

## **CITY OF VAUGHAN**

### **EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 27, 2014**

Item 2, Report No. 25, of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session), which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on May 27, 2014.

## **2 DYNAMIC DIGITAL SIGNS AT CITY FACILITIES**

**The Committee of the Whole (Working Session) recommends:**

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Executive Director, Office of the City Manager, dated May 21, 2014, be approved, subject to adding the words “and an estimate of City costs” to the end of recommendation 4.;**
- 2) That the deputation of Mr. Tony Romanelli, President RCC, Steeles Avenue, Toronto, be received; and**
- 3) That the presentation from staff and Communication C3, presentation material entitled, “Dynamic Digital Signs at City Facilities”, dated May 21, 2014, be received.**

### **Recommendation**

The Executive Director in consultation with the Interim City Manager recommends:

1. That Staff proceed with renegotiation of the current bridge banner agreement with Canadian National Railway (CN) to add RCC Media Inc. (RCC) as a party and to convert existing CN Bridge Banners from vinyl to a digital format;
2. That the agreement require RCC to build to the City's specifications a Dynamic Digital Sign Network, including the associated operational software, for 10 monument style digital signs located at City facilities at no cost to the City;
3. That the agreement require RCC to maintain the Digital Sign Network including the digital display and monumental sign structure for a minimum of 15 years from the first operational date of the entire network or until a mutually agreed upon time;
4. That Staff identify and report back to Council no later than September, 2014 with the draft amended agreement that identifies the final location of each of the 10 digital signs;
5. That Staff in the Corporate Communications Department be assigned the oversight and ongoing communication management of the Digital Sign Network; and
6. That Staff in the Corporate Communications Department draft protocol and policy for the communication use and standards associated with the Digital Sign Network.

### **Contribution to Sustainability**

Green Directions Vaughan embraces a Sustainability First principle and states that sustainability means we make decisions and take actions that ensure a healthy environment, vibrant communities and economic vitality for current and future generations. Finding and/or improving opportunities to communicate with our residents about programs, services and issues allows them to be better informed and more engaged which results in greater understanding, collaboration and action.

### **Economic Impact**

The proposal by CN/RCC to convert the RCC bridge vinyl banners on overpasses owned by CN to a digital format in the City of Vaughan (Attachment 1) has no cost to the City.

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The proposed agreement also identifies that RCC will build and maintain a Digital Sign Network of 10 monument style signs for the City at no cost. However, the City would have to assume costs associated with preparing each site. This would include trenching, and electrical materials in addition to electrical indoor work. A complete cost estimate would be prepared once the 10 locations were identified and those costs would be requested via a 2015 capital budget submission.

The alternative solution for the City would be to build a Digital Sign Network of 10 signs as outlined in the report with an estimated cost of \$700-800,000 funded from taxation.

#### **Communications Plan**

If Council endorses Recommendation Six (6), Corporate Communications will draft a communication protocol and policy for the use and communication standards of the dynamic electronic signs prior to the “network” being operational. Messaging on each digital/electronic board would be undertaken from a central location; therefore, it is recommended in recommendation Five (5) of this report that the Corporate Communications Department manage oversight of the messaging as it directly relates to City communications.

#### **Purpose**

Staff were approached by CN and RCC who have identified that they would like to amend the current bridge banner agreement to convert the vinyl banner structures to a digital format. The current agreement allows for third party advertising on all north facing structures (vehicles driving from Vaughan toward Toronto). CN has a contract with RCC for this provision. The messaging on the south facing structures is dedicated for City of Vaughan messaging (vehicles travelling from Toronto toward Vaughan). As part of the proposed amended agreement, RCC will build a city-wide Dynamic Digital sign network consisting of 10 signs to be located at city facilities. In addition, RCC will provide messaging time on both the south and north facing bridge structures once the vinyl to digital conversion is complete.

The messaging on the City's 10 signs would be 100 per cent dedicated to the City. No third party advertising would be programmed. As identified in the current agreement with CN, RCC is the sole agent for the Canadian National Railway thus making it the only company in the position to make this offer (Attachment 2). The digital signs would be sited at 10 City facilities chosen by the City. RCC currently owns, maintains, and operates the CN Bridge Vinyl structures in Vaughan and has had an existing agreement since 2006 with the City for the current CN Bridge vinyl banner program.

#### **Background - Analysis and Options**

Staff reported to Committee of the Whole Working Session, Item 1, Report No. 38, adopted by Council on September 17, 2013, about the benefits of having a city-wide network of digital signs to communicate with residents. Staff identified four potential options to erect a ‘network’ of 10 signs at the City's Community Centres. The options and costs associated with building and operating the network ranged from a 100 per cent city-owned, constructed and operated network to a 100 per cent privately owned, constructed, and operated network to a combination of ownership and operation -- all with varying costs.

The Committee raised a number of questions related to;

- Use and costs of mobile advertising signs
- Ongoing Maintenance costs
- Locating the city's digital sign network at Community Centres

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### **EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 27, 2014**

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##### Use of Mobile Advertising Signs

The Director of Purchasing has confirmed that the City annually spends in the range of \$45,000-\$55,000 per year for the use of mobile signs. The mobile signs are used predominantly by two departments- Recreation and Culture and Public Works. However, local research that was conducted through the Staff initiated survey identified that residents would be in favour of an alternative to using mobile signs. At this time, Staff would recommend a target of a 50 per cent reduction in the use of mobile signs be established once the digital sign network was 100 per cent operational and current contractual obligations are fulfilled. Any further reduction in the use of mobile signs could be monitored and adjusted as needed.

##### Ongoing Maintenance Costs

The installation of the digital sign network will have manufacturer warranties for repair and replacement. However, the agreement in principle being proposed by RCC has identified that 100 percent of ongoing maintenance and maintenance costs will be assumed by RCC for a period of 15 years.

##### Locating The City's Digital Sign Network Solely at Community Centres

After further review of traffic counts and traffic patterns, (ATTACHMENT 3) Staff confirmed that the locations should not necessarily be limited to Community Centres. However, the location of the digital sign network should be equally distributed across the City, on City owned property, using traffic counts and traffic patterns as the baseline to achieve the communication goal of a Digital Sign Network. If Council agrees with this rationale, Staff will work with Legal, Building Standards, Building and Facilities and Corporate Communications to identify the 10 most appropriate locations. In addition, Staff will review and take into consideration sight lines and other site nuances.

##### Supporting Emergency Events

It should be noted that beyond the notion of increasing resident engagement and communicating city information such as; garbage and recycling efforts, Concerts in the Park, and other city events, the recent ice storm event of 2013 is an excellent example of why a digital sign network should be built and would prove to be a benefit to the residents of the City in communicating emergency information.

As previously identified in the report dated September 10, 2013, Staff have attempted to give Council an overview of the digital billboard industry and the results of a city-wide on-line survey asking residents about their opinion to having digital billboards erected at City facilities.

##### Future Considerations

###### Consolidated Sign By-Law

The last time City Council considered amendments to the City's Sign by-law respecting Poster Panel Signs [3rd Party Billboards was Report No. 32, Item 1 of the Committee of the Whole, approved by Council on June 28, 2011, Public Meeting 1, Proposed Amendments to the City's Sign By-Law, Poster Panel Signs (Billboards), (By-law Number 107-2011)]. Council approved a recommendation requesting City Staff to review the matter of Digital Boards and bring forward a report recommending possible amendments to the City Sign By-law. Therefore, amending the CN/RCC agreement could be an initiative to better inform a new consolidated sign by-law.

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##### First Type of Use

Although municipalities around North America use bridge structures to affix vinyl banners and other banner-styled messaging, research that Staff has undertaken to date in assessing the proposal has found that digital signage on bridge structures has very little precedent. It is believed that Vaughan could be the first municipality to allow this location for digital signage. The 407ETR in the past two years has begun implementing digital messaging affixed to a traditional pole design that sits directly above the right most lane of the highway but not currently affixed to an overpass.

In other locations around the world, the use of digital billboards above a roadway have been put into use. In London, England at the Euston Road Underpass a large format digital billboard serves more than 100,000 cars per day as does the bridge structures on the Pacific Motorway in Queensland Australia.

##### **About Digital Billboard Technology: Digital technology is changing the delivery of information**

On billboards, digital technology produces static images which are changed via computer (typically every six or eight seconds), providing a non-manual way to change billboard “copy.” Digital billboards do not scroll, flash, or feature motion pictures.

Electronic billboards offer advantages, giving the City a greater versatility and flexibility in reaching its residents. Messages can be changed quickly, including multiple times in one day.

Print and broadcast news media use digital billboards to deliver headlines, weather updates, and programming information. Law enforcement and other public safety officials use digital billboards to reach mass audiences quickly. The image of a missing person or emergency information can be displayed in minutes. Safety and community concerns have however been vocal in numerous jurisdictions about the potential distractions which Digital signs could pose for drivers and illumination impacts to community.

To control digital billboards, brightness levels on signs are equipped with light sensors, which measure the amount of light available in the surrounding environment. In the brightest sun, the billboard is at its brightest to provide the necessary contrast to let the billboard be legible. At night, the billboard is much dimmer to adjust to surrounding light conditions. The billboards use the minimum amount of light necessary to provide legible copy.

##### **Public Perception**

##### **Independent Research Finds Digital Signs Provide An Important Community Service**

A review of North American jurisdiction has found varying degrees of acceptance and policy components for roadside digital signs.

In 2008, Arbitron, the global media research firm, conducted a research project: “What does the public think of digital billboards”. In the first study of its kind, Arbitron researchers found that people are aware of and positively inclined toward this technology.

The Arbitron study focused on the metro area of Cleveland, OH, where digital billboards have been operating since 2005. Through telephone surveys, researchers found “the vast majority of commuters (four out of five) feel the digital signs provide an important community service.” More than half of the commuters polled had noticed digital billboards in the past month. The vast majority of those commuters remembered at least one ad running on the boards. Eight out of ten people said digital billboards help the community with emergency information, while the majority said they were attractive.

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Among younger demographics, digital billboards have an even bigger impact. The Arbitron study found 60 percent of those 18-34 found digital billboards to be attractive, while 86 percent agreed digital billboards help the community with emergency information. Nearly one in five viewers discussed an ad seen on a digital billboard with other people. The study found that 83 percent of all respondents can recall at least one advertisement on a digital billboard and 65 percent of viewers can recall at least two ads. Furthermore, 77 percent of 18-34 year olds said digital billboards are a 'cool' way to advertise, according to the study.

#### **Local Research Concludes Digital Signs Would Be Effective**

Although not requested, Staff undertook an online survey of residents with the purpose of gauging perception and appropriateness of electronic digital signs at City facilities.

