City of Burlington Official Plan Review: Mobility Hubs Opportunities and Constraints Study

Workshop # 1 Summary

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Mobility hubs are places of connectivity where different modes of transportation - from walking to commuter rail - come together seamlessly. The City of Burlington has four mobility hubs that work together to create a connected network throughout the City.
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1.0 Introduction
1.1 Mobility Hubs - Connecting Our Community
Burlington is growing in place. That means that new growth in the City must be within our urban limits. To grow in a sustainable way the City of Burlington must make strategic decisions about growth and development and use our land and infrastructure efficiently. One way to do that is to focus growth in key parts of the city.

The Big Move, the province’s transportation plan, outlines a common vision for transforming transportation in the GTA H. Part of that vision requires the city to determine the role and vision for regional transit nodes, called mobility hubs.

Mobility hubs are more than just a transit station. They are places of connectivity where different modes of transportation - from walking to commuter rail - come together seamlessly and where there is an intensive concentration of places to live, work, shop and play. They serve as a place to wait for and connect with transit whether you are walking, cycling, taking transit or driving. Successful mobility hubs have the potential to become vibrant places of activity over time.

The City of Burlington, as part of the Official Plan Review, is doing a mobility hub opportunities and constraints study. The purpose of this study is to set a high level vision and guiding design principles for the city’s two mobility hubs (Burlington GO and Downtown Burlington) and the two major transit station areas (Appleby GO and Aldershot GO), as well as the corridors that connect them.

1.2 Purpose of this Summary
The purpose of this document is to present what we heard from you on Tuesday September 10th, 2013, at the first public workshop for the Official Plan Review: Mobility Hub Opportunities and Constraints Study. The key objectives of this informative and hands-on workshop were:

- To share information about our mobility hubs and the opportunities and constraints study, including an overview of the study, the objectives and the background work completed to-date by the consultant team.
- To obtain feedback from you regarding the mobility hubs and your vision for the future of these key nodes in the City.

The priority objectives identified in this report will contribute to the final study which will inform modifications to the Official Plan but do not represent the consultants final recommendations.

1.3 Workshop Outline
The workshop began with a panel-viewing and welcoming sessions, where participants were encouraged to meet the consultant team, and view a series of display boards outlining the work completed to-date. Opening remarks were made by Andrea Smith, the Manager of Policy and Research, followed by a presentation by Anne Mcllroy and Matt Reid of Brook Mcllroy. Following the presentation, attendees participated in small group discussions with the help of a guiding worksheet. At the end of the discussions, a member of each group presented the key findings of their discussion to the plenary group.
1.4 Who Came to the Workshop?
Approximately 30 people attended the workshop, including a mix of residents, property owners, Regional staff, several elected officials and other interested parties. Members of the consultant team and City Staff were on hand to help facilitate the workshop and answer questions.

1.5 What was Presented?
The presentation addressed the following topics:

- What is a Mobility Hub?
- Why are Mobility Hubs important?
- What elements of the City are impacted by Mobility Hub Development?
- What are the characteristics of a Mobility Hub?

A digital version of the presentation can be found on the City’s website, under:


Strong supporting policies are required to ensure that mobility hub development achieves the visions for active, vibrant streets and neighbourhoods.
2.0 Workshop Exercise

To begin the workshop exercise, participants were asked to split into five smaller groups. As an ice-breaking exercise, and to get ideas flowing, individuals were asked “what are your top three considerations related to the development of the mobility hub areas?” A variety of responses were obtained during this activity, and some broad themes were identified (and later reinforced during the workshop).

Key themes included:

- Provide an appropriate mix of uses;
- Promote and support walkability;
- Maximize connectivity of transit modes, and,
- Enhance cycling opportunities and safety.

Following this exercise, participants engaged in group discussions focused on the preliminary opportunities and constraints of each mobility hub area. A guiding worksheet (Appendix A) was used to illustrate the preliminary opportunities and constraints, and to record group comments directly on the sites.

New public streets, mews and lanes are encouraged to ensure permeable neighbourhoods, and to support active transportation.
3.0 Priority Directions

Across the five groups, a significant amount of feedback was received. This feedback has been synthesized, and the key findings have been used to develop a series of general and hub-specific Priority Directions that will guide the refinements to the opportunities and constraints mapping at each mobility hub area (and the subsequent work to follow), and contribute to the development of policy modifications.

3.1 General

1. Institute clear and strong policies (i.e. Official Plan, zoning provisions) to ensure that mixed-use buildings support a healthy mix of uses that benefit local residents and visitors, and support the objectives of mobility hub development.

2. Ensure supporting infrastructure (i.e. transit connections, cycling facilities, open spaces, etc.) is provided in concert with new development to ensure that new development within the mobility hub areas supports a healthy, active lifestyle.

