

## **2011 TAC Sustainable Urban Transportation Award Nomination Submission**

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We would like to nominate the Ontario Ministry of Transportation for the 2011 TAC Sustainable Urban Transportation Award in recognition of the Ministry's work on the Ontario Transit-Supportive Guidelines.

### **Description:**

As cities across Canada grow larger and our population becomes more concentrated in urban areas, more opportunities for work, education, recreation and housing become available. However, these opportunities tend to be dispersed across communities, so in many cases individuals are travelling farther for work, school and to spend time with family and friends. As commuting distances increase, efficient, effective transit service becomes increasingly important.

There is a strong relationship between transit ridership and land use patterns. If towns and cities grow at low densities, and development is not coordinated with transit, provision of transit becomes difficult and communities become increasingly dependent on the car. In order to make transit efficient and increase ridership, we must reconsider how cities and towns grow. Concentrating densities and a mix of uses in and around transit stops and stations is necessary to place more people close to transit at both ends of their trip.

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation has developed the Ontario Transit-Supportive Guidelines to support continued progress in building more compact, transit-supportive communities. The Guidelines bring together the most current thinking on transit-supportive urban planning and design and best practices in transit planning and delivery of customer-oriented transit service. The document emphasizes the inter-dependent relationship between transit ridership and land use patterns: that higher density communities need dependable transit systems to thrive, and in turn, transit systems rely on transit-supportive land uses to sustain and increase ridership. The Transit-Supportive Guidelines were released as draft in January 2011, completed later in 2011 and published, following translation and accessible formatting, in January 2012.

The Guidelines include over 50 guidelines and almost 450 strategies, with detailed guidance to assist communities of all sizes in promoting development patterns that make transit less expensive, less circuitous and more convenient. The Guidelines also include, for the first time, strategies to enhance the service and operational characteristics of transit systems to make them more attractive to potential transit users through a range of tools, management approaches and technologies. The document covers a broad range of topics, including:

- Developing a transit-supportive community structure and regional mobility planning

- District-level and site-specific planning strategies (e.g. layout of streets and open spaces, intensification strategies, creating complete streets and parking management)
- Transit improvement guidelines (e.g. service and operations, planning and performance monitoring, accessibility and promotion strategies)
- Implementation (e.g. innovative planning approaches and consultation strategies)
- Current, in-depth case studies from across Canada and the United States, as well as links to relevant resources for each guideline topic.

The Transit-Supportive Guidelines are available from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation's website in both French and English and in PDF and accessible HTML formats at:

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/transit/supportive-guideline/>.

See Appendix for Table of Contents and sample two page Guideline spread.

### **Contribution to sustainable urban transportation:**

The Province's Transit-Supportive Guidelines constitute a lasting contribution to the development and enhancement of sustainable urban transportation across Canada by providing, in an accessible and graphic format, a comprehensive resource for planners, transit agencies and other transportation practitioners striving to create urban environments that are supportive of transit and providing management strategies, tools and technologies to support increased transit ridership.

Transit is increasingly being recognized as an opportunity to limit our impacts on the environment, better adapt to changing demographics and reduce our overall costs of living. There is increasing recognition that building transit-supportive communities can help achieve sustainable development and an improved urban environment by:

- Supporting healthy, active, age-friendly communities
- Addressing environmental challenges
- Reducing congestion, travel times and transportation affordability
- Promoting economic competitiveness
- Making more efficient use of infrastructure

First, increased transit ridership and building compact, transit-supportive communities is good for the environment and public health. Transit-friendly communities help to protect natural areas and rural landscapes through more compact, mixed-use community design which supports sustainable growth while preserving agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive areas. In addition, transit typically uses less energy than the private car, releasing less air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Transit-supportive land use patterns are also

pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly, making it safer and easier to use active transportation along with transit. The Transit-Supportive Guidelines provide strategies and tools for communities to take concrete steps to limit emissions and waste through more compact development and by replacing single occupant vehicle use with transit.

In addition, the Guidelines include a broad range of strategies with a direct environmental focus, from encouraging adaptive re-use of heritage buildings and urban infill through development of brownfields to incorporation of permeable paving in surface parking and provision for charging electric vehicles in municipal facilities. These are identified throughout with a green leaf icon to highlight these strategies and to assist communities developing sustainability plans who may wish to incorporate these actions into their planning.

