

# OPINION



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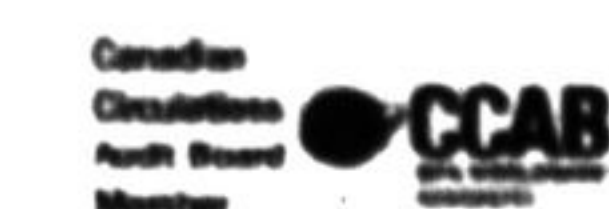
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## Region should stop punishing transit riders

### ISSUE

York Region council  
is considering boosting  
transit fares.

**N**ot only would it  
appear nothing is  
certain but death  
and taxes, so, too, are  
transit fare increases.

York Regional council is con-  
sidering a hike in fares by an aver-  
age of 7.86 per cent for most rid-  
ers, in the wake of last year's simi-  
lar increase that hit students and  
senior citizens particularly hard. If  
approved Sept. 26, the increase  
would impact every YRT/Viva  
rider, except those buying GTA  
weekly passes.

Cash fares would rise 25 cents  
to \$4 for a one-zone trip, \$5 for  
a two-zone ride and \$4.50 for an  
express run. All monthly passes,  
except for express, would jump  
by 10 per cent. Tickets would  
jump to \$3.30 for adults, \$2.50  
for students and \$2 for seniors  
and children.

The increase means most  
YRT/Viva riders would pay more  
than any other transit GTA user,  
including Toronto, with the aver-  
age cash fare at \$3.21.

While other GTA transit users  
also face fare increases, in York  
Region, the cost has become  
unreasonable. For example, Bur-  
lington Transit users swallowed  
an 8.4-per-cent cash fare hike  
last spring to \$3.25 well below  
York's proposed \$4 to \$5 fare.  
Riders will be dismayed, to  
say the least, to learn they have  
to dig deeper for a transit system  
that, in most zones, offers less  
than stellar service.

As a reader wrote, "\$4 cash  
fare and a monthly pass that costs  
more than the TTC! Both my  
mother and my girlfriend use the  
bus on a regular basis and soon it  
will be a choice between a loaf of  
bread or a bus ride to work!"

Studies show fare increases  
typically result in reduced rider-  
ship and while YRT/Viva reports  
an increase of 20 per cent in the  
last five years, that's likely due to  
growth and improved service on

some major routes.

Why boost fares at a time  
when increasing ridership  
should be the priority? When our  
major routes are being ripped  
apart to create rapid transit ways  
that will need more users to  
operate successfully?

While many riders are hos-  
tages with no choice but to  
take transit, other riders will no  
longer see its value and will find  
other options.

The region is on a mission to  
recover 50 per cent of the cost of  
transit through fares. Currently,  
taxpayers carry 60 per cent of the  
cost. The region hopes to add  
\$3.6 million to its coffers with the  
fare boost.

Do taxpayers really want  
students and seniors on fixed  
incomes and workers earning  
low wages choosing between a  
loaf of bread or a bus ride for the  
sake of boosting a cost-recovery  
ratio by 2 per cent?

Taxpayers support services  
not used by all such as public  
health care, schools, libraries,  
parks and highways without  
additional user fees.

If reducing the cost of transit  
on taxpayers is so important,  
the region could allocate a larger  
portion of its \$14.3 million-plus  
in annual provincial gas tax rev-  
enues to transit service specifi-  
cally. Some municipalities, such  
as Toronto, put 100 per cent of  
gas tax to transit.

Bottom line, if public transit  
is to thrive and have a future in  
an urban, vibrant and environ-  
mentally healthy York Region,  
with 1.5 million residents by  
2031, it must be more than a way  
to get to and from work for those  
who can't afford to drive. Transit  
for everyday living has the ability  
to transform the way our com-  
munities look and work.

The region needs to get over  
its obsession with the fare box,  
which only punishes low-income  
workers, students and seniors,  
and focus on developing the  
transit system York Region needs.

**BOTTOM LINE: Regional council  
should stop obsessing about fares.**

## LETTER OF THE WEEK

### Don't blame cyclists for crashes

*Re: Cyclists disobeying rules of road, letter  
to the editor by Nick Hoher, Sept. 5.*

I have never read such a ridiculous,  
uncaring, sanctimonious load of tripe. Mr.  
Hoher is extremely judgmental, unin-  
formed and naïve about bicycle riders.