3. Complete existing connections (i.e. transit routes, cycling facilities, etc.) to create a continuous active transportation network between major City destinations, including GO stations, Spencer Smith Park and the waterfront, Burlington Mall, etc.

4. Design and mass mid-rise and tall buildings to frame streetscapes through a human-scaled podium (i.e. 2- to 3-storeys), and stepbacks that provide sunlight access and sky views from the sidewalk. Provide an appropriate transition where new buildings abut established neighbourhoods to mitigate adverse privacy and shadow impacts.

5. Support cycling to and from the mobility hub areas through the provisions of weather protected bicycle parking and storage at the stations, as well as key destinations within the City (i.e. City Hall, parks, waterfront, etc.).

6. Provide new public streets, mews, and lanes through new larger-scale development sites in order to maximize permeability throughout the mobility hub areas.

7. Explore partnership opportunities between the City and the development community to create direct, weather-protected access to station areas through continuous canopies, street trees, internal pathways, etc.

8. Explore incentives to encourage LEED standard development, or a similar standard, to support the sustainability goals inherent in mobility hub development.

9. Reinforce the importance of creating a true balance by accommodating a diverse range of high quality employment uses including office, light industrial, and institutional with some retail commercial uses to support living and working.

Note: At the meeting, concern was expressed that the study areas do not address key destinations in the northern part of the City. It is recognized that these areas are an integral part of the City’s transportation network, however, this study focuses on the four Mobility Hub areas as they form the core of the City’s transportation system.
3.2 Burlington Downtown

1. Concentrate the greatest densities in close proximity to the transit station, and along key transit corridors, to encourage walkability and to protect the stable residential neighbourhoods and heritage buildings that surround the Downtown.

2. Establish a clear vision for Brant Street as the primary connection between the Downtown Mobility Hub and the Burlington GO Station Mobility Hub. Support this role through continued beautification initiatives, active ground floor uses, and street-related infill that results in a continuous pedestrian-supportive streetscape.

3. Design Brant Street as a highly-attractive ‘complete street’ with equal consideration given to all modes of transportation.

4. Maintain a strong transit presence at the Burlington Transit Terminal. Explore opportunities to redevelop the area as a mixed-use building, with transit-supportive uses at grade (i.e. cafes, etc.) while retaining part of the site for complimentary transit facilities.

5. Provide more efficient alternatives to surface parking, including above- and below-ground structured parking where feasible, and on-street parking.

6. Provide streetscape enhancements wherever possible through the Downtown to enhance walkability.

7. Develop large opportunity sites (i.e. Brant Plaza) comprehensively to ensure they support the mobility hub vision, including pedestrian supportive streets, and transitions to adjacent properties.

8. Consider the Downtown Mobility Hub and the Burlington GO Station Mobility Hub together as a complete system.

*The downtown mobility hub area should establish a clear vision for Brant Street that will provide a continuous connection to Burlington GO Station.*
3.3 Burlington GO Station
1. Design Fairview Street as a highly-attractive ‘complete street’ with equal consideration given to all modes of transportation.

2. Provide safe and direct connections across Highway 403 for all modes of transportation (i.e. transit, pedestrians, cyclists, and private vehicles).

3. Provide new open spaces in the area. This can include larger public spaces, as well as semi-private spaces integrated into new developments.

4. Identify the long-term potential for the redevelopment of the Burlington mall into a pedestrian-supportive, mixed use neighbourhood. While outside of the Mobility Hub area, this is an important anchor on Fairview Street, which serves as a ‘connector’ between Burlington GO and the Appleby Mobility Hub area.

5. Explore partnership opportunities and/or incentives for large-format commercial uses (i.e. Wal-Mart) to support more urban buildings or to be integrated into the ground floor of new mixed-use buildings. This could be a pilot project for future mobility hub developments.

Large opportunity sites should redevelop through street-oriented mixed-use development.
3.4 Aldershot GO Station

1. Provide safe and direct connections across Highway 403 and the rail corridor for all modes of transportation (i.e. transit, pedestrians, cyclists, and private vehicles).

2. Explore the impacts of mobility hub development on the areas north of Highway 403 and outside of the urban boundary.

3. Provide a mix of uses north of the rail corridor to ensure that the area remains safe and accessible at all times of day.

4. Concentrate taller buildings (up to 10-storeys) at the Waterdown Road and Plains Road intersection, as well as in close proximity to the station area. Design and mass these buildings to provide careful transitions to adjacent residential neighbourhoods.

5. Establish a predominantly mid-rise character (up to 6-storeys) along Plains Road to support a ‘village character.’ Buildings should have a pedestrian-scaled podium (i.e. 2- to 3-storeys) with stepbacks to adjacent residential neighbourhoods.

6. Support the vision for Plains Road as an attractive, walkable street where people can live, work, and shop. Recommendations include streetscape enhancements, plazas integrated into new development, etc.