The Guidelines also support more socially sustainable urban transportation. Large areas of dispersed development can restrict mobility for those that are unable to drive, and inaccessible transit facilities can make using transit difficult or impossible for people with mobility, visual or other impairments. Implementation of transit services accessible to all is important to assist non-drivers, including youth and the elderly, in getting where they need to go. By providing practical guidance on the development of compact, pedestrian-friendly communities and transit systems that are designed for universal accessibility, the Guidelines help urban communities meet the needs of residents safely and in a manner consistent with human and ecosystem health, and with equity within and between generations.

Finally, transit is good for the economy. By helping to manage congestion and travel times, better transit can improve the efficiency of Canadian communities, making better use of existing infrastructure, improving commuting times and reducing smog days and related human health impacts. Increasing transportation choices can help to increase the affordability of our towns and cities, reduce household costs, and provide a greater range of housing opportunities. Successfully planned, investment in transit has the potential to be the launching pad for a wide range of town and city-building initiatives aimed at strengthening communities and increasing economic competitiveness. By providing practical, accessible guidance and tools to assist communities in the provision of efficient, effective transit systems, the Transit-Supportive Guidelines contribute to fiscal sustainability, more efficient cities and regions, improved transportation affordability, more transportation choices and a vibrant economy.

### **Innovation:**

The Transit-Supportive Guidelines are innovative in their comprehensive approach, which brings together the most current thinking on transit-supportive urban planning and design *and* best practices in transit planning and delivery of customer-oriented transit service. Each of these are dependent on the other, and

an improved understanding by planners across Canada of transit services, and planning processes by transit operators, is essential to building sustainable urban transportation systems.

Other innovative elements of this initiative include a number of the topics covered. One example is the complete streets guideline. Complete streets policies have been adopted widely in the United States and are currently being explored by a number of jurisdictions in Canada. Complete street planning processes seek to create a network of streets that balance the needs of a full range of potential users, providing for trade-offs which reflect the long-term objectives for a particular street and surrounding areas. The Transit-Supportive Guidelines provide timely guidance to Canadian municipalities currently seeking to adopt complete streets planning policies, from review of existing standards to evaluation of implemented changes.

Another example of innovation in terms of content is the innovative planning approaches guideline, which provides detailed guidance related to implementation of multi-modal transportation impact assessments. One of the most common problems associated with standard traffic impact assessments when applied to communities designed around transit is that they tend to over-value the impact of new development on vehicular movement while discounting new opportunities for increased walking, cycling and transit use. This can lead to over-investment in roadway and parking infrastructure and under-investment in alternative measures which can support transit use, such as pedestrian pathways and higher initial levels of transit service. The Guidelines provide various strategies to address these issues, from evaluation of impacts of development on existing transit routes to negotiation of agreements to support extension of transit service to new developments.

Finally, the document has been designed with an innovative format, taking advantage of current technology to provide a better integrated and far more extensive reference than would have been possible in the past. The Guidelines have been expressly designed to be used as an electronic resource as well as an easy to read print document. The document makes extensive use of hyperlinks for better integration between topics and with in-depth external resources. Within the document, this includes an active link to the table of contents at the head of each page and from the table of contents to the individual guidelines as well as links to related guidelines and case studies embedded wherever appropriate throughout the document. For example, guidance related to asset management is directly linked to the transportation demand management guideline, which provides strategies for making best use of existing infrastructure. In addition, the Guidelines include direct links to hundreds of recommended resources and case studies available through the internet which provide further guidance specific to each guideline topic.

### **Transferability to other Canadian communities:**

The question of how to develop cities and towns which provide residents with a range of affordable, efficient and environmentally friendly transportation options to reach their destination is one that is relevant to communities across Canada.

The Transit-Supportive Guidelines have been designed to address the concerns of communities both large and small. The breadth of the topics covered, targeted to small and mid-sized as well as large communities, ensures that there is content with relevance for communities across Canada. Community scale icons identify strategies with specific relevance for a range of community sizes, from small (with a population less than 50,000) and mid-sized communities (50 – 150,000) to large communities (150 – 500,000) and big cities (500,000 +).