The electronic survey was created using SurveyMonkey.com. It was advertised on the City's website through a homepage banner with a link to the survey. An e-Bulletin linking to the survey was distributed to approximately 8,400 of the City's e-newsletter subscribers. In addition, the survey also went to the Recreation and Culture department's client database of more than 6,500 registered emails.

Although the online survey is not projectable to the entire population of Vaughan (statistically valid) it is extremely useful for understanding how people perceive electronic signs - much like a focus group. The questions in the survey were:

1. Overall how would you rate the way that the City of Vaughan keeps you informed about City?
2. In your opinion, it is important that you receive timely information about which of the following topics:
3. Would it be beneficial to you if City updates were advertised on outdoor electronic / digital signs located throughout the city?
4. Would the placement of outdoor electronic/digital signs at all community centres and City facilities enhance the delivery of City information?
5. What is your overall impression of outdoor electronic/digital signs?
6. In addition to City information, would it be beneficial to you if the outdoor electronic/digital signs also included advertisements from businesses in and around the community?
7. How often do you use your community centre?
8. Please indicate your gender
9. Please indicate the range which includes your age
10. What community do you live in?

The results came back very positive about the use of Electronic signs as a communication initiative. In total, 81 percent of the responses to question three – *"Would it be beneficial to you if City updates were advertised on outdoor electronic/digital signs located throughout the city?"* responded – Yes. Furthermore, 77 percent of residents thought that electronic signs would enhance the City's communication efforts as responded to in question four.

However, when asked in question six, *"In addition to City information, would it be beneficial to you if the outdoor electronic/digital signs also included advertisements from businesses in and around the community?"* The residents expressed (66 percent) that allowing advertising would not be a welcome aspect to this communication initiative.

The survey also had an open field for additional comments. The more than 150 additional comments were reviewed and were grouped into themes- Positive, Negative, Aesthetic, Cost, and Neutral. Grouping the comments into themes allowed staff to put a percentage total to each group. Below is the total percentage of comments for each theme with an example.

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#### **An example of each themed comment –**

Positive: (48 percent)

*"It would be nice to be made aware of project updates such as when the new hospital will be started, etc. I can likely look that up online...but to have the info readily available on a digital board would be handy and easier. Thanks"*

Negative: (13 percent)

*"There is enough signage out there distracting from safety."*

Aesthetic: (3 percent)

*"While I find that this type of signage can be informative, these signs must be well placed so as not to be a distraction to drivers in traffic. Maybe they should be placed in the parking areas of community centres and libraries."*

Cost: (13 percent)

*"Same thing happened with Catholic Schools in Vaughan, needed outdoor signs. Quit spending tax dollars on signs outside of building. Reduce our Taxes (property tax) if you have enough money. I should not be paying for signs on community centres with my hard earned money. It is an unnecessary waste."*

Neutral: (22 percent)

*"We don't drive by a community centre regularly due to the location of our home. Electronic signs would be beneficial to those only driving by on a regular basis or in a more central location."*

#### **Costs and Installation –**

Staff contacted various sign companies in the Greater Toronto Area to better understand the costs associated with erecting electronic digital signs at all ten (10) Community Centres and potentially at other City facilities that might be deemed appropriate in the future. The anticipated cost to install digital monument signs at all 10 Community Centres is approximately \$700,000.

The criteria used when speaking with a sign company was based on the sign – typically in a "Monument-Style" that can be viewed by people entering and exiting the facility or driving on the street. Effective sizing was also an important factor as it is critical in that the sign should not overwhelm those that may be walking but can be seen clearly from a passing vehicle. Effective sizing of the monument structure should be approximately 10'W x 16'H and the display should be no less than 50 3/8"H x 113 3/8"W (4 ft x 9 ft).

Messaging on each digital/electronic board would be undertaken from a central location, therefore, it is recommended that Corporate Communications would take oversight of the messaging as it directly relates to City communications.

#### **Proposed Agreement with RCC**

CN/RCC has proposed that the current agreement be amended with the City where RCC would construct and maintain the City's Digital sign network at no cost to the City with the exception of preparing the site for the sign. The estimated costs for preparing a site would be in the range of \$100-\$130 per meter required for trenching, and electrical materials. In addition, further costs would be incurred for indoor electrical work. A complete cost estimate would be prepared once the 10 locations were identified.

## **CITY OF VAUGHAN**

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Highlights of the CN/RCC proposed agreement are as follows;

- RCC will supply, construct, and maintain the City's the 10 monument style signs
- Content/messaging delivered on both 'faces' or sides of the City's digital sign network for the life of the sign would be dedicated exclusively for City messaging.
- In addition to building and maintaining the proposed City network of dynamic digital signs, RCC will, as with its current vinyl banner agreement, give the City a specified amount of "free" time on the newly constructed digital bridge banners and four billboards that it will convert as part of the proposed agreement. Currently the City has 100 per cent use of the South facing vinyl banners on the CN bridges and RCC has 100 per cent use of the North facing vinyl banners. RCC will assume 100 per cent of the media for both North and South facing structures. However, the City will have as part of the agreement a negotiated amount of access to these digital signs.
- No live motion video, animation or flashing images

#### **Compliance with City Sign By-laws and Other Approvals**

As the proposed signs would be considered "public information signs", neither the City's Sign By-law 203-92, as amended, or the City's Public Property Sign By-law 178-2003 apply to these signs.

To ensure proper construction, the City will require the sign construction drawings to be submitted for approval. These drawings must be approved by a professional engineer and CN Engineering prior to being submitted to the Building Standards Department.

As the proposed signs are to be located on CN overpasses extending over Regional roads, the Region of York has been contacted by CN and RCC Inc. for their comments and conditions of approval.

#### **Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan**

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved. This report supports Vaughan's Vision Goal to Run our City with objectives that advance operational excellence. This proposal is one vehicle in support of the Corporate Communications Strategy of ensuring the City communicates effectively by promoting and enhancing the City's image, and provide timely, accurate information to all stakeholders.

#### **Regional Implications**

As the proposed agreement with RCC identifies full City ownership and content of the signs (no third party advertising) at City facilities that are located on Regional roads, the by-law regulating signs on regional roads does not apply to any sign placed by or under the direction of the federal or provincial government, a municipality, the Region, a public utility or a transit authority, or any other sign prescribed by statute. (THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK - BILL NO. 74 - BY-LAW NO. R-1232-2000-074).

Where the proposed signs abut a Regional Road, the proposed locations must be approved by the Regional Municipality of York – Engineering Department. (This applies to the location of the signs only.)

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#### **Conclusion**

In order for the City to continue to expand its approaches to communication and engagement with its residents, new ideas need to be considered. Electronic/Digital signs can be one of the most cost effective methods of communication for the City on an on-going basis. Messaging can range from community events, road construction/maintenance updates, city building initiatives, emergency preparedness or action – to name a few.

One single communication medium, such as e-newsletters, social media, traditional magazine/newspaper print, and broadcast will not achieve the level of communication that the residents desire nor the level of communication that the City wishes to have. The CN/RCC proposal attempts to achieve a balance between the benefits of providing cost-effective advertising solutions with ensuring the City communicates information to its citizens.

The addition of electronic/digital signage would be a positive addition to the 'tools' that would assist Council in keeping the residents of Vaughan informed of current events and issues.

#### **Attachments**

Attachment 1: RCC Proposal  
Attachment 2: Letter from CN  
Attachment 3: Map of City Facilities with Traffic Count

#### **Report prepared by:**

Tim Simmonds  
Executive Director, Office of the City Manager

(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)



C3  
CW(ws)  
May 21/14  
Item 2.

# Dynamic Digital Signs at City Facilities

Committee of the Whole Working Session | May 21, 2014



# Dynamic Digital Signs at City Facilities

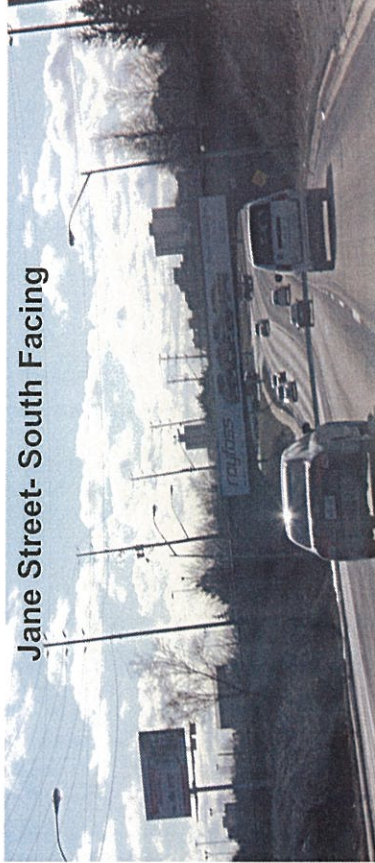
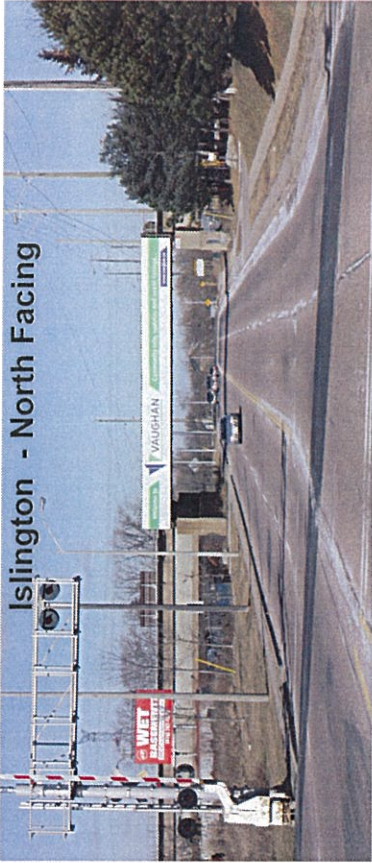
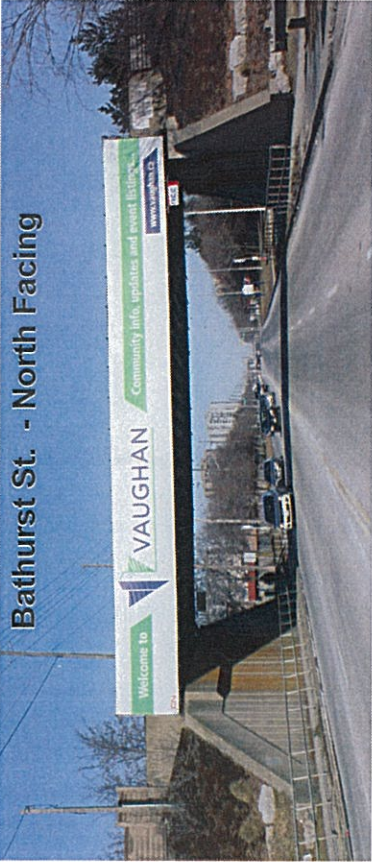
## Overview of Existing Partnership

- Canadian National Railway (CN) and RCC Media Inc. (RCC)
- Beautification Program - 2006
- Vinyl Banner Structure





# Dynamic Digital Signs at City Facilities



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# Dynamic Digital Signs at City Facilities

## Public Perception

- Electronic survey was created using Surveymonkey.com
  - Advertised on the City's website
  - 8,400 of the City's e-newsletter subscribers
  - 6,500 registered emails with Recreation and Culture





# Dynamic Digital Signs at City Facilities

## Public Perception

- Q3 - *“Would it be beneficial to you if City updates were advertised on outdoor electronic/digital signs located throughout the city?”*
  - 81 percent agreed
- Q4 - *“Would the placement of outdoor electronic/digital signs at all community centres and City facilities enhance the delivery of City information?”*
  - 77 percent of residents thought that electronic signs would enhance the City’s communication efforts



# Dynamic Digital Signs at City Facilities

## Public Perception

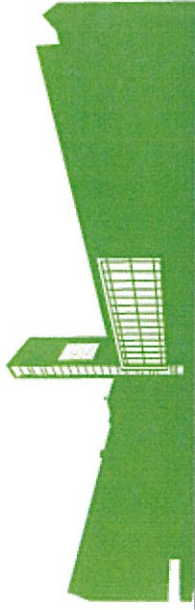
- Q6 –*In addition to City information, would it be beneficial to you if the outdoor electronic/digital signs also included advertisements from businesses in and around the community?*
- 66 percent of residents expressed that allowing advertising **would not be a** welcome aspect to this communication initiative.