7. Ensure that employment uses are limited to light industrial and office uses that can be well-integrated into a neighbourhood and have minimal impacts on adjacent stable residential areas.

8. Consider the redevelopment potential of the King Paving site to support more pedestrian-supportive uses along Waterdown Road.

The redevelopment of Plains Road will support transit-supportive densities at a scale that encourages safe, walkable streets. The design and massing of buildings will provide appropriate transitions to adjacent residential neighbourhoods.
9. Explore opportunities to provide a grocery store within walking distance of most residents within the mobility hub area. This could be integrated into a new mixed-use development to optimize the number of residents in the immediate area.

10. Consensus on the amount and location of employment was not achieved.
   
   - Some identified the importance of protecting existing employment uses on Cooke Boulevard and continuing to support employment uses in the area.
   
   - Some identified the importance of protecting existing industrial employment uses in the area.
   
   - Some identified that the amount of employment uses should be limited to ensure that the Mobility Hub area remains safe and active at all times of the day.

3.5 Appleby GO Station

1. Protect the Appleby area as a significant employment area within the City. Ensure that employment uses are limited to light industrial and office uses that can be well-integrated into a neighbourhood and have minimal impacts on adjacent stable residential areas.

2. Explore opportunities to provide a mix of uses within opportunity sites (i.e. former commercial uses, large surface parking areas, etc.), including residential, to ensure that the area remains safe and accessible at all times of day.

3. Provide direct connections on Appleby Line to Highway 5 and North Burlington for all modes of transportation, including frequent transit connections and continuous cycling facilities.

4. Provide enhancements and upgrades to the creek corridor in order to accommodate a natural pedestrian connection through the site.
4.0 Mapping Refinements and Further Considerations

The Priority Directions provide strategic guidance that will be considered to refine the preliminary opportunities and constraints mapping, and to inform the subsequent work. To reflect the Priority Directions, the following refinements will be made to the preliminary opportunities and constraints mapping:

- The Centennial Bike Path has been added to the mapping as a key pedestrian and cyclist connection within the Downtown Mobility Hub area, as well as the Appleby Mobility Hub area.
- Additional mixed-use areas have been provided at Aldershot Station to concentrate mixed-uses near the station, to provide a greater mix of uses north of the rail corridor, and to ensure a more attractive transition to residential neighbourhoods south of the station area.
- The King Paving site at Aldershot GO Station has been identified as an opportunity site for mixed-use development.
- Additional linkages have been provided to show (conceptually) where connections can be made across Highway 403.
- The redevelopment potential at the Burlington Mall was identified. This has been captured in the City’s Intensification Strategy as an opportunity for redevelopment in the long-term.

In addition to the abovementioned refinements, a number of comments were received that go beyond updates to the mapping, and will be considered in subsequent stages of this study, or identified as future studies where they are outside the scope of this study:

- **Development Partnerships** – Many of the recommendations above require active participation from landowners and the local development community. Recommended approaches to support the development of partnerships will be provided at a later stage of this study, including incentive programs, etc.
- **Define Connector Streets** – A number of streets, including Brant Street and Fairview Street, were envisioned as complete streets and key connectors in the City. A core element of this study is to consider these streets in greater detail in order to determine their potential to balance all modes of transportation.
- **Undertake a Mobility Hub Master Plan** – This study identifies the opportunities and constraints at each mobility hub area, and provides high-level recommendations for changes to the existing policy framework. After the completion of this study, it is recommended that a detailed Mobility Hub Study and master planning exercise is completed for each area to determine specific elements (heights, densities, building location and orientation, street and block configuration) before more detailed policy amendments and urban design guidelines can be prepared.
• **Transit Improvements** – A number of the workshop comments focused on improving transit times and connectivity. Burlington Transit, GO Transit, and Metrolinx have been key stakeholders throughout this process and will continue to look at all opportunities to create seamless integration between modes as the mobility hub areas develop, as well as connections to North Burlington.

• **Locate Connections Across Highway 403 and Rail Corridors** – In both Aldershot GO Station and Appleby GO Station, Highway 403 and the rail corridors were seen as significant barriers to all modes of transportation. Through this study, conceptual locations have been illustrated to show the importance of this connectivity, but further study will be required as part of a future Mobility Hub Master Plan to determine the most appropriate locations.
Appendix A - Workshop Worksheet

GROUP WORKSHEET/
Opportunities and Constraints

1. Burlington Downtown

2. Burlington GO Station

3. Aldershot GO Station

4. Appleby GO Station

Instructions:
• Step 1: Assign a note-taker and someone to report back to the group.
• Step 2: Discuss the Opportunities and Constraints. Do you agree with them? Are there additional Opportunities and Constraints which should be considered? Do you agree with the Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Zone boundaries provided?
• Step 3: Use the markers and the space below each map to record your discussion. Please draw on the maps!
• Step 4: Report your key findings to the greater group.

Notes: