

Existing parking isn't cutting it at GO station: Council

By Brock Weir

While Council continues to grapple with the perennial issue of on-street parking in Aurora's Downtown Core, for many members of Council it is time to take the concerns to the next level ? the Province of Ontario and GO Transit.

These concerns were tackled by local lawmakers at last week's General Committee meeting during a discussion of new parking measures in the area set to be ratified at this week's Council meeting.

During the discussions, Mayor Geoff Dawe pointed out that if parking by GO Commuters is going to be enforced more strictly that, although welcome, would likely mean they would be looking to park on other streets.

These were issues Mayor Dawe said he planned to take to the Steven Del Duca, Ontario's Minister of Transportation, last week but conceded there are ?many moving parts? that need to be looked at.

?The reality is GO is a victim of their own success,? he said. ?That is not the only issue. The 15 minute RER (Regional Express Rail) is going to create huge pressures on parking and GO is aware of that. They are working through that as they go through the process.

?Parking is a major issue. Part of me says you have to make it more painful for people to drive their cars to get them out. That is a reality. We have to look at ways to encourage people to take a bus.?

Currently, York Region Transit is subsidized by taxpayers up to 60 per cent, or by \$120 million, he noted, with cost recovery from the fare box clocking in at just less than 40 per cent.

?One of the things that is being kicked around is to charge for parking at the GO station,? said Mayor Dawe. ?It's an interesting comment, but the ramifications are that people will look for someplace else to park that doesn't cost.?

From the perspective of Councillor John Abel, parking restrictions are simply going to create another problem. A shortage of parking at the GO Station is a given. When this first became a problem, only a handful or two of cars would flow down to the Town Park area, but ?now they have to go to Town Park because there is nowhere else to park.?

?I got a call from a mother who has to drop her children off at school and has to take the 8 a.m. train and is just beside herself [as she] can only park at Town Park,? said Councillor Abel. ?This is going to impact her when we do this and, I think others. If we can solve [the GO parking problem] we should be able to affect the Town Park. It just seems unfair to me that we are going to compound a problem for people taking the later trains by now telling them they can't park there. If they can't park there, they are going to have to park somewhere else.

?I really feel for some of the people who have to take the GO Train, have to commute, have to put their children in day care and won't have a parking spot when they get there for the last train. Then they will probably lose their job. There is a ripple effect, a cascade, to what we are doing and we're not addressing what the real problem is and I don't know what the solution is.?