# Dynamic Digital Signs at City Facilities

## Public Perception

- Open-ended responses had more than 150 additional comments that were reviewed and were grouped into themes—
  - 48% Positive
  - 22% Neutral
  - 13% Cost
  - 13% Negative
  - 3% Aesthetics





# Dynamic Digital Signs at City Facilities

## Potential Locations (7 of 10)

Based on traffic counts, the following City Facilities would be ideal candidate locations –

Ward 1 | Vaughan City Hall - **30,993**

Ward 1 | City Joint Operations Centre - **46,421**

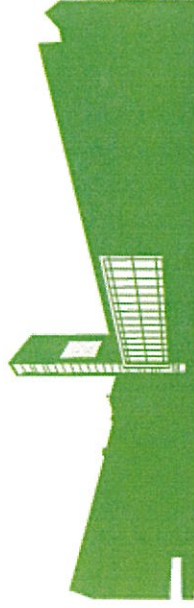
Ward 2 | Pierre Berton Resource Library - **39,853**

Ward 2 | Woodbridge Pool and Arena - **54,224**

Ward 3 | Vellore Village Community Centre – **17,000**

Ward 4 | North Thornhill District Park - **36,331**

Ward 5 | Benjamin Vaughan City Playhouse/Rosemount Community Centre - **65,975**



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# Dynamic Digital Signs at City Facilities





# Dynamic Digital Signs at City Facilities

## Council Considerations

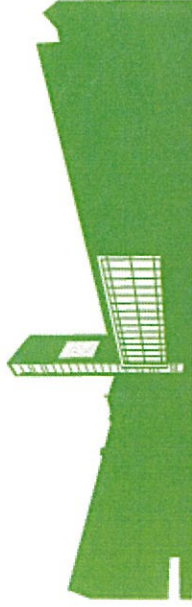
- Possible first type of use
- Potential impact on future consolidated sign by-law



# Dynamic Electronic Signs at City Facilities

## Proposal Highlights

- Digital Format - BRIDGE SIGNAGE: [Digital Sign Example](#)
- Enhanced communication – daily and emergency related
- Only costs associated with building, installing and maintaining monument style digital signs are limited to site preparation.
- Reduced use of mobile signs
- Content on city signs dedicated 100 per cent to city messaging
- Guaranteed message placement on CN/RCC digital boards



## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORKING SESSION – MAY 21, 2014**

### **DYNAMIC DIGITAL SIGNS AT CITY FACILITIES**

#### **Recommendation**

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- Locating the city's digital sign network at Community Centres

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### Future Considerations

#### Consolidated Sign By-Law

The last time City Council considered amendments to the City's Sign by-law respecting Poster Panel Signs [3rd Party Billboards was Report No. 32, Item 1 of the Committee of the Whole, approved by Council on June 28, 2011, Public Meeting 1, Proposed Amendments to the City's Sign By-Law, Poster Panel Signs (Billboards), (By-law Number 107-2011)]. Council approved a recommendation requesting City Staff to review the matter of Digital Boards and bring forward a report recommending possible amendments to the City Sign By-law. Therefore, amending the CN/RCC agreement could be an initiative to better inform a new consolidated sign by-law.

#### First Type of Use

Although municipalities around North America use bridge structures to affix vinyl banners and other banner-styled messaging, research that Staff has undertaken to date in assessing the proposal has found that digital signage on bridge structures has very little precedent. It is believed that Vaughan could be the first municipality to allow this location for digital signage. The 407ETR in the past two years has begun implementing digital messaging affixed to a traditional pole design that sits directly above the right most lane of the highway but not currently affixed to an overpass.

In other locations around the world, the use of digital billboards above a roadway have been put into use. In London, England at the Euston Road Underpass a large format digital billboard serves more than 100,000 cars per day as does the bridge structures on the Pacific Motorway in Queensland Australia.

## **About Digital Billboard Technology: Digital technology is changing the delivery of information**

On billboards, digital technology produces static images which are changed via computer (typically every six or eight seconds), providing a non-manual way to change billboard “copy.” Digital billboards do not scroll, flash, or feature motion pictures.

Electronic billboards offer advantages, giving the City a greater versatility and flexibility in reaching its residents. Messages can be changed quickly, including multiple times in one day.

Print and broadcast news media use digital billboards to deliver headlines, weather updates, and programming information. Law enforcement and other public safety officials use digital billboards to reach mass audiences quickly. The image of a missing person or emergency information can be displayed in minutes. Safety and community concerns have however been vocal in numerous jurisdictions about the potential distractions which Digital signs could pose for drivers and illumination impacts to community.

To control digital billboards, brightness levels on signs are equipped with light sensors, which measure the amount of light available in the surrounding environment. In the brightest sun, the billboard is at its brightest to provide the necessary contrast to let the billboard be legible. At night, the billboard is much dimmer to adjust to surrounding light conditions. The billboards use the minimum amount of light necessary to provide legible copy.

## **Public Perception**

### **Independent Research Finds Digital Signs Provide An Important Community Service**

A review of North American jurisdiction has found varying degrees of acceptance and policy components for roadside digital signs.

In 2008, Arbitron, the global media research firm, conducted a research project: “What does the public think of digital billboards”. In the first study of its kind, Arbitron researchers found that people are aware of and positively inclined toward this technology.

The Arbitron study focused on the metro area of Cleveland, OH, where digital billboards have been operating since 2005. Through telephone surveys, researchers found “the vast majority of commuters (four out of five) feel the digital signs provide an important community service.” More than half of the commuters polled had noticed digital billboards in the past month. The vast majority of those commuters remembered at least one ad running on the boards. Eight out of ten people said digital billboards help the community with emergency information, while the majority said they were attractive.

Among younger demographics, digital billboards have an even bigger impact. The Arbitron study found 60 percent of those 18-34 found digital billboards to be attractive, while 86 percent agreed digital billboards help the community with emergency information. Nearly one in five viewers discussed an ad seen on a digital billboard with other people. The study found that 83 percent of all respondents can recall at least one advertisement on a digital billboard and 65 percent of viewers can recall at least two ads. Furthermore, 77 percent of 18-34 year olds said digital billboards are a ‘cool’ way to advertise, according to the study.

### **Local Research Concludes Digital Signs Would Be Effective**

Although not requested, Staff undertook an online survey of residents with the purpose of gauging perception and appropriateness of electronic digital signs at City facilities.

The electronic survey was created using Surveymonkey.com. It was advertised on the City's website through a homepage banner with a link to the survey. An e-Bulletin linking to the survey

was distributed to approximately 8,400 of the City's e-newsletter subscribers. In addition, the survey also went to the Recreation and Culture department's client database of more than 6,500 registered emails.

Although the online survey is not projectable to the entire population of Vaughan (statistically valid) it is extremely useful for understanding how people perceive electronic signs - much like a focus group. The questions in the survey were:

1. Overall how would you rate the way that the City of Vaughan keeps you informed about City?
2. In your opinion, it is important that you receive timely information about which of the following topics:
3. Would it be beneficial to you if City updates were advertised on outdoor electronic / digital signs located throughout the city?
4. Would the placement of outdoor electronic/digital signs at all community centres and City facilities enhance the delivery of City information?
5. What is your overall impression of outdoor electronic/digital signs?
6. In addition to City information, would it be beneficial to you if the outdoor electronic/digital signs also included advertisements from businesses in and around the community?
7. How often do you use your community centre?
8. Please indicate your gender
9. Please indicate the range which includes your age
10. What community do you live in?

The results came back very positive about the use of Electronic signs as a communication initiative. In total, 81 percent of the responses to question three – *"Would it be beneficial to you if City updates were advertised on outdoor electronic/digital signs located throughout the city?"* responded – Yes. Furthermore, 77 percent of residents thought that electronic signs would enhance the City's communication efforts as responded to in question four.

However, when asked in question six, *"In addition to City information, would it be beneficial to you if the outdoor electronic/digital signs also included advertisements from businesses in and around the community?"* The residents expressed (66 percent) that allowing advertising would not be a welcome aspect to this communication initiative.

The survey also had an open field for additional comments. The more than 150 additional comments were reviewed and were grouped into themes- Positive, Negative, Aesthetic, Cost, and Neutral. Grouping the comments into themes allowed staff to put a percentage total to each group. Below is the total percentage of comments for each theme with an example.

#### **An example of each themed comment –**

Positive: (48 percent)

*"It would be nice to be made aware of project updates such as when the new hospital will be started, etc. I can likely look that up online...but to have the info readily available on a digital board would be handy and easier. Thanks"*

Negative: (13 percent)

*"There is enough signage out there distracting from safety."*

Aesthetic: (3 percent)

*"While I find that this type of signage can be informative, these signs must be well placed so as not to be a distraction to drivers in traffic. Maybe they should be placed in the parking areas of community centres and libraries."*



Cost: (13 percent)

*"Same thing happened with Catholic Schools in Vaughan, needed outdoor signs. Quit spending tax dollars on signs outside of building. Reduce our Taxes (property tax) if you have enough money. I should not be paying for signs on community centres with my hard earned money. It is an unnecessary waste."*

Neutral: (22 percent)

*"We don't drive by a community centre regularly due to the location of our home. Electronic signs would be beneficial to those only driving by on a regular basis or in a more central location."*

### **Costs and Installation –**

Staff contacted various sign companies in the Greater Toronto Area to better understand the costs associated with erecting electronic digital signs at all ten (10) Community Centres and potentially at other City facilities that might be deemed appropriate in the future. The anticipated cost to install digital monument signs at all 10 Community Centres is approximately \$700,000.

