

**TRANSPORTATION: Region a patchwork of transit routes**

# Transit services a 'nightmare'

BY MIKE ADLER  
STAFF WRITER

"Quick and dirty fixes" could plug holes in York Region's patchwork of transit routes, concerned politicians and municipal staff heard last week.

Over three days, members of the regional task force on transit worked out where demands for service are greatest and where their systems are failing.

They found busy roads where almost all travellers move by automobile, and employment areas that can't be reached by public transit or can be reached only with transfers, consultant Dave Roberts told the task force Friday.

East-to-west transit routes in the region's south end, where car traffic is heavy, all funnel down to Finch Station in Toronto, Roberts said. "You can get to

Finch but you can't get across (the region) without making a transfer."

For years, the region has warned that if public transit here doesn't get a lot better, life will get worse for residents. To absorb the expected growth, the region's Official Plan says, 33 per cent of trips here by 2021 must be made by transit.

But since the plan was adopted in 1994, the region has actually lost ground — from 7 per cent of trips to around 5 — while pursuing this goal.

By working together, which includes looking at the best ways to promote east-west movement and reduce the need for transfers, the task force hopes to get plans for immediate improvements ready by January.

"Quick and dirty fixes can be done with very little operating expense,"

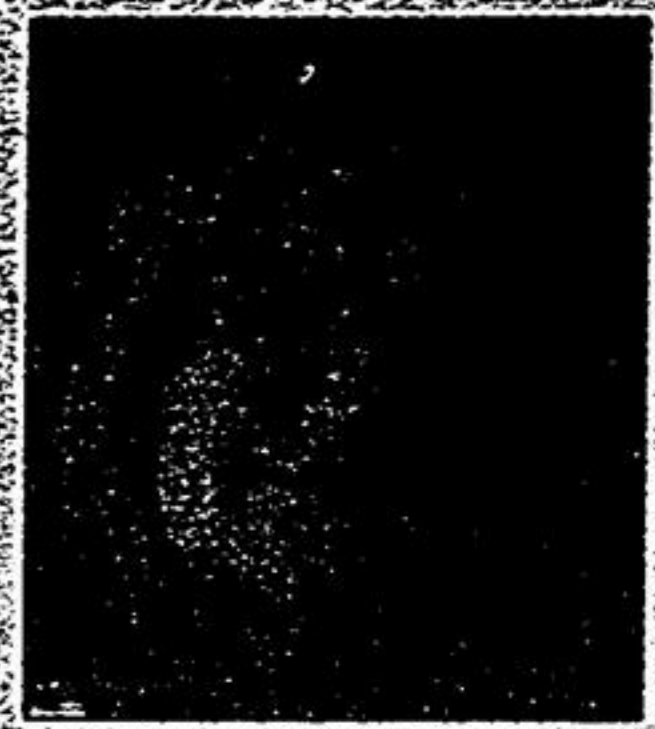
Roberts argued, after noting some municipal transit services miss each other's routes by a few blocks.

One sub-group of the task force is trying to create a single system for seniors and residents with disabilities.

Areas of York have different special needs services, including municipal mobility buses. Trips into Toronto, a favourite destination, usually need a transfer.

That means residents who don't live along the southern border may need six different vehicles to complete a round trip to Toronto, Newmarket Councillor Gail Parks said Friday. "What a damn nightmare!" she added.

Regional staff will be considering whether a central dispatching system and a single taxi-scrip system would make travel for the handicapped easier.



Joan Ransberry

## Crowds needed at crime meeting

Snitching is now in vogue. There are times when it's okay to tattle tale. This is one of those times.

It appears as if Whitchurch-Stouffville, the Pleasantville of York Region, isn't all that it's cracked up to be. If we scratch the surface, we might find that the country is too close to the city. Let's take off the rose coloured glasses and admit Stouffville has been the target of vandalism, other youth-related crime and serious break and entries, theft and property damage.

More than 40 gravestones were toppled at the local cemetery, school portables were ransacked, windows were smashed, flowerpots were overturned, paint covered a wall at the legion hall, poles and signs and hanging plants were ripped from the ground at the Stouffville train station and for kicks, vandals, riding in the back of pick up trucks, destroyed mailboxes with baseball bats. Recently, four business owners were victims of break enter, theft and property damage. Not to mention the sick feeling that comes with having some low life come onto your property and touch your things.

Last week, Mayor Wayne Emmerson chaired a 'Take Back the Town' meeting. The plan is to put a town-wide surveillance program in place.

The program is designed to curb speeding and youth-related crime and traffic problems, especially speeding. Its success hinges on community involvement.

A follow-up meeting will be held in mid-January. If it attracts a crowd, it'll suggest this town admits it has problems and wants solutions. If the meeting attracts a mere handful, the residents of Stouffville will have no one to blame but themselves when the crimes escalate.

The first meeting was a start — Det. Sgt. Bruce Powley and 30 residents, including the principal of Stouffville District Secondary School and three students joined council in the brain-storming session.

"A program will work well but it takes a commitment from the folks," Powley said. "The eyes and ears of the community are needed. It'll take a whole community effort."

The meeting produced results. Ideas presented include a police station in downtown Stouffville, hefty fines for speeders, a three-fold citizens' snitch' program, a drop-in spot for youth and a CrimeStopper telephone system in schools.

Adopting a Road Watch program and extending it to include criminal acts was well received. If a resident spots a speeder or someone involved in a crime, a citizens' reporting form can be filled out and dropped off at the town office. From there, the form will be handed over to police. In the case of the speeder, the police notifies the vehicle owner pointing out the offence. This simple approach can also apply to stoop and scoop infractions or to graffiti crimes, Emmerson said.

While nobody likes to tattle tale, believe me: snitching is not as offensive as seeing someone lying dead on the side of the road, a victim of a speeder. And, I'd rat on anybody who would topple a gravestone or deface a legion hall. Let's set aside a couple of hours in January to attend the next meeting. Since youth crime is a community responsibility, our presence is essential.

## TAKING CENTRE STAGE



Whitchurch-Highlands Public School choir sings a song during Friday night's Festival of Lights at the Clock Tower.

## Teachers will get on with work when deal final

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activities or taking work home and will be arriving at school no more than 15 minutes before class.

"As soon as both sides have ratified, teachers can get on with their work and we can all give some thought to repairing the terrible relationship that exists here between the board and the elementary teachers," she said.

The deal gives teachers 150 minutes of preparation time in the second year of the contract, as proposed by mediator Kevin Burkett after a marathon bargaining session last week.

Two professional development days will also be provided and there are no changes to the benefit plan. Full-time teachers will also receive a \$300 signing bonus. The board's rejected offer included the signing bonus and 120

minutes until Feb. 1, when teachers would receive 160 minutes for the balance of the school year. Then they would have had 140 minutes in the second year effective Sept. 1, 1999 with the use of one professional development day in the second year.

Teachers were seeking 160 minutes of preparation time in both years and a two-per-cent wage increase. The mediator did not recommend a salary hike.

## CORRECTIONS

In an article entitled, 'Residents ignoring stoop, scoop law,' published in the Nov. 21 *Tribune*, a statement was incorrectly attributed to town clerk Michele Kennedy through the editing

process. It was, in fact, canine control spokesperson Diane Cameron who said dog feces could affect nearby wells. We regret the error.

In an article entitled, 'The low-cost housing crunch,' published in the Nov.

21 *Tribune* it was incorrectly stated that Parkview Village on Ninth Line is subsidized by the government. It is, in fact, Parkview Home for the Aged on Rupert Avenue that is part of the province's subsidy program.

We regret the error.

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