

February 28, 2012

Transit system planning integral to growing Ontario

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As Ontario communities grow larger there are new opportunities that highlight the importance of efficient transit systems, says a new report.

The new provincial ["Transit-Supportive Guidelines"](#) are an update and expansion of the original ones published in 1992.

The document includes over 50 guidelines and almost 450 strategies to help urban planners, transit planners, developers and others in creating an environment that is supportive of transit and in increasing transit ridership.

"This one goes into a lot more detail in terms of how urban form can be done. It's probably a more holistic approach to growth in terms of linking land use planning and transportation together," explained Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

The document covers strategies such as: create a transit-supportive community structure; retrofit existing built-up areas to make existing development more transit-supportive; coordinate transit and land use decisions to minimize the need for trips and enhance access to transit services; create complete streets that support and balance the needs of all users; locate and design transit stations and stops to enhance accessibility and user comfort; create a transit-supportive urban form; develop a family of transit services that cater to different patterns of land use and commuting needs; and integrate amenities and services to enhance user convenience and comfort.

"Land uses should be coordinated alongside existing and proposed transit investments to ensure that appropriate densities and a mix of uses are provided in proximity to transit service. Similarly, planned transit investments should aim to support existing and planned land use patterns by providing greater levels of service to denser areas," reads the report.

The guidelines can be seen as a companion document to the amendment to Ontario's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe that now includes the County of Simcoe. They allow local decision-makers to approve development that makes sense for their communities, said Manahan.

He said such documents are important given the province's limited infrastructure fund.

"If they're going to invest it, it's got to be invested in a way that manages growth. It has to be strategic in focus, where is growth going to be, how is it going to be phased in, in terms of not just the transit, but water and other things like that," he explained.

He said planning has to be more intense than previously done and right now a challenge is low employment density.

"To achieve those employment densities I think is a really challenge. I don't think the municipalities as well as

the province have really figured out how that's going to transpire over the future. But, what we saw in the Simcoe plan was where there is going to be employment, it has to be concentrated in certain areas and not all over Simcoe County," he said.