

STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Newmarket Regional Councillor Tony Van Bynen took our transit challenge. Here he waits for a bus at Mulock Drive and Bayview Avenue.

Transfers need to be reduced

Newmarket Regional Councillor and transit committee member Tony Van Bynen got out of his car and used York Region Transit May 17 and 18. Following is an edited version of his transit diary.

My first impression in taking transit was the greeting from the driver on the London/Bristol roads route when I boarded the first morning.

When I missed my connection at Main Street and Davis Drive, the driver called ahead to the bus I had missed and arranged for him to loop around the block to pick me up.

On the return trip, the Bayview Avenue bus was already at the stop light and could have left me standing, but when I waved my transfer from across the street, she waited for the light to change so I could cross the road and board the bus.

On all of my trips, there were never more than two or three people on the bus. Most were students in their late teens or early 20s, a worker headed home from an industrial plant, a senior coming home from shopping.

The benefits of transit in York

Region are heavily weighted to inter-municipal users; like Newmarket to Toronto, Vaughan and Richmond Hill. But for in-town users, some things need to change.

My trips to and from Main Street and London Road to the municipal office on Mulock Drive were only 4.5 kilometres each way but the average all-in time — walking, waiting for the bus and actual travel time — averaged 52 minutes, compared to nine minutes by car.

The walk time and wait time is almost 2-1/2 times the actual travel time and you need to take three

Tuesday, May 17: home to municipal office — 16 walking minutes, 26 waiting minutes and 10 riding minutes. Municipal office to home — 10 walking minutes, 32 waiting minutes, 24 riding minutes.

Wednesday, May 18: home to municipal office — 16 walking minutes, 12 waiting minutes, 18 riding minutes. Municipal office to home — 27 walking minutes, nine waiting minutes, seven riding minutes.

Two-day time total — 33 per cent walking minutes, 38 per cent waiting minutes, 29 per cent riding minutes.



Last of a four-part series discussing public transit in York Region

Visit www.yorkregion.com to view our State Of series on waste, education, public safety and transit.

different routes. We need to reduce the number of transfers.

Bus schedules and timing seem to be focused on a "to work and home" framework. For mid-day appointments out of the office, I needed to hitch a ride three times on Tuesday and four times on Wednesday.

The current framework is not effective for our in-town users.

We need local solutions that focus more directly to our customer needs, rather than on general traffic patterns or transit principles applied on a broader scale.

I think it's great that YRT is initiating a small bus trial in Newmarket this summer but I want to continue to explore the dial-a-bus option where you book your trip and they arrange to send out a bus when needed.

Yes, it sounds like a taxi, but not when there are six to eight other people on the same route at the same time.

And I still believe we can replace all of our major (Newmarket) routes with the same number of smaller buses that would take you from origin to destination on the same bus or with only one transfer on an as-needed basis. It would eliminate walk time, reduce wait times and the need for transfers.

On the plus side, all but one of the buses I rode were clean and modern. Staff was friendly, helpful and courteous and seemed to have a rapport with what appeared to be regular riders.

It is cumbersome trying to find the routes and coordinating those connections from the bus schedules. The YRT website is little more than an electronic version of the printed schedules.

What's needed (and may be under development) is software similar to Map Quest, where you give your point of origin, your destination and the time you need to be there, so the system can outline the routes.

It felt good to take transit; like I was doing my part for the environment. And it felt good not having to wrestle with traffic. Now, if we could just figure out a way that it works for me and my schedule.

I might even use up the remaining six tickets this summer when I know the weather will be right and I will be in the office all day.

Makes sense to ride YRT

BY ROGER VARLEY
Staff Writer

For Jules Bedeau of Markham, taking the bus was a moving experience.

"I am changing to the bus," Mr. Bedeau said recently after a two-day experiment to determine if York Region Transit services could offer him a viable alternative to using his car.

Until taking the York Region Newspapers Group's Transit Challenge and riding the bus April 21 and 22, Mr. Bedeau's daily trip to work involved riding in a car with his sister, Terri, from their home in the Markham Road/Hwy. 7 area to Hwy. 7 and Leslie Street.

He said the trip usually takes about 15 minutes by car because of early morning traffic.

Although he doesn't start work until about 10 a.m., his sister has to travel to Woodbridge and then on to Toronto, so she would drop him off at his office.

Taking the bus allowed him to leave his home much later. Result: still a 15-minute trip, but he wasn't fighting traffic.

"In a car, it should take less time," he reasoned, "but the roads are congested early in the morning. By taking the bus, I'm avoiding the bulk of the traffic."

