

## Metrolinx continues design work on underpass to ?minimize? impact on property owners

Metrolinx is forging ahead with design work the planned Wellington Street East traffic underpass with an eye to ?minimize? impacts to nearby property owners.

This past winter, dozens of residents filled the auditorium of the Aurora Community Centre for a public open house on Metrolinx's plans to expand GO Transit across the province, including plans for all-day two-way train service along GO's Barrie corridor.

An integral part of the plan is the construction of a traffic underpass on Wellington Street East at the rail crossing to ensure the steady flow of traffic once all-day service is in place.

But the underpass will not just impact the area immediately north of the GO Station; construction of the underpass will continue substantially further east and west of the site, with the proposed eastbound entrance to the underpass near Walton Drive.

Among the area property owners speaking out against the plan ? from the disruption construction would cause to their businesses to eliminating street-level traffic ? were the owners of York Medi Spa, which recently moved to their Wellington Street location from Newmarket, as well as York National Realty, whose premises near the rail line are now earmarked for an incoming cannabis retailer.

Over the summer months, Metrolinx has been soliciting online feedback on their plans from the community and a virtual public meeting is now set for ?late October/early November? to provide an update on the grade separation, according to Metrolinx's Matt Llewellyn.

?This grade separation is?a critical upgrade that will safely enable future service increases, such as two-way all-day GO Train service,? said Llewellyn. ?With trains travelling in each direction as frequently as every 15 minutes, trains could be going through the crossing approximately every seven minutes. By building a road underpass for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, we will not only significantly increase safety ? but also convenience. No more waiting for trains in order to get across the tracks.

?The underpass is currently in early design and Metrolinx is assessing design options to minimize private property acquisitions. We're doing this by providing alternative access to properties rather than full acquisition as much as possible. We will be reaching out to impacted property owners in the next few weeks and will negotiate in good faith to find a resolution or settlement for property owners.?

Metrolinx declined to elaborate on what ?alternative access to properties? entails from their perspective ?given the commercially sensitive nature? of the conversations around land acquisitions.

**By Brock Weir**