

Delegation calls on Council to lobby Metrolinx for improved GO service

Special to the Citizen

Caledon Council's Tuesday night meeting was primarily dominated by two issues, GO Transit plans and traffic concerns in the Town.

The first, was addressed by delegation of concerned riders who depend upon GO Transit and Metrolinx to get to and from Toronto and the GTA for work. They, in addition, were representing the concerns of other riders who use the service to GO to school, or as their only available source of mobility.

As everyone knows, Metrolinx had announced that they were going to cancel all GO service to and from Bolton effective as of June 29, however, due to the efforts of Mayor Allan Thompson, the rest of Council, MPP Sylvia Jones and members of the public, this deadline was extended into December.

Nevertheless, the 38A line into Bolton was suspended, leaving residents with only the 38 line for service.

Lorraine Marchione and Mike Brunetto led the delegation and outlined the many problems with the current situation, over and above the prospect of having no service at all.

The biggest being the fact that the bus schedules do not coincide with regular business hours and schedules. There are currently four buses running daily, two in the morning and two in the evening. Missing a bus results in missing the train and being late for work, or returning home far too late for most people.

Although the morning buses do work, provided they are not delayed and provided you make your connections, the afternoon buses are not acceptably scheduled. The first afternoon bus schedule would require riders to leave work by 3:00 o'clock, in order to catch the bus. For most people, who would start at 8:00 a.m. or even 9:00 a.m., this is simply an impossibility, leaving only the second bus as an option. The latter, brings them home as late as after 7:00 p.m..

For people with a young family, this is unacceptable and even for those with an older one or no family, it is extremely inconvenient. It interrupts meal times and makes getting to extra curricular activities difficult to impossible. In this day and age of hockey, baseball, soccer and dance, to name just a few endeavours, the after school hours are as busy as the school day. For the single or childless person, it means a late night if you have any plans for a nice meal out, or a theatre or movie outing.

Lorraine explained that if there are any delays, commuters can miss their train by literally seconds and once the train doors are closed they can not be reopened, save for a grave emergency.

Although it is possible to use the morning buses effectively, the same is not true of the evening commute home. In surveys conducted, 73.7 percent of riders said they had no alternative option to Metrolinx and of the 42.5 percent who might, they said it was neither possible nor practical.

The presentation went on to highlight how the loss of transit would affect others in the community and subsequently the community as a whole. Should a resident not be able to commute, the obvious solution would be to move, thus impacting the growth potential of Caledon as a whole and the viability of local businesses, faced with a loss of customers.

Those seniors and others who depend on the Metrolinx system to travel to appointments or to shop, would no longer have that ability and owning an automobile would not necessarily be an option. In turn, this would put a heightened strain on other services, which supply rides to seniors and others.

In addition to that, people on fixed incomes would be hard pressed or unable to afford taxi services or other forms of paid mobility. It is essential for the community to have a viable transit system in order for it to grow and prosper. In point of fact, Lorraine pointed out, transit is an established right under the Ontario Human Rights Code!

Of even greater concern, as Caledon is currently experiencing notable problems in this area, is the potential increase in automobile traffic, road gridlock and increase traffic congestion on the already overloaded Highways 10 and 50. All roads lead to Toronto and the best will be the most travelled. Transit is and needs to be designated as an essential service according to the delegation.

The basic reason for the Metrolinx decision, seems to be the dwindling ridership. However, as the delegation pointed out the ridership is being adversely affected by the poor scheduling of the buses, an apparent Catch 22. You can't have empty buses but they won't fill up if you can't get where you are going when you need to be there.

The issue is urgent and the delegates urged the Mayor and Council to continue to press harder for a solution from the Province. Despite it being a Provincial, matter, the residents and riders are expecting their government to push their cause through negotiations with their MPP Sylvia Jones, and through intergovernmental channels. Concerns were expressed over what the long term plan was for the Town and whether or not there are any foreseeable local transit options available? The latter does not appear to be the case. Bolton transit is a local service and is not allowed to cross jurisdictional boundaries.

In answer to a question from Coun. Annette Groves, Fuwing Wong stated that, although it will be travelling south of Mayfield Road into Brampton, the service will only go as far as Hwy. 7 and cannot connect to the Malton go Station, which is what would be required.

The Mayor asked what might be workable in the short term, to which Lorraine replied that the morning buses were workable, if you made your connections, but the evenings were unworkable and the scheduling was impossible. If you were too miss one train or one bus, you were out of luck getting where you were going.

What the delegation wants is basically two things, they want the deadline for service cancellation to be extended for one year and they want a second bus added to the evening schedule. This would temporarily alleviate the situation and allow time to grow the ridership and formulate a planned response to the Metrolinx arguments. For anyone interested in following the ongoing discussions and keeping informed, the riders have a Facebook page entitled Move Bolton.

Speeding becoming a problem

The other hot topic of Council was the ongoing and growing problem of speeding and traffic accidents in Caledon and especially on the major arterial roads such as Airport Road, Hwy.10 and Hwy.50.

Two horrific crashes recently, on Hwy. 10 were brought up to highlight the urgency and severity of the issue. Coun. Nick De Boer and Coun. Ian Sinclair noted that Caledon Village should be registered as a Community Safety Zone, under the Highway Traffic Act. Coun. Groves added that there are various programs underway in other municipalities to address these same problems. She noted that some CSZ's employ photo radar and red light cameras to help with the issue.

Coun. Sinclair had mentioned the OPP Hot Spot designation could be appropriate for enhanced enforcement, but Coun. Jennifer Innis noted that particular program is based on fatalities in an area, not simply accidents, or property damage. Coun. Sinclair suggested that Council get the speed averages through Caledon Village, from the OPP in order to get a better idea as to what to do. The mayor added that the new OPP Inspector was coming to council to outline their thoughts and the use of more community resources, such as Neighbourhood Watch organizations to help. As changes to speed limits and other such matters are a provincial matter on Provincial roads, this will need to be an intergovernmental discussion and solution.