

# Shuttle service should help commuters get to and from the GO: Council

**By Brock Weir**

The best way to solve the parking problem around the GO Station is to discourage people from driving to the station, and getting on the bus to get to the GO is to charge for parking ? at least according to some Councillors.

Council voted to light a fire under Metrolinx to charge a ?nominal parking fee? for spaces currently serving the Wellington Street station as a way to ?discourage commuters from driving there? and getting on an enhanced shuttle service to and from the commuter hub.

The move came out of a wider motion from Councillor John Abel, calling on increased provincial funding to be dedicated to the development of a rapid shuttle service to and from the GO Station, running in circuits in Aurora's four quadrants.

?We have too many cars and not enough parking and one of the solutions is to either build capacity for parking or find a way to get people there without bringing their cars, and that would be by public transit,? said Councillor Abel, who added smaller buses recently added to the York Region Transit fleet to serve Georgina would serve a useful purpose in Aurora. ?We should take this opportunity to let them hear loud and clear that we have issues we would like to invite them to try and resolve.

?I want to make it loud and clear that we need a very intensified, unique and innovative way of moving people quickly to the GO Station. If they had a fleet with maybe four quick moving buses that could get people up there in 10 minutes they would leave their cars at home. The Province has afforded \$15 million to York Region Transit for infrastructure needs. I think this is a great opportunity for us because we are at a critical situation now with transit.?

The motion garnered a degree of support around the Council table with Councillor Harold Kim, for instance, stating he agreed with it in principle not only as a Councillor but as a GO commuter. He estimated about 30 per cent of riders at the station come from outside Aurora, but said an added fee for parking would not make him very happy.

?The risk/reward is not there for me to pay extra parking for that,? said Councillor Kim, noting erratic service from the YRT to the GO Station. ?To get out of Aurora doesn't take a long time. I understand the concerns about traffic. I know there are pressure points I don't like either, but to charge additional parking on GO Train commuters when they are doing their part to stay off the road, and the 404 is just putting a pressure point on GO Transit riders that want to take public transportation.?

For Councillor Michael Thompson, it was a matter of getting all options on the table to facilitate meaningful dialogue with the Province and the Region.

?We need to be looking at different ways in which to address [traffic congestion and parking],? he said. ?I am open to the idea of sitting down with the Region, Metrolinx, and all the players to see if there are some creative solutions that we can look at to be able to address it and here's one we're suggesting: a shuttle. Are there other alternatives? At the start there can just be some dialogue, but better that dialogue comes of some ideas, be they innovative or every day. I think we need to explore all options.?

Councillor Jeff Thom was of a similar view. He said all players need to look at public transit solution with the GO Station at its core.

?When I was in university, the public transportation in St. Catherine's was excellent and it was easier to get to school downtown, to the bus station, wherever, using public transportation,? he said. ?I don't see the same thing in Aurora currently. I like the idea we are looking to the Region to increase their interest in getting people to our GO station in a more efficient way and in a more environmentally sensitive way that maybe could address the parking issue. If this starts a conversation and we can move that forward, I think it is excellent.?

Mayor Dawe noted following a meeting with Ontario's Minister of Transportation last week that his department is ?keenly aware? of

these issues and are looking at a number of items, including paid parking at GO Stations. Land for parking spots cost anywhere between \$35,000 and \$38,000 at the end of the day, but they are also aware of the negative impact that could happen if parking is charged.

?I certainly support the intent of the motion and I certainly support looking for a combined way to do this,? said Mayor Dawe. ?The Region, Metrolinx, and the Province do work together on a regular basis to address these issues. They are trying to put together plans that service the entire Region. We can't look at these things in isolation.?