"It makes more sense for me to take the bus all the time," Mr. Bedeau said of his experience.

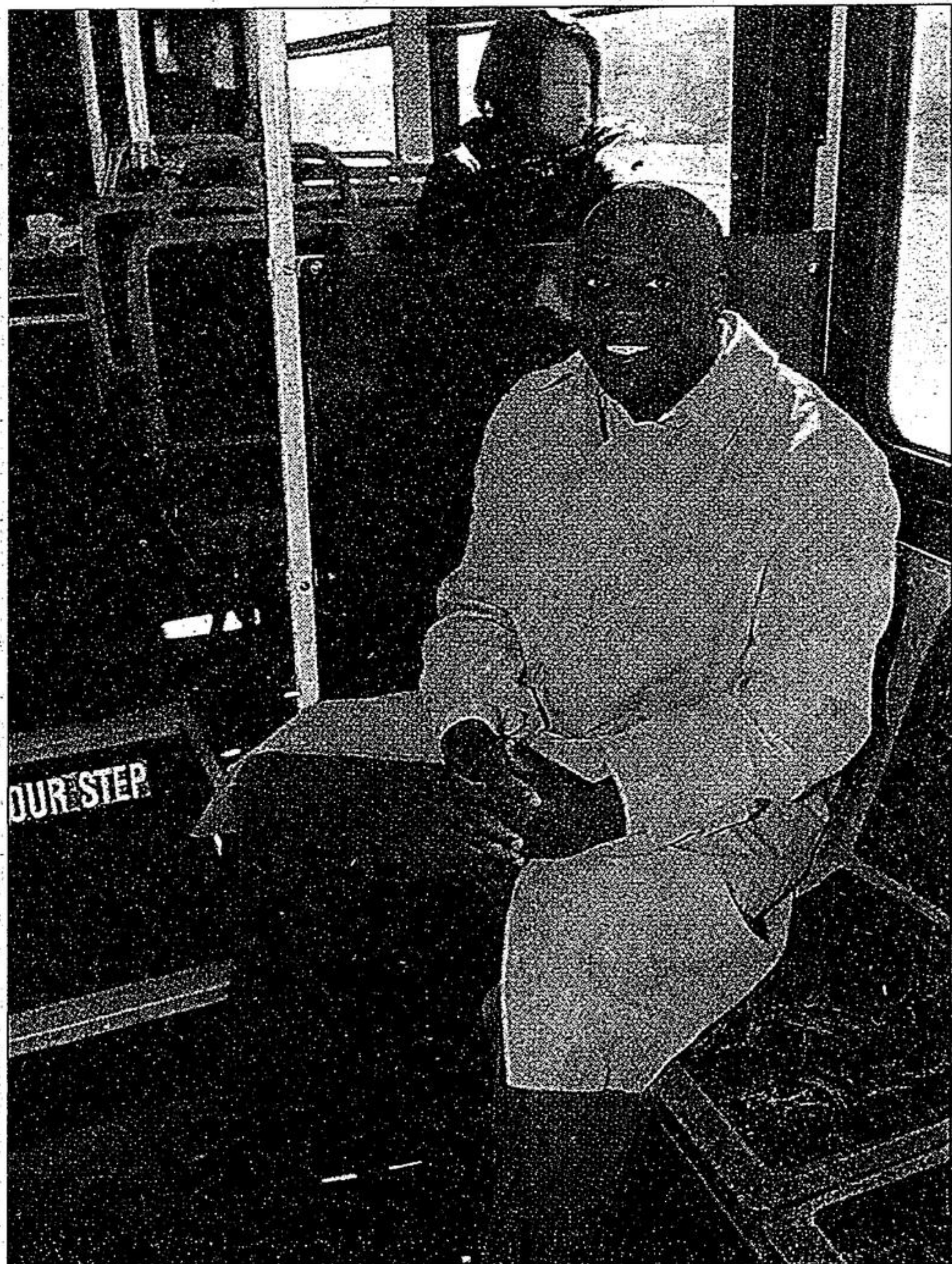
"It's environmentally conscientious, I have time to read and possibly meet some people."

He said the walk from the bus to his office — and to his home on the return trip — was "negligible".

Not that he found transit without its faults.

"The schedule is sometimes unpredictable and so is the weather," he said.

"And because of the infrequency of buses, you're up the creek without a paddle if you miss your bus."



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Jules Bedeau of Markham will ride York Region Transit every morning to work. He boards the bus at Hwy. 7 and Windridge Drive.

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