

Federation of Citizens Associations

Review of the City of Ottawa's

2013 Transportation Master Plan

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What is the FCA:

The Federation of Citizens Associations (FCA) was founded in 1975 as a coalition of community associations within the City of Ottawa, concerned about neighbourhood issues and City Council decisions that affected their quality of life. The FCA has been a resource for community associations dealing with municipal planning and service issues, a forum for discussion and (when required) joint action by community associations, and a resource for the City of Ottawa. It currently has a membership of 43 community organizations, meets monthly to discuss city-wide and local issues, has committees on various subject matters, and holds occasional workshops on topical issues.

This review of the City of Ottawa's 2013 Transportation Master Plan (TMP) was the initiative of the FCA's Transportation Committee, and involved an FCA survey of its membership and a workshop devoted to TMP issues.

Why a Review of the TMP Now:

The current TMP was approved by Ottawa City Council in 2013 as a supporting document to the City's Official Plan. It was built on previous TMPs in 2003 and 2008, and is based on a number of supporting studies. Normally the TMP would be updated as part of the City's 5-year Official Plan update cycle, but this has been delayed due to Ontario Municipal Board appeals affecting the City's current Official Plan. As well, with the building of the City's Light Rail Transit (LRT) program, which is expected to have a major impact on the travel patterns of Ottawa residents,

City staff have deemed it prudent to delay a TMP update until the LRT system is operational (expected in 2018), whereupon new studies on travel patterns (e.g. an origin & destination study – an important background component to a TMP) can be undertaken.

It is the view of the FCA that, notwithstanding the rationale given above, there are elements of the current TMP that should be reviewed now to determine how effective (and how relevant) the 2013 TMP targets and policies are, particularly given the growth of the city, new demographic data (eg the 2016 Census), and investments in public infrastructure. The FCA believes that, rather than waiting until 2021 for a new TMP, there is opportunity *now* to begin work on the background studies that contribute to updating the TMP, as well as make some mid-course adjustments.

Overview of the Current TMP:

The 2013 TMP outlines 12 principles that make up the City of Ottawa’s transportation vision:

Transportation Vision
1. Reduce automobile dependence
2. Meet mobility needs
3. Integrate transportation and land use
4. Protect public health and safety
5. Protect the environment
6. Enhance the economy
7. Deliver cost-effective services
8. Measure performance
9. Protect the public interest
10. Provide adequate and equitable funding
11. Co-operate with other governments
12. Lead by example

These principles guide the TMP, which represents City Council’s stated intentions in how our city is to grow its transportation system. The TMP is to come to life through such mechanisms as:

- Strategies and action plans
- Development charge bylaw studies and updates
- Annual budgets and operational procedures
- Environmental assessments
- Community design plans and other Official Plan tools

The TMP identifies transportation modes used by Ottawa residents – walking, cycling, transit and automobiles – and sets targets for 2031:

Travel Mode	Modal Share 2011	Modal Share 2031
Walking	9.5%	10.0%
Cycling	2.7%	5.0%
Transit	22.4%	26.0%
Automobile	65.3%	59.0%

The TMP also outlines a series of actions which would achieve these modal share targets, consistent with the principles outlined in the transportation vision of the TMP.

Walking:

The TMP states: “The popularity of walking is one indicator of a vibrant, sustainable city.” The FCA couldn’t agree more. However, urban design in our city has led to lower rates of walking in the suburban areas outside the Greenbelt. The TMP recognizes this and states that “maintaining current levels of walking is considered to be reasonably ambitious, and will require improvements in walking facilities and environments across the city”.

The FCA recognizes that there has been an increase in walking facilities, as outlined in the Ottawa Pedestrian Plan Mid-term Review that went to the City’s Transportation Committee in February 2017. This report shows some progress in meeting the TMP objectives here. However, one of the key actions identified in the TMP is enhancing winter maintenance for walking facilities, as identified by participants in the City’s 2013 Commuter Attitude Survey. This is also a key concern for FCA members, particularly given the aging demographic in our residential communities. Ice and snow on sidewalks is a hazard and a deterrent for particularly our elderly as well as our disabled residents. Providing for better sidewalk clearance in winter conditions would improve walkability and encourage more people to walk who otherwise wouldn’t during winter, better achieving the TMP’s goals regarding active transportation, and in particular the 2031 modal share target for walking.

