



**Establishing A Vision:  
The Need for a Transportation Master Plan**

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## Background

Planning for the future requires vision – and without a well-defined plan that captures the spirit of the vision, there's a greater likelihood that the best thought plans will not be fully realized. As a Chamber, we approach the city as partners in developing and implementing a vision for a more prosperous, vibrant and cohesive city. In doing so, we are constantly seeking to understand planning policies, official planning documents, community vision reports, economic development plans, and the city's strategic direction. With a firm understanding of where the city is moving towards – the business community, and the community at large - will be able to fully participate in fulfilling the vision.

Recently, the Chamber reviewed planning documents for the city, and realized that the city did not have a **Transportation Master Plan**. As a result, the Chamber contacted other cities of similar size to St. Catharines and found that most have a transportation master plan. Similarly all cities within the Greater Golden Horseshoe with similar density targets have a transportation master plan. While the Chamber acknowledges the costs associated with conducting a master plan – the city is at a critical juncture with future growth opportunities. With the city's current review of its Official Plan and zoning by-laws, a transportation master plan is another process that needs to be undertaken to guide the city's planning moving forward.

The purpose of a transportation master plan is to develop policies and strategies for the city's transportation network over the next 30 years. This network includes roads, transit, cycling, walking facilities, public parking and the city's connections to rail, marine and aviation facilities.<sup>1</sup> It must also reflect current regional transportation planning around nodal and corridor transportation development. As St. Catharines is one of the key urban growth centres of Niagara, the plan must address the needs of workforce mobility, business cluster development and residential intensification objectives.

In addition, transportation planning must include environmentally sustainable models and approaches. As the Garden City – a moniker that has been used to describe St. Catharines since the 1800s - the city must work to re-establish itself as a progressive city that espouses green focused planning. Situated in the heart of Niagara's agricultural tender fruit and produce basket, and surrounded by an abundance of green energy production, St. Catharines must become a model for environmentally sensitive transportation development moving forward. It will not only be good for the environment, but it will act as a catalyst to attract businesses and people looking to live in communities that are environmentally sensitive.

Clearly, there is a need for a planning tool for transportation development in St. Catharines. The city cannot afford to continue to operate without planning documents that capture the vision of where St. Catharines is going in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If cities and regions are truly becoming "city states" as called by Richard Florida – areas with great economic impact and influence - the city must put in place the guiding documents that will position St. Catharines as an important contributor in the new emerging economic clusters. A transportation master plan will be a key roadmap for the city over the next 30 years.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.tc.gc.ca/programs/environment/urbantransportation/transitstudies/vision.htm#Elsewhere>

## **Recommendations:**

**The St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce urges the City of St. Catharines to:**

- 1. Undergo the process for the creation of a Transportation Master Plan that must include:**
  - a. A strong focus on environmentally sensitive transportation development including the adoption of environmentally friendly construction processes.
  - b. Continued enhancement of public transit routes as a means to move people efficiently throughout the city including connections with other communities in Niagara.
  - c. Identification of specific bike routes and multi-use pathways that move people throughout the city and better connect neighbourhoods.
  - d. Road improvements to reduce localized congestion and improve access to employment lands and new communities.
  - e. Identified transportation network constraints and opportunities based on future land use forecasts with reference to provincial and regional planning documents
  - f. Considerations for reducing dependence on single-occupant vehicles and promoting improved options for walking, cycling and transit, while maintaining and improving the efficiency of trips related to the movement of goods and servicing of employment areas.
  - g. An implementation plan with metrics and timelines and associated funding implications.