The criteria used when speaking with a sign company was based on the sign – typically in a "Monument-Style" that can be viewed by people entering and exiting the facility or driving on the street. Effective sizing was also an important factor as it is critical in that the sign should not overwhelm those that may be walking but can be seen clearly from a passing vehicle. Effective sizing of the monument structure should be approximately 10'W x 16'H and the display should be no less than 50 3/8"H x 113 3/8"W (4 ft x 9 ft).

Messaging on each digital/electronic board would be undertaken from a central location, therefore, it is recommended that Corporate Communications would take oversight of the messaging as it directly relates to City communications.

### **Proposed Agreement with RCC**

CN/RCC has proposed that the current agreement be amended with the City where RCC would construct and maintain the City's Digital sign network at no cost to the City with the exception of preparing the site for the sign. The estimated costs for preparing a site would be in the range of \$100-\$130 per meter required for trenching, and electrical materials. In addition, further costs would be incurred for indoor electrical work. A complete cost estimate would be prepared once the 10 locations were identified.

Highlights of the CN/RCC proposed agreement are as follows;

- RCC will supply, construct, and maintain the City's the 10 monument style signs
- Content/messaging delivered on both 'faces' or sides of the City's digital sign network for the life of the sign would be dedicated exclusively for City messaging.
- In addition to building and maintaining the proposed City network of dynamic digital signs, RCC will, as with its current vinyl banner agreement, give the City a specified amount of "free" time on the newly constructed digital bridge banners and four billboards that it will convert as part of the proposed agreement. Currently the City has 100 per cent use of the South facing vinyl banners on the CN bridges and RCC has 100 per cent use of the North facing vinyl banners. RCC will assume 100 per cent of the media for both North and South facing structures. However, the City will have as part of the agreement a negotiated amount of access to these digital signs.
- No live motion video, animation or flashing images

## **Compliance with City Sign By-laws and Other Approvals**

As the proposed signs would be considered “public information signs”, neither the City’s Sign By-law 203-92, as amended, or the City’s Public Property Sign By-law 178-2003 apply to these signs.

To ensure proper construction, the City will require the sign construction drawings to be submitted for approval. These drawings must be approved by a professional engineer and CN Engineering prior to being submitted to the Building Standards Department.

As the proposed signs are to be located on CN overpasses extending over Regional roads, the Region of York has been contacted by CN and RCC Inc. for their comments and conditions of approval.

## **Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan**

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved. This report supports Vaughan’s Vision Goal to Run our City with objectives that advance operational excellence. This proposal is one vehicle in support of the Corporate Communications Strategy of ensuring the City communicates effectively by promoting and enhancing the City’s image, and provide timely, accurate information to all stakeholders.

## **Regional Implications**

As the proposed agreement with RCC identifies full City ownership and content of the signs (no third party advertising) at City facilities that are located on Regional roads, the by-law regulating signs on regional roads does not apply to any sign placed by or under the direction of the federal or provincial government, a municipality, the Region, a public utility or a transit authority, or any other sign prescribed by statute. (THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK - BILL NO. 74 - BY-LAW NO. R-1232-2000-074).

Where the proposed signs about a Regional Road, the proposed locations must be approved by the Regional Municipality of York – Engineering Department. (This applies to the location of the signs only.)

## **Conclusion**

In order for the City to continue to expand its approaches to communication and engagement with its residents, new ideas need to be considered. Electronic/Digital signs can be one of the most cost effective methods of communication for the City on an on-going basis. Messaging can range from community events, road construction/maintenance updates, city building initiatives, emergency preparedness or action – to name a few.

One single communication medium, such as e-newsletters, social media, traditional magazine/newspaper print, and broadcast will not achieve the level of communication that the residents desire nor the level of communication that the City wishes to have. The CN/RCC proposal attempts to achieve a balance between the benefits of providing cost-effective advertising solutions with ensuring the City communicates information to its citizens.

The addition of electronic/digital signage would be a positive addition to the ‘tools’ that would assist Council in keeping the residents of Vaughan informed of current events and issues.

**Attachments**

Attachment 1: RCC Proposal  
Attachment 2: Letter from CN  
Attachment 3: Map of City Facilities with Traffic Count

**Report prepared by:**

Tim Simmonds  
Executive Director, Office of the City Manager

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Simmonds  
Executive Director, Office of the City Manager



## ELECTRONIC MESSAGING PROPOSAL

**Date: March 2014**



## BACKGROUND

- ✓ RCC Media owns and manages up to 90% of the 10x20 billboard structures in the City of Vaughan
- ✓ RCC Media owns and manages 7 CN Rail bridge messaging structures in the City of Vaughan
- ✓ All billboard and rail overpass messaging structures located on rail corridor properties
- ✓ RCC Media sells and services advertising space to local and regional third-party advertisers looking to attract City of Vaughan residents
- ✓ City of Vaughan currently would have to pay to advertise / message on RCC properties

## PROPOSAL

- ✓ RCC Media proposes to build, install and maintain Digital / Non-Video structures at (10) select City of Vaughan Community Centres. Used exclusively by the City of Vaughan for messaging purposes.
  - Al Palladini Community Centre
  - Chancellor Community Centre
  - Dufferin Clark Community Centre
  - North Thornhill Community Centre
  - Rosemount Community Centre
  - Father E. Bulfon Community Centre
  - Garnet A. Williams Community Centre
  - Maple Community Centre
  - Vellore Village Community Centre
  - Woodbridge Pool and Memorial Arena
- ✓ City of Vaughan will have the ability to instantly stream messages electronically to signage structure (ie. traffic and amber alerts, public notifications, etc.) - **zero cost to the city and full control of content**



- ✓ RCC Media to provide general maintenance to sign structures as is required
- ✓ In return, City of Vaughan will allow RCC Media to convert all bridge overpass locations and (4) select 10x20 billboard locations to Digital / Non-Video Billboards. The following links provide a conceptual mock up of a digital / non-video bridge sign and billboard (10 second message interval).

BRIDGE SIGNAGE: <http://youtu.be/7xx0Us96d2Q> 10x30 BILLBOARD SIGNAGE: <http://youtu.be/kVl3MLtT2U8>

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| - Islington Ave. N/O Steeles Ave.  | - Major MacKenzie E/O Keele St.          |
| - Pine Valley Dr. N/O Steeles Ave. | - Highway 7 W/O Keele Street - 10x30     |
| - Jane St. N/O Steeles Ave.        | - Rutherford Rd W/O Greenock Dr. - 10x30 |
| - Dufferin St. N/O Steeles Ave.    | - Keele St N/O Steeles Ave.- 10x30       |
| - Bathurst St. N/O Steeles Ave.    | - Weston Rd N/O Steeles Ave. - 10x30     |
| - Highway 27 N/O Martingrove Road  | - Yonge St. N/O Steeles Ave. - 10x30     |
| - Highway 7 E/O Bowes Road         | - Jane St. N/O Rutherford Ave. - 10x30   |

- ✓ Provide cleaner, refined and modern look to existing structures. No new signage erected. No new locations.
- ✓ Along with full messaging control and capabilities provided by community centre structures, **RCC Media agrees to provide City of Vaughan with instant messaging access to above bridge and billboard locations (one 10 second message every minute - at no cost to the city.)**
- ✓ **Proposed City of Vaughan Digital Messaging Network Map - see Appendix A**



## ELECTRONIC MESSAGING - BENEFITS:

### MESSAGING INITIATIVES:

- ✓ all capital expenditures and media space messaging opportunities provided at **no cost** to the city
- ✓ messages can be updated instantly - (ie. traffic related problems, amber alerts, etc.)
- ✓ communicate to city residents with timely and relevant information (ie. community events, recycling and garbage initiatives, etc.)
- ✓ Digital network allows for greater reach and frequency for messaging to city residents - helps reduce amount of temporary mobile signage required - if not all
- ✓ digital technology allows for shorter run multiple messages, no waste and no costly printing fees
- ✓ unlimited messaging access provided to the city - administered by the City of Vaughan's communications department, at their discretion.
- ✓ small and medium sized businesses benefit from this messaging/advertising opportunity. Local businesses and/or charities will now have a more affordable and effective advertising method available to them in the market today. Reducing the amount of illegal "temporary" signs - lawn signs, pole signs, mobile signs, etc.



## COMMON QUESTIONS / FACTS

Q: These new digital billboards will increase driver distraction?

A: A number of studies have been conducted where digital LED outdoor billboards have been in operation for a period of time. There is no evidence that digital outdoor billboards contribute to increased driver distraction. Refer to Appendix B - Signage Impact Study.

Q: Do LED outdoor messaging boards work like televisions?

A: LED digital technology is specifically designed to provide a clear precise reproduction of still pictures or advertising artwork. They will not display live video or animation. Simply put, the messages do not move, jump or flash.

Q: How often does the message change?

A: These new digital outdoor billboards display 6 static commercial messages in 6 second intervals. The signs can be updated remotely, are monitored and can be used by the City or local emergency services to communicate messages including Amber alerts.





## COMMON QUESTIONS / FACTS - cont'd

Q: What cities provide digital signage?

A: a. New Westminster, British Columbia: has permitted large format Digital Signs to be installed on their own property. Signs also received approval from Ministry of Transportation BC.

b. City of Surrey has permitted large format Digital Signs to be installed on their own property. Signs also received approval from Ministry of Transportation BC.

2. City of Toronto has permitted Digital Signs on private property. Approximately 15 such signs have been approved since 2009.

