

GO Train passengers stranded in Acton

Travellers left cold, wet and angry with delay

Approximately 300 GO Train passengers were stranded in Acton for more than an hour on Friday because of staffing problems on a freight train that was stopped on the Goderich and Exeter rail line between the Sixth and Seventh Lines of Guelph/Eramosa Township.

Passengers on the GO Train that arrived in Acton at 6:03 p.m. were told by public address to wait on the train, but after five minutes they were told they would be bussed to their final destination according to several clearly frustrated passengers.

After milling around in the GO Train parking lot for more than 30 minutes in light rain – and watching their train leave the

Acton stop – a GO Transit official, who would only identify himself as “Jason” told the crowd to board a GO bus that had arrived at the Mill Street stop, across from the GO station.

With this, hundreds of passengers surged across the parking lot, many running through heavy traffic on Mill Street – complete with honking horns and slamming brakes – to line up along Mill Street and

“There’s a parking lot right here – why would they tell hundreds of people to cross the road to get a bus – why didn’t they bring the bus here and let people get on in an orderly way?”

around the corner onto Bower Avenue.

Approximately 70 people got on that bus, the rest told an additional bus was coming, along with the regularly scheduled bus. Fifteen wet, cold minutes later, after a VIA passenger train

rolled westbound through the station, Jason told the crowd to return to the station for the 7:03 p.m. GO Train and again, the passengers surged back across the street.

When several people complained to Jason how unsafe it was for them to lineup on the sidewalk, the GO Transit bus was moved from the Mill Street stop to Eastern Avenue. Again, many in the crowd now back at the train station rushed to get on that bus, thinking it would take them on their way.

The 7:03 GO Train arrived at 7:35 p.m., not a minute too soon for Al Fagundes of Toronto. “I was supposed to arrive in Kitchener 45 minutes ago,” he said, adding he got out of the way when the “swarm” of people, many pulling wheeled suitcases, suddenly turned and ran for the bus. “There’s a parking lot right here – why would they tell hundreds of people to cross the road to get a bus – why didn’t they bring the bus here and let people get on

in an orderly way?”

For Toronto resident Vinny Kumar, it was his first ride on a GO Train from Union Station to Kitchener, and he’s not sure he’d do it again.

“It’s not their fault that there was a problem on the line, but why not be clearer to the passengers about what is happening? They told us over and over that there would

be a bus and then a train coming in 10 minutes, and here we are more than an hour later and no one seems to know what is happening,” Kumar said.

On Tuesday, GO media spokesman Mark Ostler said the track blockage was caused by a delay getting a fresh crew after the first crew had worked the maximum number of allowed hours, and had to be replaced.

As to the confusion which angered passengers, Ostler said they deployed two supervisors to the scene and sent out email alerts. He said he’d talk with bus and rail operations “to see how we can better address this.” Ostler did not know how many complaints had been filed over the incident, but said people affected would qualify for GO’s 15-minute service delay guarantee, which would give them credit for the cost of the delayed trip.

At press time, Goderich and Exeter Railway had not responded to a request for comment.



COMMUTER CONFUSION: Over 300 GO Train passengers lined up along Mill Street in the rain on Friday evening after being forced off the GO Train at the Acton station following a freight train blockage of the track west of town. They eventually boarded another GO Train, arriving at their destinations more than an hour late. – Submitted photo

Better emergency outcomes with unified and integrated response

The tragic four deaths in an Oakville house fire in 1998 led to a coroner’s inquest jury recommendation for combined emergency services – ambulance, fire and police – to attend an annual workshop to promote teamwork, an understanding of each other’s roles and the importance of communication.

Emergency responders in Halton set up a Joint Emergency Services Operation Advisory Group (JESOAG), one of the first, if not the first in Ontario at the time. JESOAG mem-

bers briefed Town Council last Monday on the positive results of their efforts, including production of an education CD, protocol creation, joint training and partnered scenarios.

EMS Deputy Chief Christine Barber, chair of Halton’s JESOAG committee, said the mission is to improve operational excellence through teamwork, understanding each other’s roles and responsibilities, and communication.

Barber said with help from Sheridan College

they created educational CDs on rules and responsibilities, scene safety, CO2 poisoning and created protocols for dealing with drug labs, inter-agency response and standard operating guidelines. She said JESOAG took the coroner’s jury recommendations much further. “It’s on-going, it is recognized throughout the Region with all agencies,” she said, adding they also did table-top exercises and responded to mock disasters in the field.

Asked by Georgetown

Councillor Dave Kentner if JESOAG staff would take their training to high-occupancy buildings – like apartments and hospitals and other institutions – Barber said it was an interesting idea that deserved debate. Halton Hills Deputy Fire Chief John Martin said they had discussed decontamination with hospital officials and there are protocols in place with the school boards. “We’ve laid a framework with some of the – what we’ve identified as key concerns right now,” Martin said.

Regional/Georgetown Councillor Jane Fogal questioned how JESOAG fits in with the Town’s emergency response and Martin said JESOAG would use the unified command protocol to determine who will lead,

depending on the type of incident. “We do the work in the field and feed(ing) that information up to the emergency operations centre and the control group and then they provide direction back to us based on that,” Martin said.



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