1. **FCA Recommendation:** That the City of Ottawa enhance winter sidewalk maintenance standards on an annual basis, to facilitate increasing walking activity.

The FCA believes that the priority for filling-in gaps in the city's pedestrian network should be those that facilitate access to public transit, as this would facilitate more usage of public transit (a TMP goal).

2. **FCA Recommendation:** That the City of Ottawa give priority to those pedestrian projects that link to the city's public transit system.

Another key action identified in the TMP and identified by our members is pedestrian safety – in fact, the TMP states “pedestrians as one group of vulnerable road users that warrants special action”. The FCA couldn't agree more, and supports the *Vision Zero* program to eliminate pedestrian deaths (as part of eliminating traffic deaths) in our city.

3. **FCA Recommendation:** That the City of Ottawa commit to *Vision Zero* that would eliminate traffic deaths by a target year (e.g. 2030 – the 175th anniversary of the City of Ottawa).

Cycling:

The TMP states: “The popularity of cycling is one indicator of a vibrant, sustainable city”. The FCA couldn't agree more. The TMP sets a target of 5% modal share by cycling (8% within the Greenbelt) which represents a significant increase above the 2011 levels and which requires investing in a more continuous and connected network of quality cycling routes and programs.

The FCA recognizes that there has been a significant increase in cycling facilities, as outlined in the Ottawa Cycling Plan Mid-term Review that went to the City's Transportation Committee in March 2017. The FCA applauds this progress, and would urge the City to keep up the pace and continue to fill-in network gaps, particularly between residential communities and employment areas. As well, the FCA recommends expanding the winter cycling network, which will enable more Ottawa residents to cycle year-round.

4. **FCA Recommendation:** That the City of Ottawa continue to expand its cycling network, including its winter cycling network, to enable more cyclists to cycle to work, etc. safely.

The TMP identifies cyclists as one group of vulnerable road users that warrants special action. The FCA couldn't agree more, and urges the City to commit to the *Vision Zero* program objective – the elimination of traffic deaths in our city. In particular the FCA recommends that the City invest in an intensive car driver/cyclist public education program on how to share our city roads. This is timely given the recent expansion of cycling facilities.

- 5. FCA Recommendation:** That the City of Ottawa invest in an intensive public education program for car drivers & cyclists on how to share safely our city's roads.

Concurrent with the previous recommendation is the need to reinforce the rules on how to use our roads safely by both cars and cyclists.

- 6. FCA Recommendation:** That the City of Ottawa increase the capacity of the Ottawa Police Services to enforce safety rules on City streets for both car drivers and cyclists.

Roads:

The 2013 Transportation Master Plan identifies, as its first principle in its transportation vision for the City of Ottawa, the reduction of car dependency. The FCA agrees with this principle, and supports efforts elsewhere (in the Walking, Cycling, and Public Transit sections of the TMP) policies to increase these other travel modes as an alternative to car travel. While we recognize that automobile use is (and will likely remain) the major mode of travel in our city in the near future, it makes sense for quality of life, environment and economic reasons to reduce our dependency on cars.

First is the issue of our current road environment. The TMP recognizes that roads are public spaces that serve more than just cars and trucks. The FCA couldn't agree more, and supports such TMP policies as complete streets (i.e. streets that safely accommodates all users – pedestrians, cyclists, public transit, and vehicles), not just for residential streets but for arterial roads as well.

- 7. FCA Recommendation:** That the City of Ottawa imbed its complete streets model in all future road design and rehabilitation projects.

FCA members are concerned about the safety of residential streets, particularly with respect to speeding and traffic volume. Our members want to see more traffic calming measures in

residential communities, and are not willing to wait until the opportunity arises to install these when streets warrant rehabilitation. The FCA recommends that the City develop a pro-active strategy of implementing traffic calming measures in every residential community.

8. FCA Recommendation: That the City of Ottawa develop and implement a pro-active strategy implementing traffic calming measures in every residential community.

