

1. BACKGROUND

During the past ten years, Markham's residential population has increased by over 30%, from 154,000 to 205,000. The population level is forecast to reach 300,000 by the year 2021.

Employment levels have grown by more than 25% during the past ten years, from 92,000 to 115,000. Continuing employment growth is synonymous with Markham's reputation as the High Tech Capital of Canada. An employment level of 184,000 (a 60% increase from 2001) is forecast for the year 2021.

Continued residential and employment growth have, and will continue to have, a significant impact on transportation issues within Markham. In 1999, Council approved a review of the 1994 Markham Transportation Planning Study (MTPS-1994). Council recognized the need to prepare a new "blueprint" that could build upon the recommendations of the earlier study and guide the implementation of new transportation initiatives over the next 20 years.

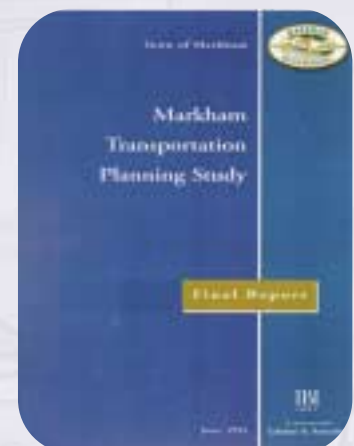
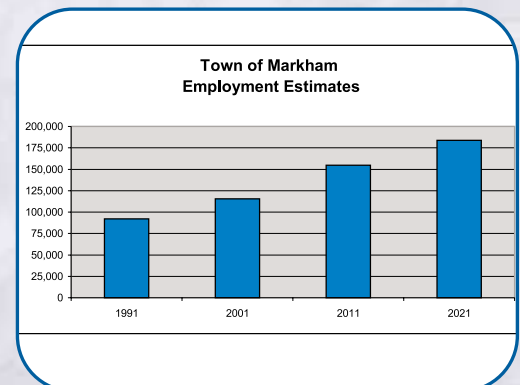
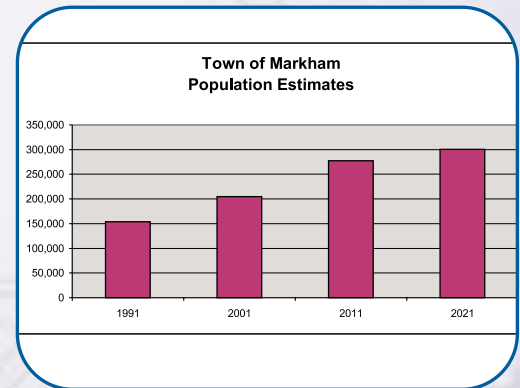
1.1 MTPS-1994 RECOMMENDATIONS

MTPS-1994 was originally developed to define the infrastructure that would be required to support new residential communities in the north and east areas of Markham as identified in Official Plan Amendment No. 5 (OPA 5). The study evaluated two transportation visions. The first considered the continued use of the private automobile as the primary mode of transportation. The second focused on non-automotive modes of travel.

The second vision was determined to be the more viable solution. It placed a greater emphasis on public transit, walking and biking, and provided the outline for a staged approach to manage growth. MTPS-1994 identified the need for significant transit and road improvements. Key recommendations included:

- Enhanced GO Rail Service;
- Improved east-west transit lines on Highway 7 and Highway 407;
- North-south transit links on Yonge Street and Highway 48;
- A strategic system of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes;

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- The Markham By-Pass and Highway 407;
- Transit supportive policies regarding urban structure, land use and finance;
- The creation of “downtown” area (Markham Centre);
- A transit modal split target of 25% by the year 2021.

1.2 MTPS-2002 BUILDS ON NON-AUTOMOTIVE MODES OF TRAVEL

By 1999, a number of developments had begun within the OPA 5 area, including Cornell, Berzy, Wizmer and Greensborough. Transportation was becoming a key concern. (Transportation was later identified as the number one issue by Markham residents in both the *Vision 2000* survey and subsequent *Engage 21st Century Markham* survey.)

Although a number of the proposals recommended in 1994 were well on their way to being implemented, several key transit initiatives were not moving forward.

The MTPS-2002 was developed to build on non-automotive modes of travel. The plan recognizes that it is not possible to serve the growing community simply by constructing more roads. A convenient and reliable rapid transit network, served by an extensive bus-feeder system and supported by appropriate policies and programs, is required.

MTPS-2002 identifies the infrastructure necessary to support Markham's existing and emerging communities. New rapid transit corridors will link these communities with Markham's emerging downtown and provide effective connections with the City of Toronto and other municipalities in York Region and the GTA.

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1.3 KEY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

- **York Region is the fastest growing municipality in Canada.**

Markham will see its population almost double from 1991 levels by the year 2021. Transportation solutions are urgently required to manage growth.

- **Gridlock is a significant economic drain.**

Traffic delays add a 30% surcharge to the cost of moving goods within the GTA, and drain billions of dollars from the economy every year (*Transportation Options for the Greater Toronto Area, ETP, January 2000*).

- **Congested highways negatively impact the environment.**

Harmful emissions damage air quality, contribute to the greenhouse effect and increase smog. Although York Region made an international commitment under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the automobile is still the preferred method of travel.

- **Travel patterns are shifting.**

More corporations are choosing suburban locations within the 905 area. Although connections with Toronto will continue to remain vitally important, improved links between growing municipalities in the GTA are needed.

- **Rapid transit can be expanded to keep pace with population and employment growth.**

Not only does rapid transit improve access and efficiency, Peter Newman, co-author of *Sustainability and Cities: Overcoming Automobile Dependence*, noted cities that prioritize transit and compact development can spend less than half as much on transportation costs as cities that prioritize freeways.

- **Rapid Transit frees up road capacity for those who require it.**

Reduced congestion results in fewer accidents, improved goods movement and faster response time for emergency vehicles.

- **New policies and education programs can affect change.**

To reduce reliance on the automobile as the primary mode of travel, it is necessary to involve stakeholders and build awareness.

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