

Staff Report



To	General Committee
Subject	Barrie Regional Technology Development Site Opportunity
Date	June 11, 2025
Ward	All
From	S. Schlichter, Director of Economic and Creative Development
Executive Member Approval	B. Araniyasundaran, P. ENG., PMP, General Manager of Infrastructure and Growth Management
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer
Staff Report #	ECD005-25

Recommendation(s):

1. That the Economic and Creative Development Department be directed to pursue discussions with the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network and key stakeholders to pursue a Regional Technology Development Site (RTDS) that would serve Barrie.
 2. That staff in Economic and Creative Development report back to the Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee with findings, including financial and in-kind funding considerations.
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Executive Summary:

The purpose of this Report is to request direction from Council for Economic & Creative Development to pursue the opportunity of a Regional Technology Development Site to serve Barrie and/ or the greater Golden Horseshoe Region to strengthen our strategic relationship with the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN) and further support Barrie's automotive sector.

Key Findings:

The Regional Technology Development Sites (RTDS), run through the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN), support SMEs to develop, test and prototype their advanced automotive technologies and smart mobility solutions, and tap into specific advice, expertise and knowledge around key focus areas for the sector.

Opportunity exists to be a participant or lead an application to fill a gap in service in Central Ontario.

Financial Implications:

The adoption of a Regional Technology Development Site will have financial implications for the City's Economic & Creative Development Department, including both direct cash contributions and in-kind support through staff hours and access to Invest Barrie's network. At this stage, the total financial commitment required remains undetermined and will be contingent upon further discussions with OVIN and potential funding partners, as well as the role that the City of Barrie will play i.e., leading applicant vs partner applicant. Staff will need to continue to engage with stakeholders to clarify the scope and scale of the City's involvement, and a more detailed financial outline and suite of opportunities can be provided once these discussions have progressed.

Most RTDS' are funded primarily through the OVIN grant to operate the space, hire staff, run programming and purchase necessary equipment. Many municipalities come on board with staff hours and office space as in-kind contributions. Post-secondary institutions and local incubators and accelerators offer programming discounts to offset the cost for SMEs to participate. Industry contributions contribute to top-up funding and access to knowledge experts.

It is up to the discretion of the RTDS on if they choose to offer their programming at no cost or for a fee as another revenue stream.

Funding a regional technology development site will drive innovation, create high-skilled jobs, and strengthen the local economy by attracting tech talent and investment. It will also support the automotive sector by advancing smart mobility solutions, fostering partnerships between manufacturers and tech startups, and accelerating the development of next-generation vehicle technologies.

Alternatives:

The following alternative is available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1 – General Committee could choose not to allow Economic & Creative Development to pursue the opportunity to bring a Regional Technology Development Site service to Barrie and broader area. This alternative is not recommended as it would significantly hinder efforts to strengthen and diversify support for the automotive and advanced manufacturing sectors. This initiative represents a strategic opportunity to drive long-term economic impact, enhance the city's innovation ecosystem, and elevate its profile as a competitive destination for investment. Without it, the city risks falling behind peer municipalities in attracting talent, funding, and high-growth companies.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

Affordable Place to Live	X	• Open for business environment to help encourage job creation • Develop and attract talent to support our employers
Community Safety		
Thriving Community		• Create and foster programs and

	X	opportunities to support community wellness
Infrastructure Investments		
Responsible Governance		

Additional Background Information and Analysis:

The existing seven Regional Technology Development Sites (RTDS) are located in Waterloo, Ottawa, Hamilton, Durham, Windsor-Essex, Toronto and the newly added Northern RTDS that includes Greater Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Temiskaming Shores, Sault Ste. Marie and North Bay. Currently, each RTDS is run out of their local Regional Innovation Centre.

Each RTDS carries out the following activities:

- Enable physical sites across the regions that bring together post-secondary institutions, regional innovation centres, incubators/accelerators, municipal and regional resources, industry and other regional collaborators to support SMEs in the development, testing, prototyping, validation and commercialization of automotive technology and smart mobility solutions
- Provide access to specialized equipment, hardware and software that will reduce the barriers to innovation for start-ups and SMEs in the automotive and mobility sector, including those developing electric vehicle and battery-related technologies
- Provide business and/or technical advisory services to start-ups and SMEs to assist in the commercialization of technologies developed at the regional sites
- Support regional testing and piloting of technologies and solutions that will lead to adoption and deployment
- Each regional site focuses on a unique aspect of the automotive and smart mobility sector, such as hardware, security, data analytics and more.

The goal of a RTDS is to act as a concierge service to guide clients to the appropriate program or contact, while also building out a set of niche programming that the RTDS runs in house or in partnership with another entity.

Leading or partnering on a RTDS allows municipalities the following benefits:

- Grant funding to run programming or cover administrative costs associated with managing the RTDS
- Leads directly from OVIN for potential new companies or founders looking to explore Barrie as a landing spot
- Access to the RTDS network across the province to collaborate on a client's journey
- Monthly community meetups and events

Consultation and Engagement:

At this time, there is no public consultation required in relation to this report.

Environmental and Climate Change Impact Matters:

There are no environmental and/or climate change impact matters related to the recommendation.

Report Author:

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Pending #:

Not applicable