

September 9, 2016

Respectfully Submitted to Burlington, Ontario Mayor and Council:

Re: Reporting Letter – DRAFT City of Burlington Transportation Vision & New Directions

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT:

This reporting letter (RL) from TODERIAN UrbanWORKS (TUW) is provided to the City of Burlington as support for Council consideration of a proposed launch of a public engagement exercise for a new City of Burlington Transportation Plan. This RL's author is Brent Toderian of TUW, working in close coordination with Kaylan Edgcumbe, Manager of Transportation Planning and Parking for the City of Burlington.

It is intended that this RL will support an interactive Committee of the Whole Workshop on September 20, 2016.

TUW has been providing city planning, transportation and general operational and culture change advisory services to the City of Burlington since November, 2015. Our engagement with the City has been strategically and deliberately broad/flexible, including advice on the City's proposed new official plan, various transit-oriented development considerations, and more general city planning, urban design, communications, cultural, and capacity-building aspirations. The most specific and "deep" example of TUW's consulting services to the City has been in the creation of a new Transportation Plan, the subject of this RL.

INTENDED TRANSPORTATION PLAN NATURE AND STRUCTURE:

Informed by extensive discussions with city staff, the intention for the Transportation Plan work program is to prepare a plan document organized around a new central transportation vision, eight powerful "new directions," and a series of new implementing policies and actions under each new direction. Actions will include, among other things, new work programs that will extend from the transportation plan, and be guided by it.

The intention is NOT to make any detailed transportation alignment or design decisions as part of the Transportation Plan that would require processes such as environmental assessment – these would come later. Before any such detailed work is undertaken, and indeed before it CAN be properly undertaken, it is critically important for the City to consider and decide on a significant new direction for the city's transportation.

Our working title for the Transportation Plan, which should have a dynamic and engaging brand, is "**GO BOLD in a City Growing Up: City of Burlington Transportation Plan.**" This working title reflects the critical relationship between the Transportation Plan and the Official Plan, which has already been branded "**GROW BOLD.**"

DRAFT TRANSPORTATION PLAN TEXT FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION:

The following represents initial draft text that could ultimately be included in the Transportation Plan, that would be shared and discussed with the public in the coming months. In our September Workshop with Council, we would appreciate as much feedback and commentary from each individual Council member as possible on this text, so that any

changes or edits that may be necessary can be made BEFORE the text becomes the basis for public discussion. In other words, if Councilors have comments and/or concerns with the directions and level of ambition contained in this wording, we hope you will share those concerns candidly at the workshop, so that the public engagement, and indeed the entire planning process, that will follow can be as focused and successful as possible.

The proposed draft text that follows is *italicized*.

HOW WE GOT HERE:

The City of Burlington is at a turning point. We would say that we've reached a "fork in the road," but frankly that is left-over language from a car-first transportation era.

Building on decades of evolution in transportation thinking over many plans, policies & initiatives, two significant recent events have sparked a game-changing new conversation about mobility in Burlington.

The first is the April 11, 2016 Council adoption of Burlington's Strategic Plan 2015–2040. The bold new Strategic Plan contains unprecedented aspiration and commitments regarding both "A City That Grows" and "A City That Moves" – and to be more specific, a city that will move in a fundamentally different way in the future than it has in the past, as it grows in a different way than it has in the past.

The second is the significant declaration by Mayor Goldring and City Council in 2015 that Burlington is the first Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) municipality to "stop urban sprawl" and become a city that is "growing up rather than out." City leaders realize that for such a transformation to be successful, with resulting greater livability, quality of life, sustainability, equity, & healthy living, our city's mobility and accessibility will need to be fundamentally rethought and rebuilt. The way we've been visioning, planning and designing our transportation networks as the city has grown outward has fundamentally focused on moving cars to such an extent that other mobility options are either not present, or at best are not practical. This approach will not succeed if we are to be a city growing upward and inward.

