

King welcomes transit expansion plans

By Mark PavilonsEditor

GO and Metrolinx are in the midst of a transition. And the end result will benefit all commuters in the GTA, including those in King. King councillors heard from staff from Metrolinx in transit expansion that will eventually result in two-day, all-day service every 15 minutes in York. Jake Schabas, head sponsor, planning and development with Metrolinx, noted there are many moving parts to the process, including upgrades across the system. The future will completely change the focus from rush-hour based to reliable, all-day service. It will mean more access to more people. He said they want GO to be the mode of choice for residents for all of their trips. Along with service improvements, faster and more efficient trains are planned, some reaching speeds of up to 140 km/h between stations. Plans call for more accessible stations and more improvements to Union Station. In 2019, GO made roughly 3,500 trips per week and ultimately, they're looking at more than 10,000 trips per week. Schabas said GO expansion has economic benefits across the province, benefitting consumers and businesses. For every dollar invested in GO expansion, the region benefits by \$2.60. That's significant when it comes down to the total planned. The multi-year expansion will require roughly \$35.4 billion. These incremental costs include \$12.2 billion for capital and \$4.4 billion in operating costs. Other benefits to this growth will make roads safer and less congested and improve air quality and greenhouse gas emissions. Major projects already completed included improvements to Rutherford Station, Kipling and Union. King City GO is currently undergoing upgrades, as are Bramalea, Barrie and Malton, to name a few. In King, a new west platform is planned, along with a pedestrian bridge. Surface parking is projected to grow with 192 net new stalls, 2 accessible stalls and 40 new bike parking stalls. Rutherford has seen a recent underpass installed, improving connectivity to the station. A six-storey parking structure has been built, along with a new pedestrian bridge and east platform. The double tracking of the Barrie corridor began this year and is slated for completion by 2025. Schabas noted there are three main areas of network improvements and some \$11 billion of early and off-corridor projects are already under way. Some of the other improvements include upgrades to level crossings, and there are a couple in King. Stephen Coleman, senior utilities manager with Metrolinx, noted said they are also looking at whistle cessation measures, which King has made known for some time. They are assessing the move at the crossings at Station Road, Dufferin and 15th Sideroad. He noted safety assessment has been completed to identify the specific whistle cessation requirements at each of the crossings. A coordinated approach between Metrolinx and King is under way that involves identification of responsibilities for implementation of improvements and coverage of costs. Back-end requirements of current whistle cessation process (e.g., passing of bylaw, indemnity agreement, operational adjustments) remain and must be satisfied prior to whistle cessation implementation. King staff are aiming to get this done in 2023. Metrolinx's community engagement vice-president, Rajesh Khetarpal said they are encouraging community feedback throughout the process. Schaefer wanted to know whether noise walls were being planned and Schabas said they are in the works in certain areas.