

Transit system is just talk for now, says mayor

By **TIM FORAN**
Metroland Media Group

An amalgamated transit system possibly serving all four Halton communities will be studied by Regional staff.

Halton's council has directed the works department to consider including an integrated regional transit system into the multi-billion dollar master plan it is developing for transportation projects over the next two decades.

Staff hope to complete the master plan, dubbed *The Road to Change*, by the end of the year.

A public information centre is scheduled for March 25 at Mold-Masters SportsPlex. The drop-in will be at 6:30 p.m., followed by a presentation at 7 p.m.

Currently, transit service in Halton is handled at the local municipal level, with Burlington, Oakville and Milton all operating separate transit systems. Halton Hills does not have a conventional transit system, but Regional planning documents envision the Town could have a small six-bus system by 2031 to service the approximately 25,000 extra people coming to Halton Hills between 2015 and 2031.

"This is strictly for discussion purposes," said Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette. "It hasn't been defined whether the six buses needed could be GO transit service, or whether it will be a regional transit, or no transit."

He also said two reports done in con-

nection with the Sustainable Halton process, which maps out growth in the region through 2031, have projected different figures for transit requirements for Halton Hills by 2031. One suggests six buses will be needed by then, while the other says none will be necessary.

"There won't be any public transit coming to Halton Hills soon," said Bonnette.

"It's so early in the process," said Regional Councillor Clark Somerville. "There will be public consultations coming up. It's fully open and transparent."

"I've been an advocate for looking at this (regional transit system) for some period of time," said John Taylor, vice-chair of council's planning and public works committee and a Burlington councillor.

Taylor said a Halton regional transit system would be an intermediate step. The ultimate aim should be a seamless, GTA-wide transit system similar to what is available in Vancouver and its suburbs, he said.

Taylor's Oakville colleague, Allan Elgar, was more circumspect of a regional transit initiative, in regards to the cost.

"Who's going to pay?" asked Elgar. "I don't believe Oakville is interested in subsidizing Halton Hills and Milton in



RICK BONNETTE

this initiative."

While Halton's transportation master plans have traditionally focused on building more roads—\$1.1 billion is projected for such projects over the next 11 years—transit has been at the forefront of other Regional plans.

Included in the recently passed amendment to Halton's official plan, ROPA 38, the Region has set a target of having 20 per cent of all peak period trips made by transit by 2031, with automobiles used for 70 per cent of such trips and walking, bicycling and other "active transport" modes used 10 per cent of the time.

Reaching that target will require a massive change in both the attitudes and behaviour of Halton commuters as well as the level of transit service offered to them. In 2006, only 5 per cent of peak period trips were made by transit and 2 per cent by active transport.

The Region's plans depend on the Province to continue investing heavily in inter-regional transit.

With such investments, the Region hopes 42 per cent of peak period trips made outside Halton Region will be made by transit in 2031. Only 11 per cent of such trips within Halton would be made by transit. Combined, the two add up to the 20 per cent transit target.

In Halton the three local transit systems recorded a combined ridership of 4.4 million.

—With files from Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

Commuter facts

Work trips made by Halton region residents: 160,500

48% stay within Halton
27% go to Peel
18% go to Toronto
5% go to Hamilton
2% go to York

...

Origin of people travelling to Halton region for work: 136,200

56% from Halton itself
21% from Hamilton
16% from Peel
5% from Toronto
1% from York

...

Work trips made by Halton Hills residents: 20,800

43% go to Peel
30% stay within Halton Hills
12% go to Toronto
5% go to Milton
4% go to Oakville
3% go to York
1% go to both Burlington, Hamilton

...

Origin of people travelling to Halton Hills for work: 10,500

60% from Halton Hills
21% from Peel
6% from Milton
4% from Toronto
3% from both Burlington, Oakville
2% from both York, Hamilton
1% from Durham

* Transportation Tomorrow Survey, 2006 www.dmg.utoronto.ca/transportationtomorrowsurvey/2006/travel_summaries_for_the_gtha.html#halton

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