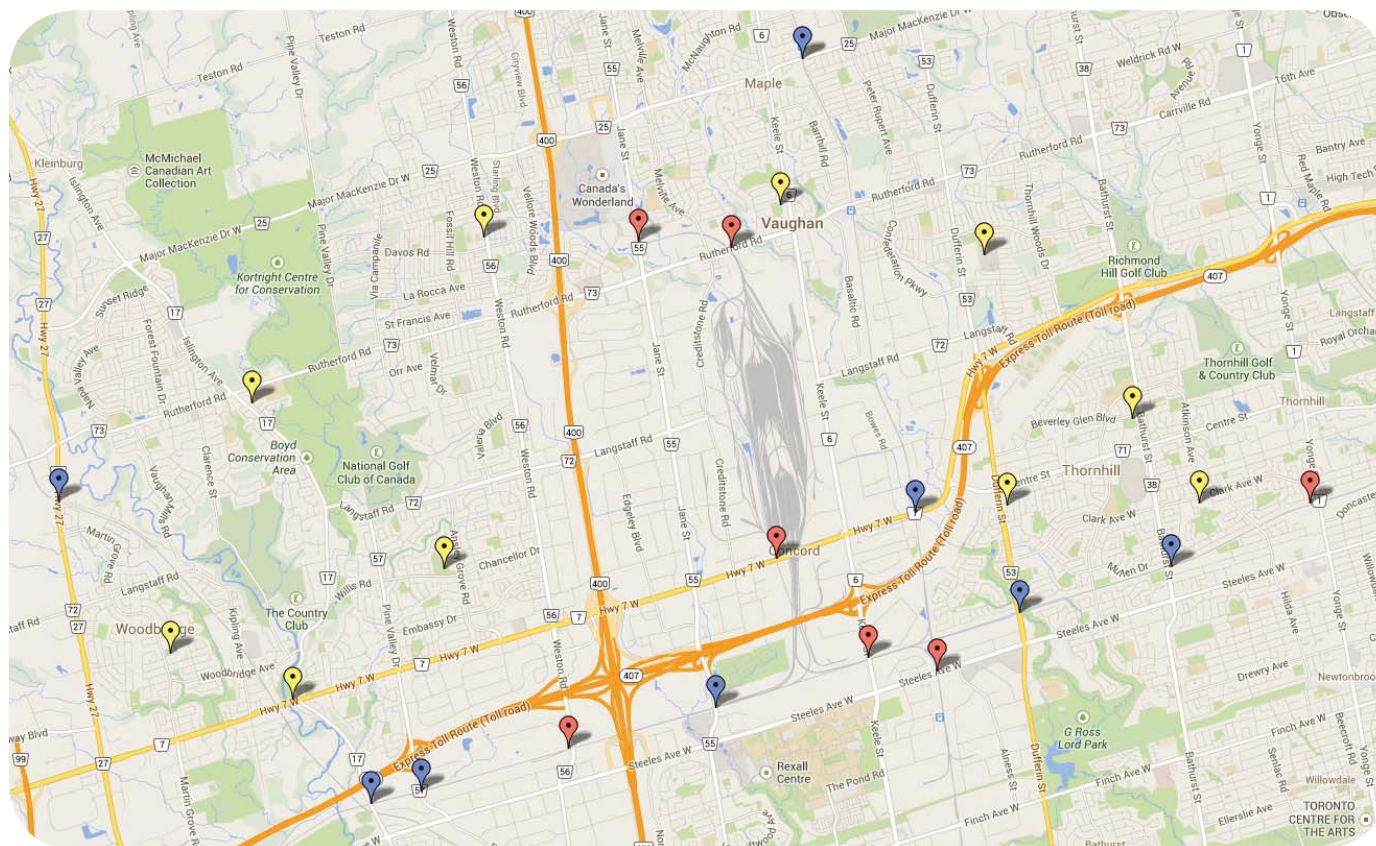
3. Various municipalities (Lachine, Sud West, RDP, Montreal etc) in Quebec have permitted approximately 20 signs on both private and public property. All signs also received approval from Ministry of Transportation Quebec.

4. Calgary, Edmonton has digital signs on private and city owned lands

FACT: LED digital outdoor advertising messages are not the same as a Jumbotron style of video screen. RCC digital outdoor advertising bridge formats will be fabricated and constructed based on the overall size of the bridge structure. Each bridge is custom in size - with an overall height allowance of 8'H.

FACT: The new signs will have a more modern look and operation. Removing existing out of date billboard look for a new state of the art look.

## APPENDIX A PROPOSED DIGITAL NETWORK



- Bridge Locations
- 10X30 Billboard Locations
- Community Centre Locations

<https://maps.google.ca/maps/ms?msid=210202608400401051354.0004e6d32547798e3f6ae&msa=0&ll=43.797615,-79.530373&spn=0.251028,0.528374>



## SIGNAGE STRUCTURES - Mock Up

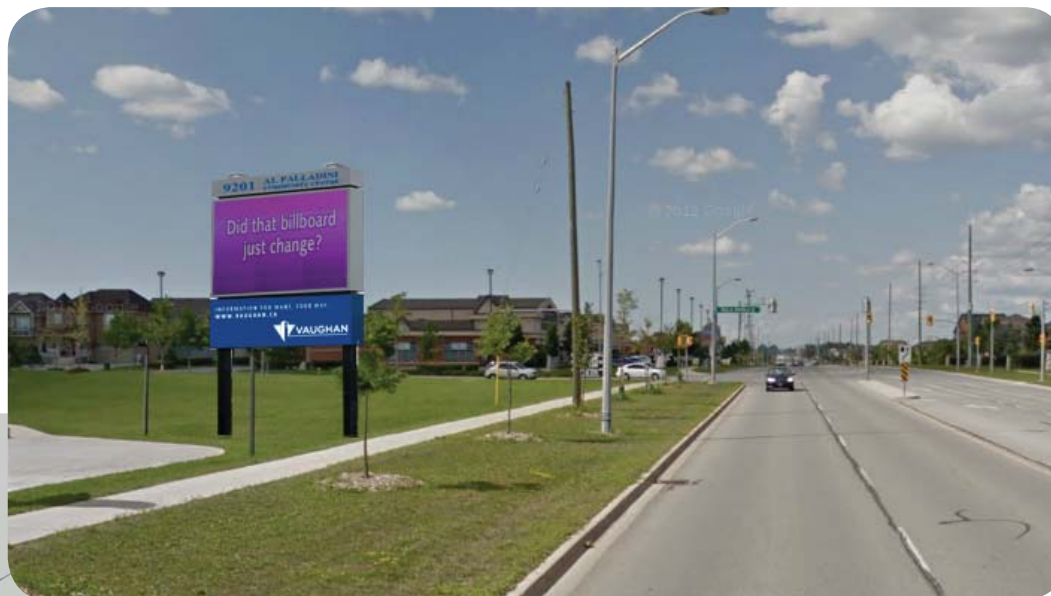
Conceptual mock ups. For discussion purposes only.

Final design approval by the City of Vaughan.

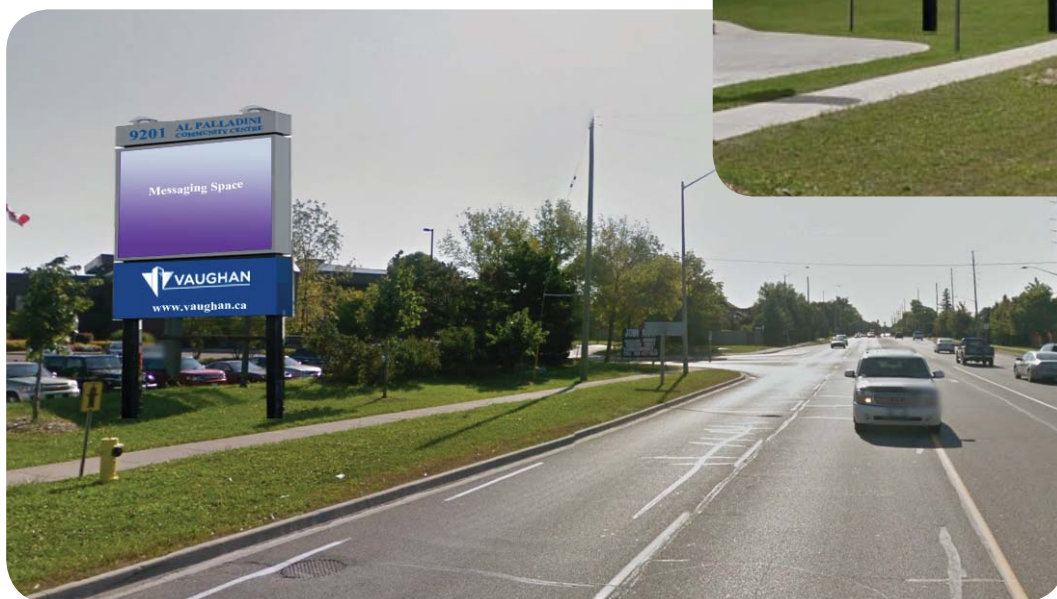
Proposed Size:

Overall Size = 10'W x 16'H

Display Size = 50 3/8" H x 113 3/8" W



Vellore Village Community Centre



Al Palladini Community Centre



## APPENDIX B

# SIGNAGE IMPACT STUDY

## Variable Message Signs (VMS)



**Ernie Longo**  
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Concord, Ontario  
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E-mail address: [ernie.longo@cn.ca](mailto:ernie.longo@cn.ca)

Directeur, expansion commerciale et immeubles  
1, rue Administration  
Concord (Ontario)  
L4K 1B9  
Téléphone: (905) 760-5001  
Télécopieur: (905) 760-5010  
Courriel: [ernie.longo@cn.ca](mailto:ernie.longo@cn.ca)

February 21, 2014

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

Mr. Tony Romanelli  
RCC Media Inc.  
4101 Steeles Ave. W. Suite 201  
Toronto, ON  
M3N 1V7

To whom it may concern,

**RE: CN Bridge Beautification Project – Proposed Digital Conversion**

The purpose and intent of this letter is to notify all concerned parties that RCC Media Inc. has the authority to manage and negotiate terms and conditions, for all CN Rail bridges and abutments across Canada – as it pertains to the Bridge Beautification Project and the proposed conversion from static vinyl to digital messaging panels. Please be further advised that CN has no objections to the digital conversion.

Should you have any questions regarding this project or the authorization granted to RCC Media, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ernie Longo', written over a horizontal line.