Truck traffic going through the downtown remains an on-going safety concern for FCA members. The FCA believes that the City should be taking steps now to deal with this long-standing safety problem.

9. FCA Recommendation: That the City of Ottawa vigorously pursue a solution to removing through-truck traffic from the downtown.

The TMP is silent on measures used in other cities that reduce car dependency, such as limiting parking inside the city core or relocating parking outside of the city core, or using road congestion charges to reduce car use in our city. The FCA recognizes that the TMP goals of enhancing walking, cycling and public transit as alternatives to car use are useful means to achieve the objective of reducing car dependency, but also believes that there are other legitimate policy tools to reduce car use in our city. Given the significant public subsidy provided by Ottawa taxpayers towards supporting car use, the FCA believes it is in the public interest to better understand the costs and benefits of our road system, and the costs and benefits of various traffic management measures (e.g. parking restrictions, road congestion charges, tolls, etc.) to reduce car dependency in our city.

10. FCA Recommendation: That the City of Ottawa undertake, as part of the development of a new City of Ottawa Transportation Master Plan, a study on the costs & benefits of such traffic management measures (such as parking restrictions, road congestion charges, tolls, etc.) that will support the TMP objective of reducing car dependency in our city.

Transit:

The 2013 TMP sets as a target transit modal share for Ottawa to increase from 22% (in 2011) of all transportation trips to 26% by 2031. The TMP states that “this will require the City to continue making transit more attractive than automobile use for an even greater number of residents. Ongoing efforts to improve the availability, reliability, speed, accessibility and comfort

of transit service will improve the transit customer experience and make transit a more viable transportation choice”.

Certainly the public investment in transit, particularly light rail transit, consumes by far most of the planned TMP capital expenditures to 2031. Of the nearly \$4 billion (\$3.995 billion in 2013 dollars) for all new infrastructure and services contemplated in the TMP for walking, cycling, roads and transit from 2013 to 2031, transit-related expenditures account for \$2.985 billion, or three-quarters of the TMP’s expenditures. Of that, \$2.360 billion is for Light Rail Transit (LRT). This is a significant public investment in transforming the delivery of transit in our city as an aid towards increasing transit modal share to 26% by 2031.

FCA members expect that the transformation of our existing Transitway system to Light Rail Transit will have a positive effect on transit ridership, but believe that the new LRT infrastructure will not be sufficient by itself to reach the City’s transit modal share target.

Accompanying the shift to LRT is the conversion of popular express buses from the outer Greenbelt suburbs to the downtown core to feeder lines connecting LRT stations, necessitating transfers at these stations. While the comfort and capacity of LRT trains will be attractive, the FCA is concerned that the process of transferring from feeder buses to the LRT may be a disincentive for transit users, particularly those who have access to automobiles as an alternative.

The TMP is silent on policies that would attract more transit riders, or which may persuade car users to use transit rather than cars. Further, in the opinion of the FCA, transit ridership growth has been hindered by City Council’s policy of increasing transit fares annually (since 2011) faster than the rate of inflation.

FCA members believe that the most important factors required to increase public transit trips is service reliability and trip frequency, and affordability. To ensure that this large public investment in new transit infrastructure achieve its intended result of increasing transit ridership, the FCA believes that the City must develop an LRT transition plan, in consultation with the community, that (among other things) addresses the issue of transfers at LRT stations, and includes a fare strategy that will create a sustained increase in transit ridership consistent with the targets of the TMP.

11. FCA recommendation: That, for the opening of the new LRT system, the City of Ottawa develop an LRT transition plan in consultation with the community that (among other things) addresses the issue of transfers at LRT stations.

12. FCA Recommendation: That the City of Ottawa review its transit fare structure in order to maximize transit ridership as a means of achieving its target modal share for transit.

The FCA supports efforts to make public transit accessible and affordable to low-income residents in our city, many of whom do not have access to cars.

13. FCA Recommendation: That the City of Ottawa continue to expand the Equity fare system for low-income residents in order to increase access to public transit for these residents.

The FCA understands that, to make effective use of this significant public investment in LRT, there needs to be supportive planning policies (aka transit-oriented development policies (TOD)) in the communities bordering the LRT, including an increase in density provisions. For some communities, TOD will mean significant change. Our expectation is that these communities will have meaningful public consultation on the nature of this change to higher densities during this transition, so that the quality of life currently enjoyed will not be compromised by inappropriate development.

