

Transportation challenges abound

EDITORIAL

THE NEW COUNCILS formed as a result of next Monday's elections will have plenty of challenges during their four-year terms, but none will beat those coming in the area of transportation.

As it happens, this election comes on the heels of major traffic disruptions on Highway 10 that have taken place despite time lines that have led to virtually nothing being done on the road for weeks on end, and a contract that inexplicably does not include the long-needed widening of the highway between Camilla and Primrose.

It also occurs at a time when rapid population growth in Orangeville, Shelburne, Grand Valley and Mono has come without badly needed provision of public transit services and when some candidates for Orangeville Council want to close the money-losing Orangeville-Brampton Railway.

Interestingly, the need for improved transportation was a theme explored at Monday night's candidates' meeting in Mono's Monora Park Pavilion, with most of the candidates agreeing that Dufferin County Council and Metrolinx should be involved and one candidate specifically calling for our surviving rail line to be used for a test of self-propelled passenger coaches for commuters who now have no choice beyond their cars and GO Transit buses.

There surely is no doubt that travel by rail can be made popular even if it takes a little longer than a commute by private car, and we've never seen any explanation from Metrolinx or Go Transit as to why they offer nothing apart from double-decker trains and intercity buses when it's obvious that self-propelled single or multiple units could be providing commuter service to places like Orangeville, Alliston and Peterborough as well as off-peak service on existing GO lines.

As we see it, the new County Council should immediately embark on discussions with the Ford government and/or its agencies on two fronts, commuter services and the Highway 10 corridor.

The simple fact is that, with a population likely to reach 10,000 before long, Shelburne currently has no public transit beyond taxis, while Grand Valley at least has a Can-Ar Coach service along Dufferin 109. The County should be asking for at least a couple of GO buses out of Shelburne and one from Grand Valley, as well as beginning talks on provision of some rail service.

As for Highway 10, there is a long list of questions that need to be posed, starting with the rationale behind the current, seemingly endless contract for the roadway between Orangeville and Primrose.

Initially, the London-based West Region office of the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) talked of it as a taking place in 2017, but the contractor, Aecon, was given three years to do the work that would normally have been accomplished in a single construction season. As a consequence, the work has been sporadic, with crews perhaps occasionally visiting the project from other more important jobs.

The fact is that it took no longer for the highway to be widened to five lanes between Orangeville and Caledon village.

Another fact is that, particularly on weekends, the two-lane roadway between Camilla and Primrose is carrying far more traffic today than the road south of Camilla carried when it was widened to four lanes, and that as a consequence a lot of vehicles are using either the Mono-Amaranth Townline or Dufferin Road 11 as safer alternatives to the highway.

Perhaps the most important question to be asked of MTO is when, if ever, will there be truck bypasses of Shelburne (a Highway 10 bypass between Shelburne Cemetery and Dufferin 124 and a Highway 89 bypass via Amaranth's 30 Sideroad).

Our suspicion is that there is no plan for either bypass, nor any monitoring of current traffic volumes on the Highway 10 corridor north of Orangeville.