Ernie Longo  
Manager, Business Development  
& Real Estate



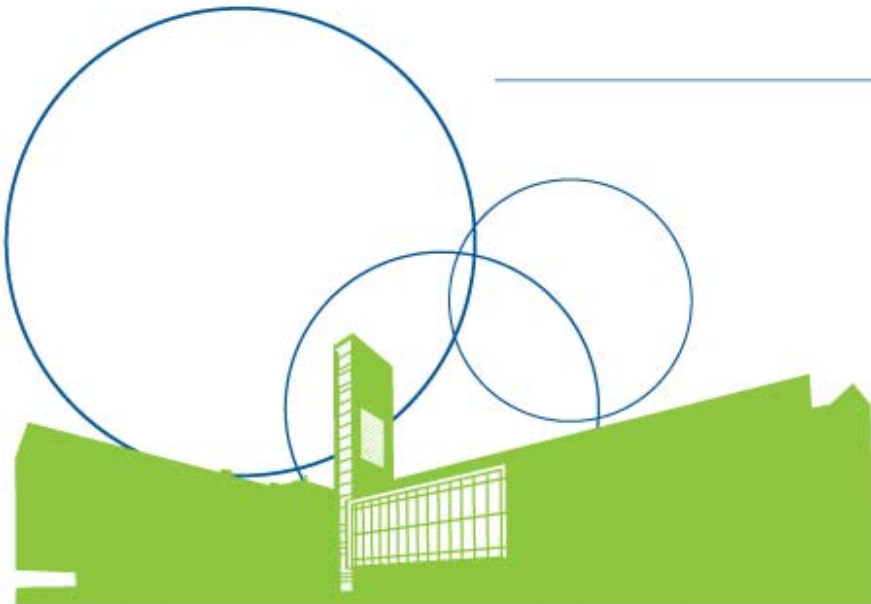
1. Al Palladini Community Centre
2. Benjamin Vaughan City Playhouse Theatre
3. Vaughan City Hall
4. Vaughan Public Works Yard - Dufferin
5. Fire Station 72
6. Fire Station 77
7. Joint Operations Centre
8. Kleinburg Library
9. Maple Community Centre
10. Pierre Berton Resource Library
11. Woodbridge Pool and Memorial Arena



# Traffic Counts: City-Owned Facilities

## October 2013

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# Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)

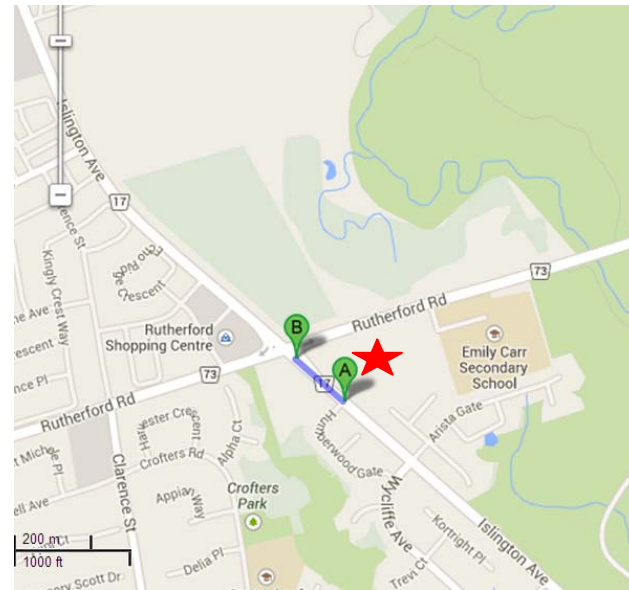
- Counts were provided by York Region & City of Vaughan Engineering Services.
- The Region's count program consists of locations that are counted for a 7-day period every couple of years.
- Each location is tied to a permanent count station (PCS) that collects data on a continual basis.
- Factors are calculated from PCS data for "day of week" and "month of year," and then applied to the 7-day count results for each associated location to generate the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT).
- This analysis uses factored data.
- York Region generally has one count station located within 2 kilometer sections of road between the major concessions. They consider the AADT from that count location to be valid for the entire 2 kilometer stretch.





# Al Palladini Community Centre

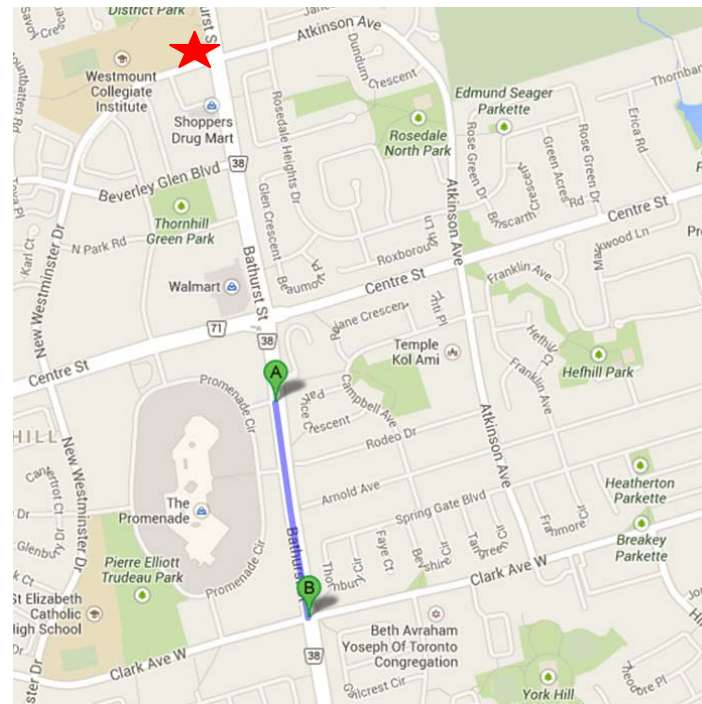
- ★ 9201 Islington Avenue
  - Traffic counts captures Islington Avenue between Humberwood Gate and Rutherford Road
  - AADT (2012): 23,894 (north bound & south bound)
  - Source: York Region



3

# Benjamin Vaughan City Playhouse Theatre & Rosemount Community Centre

- ★ 1000 New Westminster Drive
  - Traffic counts captures Bathurst Street between Clark Avenue West & The Promenade Mall Entrance
  - AADT (2009): 65,975 (north bound & south bound)
  - Source: York Region

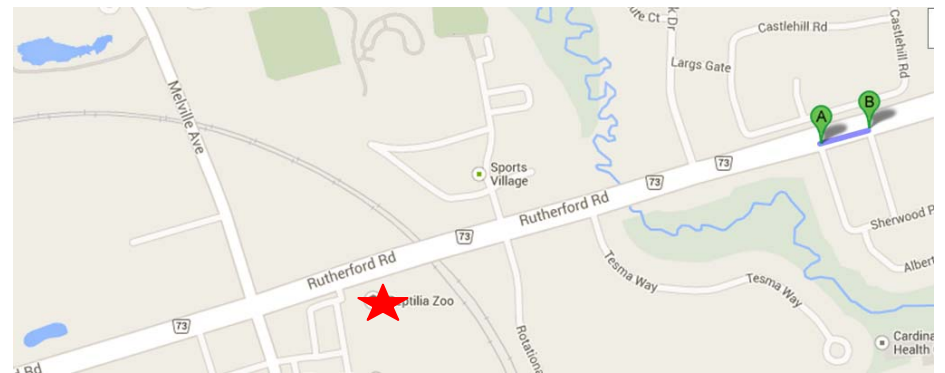


# Bocce & Recreation Centre

- ★ 2501 Rutherford Road, Unit 15
  - Traffic counts captures Rutherford Road between Sherwood Park Drive & Wedgewood Place
  - AADT (2012): 46,421 (eastbound & westbound)
  - Source: York Region

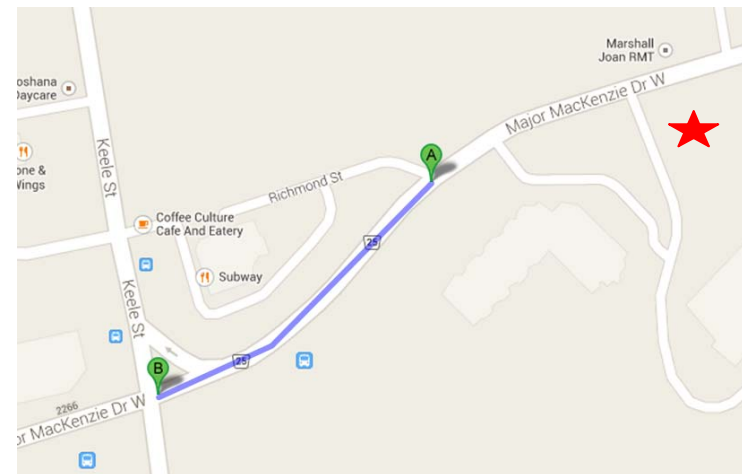


5



# City of Vaughan City Hall

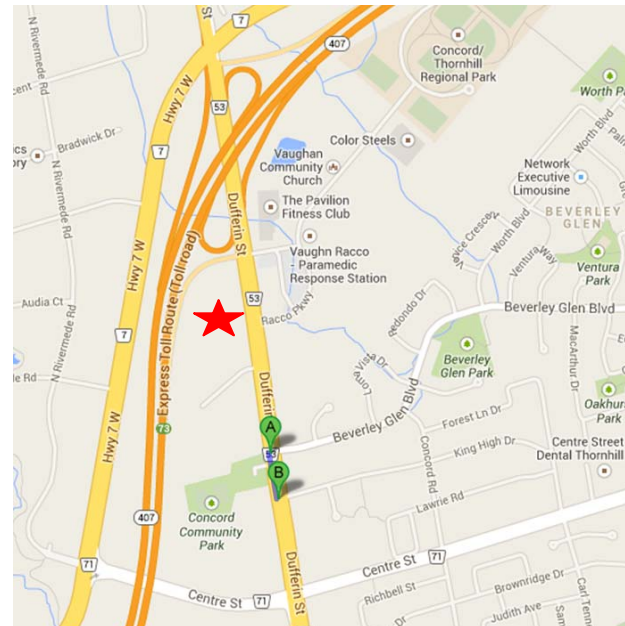
- ★ 2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
  - Traffic counts captures Major Mackenzie Drive between Keele Street & Richmond Street
  - AADT (2012): 30,933 (east bound & west bound)
  - Source: York Region



6

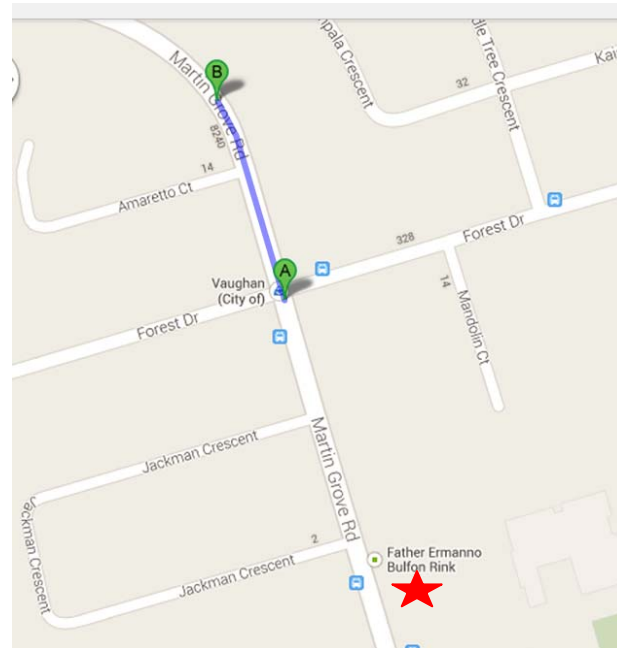
# City of Vaughan Public Works Yard

- ★ 8000 Dufferin Street
  - Traffic counts captures Dufferin Street between King High Drive & Beverly Glen Boulevard
  - AADT (2012): 36,441
  - Source: York Region



