

The topic is transportation... Again

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Once again I am thinking about transportation and the pivotal role it plays in promoting healthy communities and a healthy environment. Promoting pedestrian friendly downtown cores that are easily accessible using mass transit, providing easy access to employment and volunteer opportunities for students and enabling seniors to get to medical appointments when a ride from family is not an option ? these are just some of the many benefits of accessible and affordable public transportation. Doing all of this while also reducing fossil fuel emissions thereby offering some small benefit to the climate change movement is an important and necessary added bonus. As I've said before, public transportation provides access. Access to whatever it is you need to engage in a healthy, active lifestyle with opportunities to live, work and play right here in our own community. Caledon took another important step forward recently with the launch of the Bolton Line, run by Voyago under contract to the Town. Given the feedback received the last time I wrote about transit, I see this launch as another great opportunity to talk about the many ways one can now move ?out and about? in Caledon. I expect only some of you will agree.

The Bolton Line will feature 27 stops running during prime commuting times in the morning and afternoon, from 6am ? 9am and 3pm ? 6:30pm. Covering many of the most popular stops, the transit line should enable young adults looking for an after school job easy access to the means of obtaining one. Employees looking for an alternate route to work now have one. The cost is affordable and it's time for transit in our Town. In his media release, Mayor Allan Thompson stated: ?This will give residents an environmentally-friendly and cost-effective option to connect them to jobs, education and community.? We couldn't agree more. The routes start on November 11th ? a fitting time that might just increase the possibility for at least a few folks to attend Remembrance Day Services. Find out more about how you can ride the bus with Voyago by checking out schedules and costs on the Town of Caledon's website.

There's also another way to get around Town and this one has been around for a while but perhaps you haven't heard of it or maybe, just maybe you didn't think you were eligible for a ride. How? With Caledon Community Services who also offer transportation and you need to know why that matters to you. CCS also believes transportation touches everything. Being able to move people around, for work, health-care, or for senior supports (like attending an event at the Seniors Centre) all play a role in poverty reduction. Helping youth grow in to responsible healthy young adults through programs like Life for Youth means offering transportation to those programs. Assisting a young adult with obtaining their required volunteer hours contributes to diploma attainment, with the added bonus of using Caledon Community Services is parents and guardians know a safe, bonded driver is navigating the route. Parents with children over the age of 8 (therefore not requiring a car seat) can also utilize the services for appointments, grocery shopping and more. Carrying more than just seniors, at the moment, CCS is the largest provider of transportation services in Town using 12 accessible busses and providing rides to over 40,000 customers each year. The good news is these rides and services will continue to be offered as long as a combination of Provincial, Municipal, and Regional funding dollars from various sources exist and where fundraising dollars are also able to augment and support it. Find out more about how you can ride the bus, 7 days a week, with CCS by contacting them today.

Finally, there is Brampton Transit. The one area where the idea of transit seems to be causing the most concern is in the Mayfield West area of Caledon, in Southfields. Through extensive community consultation, the Town heard that the need for transportation was pressing. In fact, anyone who has ever driven by the area of Mayfield Rd. and Kennedy could certainly attest to that fact simply by viewing the evidence: large numbers of bicycles parked in racks indicating the sheer volume of folks who had ridden down to the corner in order to hitch a ride with Brampton Transit. Moving these residents around to school, work and recreational activities is a priority ? particularly, as I cheekily noted in my last article, because not everyone has a lovely, new Lexus to drive around in. With rush hour routes now servicing the community, some are complaining the busses are empty but give it time. Like any new program it will take time to work out the kinks, for folks to get familiar with the schedules and to begin regular use. I'm sure the same will also happen in Bolton and that perhaps even CCS will see an increase now that more people have had the opportunity to learn who is eligible for a ride!

Yup ? you might see an empty bus here and there around Town but don't worry ? ?if you build it they will come.? We know public transportation is needed here and while Caledon poses unique challenges geographically, our municipal leaders and social service providers are rising to the challenge. Even MPP Sylvia Jones did her part not long back, helping to advocate for continued GO service to Bolton. Together, we are building a public transportation system that will facilitate employment opportunities, a chance for students and seniors to work or volunteer (students can now easily find ways to get their 40 hours) and that provides access to getting your weekly groceries, accessing The Exchange, getting to the Doctor or even to a fitness class. Yup ? it's like I said, public transportation provides access. It's about time we all got on the bus.