14. FCA Recommendation: That the City of Ottawa, in developing its transit-oriented development policies, conduct meaningful public consultation with the affected communities on how these new policies will be implemented.

However, the FCA is also concerned that the introduction of LRT into and through our communities and associated intensification through transit-oriented development policies may lead to increases in property values sufficient to render housing here unaffordable to many. This, in our view, would be an undesirable public policy outcome. The FCA supports the concept of complete communities, affordable to a range of income classes, including young families starting out and seniors living their golden years. In particular the FCA recognizes the value of public transit to those who are not able to access cars and the need to ensure for them easy access to the LRT system.

15. FCA Recommendation: That the City of Ottawa, in developing transit-oriented development policies to support the significant public investment in LRT, ensure that such policies make housing affordable to all income classes within the LRT corridor, as a means of having complete communities.

An area where the current TMP provides little direction is the matter of future interprovincial connections. As a significant number of Ottawa residents (and Gatineau residents) cross the Ottawa River daily to reach their employment, this is an oversight which a future TMP should address.

16. FCA Recommendation: That the City of Ottawa, as part of developing the next edition of its Transportation Master Plan, address the issue of future interprovincial connections, particularly for public transit.

Summary:

The FCA supports the goals of the 2013 Transportation Master Plan and recognizes that there has been progress in meeting some of these goals. Nonetheless, the FCA believes there are opportunities *now* to adjust policies in order to better achieve the TMP goals. Doing so sooner rather than later would better help the City to achieve its TMP goals as approved by City Council. It would also facilitate the work needed to conduct the more comprehensive review of the TMP that is planned for 2021.

The FCA offers these recommendations to City Council as a means of better achieving these goals, particularly as they affect the quality of our residential communities, improve safety for all, and ensure effective means of reducing the dependency on cars in our city.

1. That the City of Ottawa enhance winter sidewalk maintenance standards on an annual basis, to facilitate increasing walking activity.
2. That the City of Ottawa give priority to those pedestrian projects that link to the city's public transit system.
3. That the City of Ottawa commit to *Vision Zero* that would eliminate traffic deaths by a target year (e.g. 2030 – the 175th anniversary of the City of Ottawa).
4. That the City of Ottawa continue to expand its cycling network, including its winter cycling network, to enable more cyclists to cycle to work, etc. safely.
5. That the City of Ottawa invest in an intensive public education program for car drivers & cyclists on how to share safely our city's roads.

6. That the City of Ottawa increase the capacity of the Ottawa Police Services to enforce safety rules on City streets for both car drivers and cyclists.
7. That the City of Ottawa imbed its complete streets model in all future road design and rehabilitation projects.
8. That the City of Ottawa develop and implement a pro-active strategy implementing traffic calming measures in every residential community.
9. That the City of Ottawa vigorously pursue a solution to removing through-truck traffic from the downtown.
10. That the City of Ottawa undertake, as part of the development of a new City of Ottawa Transportation Master Plan, a study on the costs & benefits of such traffic management measures (such as parking restrictions, road congestion charges, tolls, etc.) that will support the TMP objective of reducing car dependency in our city.
11. That, for the opening of the new LRT system, the City of Ottawa develop an LRT transition plan in consultation with the community that (among other things) addresses the issue of transfers at LRT stations.
12. That the City of Ottawa review its transit fare structure in order to maximize transit ridership as a means of achieving its target modal share for transit.
13. That the City of Ottawa continue to expand the Equity fare system for low-income residents in order to increase access to public transit for these residents.
14. That the City of Ottawa, in developing its transit-oriented development policies, conduct meaningful public consultation with the affected communities on how these new policies will be implemented.
15. That the City of Ottawa, in developing transit-oriented development policies to support the significant public investment in LRT, ensure that such policies make housing affordable to all income classes within the LRT corridor, as a means of having complete communities.
16. That the City of Ottawa, as part of developing the next edition of its Transportation Master Plan, address the issue of future interprovincial connections, particularly for public transit.