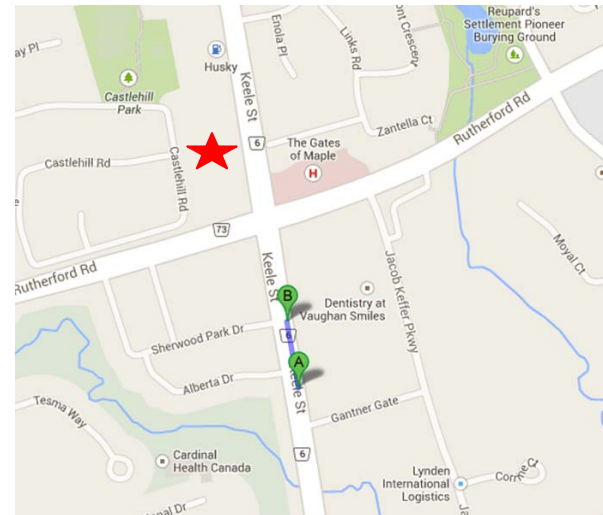
# Father Ermanno Bulfon Community Centre

- ★ 8141 Martin Grove Road
  - Traffic counts captures north of Forest Drive
  - AADT (2000): 6,690 (north bound & south bound)
  - Source: City of Vaughan, Engineering Services Department



# Fire Department Station 72

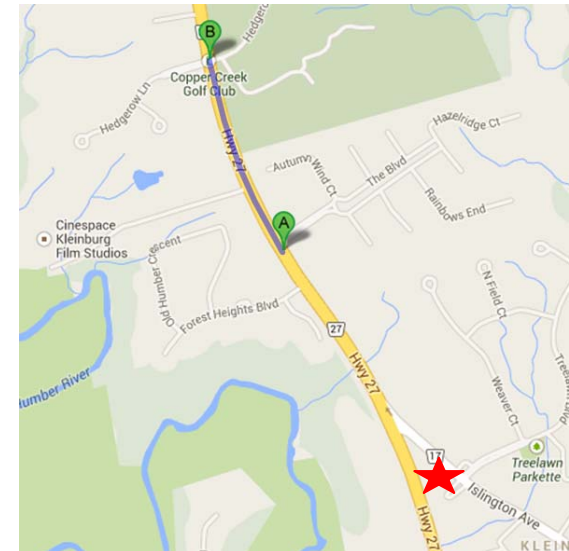
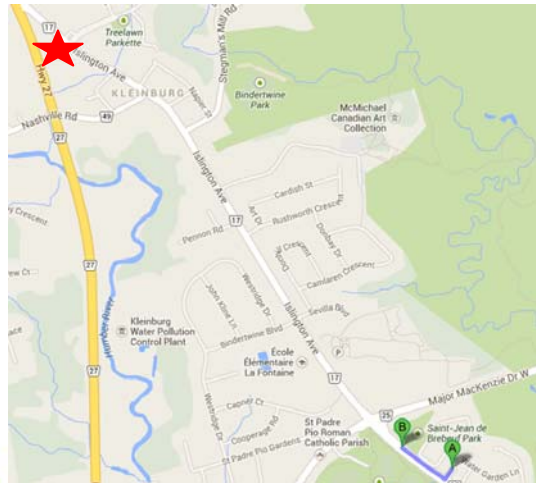
- ★ 9290 Keele Street
  - Traffic counts captures Keele Street between Alberta Drive & Sherwood Park Drive
  - AADT (2009): 24,408 (north bound & south bound)
  - Source: York Region





# Fire Department Station 74

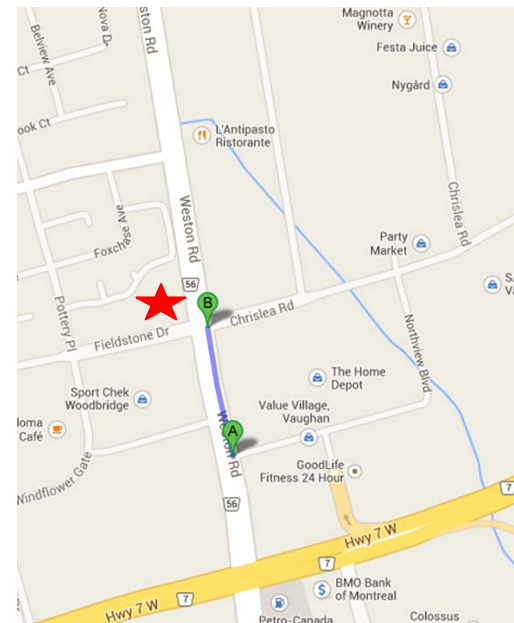
- ★ 10665 Islington Avenue
  - Traffic counts:
    - Islington Avenue between Spring Berry Gate and Major Mackenzie Drive: AADT(2009) of 12,978 (north bound & south bound)
    - Highway 27 between The Boulevard and Hedgerow Lane: AADT (2009) 12,952 (north bound & south bound)
  - Source: York Region





# Fire Department Station 75

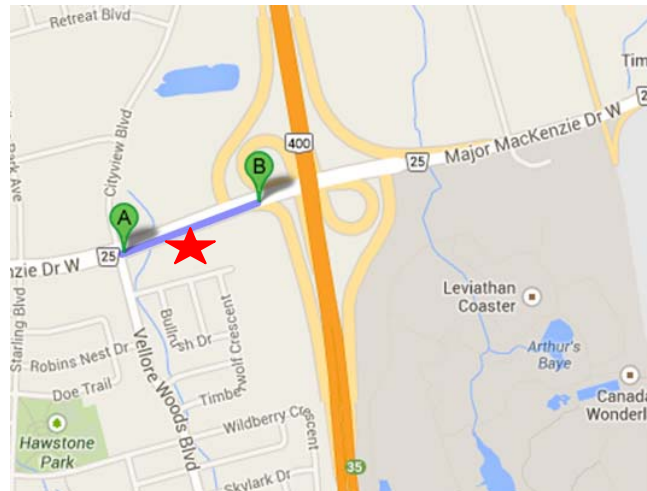
- ★ 2 Fieldstone Drive
  - Traffic counts captures Weston Road between Northview Boulevard & Fieldstone Drive/Chrislea Road
  - AADT (2012): 29,211 (east bound & west bound)
  - Source: York Region



11

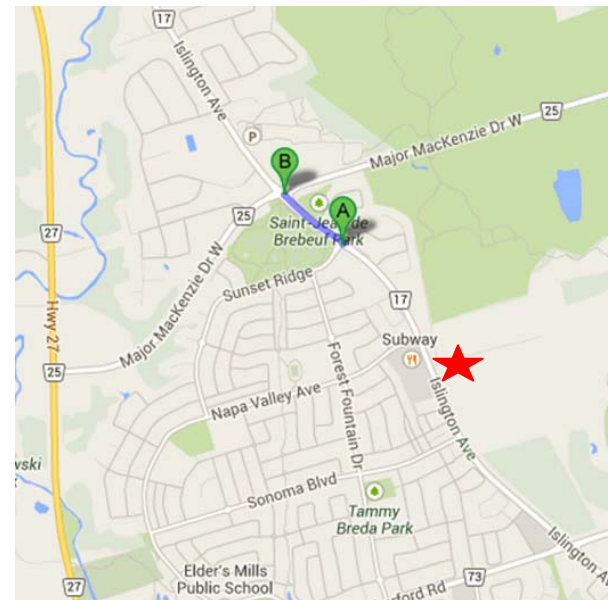
# Fire Department Station 77

- ★ 40 Eagleview Heights
  - Traffic counts captures Major Mackenzie Drive between Vellore Woods Boulevard/Cityview Boulevard & Exit 35 (Highway 400)
  - AADT (2012): 35,318 (east bound & west bound)
  - Source: York Region



# Fire Department Station 79

- ★ 9601 Islington Avenue
  - Traffic counts captures Islington Avenue between Spring Berry Gate/Sunset Ridge & Major Mackenzie Drive
  - AADT (2012): 12,978 (north bound & south bound)
  - Source: York Region



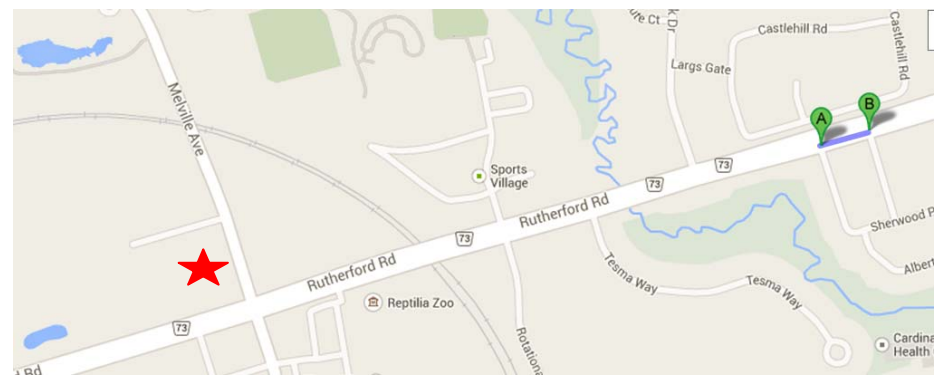
13

# Joint Operations Centre

- ★ 2800 Rutherford Road
  - Traffic counts captures Rutherford Road between Sherwood Park Drive & Wedgewood Place
  - AADT (2012): 46,421 (eastbound & westbound)
  - Source: York Region

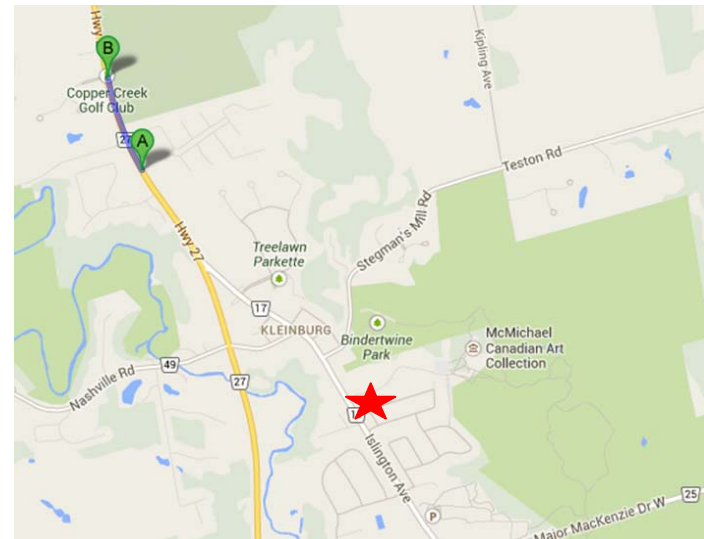


14



# Kleinburg Library

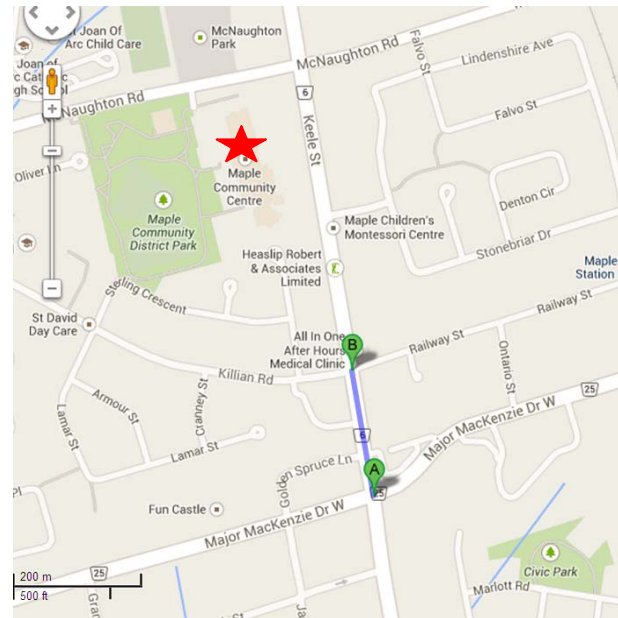
- ★ 10341 Islington Avenue
  - Traffic counts captures Highway 27 between The Boulevard and Hedgerow Lane
  - AADT (2009): 12,952 (north bound & south bound)
  - Source: York Region