Following these two big events, Council made two related critical decisions on July 7th of this year:

- 1. Council supported a new urban structure for the City with growth focused in downtown Burlington, at our GO Stations (Mobility Hubs), and along the connecting corridors of Brant Street (between hubs) and the Plains Fairview Corridor (connecting all three GO hubs). This smart, strategic land use facilitates, and is facilitated by, a different approach to mobility than Burlington has focused on in the past.*
- 2. Council approved strategic and unprecedented funding for the detailed planning and implementation of growth in the planned Mobility Hubs.*

To further facilitate this turning point, and to begin the process of creating a new Transportation Plan for the City, we have prepared a DRAFT vision statement for Burlington's new era of transportation. This Draft Vision draws from, and is inspired and directed by, existing policy, the new Strategic Plan, and recent community conversations about the future of our city. This Draft is not intended to be finished, but rather to start a conversation about what an ultimate new vision should include.

Since beginning this work, the City has released a new communications strategy relative to the preparation to a new Official Plan and Transportation Plan for Burlington. The key message in this strategy is the need for us to "Grow Bold." This message – this NEED – is in keeping with and is further inspiring our changing thinking around transportation. We will indeed need to grow bold in our thinking and building, and we will need to GO BOLDLY toward a better, more successful city as we grow.

DRAFT VISION:

A city that is growing up rather than out has a different kind of transportation - a different kind of mobility and accessibility. Trying to build a city upward and inward, supporting new population and employment density and more walkable, vibrant communities, with the same transportation assumptions and solutions that we used while growing outward, is a sure recipe for failure. That's because as you grow up as a city, if everyone still continues to rely on their automobiles to drive everywhere, it will become harder and harder for anyone to move.

A city growing up is an engaged city, a city where people frequently choose to walk, cycle and ride public transit. People only make these healthier, more sustainable & more cost-effective choices when they are delightful; and they can only be delightful when they are prioritized.

Prioritizing means that tough choices have to be made and followed through upon. These tough choices will pertain to every building block of better mobility; from how our land-uses are planned, to how our streets and networks are designed, and how our budgets are spent.

These tough choices have already started, and as they continue, they will be built on the recognition that although improved connectivity between people and places will support a better Burlington, the deeper successes will come only with fewer cars, shorter trips, less parking, and more healthy, sustainable and delightful alternatives for everyone.

A Burlington that's growing up successfully is a walking city. It's a bike-friendly city. It's a city designed and built around public transit. It's a city with increasingly more and better choices than the car for real people & families. It recognizes that although not every household will want to, be able to, or need to give up their car, the best thing for everyone, including our many residents who will continue to drive, is that many of their neighbours will be able to and want to make different choices. When that happens, the city will move better for everyone.

This new Transportation Plan isn't a "gearshift," nor is it a "pressing or releasing of our foot on the gas" while going fundamentally in the same direction. Such metaphors don't accurately reflect the choice we are making. This Plan represents a fundamental change that will lead us in a new direction - a necessary and better direction for a city growing up successfully.

Creating this Plan will have been the easy part. The harder part will be making the Plan real, and following through when more of those tough choices arrive. Thus this Plan will address both vision AND follow-through, both content AND culture. Only by doing so will this Plan be the game-changer Burlington needs it to be.

8 NEW DIRECTIONS:

In order to make this ambitious new Vision a reality, significant new directions are necessary. This Transportation Plan will be designed around 8 powerful, transformative and interconnected new directions that, when implemented, will result in fundamentally different mobility for our city, supporting our aspiration to grow up successfully.

Direction 1 – Fully Align Land-Use and Transportation.

Smart city-building recognizes that land-use and transportation are part of one single conversation, one thought process. Many of the most important building blocks for a smart mobility system that provides real choices are in fact land-use decisions, including densities, mixes of land use, and quality of urban design to support walking, biking and public transit. Despite this, many cities, including Burlington, have separated and "siloe" land-use and transportation decision-making at every level, from vision all the way to the details and follow-through. The quality of our city and our corresponding quality-of-life has suffered as a result.

