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## Proposed transit system shot down by council

Halton Hills council voted down a staff proposal Monday night—by a 7-4 margin—to have a bus service for the general public in Halton Hills.

Staff had recommended the Town start a two-bus service in January 2006, that would replace the current smaller Activan bus that serves only physically challenged passengers, with a larger 17-seat bus. A second similar bus would also be purchased and the two would be used as a morning and evening shuttle service to and from the GO station Monday to Friday and to the various residential neighbourhoods in Georgetown.

Between 8:45 a.m. and 4 p.m. the "Activan" bus would go back to its regular duties and the second bus would be a community bus primarily used in Georgetown to move school kids, seniors and other transit users to major centres of interest in the town.

Funding would have come from ridership revenue, provincial gas tax allocation, transportation and transit reserve, and a 0.2 per cent dedicated tax hike.

But Mayor Rick Bonnette, and Councillors Ron Chatten, Jon Hurst, Bryan Lewis, Mike O'Leary, Joan Robson and Clark Somerville voted against the bus service.

Their reasons included:

- It's premature. Council should wait until the town grows in population, and the 401 Corridor is built out.

- "This town is not ready for a transit system in our community; I don't think we can afford it," said Chatten. "Our population is not large enough to get into the transit system."

- It's misleading to think this is

a transit system that will serve the 54,800 residents because the majority of the service will be in Georgetown only (about 30,000 people), with the exception of the Activan bus, which would still go throughout the town.

"We're going to expect the taxpayers of Wards 1 and 2 to help pay for the formula for service in Wards 3 and 4 and when you look at the survey, a lot of people in Georgetown don't even want it," Bonnette said.

- The survey shows the majority of respondents are opposed to implementation of a service. Only 210 people responded to a survey and of those, about 70 per cent indicated they were against a bus service for the general public as well as a dedicated tax increase.

- There is a potential loss of the gas tax if there is a future change in government.

- The Town can give the gas tax allocation (\$72,000) back if it's not used for transit.

"If you go shopping and you have a fistful of coupons, but if you don't need what you see, then why should you have to buy it, and that how I feel about the funding on transit," Robson said.

- Cancellation of the service would be difficult once it's started.

- The Town has a lot of capital projects planned for the future including new library, another arena and park improvements.

Voting for the system were Councillors Mike Davis, Jane Fogal, Bob Inglis and Moya Johnson.

Among their reasons for the service:

- The Town already has a transit service (Activan) and GO Transit and the two-bus system would enhance that, allowing the

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### Big Ben gets the bronze

Stan Yeung, who works in the finishing room at Artcast in Georgetown applies the final touches to a bronze statue of equestrian Ian Millar and his horse Big Ben. The statue is one of several to be leaving Artcast in the coming days. Other recent works include Group of Seven artist Tom Thomson, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King and Franklin the Turtle. See story page 5.  
Photo by Yves Desjardins

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