15

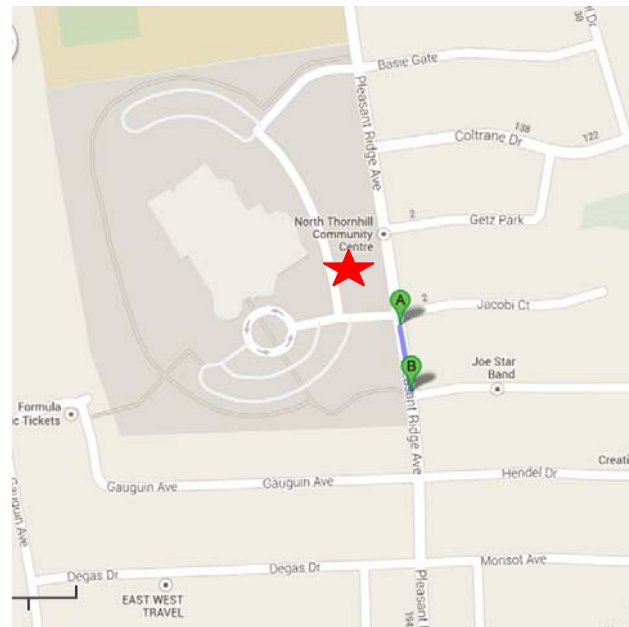
# Maple Community Centre & Maple Public Library

- ★ 10190 Keele Street
  - Traffic counts captures Keele Street between Major Mackenzie Drive and Railway Street/Killian Road
  - AADT (2012): 19,400 (north bound & south bound)
  - Source: York Region



# North Thornhill Community Centre

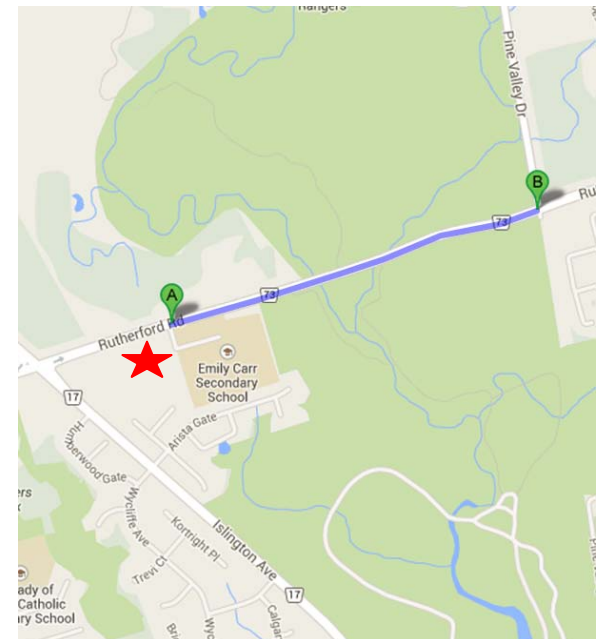
- ★ 300 Pleasant Ridge Avenue
  - Traffic counts captures 20 meters south of Jacobi Court.
  - AADT (2013): 6,100 (north bound & south bound)
  - Source: City of Vaughan, Engineering Services Department





# Pierre Berton Resource Library

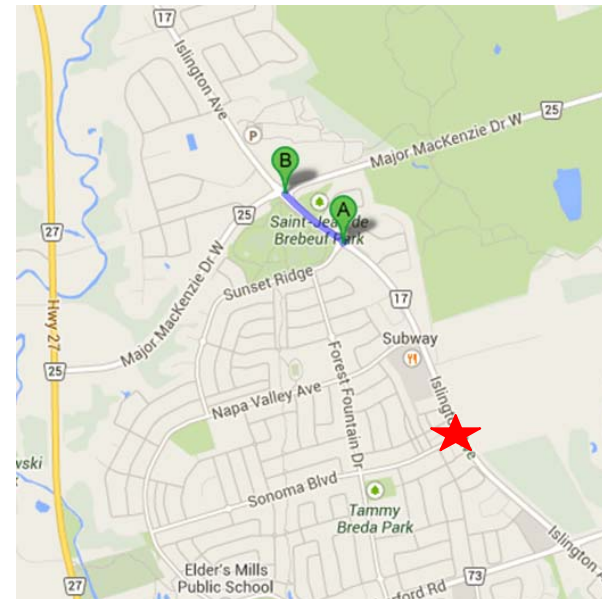
- ★ 4921 Rutherford Road
  - Traffic counts captures Rutherford Road between Emily Carr School & Pine Valley Drive
  - AADT (2009): 39,853 (east bound & west bound)
  - Source: York Region



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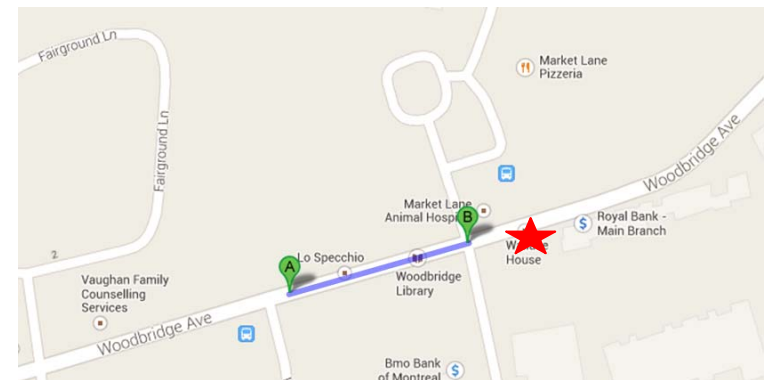
# Sonoma Social Club

- ★ 1 Sonoma Boulevard
  - Traffic counts captures Islington Avenue between Spring Berry Gate & Major Mackenzie Drive
  - AADT (2009): 12,978 (north bound & south bound)
  - Source: York Region



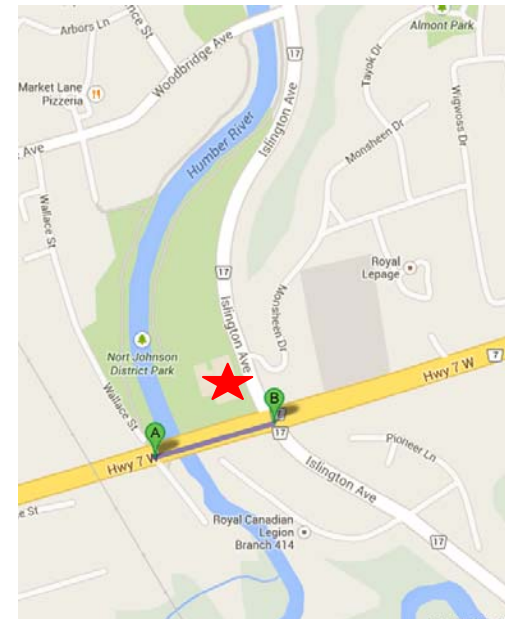
# The Historic Wallace House

- ★ 137 Woodbridge Avenue
  - Traffic counts captures Woodbridge Avenue 70 meters east of Market Lane
  - AADT (2011): 10,302 (east bound & west bound)
  - Source: City of Vaughan, Engineering Services Department



# Woodbridge Pool And Memorial Arena

- ★ 5020 Highway 7 W
  - Traffic counts captures Highway 7 between Wallace Street and Islington Avenue
  - AADT (2012): 54,224 (east bound & west bound)
  - Source: York Region

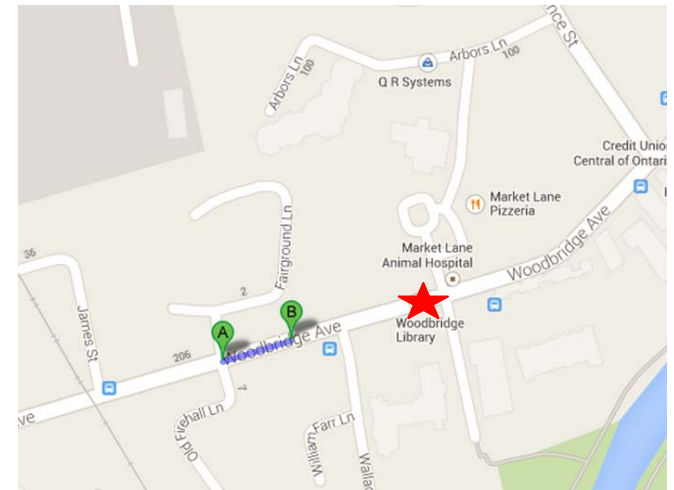


# Woodbridge Public Library

- ★ 150 Woodbridge Avenue
  - Traffic counts captures Woodbridge Avenue 10 meters west of Old Firehall Lane
  - AADT (2013): 10,855 (east bound & west bound)
  - Source: City of Vaughan, Engineering Services Department



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## Traffic counts unavailable for:

- Ansley Grove Library (350 Ansley Grove Rd)
- Chancellor Community Centre (350 Ansley Grove Rd)
- Bathurst Clark Resource Library (900 Clark Ave W)
- Dufferin Clark Community Centre & Dufferin Clark Public Library (1441 Clark Ave W)
- Fire Department 71 (835 Clark Ave W)
- Fire Department 73 (325 Woodbridge Ave)
- Fire Department 76 (120 McCleary Crt)
- Fire Department 78 (111 Racco Pky)
- Garnett A. Williams Community Centre (501 Clark Ave. W)
- Tigi Court (70 Tigi Court)
- Vellore Village Community Centre (1 Villa Royale Ave)

