

Region looking at new ways to deliver transit

The pandemic has changed almost every facet of our lives, including how we use public transportation.

In a rapidly changing world, the Region of York is looking at ways of delivering transit options that represent our current reality.

"[Our transit ridership] has been challenged through the pandemic," said Brian Titherington, Director of Transportation & Infrastructure for the Region. "One thing York Region Transit [as done] is introduced the Mobility on Request program. As a resident of Aurora myself, I know we had a trial run to the GO Station where there was almost an Uber service the YRT ran in specific zones around the GO Train that was allowing service to the GO Train in smaller vehicles. The Region is trying to match service and demand."

Titherington was responding to questions last week from Councillor Wendy Gaertner who said the Region puts "a lot of money" into the local transit systems, but many routes experience low ridership, and many buses go by with no riders at all.

"The challenge on many local routes is you just don't get the demand as you do on some of our main lines," Titherington continued. "I tend to ride my bike over to Yonge Street to get on the Viva rather than waiting for my local routes. We are trying to match service with demand because transit is very expensive in areas that don't have high demand."

The Mobility on Demand service is one the Region is looking at expanding, he said, using smaller buses to offset the cost of transit and "reduce empty buses and we will find buses where the demand is."

"Hopefully we will see more of that going forward," he continued. "We're blessed to have the GO Station and with the expansion of Go Service, two-way, all-day service, we're really hoping that more people look at options to get to the GO station that are not their car."

Regardless of how it is done, Councillor Gaertner contended that it is an issue that needs to be figured out.

"I keep saying it year after year," she said. "I know it is challenging, but it has to be figured out because why would we want to run empty buses? We're paying a driver and we're creating pollution. There are a lot of people who can walk or bicycle, but there are a lot of people who can't, for disability issues, because they are older, or whatever reason."

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter