

Peel Region seeking input on its transportation plan

By Bill Rea

Aggressive driving appears to be a major concern among Caledon residents when it comes to transportation issues.

That was one thing that was indicated recently as Peel Region hosted the first in a series of public information centres (PIC) on long-range transportation planning. The session was at Caledon Community Complex in Caledon East.

Lindsay Edwards, a principal planner with the Region, said about 25 people signed in at the PIC, and they were all asked to indicate on a list of transportation-related concerns which ones were important to them. Aggressive driving was well out in front on the list, but speeding and trucks drew some attention, as did pedestrians.

Edwards said they have been trying to get input from the public on the greatest concerns so a plan could be put together to address them.

Other CIPs were to be held in both Brampton and Mississauga, and Edwards said transportation plans will be tailored to each of the three municipalities. She added six or seven of these concerns will be primary focuses in coming up with a plan, with the concerns raised by the public being part of that process. The Region will also be hearing from the three municipalities, as well as other stakeholders like the school boards and police.

The Region is working on a 25-year plan to last until 2041, and the idea is to incorporate it into the Regional Official Plan.

According to material presented at the PIC, the aim is to make travelling in Peel easier, faster, greener, safer and healthier. This would be achieved through making the best use of existing infrastructure while making strategic investments in new infrastructure.

The themes of the study are to promote sustainable modes of transportation; attract businesses and people to Peel; implement strategies to manage traffic demand; and harmonize car and truck traffic in Peel.

The Region is planning for transportation solutions that are less harmful to the environment, as well as healthy and age-friendly, and that allow for better movement of goods to help business. They are also trying to manage coming growth well by looking to reduce congestion.

According to information at the PIC, a sustainable transportation strategy will help build a system that is safe, efficient and healthy. It's estimated that Peel's population will grow by almost 40 per cent by 2041. The current roads can't handle that load, and it's not going to be possible to simply widen existing ones.

If more people use sustainable transportation alternatives, it would result in benefits in terms of public health and safety, lifestyle choices, sustainable communities and economic prosperity.

The information at the PIC stated that 34 per cent of the peak-period trips in Peel make use of sustainable transportation, such as walking, cycling, transit, car pooling, etc. The strategy the Region is working on aims to increase that figure to 50 per cent by 2041. Some issues that are being looked into include dealing with missing sidewalks to facilitate walking, making road crossings safer, building separate bike lanes, better marketing of the benefits of using transit, improving connections to transit, flexible work options, building more car-pool lots, etc.

More PICs are planned for April.