

Mayor heads Region's Transportation Services Committee

Future needs in how we move around York Region, including transit and active transportation, will be steered by a committee led by Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas.

Mayor Mrakas, Aurora's lone voice at the Regional Council Table, has been appointed to lead the Region's Transportation Services this term.

His appointment was announced just before the New Year.

In a statement on social media, Mayor Mrakas said, "I am honoured to be appointed Chair of York Region's Transportation Services. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues to plan, build, and operate our roads in York Region."

"We need to look at creating complete streets and a big part of that is to continue to strengthen all aspects of active transportation," he continued. "I truly believe there's never been a more important time to not only strengthen our local transit system, but also work with our Provincial and Federal partners to build a regionally-integrated public transit system that residents of the GTHA deserve."

"Municipalities in York Region want to move away from being car-centric communities and move towards sustainable transportation options; but to do this we must build transit-orientated, complete and connected communities, where people can quickly and efficiently move across York Region and the entire GTHA."

Last week, Mayor Mrakas told The Auroran that while he was honoured to be appointed to the position by Regional Chair Wayne Emmerson, he said he was drawn to the portfolio because it was an "bring some transportation challenges from the N6 to the forefront."

N6 is a commonly-used acronym for York Region's "Northern 6" communities - Whitchurch-Stouffville, King, Newmarket, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, and Aurora.

As for Aurora issues, Mayor Mrakas said he's hoping to underscore connectivity and traffic.

"Better public transit that is more reliant with routes that better meet the needs of our residents as we continue to grow," he said. "I will also be pressing for something that we have long been advocating for and that is the interchange at St. John's and the 404."

"Complete streets" are also models that have been pushed for at the local and Regional Council tables, and hurdles in the way of making them the norm rather than the exception will be an additional focus.

"The hurdles to creating complete streets has always been the continued reliance on cars in the suburbs," said Mayor Mrakas. "If we are to create complete streets and have our communities becoming self-sufficient, we need to move to more transit, more cycling, and more walkability. This does not mean we move away from cars, but that we acknowledge that we need more than just cars if we are to become a complete community."

"We need to focus on the Cycling Master Plan and the connectivity across the entire Region," he added on what the Committee might focus on when it comes to promoting active transportation. "When someone is cycling, they shouldn't see the cycling lanes end at the municipal border; I believe our trails connectivity is excellent, but we definitely need to build our cycling infrastructure."

By Brock Weir
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