

Keep Aurora united and separate rail from road: reader

The Auroran's recent cartoon of the future parking needed to accommodate upcoming two-way GO Train service on the Barrie line was prescient, but missed one important part. The cartoon should have also shown traffic at a standstill all along Wellington Street. I have written letters to The Auroran on the subject of level rail crossings a few times over the years. Now that two-way traffic appears to more than a light at the end of the tunnel (to borrow the correct railway metaphor), it is time to really consider what has this will mean for Aurora.

Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area have a spotty record when it comes to building infrastructure to match growth. New developments are often erected with little change to road capacity or traffic signals. The result is apparent to anyone who commutes: congestion in places where there was once open fields and open roads. And somehow the headaches caused by development always seem to come out of the blue, like no one could predict it.

Growth is great when it is managed well.

In case of Aurora's rail traffic, there are four level rail crossings in town (St. John's Side Road, Centre Street, Wellington Street and Engelhard Drive). These crossing worked fine when Aurora had the occasional freight train.

Later, when there were only three or four passenger trains per day and almost no freight traffic, these crossing were adequate.

However, all day, two-way rail traffic will essentially cut our town in half and create greater congestion particularly on Wellington Street, Aurora's main east-west route.

When it comes to transit in Aurora, people should be aware that the Barrie line will soon become a feeder line for the University subway extension as there will be a connecting station at Sheppard Avenue West. Because of this, commuters in York Region will have greater access to many different areas of Toronto.

It is an 'if you build it, they will come?' scenario and a good news story. But will we be ready?

Members of Aurora Town Council need to be proactive here. There is still time to act. The province is currently freeing up money for transit infrastructure.

Part of this infrastructure development should include bridges and tunnels for our busy train lines. Stumbling into a situation where we have to deal with the unintended consequences of transit growth is not the right approach. The message from our Town Council should be clear: Keep Aurora united, separate the rails from the roads.

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Aurora