

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT IN SMITHS FALLS, ONTARIO; A COMPARISON BETWEEN TWO SITES

Topic and Purpose

In 2007, the Mayor of Ottawa's Task Force on Transportation suggested adding a commuter rail line between Smiths Falls and Ottawa. While planning for commuter rail continues, VIA Rail is preparing to move its operations from a historic urban station to a new unstaffed suburban building to prevent passenger trains from obstructing freight trains entering Canadian Pacific Railway's regional rail yard. Does the existing or future train station have more potential to accommodate commuter transit-oriented development, as defined by the City of Ottawa's guidelines?

Study Area

The study area consists of two site areas that can be seen in the map on the next page. The first includes all land within a 600-metre radius of the current VIA Rail station located at 63 Victoria Avenue in Smiths Falls. Other important sites include a significant and associat

ed industrial land to the east occupy the rest of the site area.

The second site area includes all land within a 600-metre radius of the proposed
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one third of the site area. The other two thirds is situated in Montague Township and includes rural estate lots, occupied and vacant auto-oriented commercial, and agriculture. This site area's land use pattern and built form embody greater suburban characteristics than the current station's site area.

Evaluation

A combination of transit-oriented development guidelines from the City of Ottawa and Robert Cervero's *Developing Around Transit* were used to evaluate the potential for existing land uses and policies to accommodate transit-oriented development around a commuter rail station in Smiths Falls. The twenty-five guidelines were divided into six categories: land use, layout, built form, pedestrians and cyclists, vehicles and parking, and streetscape and environment. All categories were compared to existing land use conditions and relevant policies for within a 600-metre radius of the existing and future VIA Rail stations. A summary of the evaluation can be found in

Conclusion and Recommendations

The existing VIA station and associated site area is more suitable to accommodate a commuter rail station, transit-oriented development, and take advantage of transit-friendly municipal policies. This site area is located within a district with a land-use pattern, path network, historical precedent, and pedestrian infrastructure that facilitates mass transit use and future transit-oriented development. Smiths Falls' Official Plan and Zoning By-Law specifically recognize established urban areas as potentially successful locations for transit-oriented land use patterns. A sample of the forty recommendations for the superior site area can be found below, according to their term of implementation.

Short Term

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