The goal of this Direction is to fully integrate all land-use and transportation decision-making within City Hall at every level, including organizational culture, policy-making, municipal standards, budgeting, and so on; and to ensure that future land-use decisions facilitate and support walking, biking, and transit that is delightful.

Direction 2 – Rethinking Streets.

Up until now, many municipal considerations have treated the city's roadways primarily as a horizontal surface to move cars – essentially, a sewer for car traffic. Even the term "road," commonly used in Burlington conversations and processes, reflects a rural or suburban perception of the space involved, rather than an urban perception.

Roads generally represent space to move cars. Streets, on the other hand, are three or even four dimensional places. Streets do many things successfully, including but not limited to moving people. The goal of this direction is to fully evolve suburban road-thinking to urban street-thinking. This includes seeing streets not only as places for people to move through, but as the primary people-places in the civic life of the city.

Direction 3 – Reprioritize Mobility Choices.

For generations of city-building, Burlington (like most Ontario cities) has prioritized the car in all its decision-making. This has been reflected in the nature of street design, the amount of space allocated to different ways of getting around, parking standards and other rules, municipal budgeting, and even the culture and public perception of who "owns the street." This has resulted in an urban condition where the car is perceived to be the only viable and rational way of getting around – essentially a self-fulfilling prophecy resulting from the city's deliberate and single-minded choices.

The goal of this Direction is to reprioritize all municipal decision-making in order to support a city successfully growing up; to allow other more healthy & sustainable mobility choices to "catch up" to the private automobile as quickly as possible, and to subsequently reach an ambitious level of attractiveness and delightfulness around walking, biking and public transit to realize a true multi-modal city. Attempting to "balance" ways of getting around will not achieve these goals, as cars have too big a head start. This new prioritization will be walking first; biking & other assisted human movement (including wheelchairs) second; public transit third; car-sharing, taxis & ride-sharing fourth; goods movement fifth; & private automobile use sixth. It is critically important to understand that prioritizing cars last will not prevent driving – indeed, experience in other successful cities has shown that multi-modal cities work better for all, including drivers.

Direction 4 – No New Street Capacity for Cars.

The amount of street-space previously dedicated to car movement in Burlington is indicative of the city's previous significant prioritization of car-oriented design. The more capacity for cars that has been provided, the more incentive to continue to drive and the more driving that has occurred, thus filling up the capacity with more car trips. This effect is well understood, and is commonly referred to as "induced traffic demand" or the "law of congestion." Seeking to increase the city's population and density upward with further car-oriented design is a recipe for continued auto-dependency and expensive, space-consuming failure.

The goal of this Direction is to confirm and operationalize that as the city grows upward and inward, additional trips and movement will be facilitated not through increased car capacity, but by additional space for and investment in walking, biking and public transit, including the strategic reallocation of existing car capacity for less space extensive and more active and sustainable mobility choices. To put it more directly, Burlington will not be widening streets for more cars. A new approach will include a "complete streets strategy" at network and systems scales, and other initiatives to intelligently and creatively repurpose existing street rights-of-way.

Direction 5 – Make Walking Delightful.

Currently, most of Burlington is not pedestrian friendly. The prioritization of cars in infrastructure & urban design has left little room for, and a lack of attention to, a quality public realm where pedestrians live and move. This includes both the horizontal aspects of street design, as well as the vertical aspects of both streetscape features and ground floor architecture that pedestrians experience at eye level and at their normal walking speed. In many parts of the city, there aren't even sidewalks available.

The goal of this direction is to change the municipal culture, decision-making, policy, standards, public realm design, budgeting, etc. to make Burlington significantly and rapidly more walkable each day, and ultimately the most walkable mid-sized city in Ontario. Building a truly walkable city will be one of the top priorities for the City.

Direction 6 – Make Biking Delightful.

