

# TALKING TRANSIT

CHRIS MILLS, COMMISSIONER OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS, SPOKE TO THE INDEPENDENT ABOUT THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT IN TOWN

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Georgetown resident Eileen Hill has been taking a taxi to and from work for 21 years.

The local hairdresser says driving is not an option for her, adding she feels she would benefit greatly from a municipal bus system.

"I'd take the bus every day if I could, back and forth," she said. "I would go shopping and do what I have to do."

Currently, a one-way trip to work costs Hill \$12 - an expense that would be reduced dramatically with the introduction of a new bus system in town.

"I rely on other people if I don't have the funds to take a taxi," she added.

As for Halton Hills resident Kenny Wittmann, a more intricate public transit system would mean losing the small-town feel he has come to love while living in town for the past two decades.

"Being a resident here for 20 years, I've grown up in a positive environment with the resources I feel Halton has done a good job with," he said, citing both GO Transit and Uber as efficient means for getting around town, and to and from school at Humber Col-

lege in Etobicoke.

He says that while he pays about \$75 a week between GO and Uber, it is simply an expense he has factored into his budget, just as a person with a personal vehicle would for fuel.

Wittmann says he prefers to use Uber to taxis, as he is privy to certain promotions, such as receiving discounted fares for repeated usage of the application.

Wittmann, who has cerebral palsy, has used Halton Hills' Activan service in the past, but he says there are some grey areas with the system in terms of how far a person can go in town.

"There are certain boundaries that you cannot cross," he said.

Despite mixed reactions from residents, Halton Hills will be getting an updated public transit system within the next few years to meet the needs of its growing population, but whether this will result in municipal buses in town remains to be seen.

According to the town's most recent Transit Service Strategy and Direction Report, the population in Halton Hills is expected to grow to 94,000 by 2031, from 61,161 in 2016, which means an increase in employment and development growth as well.



**THE QUESTION:**  
IS A MUNICIPAL BUS SYSTEM A FEASIBLE OPTION FOR HALTON HILLS?  
**THE ANSWER:** THE TOWN IS ANALYZING THREE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS.

Chris Mills, commissioner of transportation and public works at the Town of Halton Hills, says the town is analyzing three different public transportation options, and will be heading toward further public interaction in 2019.

The first option, called universal access service, would be an expansion of the existing Activan service, which could be offered by the private sector, or delivered through the Activan service, under different terminology.

This would be a basic level of transit available to all residents, which would be able to be introduced in a short period of time.

"It's a very demand-responsive service that effectively is a door-to-door or

home-to-hub service," Mills said. "(It would get) people from their houses either to the location they're going to, or to a hub where they have other options."

The second option up for consideration is called "universal access service plus limited fixed route," which would see the first option implemented, along with a limited municipal bus system.

With this option, the access service will ensure people from all over town can get to the fixed route, Mills said.

Option 3, called "universal access service plus expanded fixed route," would be an expansion of the second option, fleshing out where the primary fixed routes would be.

"For example, it could be down to Milton or further down to other municipalities as well," Mills said, adding that all three options will be assessed as part of the next phase in 2019.

When assessing the viability of a municipal bus system, Mills says the town is looking at a number of factors including demand, as well as operating and capital costs.

A public consultation process is underway, and residents can participate in an online questionnaire, to outline their transit needs and preferences.

"This process means really responding to the demographics of the community," he said.

As well, plans for vision Georgetown include the expectation that that community will be transit ready, Mills added.

"With vision Georgetown coming online within the next two or three years, we have to be ready to implement where we will be going with transit," he said. "Again, it may not be buses. There are different models coming out all the time that may facilitate the same transportation challenges."

To learn more about Halton Hills' Transit Service Strategy, visit <https://www.haltonhills.ca/transitservicestrategy/>.

Pixabay

The Town of Halton Hills is currently analyzing three different transit options for the future, under its Transit Service Strategy.

## STORY BEHIND THE STORY:

Halton Hills will be getting an updated public transit system in the next few years. This is to meet the demands of the growing town. What will this system look like? The IFP looks to find out.



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