

BACKGROUND

The Ontario government released the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario on March 4, 2011. The Plan is intended to guide provincial decision-making and investments over a 25-year period. As part of the action plan for the first five years, the Province committed to the development of the Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy – to be developed by the Ministries of Transportation and Northern Development and Mines.

The Strategy is being developed in three phases:

- Phase 1 is an overall assessment of the region and started in May 2015. A draft regional assessment report was posted for public comment in spring 2015.
- Phase 2 is an analysis of the transportation system and began in June 2015. A discussion paper and a series of draft technical backgrounders that report on transportation systems analysis were posted for public input and comment in fall 2016.
- The final phase is the development of the Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy. A draft Strategy was released in July 2017 (attached as Appendix B), and was open for public comment through September 15, 2017. The Province is currently reviewing all input that was received during this time. This phase will conclude with the final Strategy by the end of 2017, and it is intended that a more detailed Action Plan will also be released at that time.

The Strategy is being developed by the Province to guide transportation policy, program and investment opportunities for a modern and sustainable transportation system in Northern Ontario. The final Strategy will support economic development in Northern Ontario and the implementation of the transportation policies in the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. It will help ensure that the transportation system – including infrastructure, policies, services, information and partnerships – is improved and managed in a way that supports northern prosperity over the coming 25 years.

The Ministries of Transportation (MTO) and Northern Development and Mines (MNDM) released a Draft 2041 Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy for public feedback on July 12, 2017, with a comment period that closed on September 15, 2017. Public input received on the draft Strategy will be reviewed to inform the final version of the document and the development of the first Action Plan.

The Draft Strategy identifies a series of transportation challenges that Northern Ontario will face over the next 25 years:

- Maintaining and enhancing connections among major centres and to global markets is important to supporting economic development and quality of life.

- Transportation safety and reliability is especially critical for Northern Ontario residents and businesses given the long distances between communities, dispersed populations and long cold winters. This means a breakdown could not just be inconvenient, but costly.
- Climate change is expected to have a fundamental impact on the transportation system in Northern Ontario through severe weather and unsuitable conditions for winter roads, which will have a disproportionate impact on the Far North and its many remote communities.
- The pristine natural environment and stunning vistas of Northern Ontario are a unique asset, one with which many residents have a special connection. Improving transportation in a way that reduces impacts on the environment is especially important.
- The provision of transportation infrastructure and services in Northern Ontario will need to keep pace with new ways of doing business. Technology has already changed the way Northern Ontarians access services and has the potential to help address many of the anticipated challenges noted above.

To address these challenges, the draft Strategy sets out a vision and five goals to improve and transform the transportation system over the next 25 years. The 2041 Vision Statement reads:

“Northern Ontario’s transportation system is responsive to economic, social and environmental needs and change, and is transformative in supporting new economic activity, healthy communities and a cleaner environment”.

To achieve this vision, the Strategy lays out the following goals:

Goal 1: Connected and Prosperous – Increase and modernize transportation options to support everyday living and economic activity in Northern Ontario.

Goal 2: Safe and Reliable – Enhance traveler safety and system reliability and minimize travel delays and complications.

Goal 3: Address Remote and Far North Challenges – Work with remote and Far North communities to address unique transportation needs with more reliable connections between communities and to the all-season ground transportation network.

Goal 4: Integrated and Innovative – Anticipate and respond to economic, technological, environmental and social change to link people, resources and businesses.

Goal 5: Healthy and Sustainable – Create a cleaner and more sustainable transportation system in Northern Ontario by reducing GHG and other environmental and human health impacts.

These goals are supported by 37 directions to guide the creation of the multimodal transportation system of the future.

CITY ACTION

Economic Development staff reviewed the draft Strategy and identified a number of key areas and partnerships that could contribute to Greater Sudbury's economic prosperity as this Strategy and forthcoming Action Plan are implemented over the next ten years. These points were then used to draft a letter (attached as Appendix A) from the CAO to the Ontario government, in contemplation of future endorsement by resolution of City Council. The letter identifies the following key areas and partnerships that the City feels should be reflected in the final strategy and consequently, will influence its implementation over the next ten years. In addition to the attached letter, staff will continue to work with counterparts with the Ministries of Transportation and Northern Development and Mines as the Strategy is finalized and an Action Plan is developed.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council adopt the above resolution and endorse the attached letter from the CAO to the Ontario government (dated September 15, 2017) outlining the City of Greater Sudbury's response to the Draft 2041 Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy.