

GO?Station option not being embraced as expansion area

By Bill Rea

Consultants have come up with their suggestion of where the Bolton community should expand, and they've started hearing the reaction; a lot of it negative.

Bolton has to grow by 190 hectares, with the expansion being part of the Town's compliance with the Province's growth plan. The growth expected in Caledon is going to be aimed mainly at Caledon East, Mayfield West and Bolton, meaning the extra land in Bolton needs to be set aside.

Six options have been examined for some months as to where this expansion area could go, and Nick McDonald of Meridian Planning last week said the recommended area is on Humber Station Road, between the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks and The Gore Road, north of King Street.

He outlined that last week at a workshop for Town councillors, and again last Thursday at a public session in Bolton.

McDonald explained that in addition to the six option sites, there were some rounding out areas considered.

The six sites were considered through to 13 different criteria, which were weighted according to importance. Although the results he presented were close, the recommended option, also known as 'Go Station Focus,' was ahead. The two options closest to it were both centred on the village's north hill.

McDonald reported that in percentage terms, the scores were tight, with the suggested option getting 57 per cent, and the two north hill locations getting 52 and 51 per cent respectively.

The other three options are farther to the south, bordering industrial and employment lands. Their scores ranged from 33 to 49 per cent. McDonald said they scored lower because of their location in relation to existing, planned and potential employment areas. As well, he said the potential for integrating these lands with the existing built-up area of Bolton is less, and there's less chance of optimizing existing infrastructure (with the exception of sewer and water).

He added the GO Station option offered slightly less complexity and servicing costs than the two on the north hill, also pointing to the fact that it supports the eventual establishment of a GO?train station.

Addressing specific criteria, McDonald cited one of them as looking to reduce land-use conflicts between the expansion area and adjacent prime agricultural lands. The suggested option, as well as the three to the south, all scored high, while the two on the north hill were graded zero. He told the public meeting those lands border on the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Greenbelt.

Another criteria addressed whether new development in the expansion area would optimize the use of existing and planned major roads. The GO Station option tied for first with one of the options to the south because of their proximity to the Bolton Arterial Road (BAR).

He also said supporting the establishment of GO?Rail service was an important consideration. That was one of the highest ranked criteria, and the suggested option was far ahead. He added that even if the GO station issue wasn't weighted as heavily, the GO option would still be ahead.

Opposition to the proposal came from both members of the public and council.

Councillor Richard Whitehead, in a prepared statement, said there is no commitment from the Province to commit to funding for GO?any time soon.

'It seems likely that we won't see this service provided for about 20 to 25 years,' he observed, adding clustering some 10,000 people in an area is not going to change the direction of the initiative. 'It is also pointless to build a community and a density on the premise of an infrastructure that won't be available for at least another decade after a major construction and occupancy.'

He also had problems with the weighting of some of the criteria.

Councillor Richard Paterak also had reservations about GO getting so much weight, pointing out the train service is not going to be around for years.

'GO?is a moving target,' he said. 'It's moved itself back.'

He added GO?might put more of a priority on express buses in the area, especially in light of the Toronto subway extending into Vaughan.

McDonald countered it should be weighted highly because it's been identified in all policy documents.

Councillor Patti Foley commented that the two north hill options might have been rated too highly, since people there will still be travelling south to do their shopping

Several people at the public session had issues with the way the criteria were weighted.

'I'm not really confident we've come up with a clear answer,' one man commented.

McDonald observed that the other five options will likely come up for consideration when further growth is considered in years to come.

Another man pointed to the proximity of the GTA?West corridor, as well as the proposed massive Canadian Tire depot in the village's industrial area. He suggested the north hill options would be more assured of clean air.

One woman was concerned about the possible location of a new fire hall in Bolton, pointing out the GO?Station option would be on the other side of the train tracks from the rest of the village. She wondered about emergency vehicles getting across the tracks.