The document has been designed to be a best practice reference, presenting a variety of ways to meet the objective of building transit-supportive communities. Case studies and resources are drawn from across North America. There are a large number of examples from other provinces, including in-depth case studies profiling transit-supportive initiatives in Calgary and Winnipeg. Understanding that circumstances vary from place to place, it is expected that municipalities across Canada will adapt these guidelines and examples to their own individual situations.

### **Performance results to date:**

While the final Transit-Supportive Guidelines have only recently been released, document has already been met with supportive comments from municipalities, transit and planning associations as a valuable, relevant and comprehensive resource.

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) has endorsed the Transit-Supportive Guidelines as an important and informative tool for all professionals involved in land use planning and the delivery of infrastructure, stating that “widespread and effective use of these Guidelines will benefit all Ontarians and provide the basis to successfully meet the transportation challenges of tomorrow.” OPPI has offered their assistance in promotion of the Guidelines, include a partnership to deliver an in-depth workshop to an estimated 200 members as part of their fall conference.

Presentations and copies of the Guidelines are already being requested by municipal staff in communities from Sudbury to Hamilton as a resource for projects from municipal official plan reviews to economic development initiatives.

In addition, TAC’s own Transportation Planning and Research Standing Committee has recognized that the Ontario Transit-Supportive Guidelines

address numerous items within the scope of the planned TAC project entitled "Design and Implementation of Public Transit Services - Guidelines for Communities", for which TAC has been seeking funding. As a result of the availability of the Guidelines for use by transportation practitioners across Canada, reductions to the scope of the TAC project are currently being explored in order to complement the existing document.

**Appendix:**

Transit-Supportive Guidelines Cover, Table of Contents and Sample Guideline

# Transit-Supportive Guidelines



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## Sample Guideline (2)

### Complete Streets Planning Process: Guideline 2.2.1

#### Strategies:

- process strategies**
1. Identify and develop a range of design elements and features aimed at facilitating movement by different users. These should promote a shift in travel behaviour based on the following passenger transportation hierarchy:
    - Trip avoidance or shortening, for example by encouraging a mix of uses
    - *Active transportation* such as walking or cycling
    - Transit
    - Ride-sharing, for example by carpool or *vanpool*
    - Carsharing and taxis
    - Single-occupant vehicles (R) (M)
  2. Review existing street standards, such as speed limits and lane widths, to assess their impacts on all users, including children and the elderly, and revise them to reflect a more balanced user profile. Consider setting aside a set percentage of the *rights-of-way* for active transportation and public space. (R) (M)
  3. Work with local stakeholders to identify level of service criteria for all modes of transportation including walking and cycling. (M)
  4. Identify and document the benefits and trade-offs of different design approaches in relation to the impacts on various users to assist in decision making. This should include an evaluation of the level of service impacts on all modes. (R) (M)
  5. Review existing street planning processes and revise as necessary to integrate routine consideration of a full range of users. Codify circumstances where exceptions to the provision of design features intended to support different users are made, demonstrating how conflicts between users will be resolved. (M)
- design strategies**
6. Design complete streets to reflect both the existing and planned land use, urban form and transportation contexts. Not all streets will be the same. Trade-offs between features should reflect the long-term objectives for the street and surrounding areas. Goods movement needs within the municipality, including both designated routes and access for local deliveries, should be considered along with passenger transportation needs where appropriate. (M) (D)
- evaluation**
7. Regularly evaluate design elements and street treatments implemented against performance standards related to factors such as safety, comfort or ease of use to ensure the achievement of complete streets. (R) (M)
- planning strategies**
8. Embed complete street planning policies within official plans and establish a planning process that ensures all users are considered in the design, refurbishment or reconstruction of existing and planned streets (Chapter 4). Coordinate street improvements between various city departments to expand the network of complete streets over time. (R) (M)



St. George Street running through the heart of the University of Toronto campus was rebalanced in 1997 through the addition of bike lanes and pedestrian-supportive paving treatments to create a street that better supports the many pedestrians and cyclists that use it daily.

#### Recommended Resources

- [Case Study: Creating Complete Streets](#)
- [National Complete Streets Coalition](#)
- [Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices](#) (McCann and Rynne)
- [Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach](#) (Institute of Transport Engineers)
- [Child and Youth Friendly Land-use and Transport Planning Guidelines for Ontario, Version 2](#) (The Centre for Sustainable Transportation)
- [Urban Street Design Guidelines](#) (Charlotte Department of Transportation)