

Halton to consider regional transit system

By Tim Foran
METROLAND WEST
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An amalgamated transit system possibly serving Halton's four communities of Milton, Burlington, Oakville and Halton Hills 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's 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 late March.

Currently, transit service in Halton is handled at the local municipal level, with Milton, Burlington and Oakville all operating separate transit systems.

Halton Hills doesn't have a conventional transit system, but Regional planning documents envision the town could have a small six-bus system by 2031 to service the



Will Halton's logo grace local transit buses in the future? Regional council has directed Halton staff to investigate a regional transit initiative.

approximately 25,000 extra people coming to Acton, Georgetown and area hamlets between 2015 and 2031.

In the past decade, both York and Durham regions have created regional transit bodies, taking over the bus services offered by their local municipalities.

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

"Milton has a fledgling system, Burlington and Oakville have more sophisticated systems. Can we find a way to find efficiencies? I think we

should have the facts in front of us."

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's available in Vancouver and its suburbs, he said.

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

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

Elgar was referring to a point raised often by Oakville's regional council

members, that residents and businesses in their town — due to the higher assessment value of their properties — pay about 42 per cent of the property taxes that end up at the Region though Oakville's population is only 37 per cent of Halton's total.

Elgar said Oakville Transit has also moved to a grid-based transit system designed for people to get around the town, while Burlington's and Milton's transit agencies still operate radial systems focused on getting commuters to GO stations.

Taylor responded to Elgar's concerns by suggesting a regional transit system could operate like Halton's waste collection division, with local

municipalities determining the service levels they desire and paying the Region accordingly.

A public information centre for the Region's transportation master plan will be held Tues., March 30 at the Milton Sports Centre (Banquet Room), 605 Santa Maria Blvd. The doors open at 6:30 p.m. followed by a presentation at 7 p.m.

Correction

A woman was incorrectly identified in a photo in Thursday's *Champion*.

Holding the model of the Ford Model C was Linda Twitchell, curator of Halton Region Museum.

The *Champion* regrets the error and apologizes for any inconvenience it may have caused.



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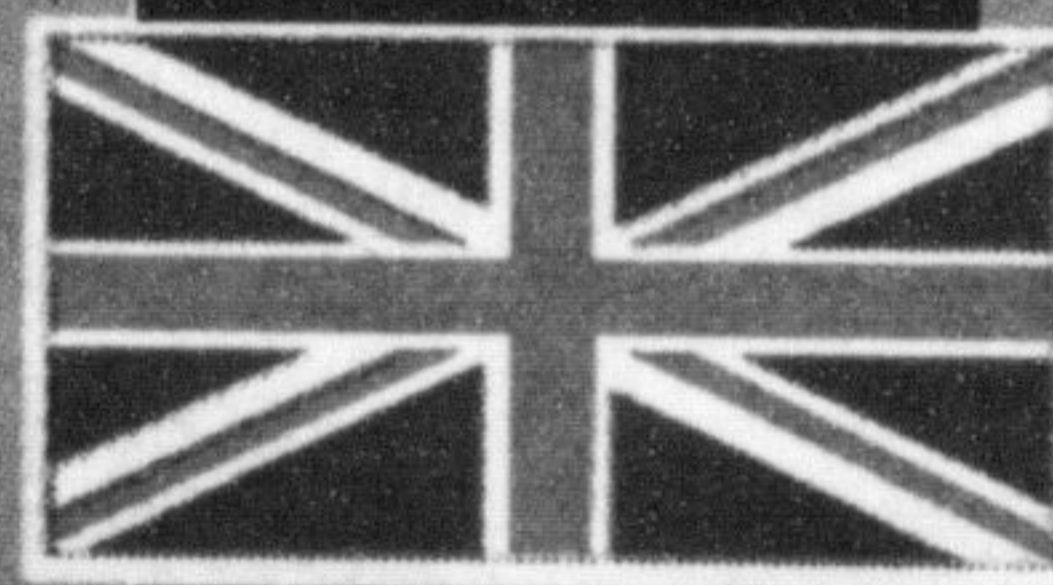
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