Safe and attractive urban biking has not been a priority in the allocation of space, the funding of infrastructure, or the design of streets in Burlington. In fact, until relatively recently, it hasn't even been a serious consideration. Supporting initiatives to build an urban biking culture have similarly not been realized, or even attempted. Where biking infrastructure has been contemplated, the city has essentially relied upon on-street painted bike lanes and "sharrows," approaches that tend to be more acceptable to those who are already comfortable riding in traffic. In order to appeal to a wider audience, facility types such as separated bike lanes or protected cycle tracks need to be given serious consideration, especially in contexts with high volumes and fast speeds.

The goal of this direction is to move in a timely way to a successful minimum network of safe, connected bike infrastructure, with continued network expansion over time, along with supporting features such as change facilities, secure and convenient bike parking, bike-share and so on. Similarly, ambitious efforts to support a "bike culture" in Burlington will be supported and fostered both within and outside of City Hall.

Direction 7 – Make Public Transit Delightful.

Despite significant advantages and opportunities such as strategically located GO Stations, public transit in Burlington is not yet considered a viable alternative to car use and ownership. Weaknesses in transit coverage, level of service and supporting land-uses all contribute to a public transit system that is considered unattractive in both perception and reality.

The goals of this Direction will be to facilitate the significant & strategic improvement of transit coverage, service, and experience; to improve the marketing and branding of public transit as an attractive option; and to ensure that land-uses and densities are planned and built that are supportive of high ridership levels.

Direction 8 - "Walk the Talk" in the Follow-Through.

A plan with almost perfect vision, aspiration and policy can still fail in the "buy-in," implementation and follow through. Indeed, disconnects between vision and implementation are the most common reason for failure of plan achievement. Failure can occur when plans aren't given significant weight and value by Council, staff, and/or the community, and thus "sit on a shelf collecting dust." Plans also often frequently fail when there are disconnects between plan vision/aspiration and actual budget decisions.

The goal of this Direction is to dedicate significant corporate energy and attention to ensuring that every level of follow-through, from culture change and capacity-building, to detailed levels of implementation & budgeting; is considered, and has been strategically positioned for success. This Plan will be a powerful catalyst for real change, and will not sit on a shelf collecting dust.

NEXT STEPS:

After the Council Workshop in September, the intention is to share this draft vision and 8 draft new directions with the public as a public "launch" for the new Transportation Plan. City transportation staff have coordinated closely with staff from other departments so that public engagement opportunities and efforts between the new transportation plan and the new official plan can be "piggy-backed" as much as possible.

It continues to be TUW's advice to the city that all opportunities for less formal/"traditional" engagement contact with the public should be taken advantage of. The bedrock of this way of thinking is to "go where the people already are, rather than expecting the public to come to you." Shopping centres, schools, events, fairs & festivals, markets, "pop-up"

street installations, churches etc, should all be considered to ensure that engagement reaches the broadest possible community, including those who would not normally engage with city participation processes.

In addition to face-to-face connections, TUW recommends that individual transportation plan-related social media accounts be created (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc) ASAP, bolstered by the existing citywide accounts, to help create a new brand and specialized on-line conversation for the Transportation Plan. These will continue to be an asset after the Plan is approved, over years of implementation and review.

Our intention is to take a very proactive approach to explaining to the public the "origin story" of this draft Vision and these 8 draft New Directions. In particular, it needs to be clearly explained how they seek to "make real" the commitments in the already Council-approved Strategic Plan. In that sense, it is not our intention to ask the public for comment on whether we are generally "on the right general track." The truth is that Council's existing approvals have already put us on that general track. We would be honest and transparent about that.

Having said that, we WOULD be communicating to the public that the draft text is considered far from finished, and for that matter far from perfect, and thus we invite comment on whether we've taken the right approaches & have the right language, with the intention of using such input to produce a final version of the Vision and eight New Directions. Based on this input, New Directions may be added, removed, revised or consolidated. Further, and very importantly, we would be inviting the public to comment on/recommend specific policies, actions or changes that the city should undertake in order to realize this vision and facilitate these New Directions.

CONCLUSIONS:

We eagerly await our opportunity to workshop these challenging and dynamic New Directions for Burlington transportation. They are inspired by, and hope to further inspire, the ambitious and bold thinking that Council has already been showing.

Best regards,



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