

Editorial ? A challenge for two councils?

A recent Toronto Star story predicted that GO Transit will soon announce plans for a major improvement in its train service between Brampton and Toronto.

The story, by transportation writer Tess Kalinowski, said unnamed sources have disclosed that service between the Mount Pleasant station in west Brampton and Union Station, which currently consists merely of a few rush-hour trains eastbound in the morning and westbound in the afternoon, will be boosted to hourly service in both directions in off-peak hours.

The significant improvement, bringing service to the same level found on GO's Lakeshore line, is expected to be announced later this month and become a major element of a government commitment for GO Transit that includes electrifying the existing commuter services. In April, Premier Kathleen Wynne said GO plans to increase its service 50 per cent over the next few years, from about 1,500 trips per week currently to 2,200 weekly.

Welcome as such developments must be to residents of Brampton and those close to the Bramalea, Malton, Etobicoke North and Weston stations, they by themselves will only exacerbate the contrast between services available in south Peel and farther north. Currently, the only GO services into both Caledon and Dufferin are a few rush-hour buses that connect with only some of the morning and evening trains, and while both Orangeville and Bolton have rail services, all we have learned to date is that at some point in the far-off future there may be GO train service to Bolton.

We think the time has come for our local politicians to consider making a joint approach to GO Transit or Metrolinx, ideally including Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones, to make the point that this area should share in the planned service improvements. If indeed there is to be hourly GO train service between Brampton and Toronto, it surely would make sense to have bus shuttles between those trains and both Bolton and Orangeville.

In the case of Bolton, a single bus could easily make the trip to GO's Malton station and back within 60 minutes. As for Orangeville, one bus would take more than an hour for a round trip but would at least be able to connect with every other GO train at the Brampton depot.

As for potential GO train service, the two rail lines through Caledon present different problems.

The CP Rail line through Bolton currently carries high volumes of freight, and most of it is single-track. Accordingly, the most that could be hoped for initially would be one or two trains morning and evening until such time as the CP line is double-tracked between Bolton and Weston.

No such problem exists for the former CP line between Orangeville and Brampton, which currently has only a few freight trains and perhaps one or two Credit Valley Explorer tour trains a week.

However, the trains currently are held to a maximum speed of 30 miles an hour, and upgrades of the rails and roadbeds would be needed to permit the speeds found on the line of up to 70 m.p.h. when CP Dayliners ran between Owen Sound and Toronto in just three hours.

Were an Orangeville/Caledon delegation to approach Metrolinx, they might also inquire as to the agency's long-term equipment plans.

For reasons we've never seen explained, all GO Transit trains are the double-decker variety, with each of up to 12 coaches being capable of carrying about 200 passengers.

This clearly is needed during rush hours, but far more than what is required for off-peak hours or for new services to places like Orangeville, Alliston and Peterborough, not to mention for the Smart Track service Toronto Mayor John Tory is proposing for the Toronto-area GO lines.

As we see it, an ideal conveyance for low-demand periods on GO lines would be a self-powered, natural gas/electric hybrid similar to Toronto's new low-slung streetcars or perhaps the type of vehicles now being used for the UP Express service between Union Station and Pearson Airport.