

Weekend GO Train service resumes Saturday

By Brock Weir

Building on the significant uptake from riders, weekend GO train service returns this weekend.

After last summer's pilot project, the second year for weekend train service on the Barrie-Toronto corridor begins this Saturday, June 29. With several routes heading southbound from Barrie in the morning and returning trains heading back in the afternoon.

Southbound trains are scheduled to stop in Aurora at 10.26 a.m., 2.56 p.m., 4.37 p.m., and 8.56 p.m. Heading north, you can catch the train at the GO Station 1.09 p.m., 5.09 p.m., 7.09 p.m., and 11.09 p.m.

"We learned a lot in our first year of service and we're going to be introducing it again this year with some modifications of the timing," said Gary McNeil, President of GO Transit. "The real trick with the Barrie Corridor is we're a single track corridor, therefore, we can't really run opposing train service in this corridor. Until such time as we actually double track the corridor, we are going to be limited in the amount of service that we get in this corridor."

"Our weekend service, which will start June 29, leaves Allendale Station in Barrie at 9.40 in the morning and the first train southbound to Union Station is 12.20. That is really in recognition of the fact in most cases, the city of Toronto in the summertime is a large draw of customers in the north."

"They come down to baseball games, the theatre, to events that are happening in Downtown Toronto and it is a major draw. We discovered in our service last year that most of our service was inbound coming into Toronto and outbound going home at night. For people coming down, of course, there are still all day bus services."

Revisiting the Weekend GO service is just one step GO Transit has taken in increasing services along the Barrie Corridor, Mr. McNeil added. Since 2007, they have extended the line northwards from Bradford, added five trains in the morning and evening rush hours, and added further bus routes.

The next phase in the Barrie line improvements will be all-day two-way service, slated for 2015.

Although Mr. McNeil, when questioned by Mayor Geoffrey Dawe at last week's General Committee meeting, was unable to pin down when double tracking might happen, he said he thinks it will. It will, of course, depend on the funding for such a project, particularly through The Big Move, the multi-billion dollar transit proposal recently proposed by Metrolinx at Queen's Park, raising money for transit and infrastructure improvements through a variety of new taxes.

"Double tracking will cost a significant amount of money and we're hoping through the investment strategy that funds become available that allows us to move forward," he said. "This corridor is actually one of the prime important corridors for us. It has a lot of growth anticipated in this corridor. Innisfil has massive amounts of growth planned for residential uses and we already know that the 400 is at capacity."

"I think back to the days when I first joined GO Transit in 1999 and Aurora was a sleepy little station and now it is one of the most important stations on the line. It is a reflection of the growth that you're having in your community and also the investment we put back into that station."