For him to argue a peloton of riders  
would ride through stop signs or traffic lights  
is patently false. I have not seen one serious  
road rider not wearing a helmet in years.

He suggests we are city slickers up for a  
ride in "the bush" on weekends, don't pay  
for roads, don't pay for insurance, don't  
contribute, don't follow the rules etc. Wow, I  
never thought of myself as an outlaw.

Go out on a bicycle and you will see the  
world differently. Take a ride down Reesor  
Road or Ninth Line. Check out how poorly  
maintained they are, especially at the right  
edge, which is where bicyclists ride.

Witness the idiots in cars who don't  
move over when they see a cyclist. Most  
road bike riders do this for health. Check  
out how many cars don't stop for red lights  
and stop signs.

Mr. Hoher doesn't understand a road  
bike weighs less than 20 pounds and rides  
on two inch-wide wheels. If a car or truck  
clips a bicyclist while going 80 km/h it is  
serious injury or death. A car or truck  
weighs 3000 pounds.

What's your rush, buddy? It's absolutely

no extra work for you to slow down and wait  
for the other lane to clear before you pass.  
Or are you too busy texting, talking on the  
cellphone, eating, drinking and not paying  
attention?

*Share the road. Slow down.*

*Don't tell me I don't have the  
right to ride on the roads.*

*Slow down. Judge Judy will wait.*

I don't want to die on the roads. Who  
does? The risks that I run as a bicyclist are  
complex and include blowouts, dogs, cracks  
in the pavement, road kill, fatigue and our  
own mistakes.

For anyone to blame riders for the acci-  
dents that we've seen over the last three or  
four years in this area is simply blaming the  
victim.

Shame on you. I ask very little. Pay  
attention to what you're doing. Share the  
road. Slow down. Don't tell me I don't have  
the right to ride on the roads. It's my road  
every bit as much as yours.

Oh, by the way, this city slicker swarm-  
ing your roads has lived in Stouffville for 27  
years. I'm sure I pay every bit as much in  
taxes and insurance as you.

SANDY MACKENZIE  
STOUFFVILLE

### Churches tax-exempt for good reason

*Re: Business park no  
place for church: town staff  
Sept. 7.*

Let's talk about zoning.  
Heavy industrial areas  
have special electrical and  
environmental needs so,  
frankly, unless you have a  
grimy and smelly business  
you don't want to be there.

Business areas are for  
workers who wear clean  
shirts and want to smell the  
vanilla candle on their desks  
— that's OK.

Residential areas are for  
anyone who wants to sleep  
in this town or send their  
kids to our great schools.  
Whitchurch-Stouffville  
council zones for thousands  
and thousands of dwellings  
and gives up hundreds of  
acres.

But wait, practically  
all of our new citizens in  
Stouffville do not work here

### HAVE YOUR SAY, STOUFFVILLE

► What do you think of  
these issues or any others?  
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and probably never will.  
We know this because they  
arrived before we built up  
the business space and they  
have money every month to  
pay the mortgage.

Why did we not save  
some of that space for the  
173 acres shortfall business  
areas to employ people who  
obviously will not be work-  
ing here anyway?

We know why — all that  
delicious tax money.

Churches do not pay  
property taxes. What a  
bunch of freeloaders.

I thought the reason  
churches do not pay prop-  
erty taxes and people get  
income receipts is that

churches take their money  
and do beneficial work to  
their communities, which  
no government could afford  
to do without taxing you a  
bunch.

Wait a minute, did I just  
say churches reduce the tax  
burden on the town and  
region? Ask the food bank.  
You have to put that in the  
equation Wilf Morley, for-  
mer town councillor.

And while doing this  
beneficial work, they buy  
stuff from local businesses.

Now we are back to the  
top of business areas.

The Church of Jesus  
Christ is one of the largest  
employers in town.

Oh, I just had a thought.  
That means they make a  
bunch of people move to  
this town to pay property  
taxes.

Oh, boy, hope the town  
council can process all this.  
Time for a nap.

RON BOYD  
STOUFFVILLE