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TRANSPORTATION

Smart technology sought for GTA-wide pass card

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

Every day, certain transit riders in York Region — nobody is sure how many — board a GO train or bus by flashing a card.

The card is a one-week GTA-wide transit pass, and it's an idea not living up

to its potential.

Although the pass has a magnetic strip, users can swipe to walk through some Toronto subway entrances, it merely gets a glance from municipal bus drivers here.

But more intriguing than what such cards do now — offer cashless access to the GTA's public buses and commuter trains — is what they might do in the future.

City of Toronto planner Sue Zielinski looks forward to a day when people carry a smart version of the card: a personal mobility system, they can also swipe to hop on a power-assisted bicycle or into a shared automobile, a taxi, VIA rail train or another alternative to driving their own cars.

Such transportation networks are developing in cities around the world, creating jobs and offering more choices to consumers, Zielinski told a committee of the Greater Toronto Services Board yesterday.

Zielinski is organizing a meeting this fall between experts from cities like Hong Kong, where half of all transit fares are paid with smart cards, and local planners and people interested in spin-off businesses.

Buses in Burlington and Ajax can already read smart cards held in proximity to a counter.

Smart technology is available today, Durham Regional chairperson Roger Anderson told the committee. "People just aren't using it."

Smart technology hasn't been used in York because of its cost, but it may be only a few years from becoming affordable, Richmond Hill Transit manager Bud Newton said. "It would tell a lot more than we know now about our transit system."

Such a smart pass, he noted, would be work just as well at a public swimming pool as on a bus. "We see eventually all transit systems going to it."

Meanwhile, the electronic fare boxes on Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan buses could be fitted with card-readers, but swiping the current GTA passes on them wouldn't give those transit services much information, Newton said.

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CORRECTION NOTICE

Markham Skating Club
The ad which ran on Thursday, September 16 had registration on Saturdays for the month of September. This was incorrect. There will be no registration on Saturdays. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.