

Goal is 4,000 riders for 2007

Town urging greater use of Activan

CYNTHIA GAMBLE
Staff Writer

The Town's new transit co-ordinator wants seniors to get on the bus—the Activan bus.

A concerted effort is being made to lure more riders to use the town-operated transit system, Activan. Ridership criteria had been relaxed last year to allow seniors, age 65 and older, and a wider range of people with disabilities to use the two-bus system.

"This is the new Activan service," said Don Clarkson, in his first, but enthusiastic, presentation to council recently. "You don't have to be going to the doctor or going to the hospital for physio to take advantage of our program. You could be going to the seniors' centre to play bridge or do your shopping at the Superstore or wherever you happen to shop or even going to the movies. All we have to know is where you want to go and what time you want to return and we need to know that the day before, at the latest."

Ridership registrations are increasing, with the Town receiving five to 10 calls a day asking for an application to ride the bus. Riders must fill out a free application to become a registered rider, just so the program ensures that they are eligible for the service.

Ridership increased substantially in the fall from 125 to 210 registrations after advertising was placed in local newspapers. He plans to continue with the advertising, supplemented with posters, fridge magnets and other "get the message out there" ideas. As ridership increases, the cost per trip drops, he explained.

His goal is to double ridership to 4,000 trips in 2007 from the nearly 2,200 last year.

Clarkson took on the job as the new transit co-ordinator position in September.

"I've enjoyed every minute of it so far," he said. "I particularly like the feeling of satisfaction that goes with helping deserving people with solutions to their transportation problems."



Pat Graham (left) driver of the Halton Hills Activan, joined Transit Co-ordinator Don Clarkson in showing off the newest addition to the service. The Town is urging seniors and people with disabilities to use the local bus system more frequently.

Photo by Ted Brown

It's very gratifying."

As part of his duties he will also take over the booking and dispatching of calls by February 19. This service was previously provided by Tyler Transport personnel.

"The advantage of bringing the booking in-house is that that now we can do a more thorough job of communicating because promoting and managing Activan is our core business," Clarkson said.

Council also awarded the tender for Activan drivers to Tyler Transport Ltd of Acton for \$113,000 in 2007 and for \$135,000, plus the Consumer Price Index, in each of the subsequent years of the four-year contract. Tyler was the only applicant for the job.

Clarkson attributed the slight drop in ridership in 2006 over 2005 due to the startup of North Halton Rides. However a deal has been struck that if riders request out-of-town trips, Clarkson will refer them to North Halton Rides, and if the rider calls North Halton Rides and requests an in-town trip they will be referred to

Activan.

Clarkson also plans to take Activan to a cash-less fare system by the end of February. Tickets will become available at various locations around town such as the libraries or the seniors' centre. As well, service hours will be increased to accommodate some requests for transportation during evening hours and on weekends. After-hour trips will be upped by \$1 over the regular \$2 fare and must be made at least 48 hours in advance.

"The decision to expand the service has been a very positive step for seniors and the disabled members in this community," said Ward 3 Councillor Moya Johnson, and chair of the town's Accessibility Advisory Committee. "We've had very positive feedback from people using the service."

To register as a subscriber call 905-873-2601 ext. 2617. Hours of operation are Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

(Cynthia Gamble can be reached at cgamble@independentfreepress.com)

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Plaque to honour UN, NATO soldiers

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A new plaque will be mounted on the Remembrance Park Cenotaph to commemorate the service of local residents, who died serving their country under United Nations or NATO auspices.

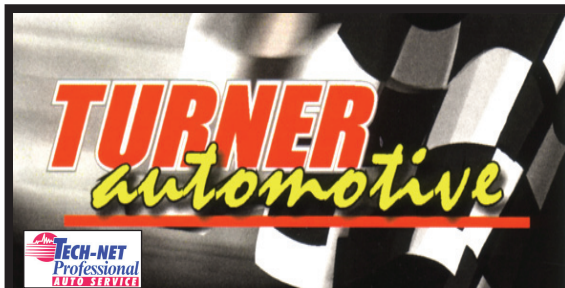
The request came from Branch 120 (Georgetown) of the Royal Canadian Legion. The first name inscribed on the plaque will be Pte. Christopher A. Dodge of the 73rd Canadian Signal Squadron. While serving with the United Nations force in Egypt, he was killed on July 2, 1979.

"The role of the Canadian troops has changed in the last few years and they're getting into more theatres (of action), such as Afghanistan," said Mayor Rick Bonnette. "I think it's the least we could do to honour our fallen soldiers."

Ward 3 Councillor Moya Johnson, who seconded the mayor's recommendation, said, "I wholeheartedly believe we should be putting another plaque on the Cenotaph, especially for the one soldier who has given his life and his name isn't there. I hope his name is the only one that ever goes on this plaque but we know there are presently members of this community who are over in Afghanistan putting their lives at risk."

The plaque will be unveiled during a legion ceremony marking the anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April.

The Town will also make an enquiry to the Branch 197 (Acton) about a similar plaque for its Cenotaph.



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