

Parking crunch addressed in new traffic study

As Aurora moves to make the historic downtown core a destination once again, pointed questions are often asked just where people are supposed to park if they plan to drop into local businesses or, in the future, enjoy Library Square.

This is an issue set to be addressed this week as Council reviews an updated Master Transportation Study.

Within the plan are a number of proposals to address the parking crunch not only for individuals and businesses in Aurora's Downtown Core but also commuters looking to travel into Downtown Toronto for work.

Among the key proposals contained within the plan is one from Metrolinx to turn land previously occupied by the Town's Public Works Department on Scanlon Court into a parking lot to accommodate an estimated 400 vehicles.

The parking situation at the GO Station is set to only get worse as Metrolinx prepares to accommodate both double-tracking to make way for all-day two-way train service on the Barrie line and the construction of an underpass at Wellington Street. Both related projects will take up a significant portion of GO's Berczy Street lands already allocated for parking.

A parking needs assessment was undertaken as part of the TMP (Transportation Master Plan) to document current parking conditions within the Aurora Promenade, including Yonge Street from Wellington to Church Street, Library Square, and the Aurora GO Station area, says Town Traffic Analyst Michael Bat, going on to outline a number of short-term recommendations pegged at the 1 to 5 year window. Metrolinx is proposing to construct a new surface parking lot at 9 Scanlon Court with an estimated supply of more than 400 parking spaces. This is primarily to offset the loss of existing Berczy Street surface parking lot on the west side of the rail corridor to the new platform construction.

As part of the proposed Wellington Street Grade Separation Project, Berczy Street will be realigned and there will be reduction in the number of parking spaces related to this project.

Additional short-term recommendations include a further look at on-street parking on Yonge.

If the traffic demand along Yonge Street from Wellington Street to Church Street increases, on-street parking along this segment should be strictly enforced to maximize safety and reduce congestion.

On-street parking is also addressed in the long-term window, including consideration for new on-street parking policies to prevent

GO commuters ?from parking on adjacent residential streets, including clear signage and information on where appropriate overflow parking is located? and the chance for residents to apply for on-street parking permits for accessible users.

?Further study is required to determine an appropriate solution to address area-specific needs,? says Bat.

Beyond the five-year window, further opportunities might present themselves in the consolidation of privately-owned parking lots in the downtown core and the possibility of using land currently under the jurisdiction of the Lt. Governor John Graves Simcoe Armoury on Industrial Parkway South for parking.

?Consolidation of private lots into municipally owned and managed lots promotes efficiency in land use, creates land for new development, and results in increased pedestrian activity in the area,? says Bat. ?This may be achieved through new development application process and/or land acquisition. It is to be noted that land acquisition costs requires further consideration if this option will be considered.

?215 Industrial Parkway South is a property owned by the Town of Aurora and is currently leased [to the Armoury]. Although this property is located outside of the study limits, there is a possibility of this property to be converted to municipal parking lot in the future, if necessary.?

By Brock Weir