



October 4, 2023

Township of Muskoka Lakes
1 Bailey Street, P.O. Box 129
Port Carling, ON P0B 1J0

Attention: Mayor Peter Kelley and Members of Council

Dear Mayor Kelley and Members of Council:

**Re: MLA Comments on
Transportation Master Plan**

The Muskoka Lakes Association (the “MLA”) is writing to offer its comments on the Transportation Master Plan which was presented to the General and Finance Committee on August 16, 2023, and referred to the October regular Council meeting to incorporate any public feedback.

The MLA would like to thank the Township for commissioning such a comprehensive study resulting in this report. We were particularly pleased to see that R. J. Burnside and Associates have produced a report that is truly data-driven, having included both public consultation and extensive data collection to support their recommendations.

Overall, the MLA is generally supportive of the Transportation Master Plan and the sensible investments in infrastructure which it recommends for adoption. The plan contains a number of excellent initiatives which would be greatly beneficial to many residents of the Township, both seasonal and year-round. We are very supportive of the proposals for Transit and Bridge Improvements which will increase road safety and quality-of-life at relatively modest expense to the Township.

We are also strongly supportive of plans to provide parking facilities at existing lake access points which will improve access for the Township’s many water-access properties. We consider this a good first step towards addressing the growing gap between the number of water-access property residents and the availability of sufficient mainland parking and docking for access to these properties. Furthermore, we would encourage the Township to engage more fully with water-access property owners in regard to the need for expanded dockage facilities and mainland parking area services. In addition, lake travel needs (such as dockage) should be taken into account just as the pressure on road transportation has been considered in the Transportation Master Plan.

Where we do have concerns with the report, it is not due to the recommendations themselves so much as the projected cost of adopting them. The report recommends over \$63 million in new transportation investment over 15 years. The vast majority of this investment proposed in the plan would be for Active Transportation improvements; nearly \$45 million in the first 10 years following adoption. MLA recognizes the benefits of increasing active transportation opportunities to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and improving safety for cyclists. The bulk of this \$45 million appears to be associated with the proposal to

pave the shoulders of the roads which encompass Lakes Joseph, Rosseau, and Muskoka. While we find this particular proposal to be great in theory, we wonder whether it would be providing the Township with good value-for-dollars when viewed alongside the other proposals recommended in the report.

Whereas recommendations such as parking at lake access points and public transit improvements have the potential to be revenue generating – thereby reducing the overall cost of implementation to the Township – the paved shoulders may present challenges in terms of funding through revenue generation. We would also be curious to know whether every option had been considered to minimize the total cost of the project. For example, we anticipate that staff will receive direction to explore cost efficiencies by scheduling shoulder paving to coincide with existing plans to repave these roads under the Asset Management Plan. Ultimately, we wish to register our concern for how the Township plans to finance this \$45 million investment and would encourage councillors to consider the impact of such an investment on municipal taxes. We would deeply appreciate full transparency from the Township on the financial implications of adopting the plan as written.

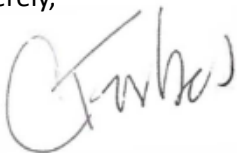
In conclusion, the MLA would strongly encourage Council to adopt a business plan approach to the Transportation Master Plan. The residents of the Township would be best served by prioritizing the most cost-effective proposals which will increase transportation safety, promote economic development, reduce GHG emissions, and improve overall quality-of-life within the Township. Moreover, the transportation needs of the Township will also need to be balanced with other areas of investment which the MLA views as priorities for the Township, including:

- By-law enforcement,
- Septic system inspection program,
- Building department inspections, and
- Planning, including environmental sustainability

It is important that these service areas have the necessary budget support to execute on their mandate. Our concern is that the full investment level recommended by the plan will impinge on the Township's ability provide the necessary investments in these areas without a significant impact on the municipal tax burden.

On behalf of the Muskoka Lakes Association, we would like to thank Council for this opportunity to provide our comments on the Transportation Master Plan.

Sincerely,



Cindy Forbes
Second Vice President, Muskoka Lakes Association

Cc: Ken Becking, Director of Public Works
Derrick Hammond, Chief Administrative Officer
David Pink, Director of Development Services and Environmental Sustainability