

Infrastructure not keeping up with times: reader

Metrolinx (GO Transit) continues to expand rail capacity on the Barrie line through Aurora which is mostly positive news. However, the town's infrastructure is not keeping up with the times. This is an unfortunate situation.

One would hope that more planning and consideration would have been given to eliminating the level crossing in our town. So, it is good that Aurora Town Council will be asking tough questions about rail expansion this week (as noted in the March 23 edition of The Auroran).

Presently, vehicular traffic on Wellington Street is paralyzed throughout the day, seven days per week. It's not dozens of cars, but hundreds of idling vehicles that can be affected when the level crossings are closed. The future situation is that the rail line will be doubled and construction of pedestrian underpasses added to the train station.

I recognize that Metrolinx would likely say that their approach to increasing rail traffic has been 'incremental'. That is true. A few short years ago the Aurora train station went through a major facelift with better bus bays added and an update to the main platform. Now, fresh on the heels of these changes, more changes. The problem here is that tax payers have to pay for every one of these changes. So, incremental change is not always the answer and having multiple levels of government does not always help.

I believe our town should be pursuing with Metrolinx a solution that involves separating the rails from the roads. As our population grows, as the roads get busier does it make sense to retain these level crossings? At what point should level crossing be phased out for good? By looking south of Aurora the situation becomes more clear. Level crossings have been eliminated by the construction of under and overpasses. In Richmond Hill, the level crossing on Major Mackenzie Drive is long gone. In Aurora we have one rail bridge at Yonge Street.

Our town should be as proactive as possible with regards to changes that Metrolinx has planned. Pursuing a path that involves slow, gradual change may seem reasonable at first glance. However, we have a good opportunity now to avoid years of troubles. Half measures in this case will not do because we will be paying full tax dollars to temporarily solve the problems caused by the increased rail traffic. In other words, it would be better to persevere the end state now rather than many costly work-arounds. Town Council needs to be bold and pragmatic with Metrolinx and let them know that Aurora is not going to get 'railroaded'.

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