

York Region Transit wants your input at Wednesday meeting

By Brock Weir

Whether you're a regular transit user, or a person who has a particular reason not to, York Region Transit wants to hear from you.

York Region Transit (YRT) will host a public engagement forum (PEF) in the lobby of the Aurora Public Library this Wednesday, April 24, from 4 ? 8 p.m.

The YRT kicked off a series of forums on April 3 in Newmarket and Aurora is the second-to-last stop.

?This is an opportunity for the public to learn more, ask questions, share concerns or provide suggestions on proposed transit, roads and construction initiatives,? says the YRT. ?Each Public Engagement Forum will have information displays and Transportation Services staff will be available to answer all initiatives in detail and answer any questions.

?Guests can share feedback and learn more about York Region Transit service adjustments and new initiatives for 2019 and 2020, the Electric Bus Pilot Program, transit technology and green initiatives; traffic signal installations, timings, technology and safety features; active transportation initiatives and improvements for pedestrians and cyclists; current road maintenance and construction projects; and future construction projects, plans and more.

?Your feedback is invaluable as it will help us complete an annual review of our services for 2019 and finalize plans for 2020.?

Next Wednesday's meeting comes just over a week after the Province announced further plans to expand subway service into York Region, building north on the Yonge Line from Finch Station to a new terminus at Richmond Hill Centre.

The subway extension was just one component of a \$28.5 billion expansion to the Province's transit network.

?Our government is investing in transportation to bring relief and new opportunities to transit users and commuters,? said Premier Doug Ford. ?We announced the new Ontario Line to deal with the dangerous congestion on Line 1, the Yonge North Subway Extension that will connect the subway to one of the region's largest employment centres, the three-stop Scarborough Extension to better serve communities, and the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension ? a large portion of which will be built underground to keep people and goods moving on our roadways.

The Yonge North Subway Extension will cost an estimated \$5.6

Billion and, according to the announcement, will open ?soon? after the opening of the new Ontario Line, which is slated for completion in 2027.

Funding for the Yonge North Subway Extension will, in part, have to come from the Region of York.

Transit was also on the minds of local lawmakers at last week's Council meeting.

Councillor Wendy Gaertner questioned Mayor Tom Mrakas, Aurora's representative at the Regional table, about buses going down Yonge Street at off-peak periods that are ?empty or almost empty.? This concern, she said, was related not only to Viva Rapid Transit, but also YRT buses as well.

?It is a constant conversation at the table,? said Mayor Mrakas.
?[The YRT] is going to be taking quite a few routes offline, but not in Aurora. There are a whole bunch in Newmarket that we have actually taken offline moving forward. They are looking at increasing efficiencies within the transit system and they will be coming to do a presentation (in front of Council) very shortly.?