south terminus alternatives will be solicited as part of the evaluation process.

7. Financial Implications:

The Region's approved 2023-2032 Rapid Transit Capital Program includes \$1,664,000 in 2023 for Phase 2 Environmental Assessment (project #68024) to be funded from the RTMP Reserve Fund (61%, \$1,015,040) and from the Public Transit Development Charge Reserve Fund (39%, \$648,960). The budget is sufficient for previously approved consulting contracts, internal staffing and upcoming business case costs.

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

- December 2023 Complete south terminus re-evaluation
- Early 2024 Start Initial Business Case
- Mid-2025 Complete Initial Business Case

9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Map of T4 Location and Dundas Street Route

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