

Last chance to participate in Metrolinx's virtual transit open house

The latest round on public consultation on GO Transit expansion along the Barrie Corridor concludes this week, and Metrolinx wants your input.

Metrolinx's virtual open house on the GO expansion program wraps up this Friday, December 11 through the Metrolinx Engage platform at metrolinxengage.com.

The expansion includes double-tracking through Aurora to allow for 15-minute all-day two-way GO Train service between Barrie's Allendale Waterfront station to Toronto's Union Station.

Additional components include upgrades to the Aurora GO Station, a vehicle and pedestrian underpass under the tracks at Wellington Street, and additional service through the nearly-complete Bloomington GO Station located on the southwest corner of Bloomington Road at Highway 404.

More than a rush hour commuter service GO Expansion will connect communities with more GO service, faster trains, more stations and seamless connections in a regional rapid transit network," says Metrolinx. "The change will be seismic in how commuters will travel through the region. Imagine trains every 15 minutes, not just into the downtown, but in all directions. Customers will have more choice in transit than ever before.

Grade separations are [a] key element that will help unlock new service levels and increase safety and convenience for both transit and road users. Grade separation allows road users to travel seamlessly over or under the rails, without needing to stop for passing trains. With 15-minute service levels in both directions on core lines, grade separations ensure level crossings are not closed every 16 minutes.

Beginning in early 2020, Metrolinx has been consulting with the public and stakeholders around the region on local grade separation. Throughout the process, feedback has been helped to develop a preferred design that satisfies the needs of impacted properties and businesses.

This was a key concern voiced by Aurora residents in an open house held at the Aurora Community Centre this past winter just weeks before the pandemic pivoted these consultations into the online realm.

At the time, businesses and property owners along Wellington Street East, particularly between Larmont Street and Industrial Parkway voiced concerns about several components of the project, from duration of construction, to impact on property values, to lost revenue as the tunnel will do away with traffic passing their doors.

The underpass is currently in the early design phase, with the environmental assessment currently in the works. Metrolinx estimates construction to start in 2024.

Above-ground, proposed upgrades to the Aurora GO Station are being eyed to accommodate a 25 per cent service increase. These include the construction of the second track on the west side of the existing platform for southbound trains and the building of a temporary parking lot off Scanlon Court, just off Industrial Parkway North, to accommodate parking lost to the new platform. The Scanlon Court site was the Town's former Works Yard.

Construction on this component of the project is estimated to be complete by 2023.

In the shorter range, the new Bloomington station is forecasted to be complete in 2021.

The new station, which serves the Richmond Hill line ending at Union Station, will include over 1,000 parking spaces, bike shelters,

a kiss and ride, a six-bay bus loop for local transit, all with LEED Gold certification.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter