

Transit options presented to Caledon Council

Written By JOSHUA SANTOS

An update of a transit feasibility study report showed five transit options that may be prioritized in Caledon.

Eric Chan, transportation engineering manager for the Town of Caledon provided an in-depth analysis to council on their recent work at a planning and development meeting at council chambers.

"The topic of transit is new to us," said Chan. "It's planning, operation and implications to finance is related to tourism, economy, to the land development and with our diverse society. All of this are beyond just the buses on the road."

He said there will be three rounds of public consultation in March. They are scheduled for Thursday, March 7 in Caledon East at the Caledon East Community Complex from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Monday March 18 in Mayfield West at a storefront in Southfields from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. and on Wednesday, March 27 in Bolton at the Albion Bolton Community Centre, meeting room C from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. They will use public comments and bring another report to council.

About \$320,000 was designated in the 2019 budget to implement Phase 1 of a transit system beginning in the first half of 2019. This is subject to council's approval in spring.

"On the ongoing phases, every year, staff will report to council on this phase in implementation plan and make sure every year we have the opportunity to make adjustments to the pacing of this implementation and whether, what or where to extend this transit service," said Chan.

When Chan and his staff launched the program, his team conducted initial surveys to hear feedback from residents. In a census and transit transportation survey, residents will make a lot of their trips to stay in Caledon and that most people work outside of Caledon.

In their telephone survey, they found 99 per cent of Caledon households have a car, one in five respondents are likely to use transit within Caledon and outside and 62 per cent of residents would support a \$20 to \$40 household increase in property taxes to fund transit.

In his presentation he discussed three methods of transit, a fixed route, flexible route and demand response.

A fixed route is a conventional transit system where there are bus stops around the community and a centralized hub.

"This is the type of transit that is most efficient when there are high densities at both ends of the bus stops as well as along the corridor," said Chan. "The trip pattern, if it is predictable, and consistent, is the most efficient. A trip pattern like that is usually associated with going to school and going to work."

A flexible route services a combination of flexible routing and scheduling. It is similar to a fixed route, where there's stops placed around town but it allows for change throughout the trip. Passengers can call for special stops, routing and scheduling. Chan said this is best suited for a lower density area or during peak periods.

A third option is a demand response system. This type of service has no fixed alignment and scheduling.

"It's very similar to Uber, Lyft or Caledon Community Services. Each appointment is unique, but if scheduling and location allow, multiple appointments can be grouped together to find some efficiencies," said Chan.

His team looked at potential community local bus services, for buses only in Caledon East, Bolton and Mayfield West,

inter-community connectors allowing passengers to catch a ride to Mayfield West, Caledon East and Bolton and external connectors enabling riders to use transit to go to Brampton, Vaughan, King Township and Orangeville.

They also looked at village to rural, connecting riders, for example, from Caledon East to Inglewood or Bolton to Sand Hill, rural to rural allowing passengers to, for example, connect to Cheltenham to Terra Cota and hamlet to hamlet connections.

‘Each option has already gone for a pre-screening process such as connecting the origin and destination with other transit hubs, maximizing the coverage to the critical mass, maximizing the number of purpose of trips that these routes can serve and maximizing the supports to the town's initiatives,’ said Chan.

Following this, his staff provided 26 potential options for transit service in Caledon, that may be able to connect with Brampton Transit, Peel Region TransHelp, Metrolinx's Go Buses and Caledon Community Services.

‘We have started discussions with some of the key transit providers to ensure these lines are pragmatic meaning we can actually go ahead and do it and something that is integrable to the existing transit services,’ said Chan. ‘These 26 options are then objectively evaluated against a comprehensive multifaceted assessment process.’

His team developed six categories for their assessment. Financial responsibility considered capital cost, total operating cost and operating cost per passenger and integration with land use looked at current population served, future population trends and quality of pedestrians accessed. Support for healthy living communities took into account a number of activity centres – such as healthcare, leisure amenities, government services, schools, tourist's attractions and recreation centres among others centres, inclusiveness and ridership that look into forecast ridership, economic vitality that considered jobs served by route and post-secondary education access and customer service considered quantitative assessment of directness of route and transfer requirements for likely users.

Four of the five high priority transit options are fixed routes. One is a route in Mayfield West that travels along Kennedy Road then to Mayfield Road and south on Highway 10 to a larger network.

A second and third line revolve in the Bolton area. They will connect passengers to Highway 50 to King Street to the westside of Bolton and then to Brampton and a fourth line connects riders to Bolton and to Mayfield West.

A fifth line is a proposed demand route where passengers are able to receive rides, to a destination of their choosing, by making appointments to be picked up at a specific designated time. This is available upon request.

‘The overall transit strategy is more than simply putting buses on the road,’ said Chan. ‘There are other things that we need to do to complement transit.’

He said they need to find ways to lessen the financial burden of operating transit, make areas transit friendly and less car centric, make sure transit is accessible for all ages and all abilities and find ways for residents to easily connect with business and enjoy the freedom of mobility among other points.

He said Caledon's population is projected to double in the next two decades and the town has one of the highest proportions of an aging population. He said the Town needs to implement transit to prepare for the future.

‘We need to find ways for residents to enjoy the freedom of mobility where they can go to college or university without the need of a car, where they can find their first job without the need of a car, where they can go to a rec centre without the need of a car and they can age in place, without the need of a car,’ said Chan.

Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson suggested a monorail system, referencing Walt Disney World's railway program.

‘If you look at the small monorail system Disney has, on average they move half a million people every day,’ said Thompson. ‘It's

cheap, can run over buildings, and you don't need real estate.?

Ward 3 and 4 area coun. Nick deBoer wondered if a tax subsidy would come anywhere close to covering the cost of operating transit and if the Town can state how much the service will cost to residents.

?I know Orangeville transit is a very expensive service to provide. Has there been any thought about an actual number?? asked DeBoer

Fuwing Wong, general manager of finance and infrastructure service for the Town of Caledon said council would need to decide what service to launch, and how quickly, to show an actual number. Actual costs estimates cannot be provided in proposals.

DeBoer said all the residents will want transit but they won't know how much it's going to actually cost.

?If the cost is going to be \$50 per household, then all of a sudden everybody is going to stop and take another look and say yes, transit is nice, but is that something we want at \$50 per household knowing if we're going to need to add that every year, knowing that we're already deficient in funding roads,? said deBoer. ?Knowing what the true cost is going to be, I think is an important piece that residents need to have to have whether you can ballpark it.?

Ward 2 area coun. Christina Early said they have to allocate the right fee for residents as they have to pay a portion of an expensive transit service.

?Maybe it is in Caledon because of our geography, maybe there's a couple of models they need to look at whether it be Uber,