

Newsletter Fall 2016



Regional and Local Councillor Brenda HOGG

As a Richmond Hillite, you know how frustrating it can be to get through TRAFFIC. People complain about distracted driving: drivers using cell phones; eating at the wheel; using their mirrors for personal grooming and no one uses their turn signals to indicate a lane change! No wonder cyclists and pedestrians feel threatened. Here's some news about transit plans. Some of the work is well underway like the VivaNext rapid bus transit system on Yonge Street and some is in the planning stage – we have to prove our needs before we can ask for financing.

Plans to make our Community Work Requires Investment

Richmond Hill and York Region rely upon Provincial and Municipal plans to build for our future. The Provincial Growth Plan, the Greenbelt Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan collectively protect natural areas within a defined settlement area. Council directs growth to specific areas which will support the high cost of building transit – currently our greatest need. These plans have been under review for the past year. It's time to activate them. The Federal government must invest heavily in public transit and the Province needs a dedicated funding source for transit now. Without these commitments – the intensification of the Provincial Growth Plan will come to a halt and our greater economy will suffer.

Are trains holding you up?

We've all spent time waiting for trains to pass on Elgin Mills Road East, Weldrick Road East or on Centre Street East. As always, there's good news and bad news. The good news is Richmond Hill is working closely with all the organizations which plan, fund and build bridges or tunnels for train track crossings. Our studies based on traffic volumes, rail volumes and the increased potential for collisions have confirmed that the Elgin Mills crossing is priority #1 with Weldrick Road East being priority #2.



Now for the bad news or You knew it would be money...

In today's dollars, the Elgin Mills Road East crossing is estimated to cost between \$35 and \$40 million. The Weldrick Road East crossing cost estimate is the same, \$35 to \$40 million but has the potential for more significant land acquisition/impact issues. Historically, most grade separations for commuter railway transit have been jointly funded by both railway and municipalities. Elgin Mills is a Regional road but Weldrick is a local road. Metrolinx has indicated that they will be establishing a process for consideration of separations across the network as part of its GO Regional Express Rail initiative. Richmond Hill will be competing with 185 level crossings across the GO system. The availability of funding is one of the key considerations in the projects that move forward.

Based on the costs and the necessity of this work, Richmond Hill will be looking for many funding partners from the CNR; and the local, regional and federal governments. Relying on property taxes alone will not build the transit systems we require.

WHAT IS Regional Express Rail (RER)?



In April 2015 the Government of Ontario announced plans to provide Regional Express Rail on CNR tracks. This is a ten year program designed to improve GO rail service across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. The frequency of trains is expected to increase to every 15 minutes during the rush hours along the Richmond Hill corridor and the number of daily commuter trains servicing the Richmond Hill GO Station is expected to increase from 12 to 31 by 2031. North of the Richmond Hill GO Station, expanded commuter rail service will also see the number of daily commuter trains increase as the Stouffville and Bloomington GO stations come online. The number of freight trains is not expected to increase substantially, but the length of the trains is anticipated to grow. That is why Richmond Hill needs to separate train traffic from car, cycling and pedestrian traffic **NOW**.

FAST FACTS:

Here's a scavenger hunt for you...

- ◇ Did you know that there are 15 railway crossings of regional and local roads in Richmond Hill and eight **are** grade separated?
- ◇ The existing railway line in Richmond Hill is owned by the Canadian National Railway (CNR) which leases track time to GO transit and Via Rail Canada for passenger service.
- ◇ Richmond Hill's railway infrastructure forms part of CN's main transcontinental route, linking trade centres in Ontario and on the Pacific Coast. There are 17 freight trains a day and a CN ridership of 93,810 passengers per week.
- ◇ The Richmond Hill rail corridor also serves as many as 10,000 GO passengers each weekday.

VivaNext Updates: vivaNext.com/subscribe

York Region and Richmond Hill continue to build our rapid transit on Yonge Street. Once completed, the rapidway will extend 6.5 km from Highway 7 to 19th Avenue/Gamble Road. The latest consideration at the Region is how to take Viva buses out of mixed traffic in our Heritage Village, north of Major Mackenzie Drive. Discussions about removing Yonge Street parking and dedicating one lane to rapid bus transit has begun. The expected completion of construction is the end of 2018. Any questions? vivanext.com



SENIORS' STRATEGY 2016 Final Report this Fall

People aged 65 and older are now our fastest-growing group in York Region. For the past year, the Region of York has been reviewing population forecasts, current programs and services so that we can best serve and pay for our Seniors' needs. We want to continue to build facilities, provide services, and create programs which are fair, efficient and economical. The following areas of interest and concern have been discussed:

- ◇ Employment, Education and Volunteering
- ◇ Health, Well-Being and Safety
- ◇ Financial Security
- ◇ Housing and Living Arrangements
- ◇ Transportation

Stay Active my Friends!

At the local level, Richmond Hill plans for community facilities and programs to best suit the needs of our Senior population so that we may encourage social well-being and good overall health as we age. The Seniors' Strategy with recommendations is expected this fall.

Richmond Hill Proud! We are proud of our many community facilities, parks and trails. We honour the contributions of Lois Hancey – the longest-serving, female politician in the history of Richmond Hill and the champion of our first swimming pool for the Town (Centennial Pool)! We also honour The Good Brothers, our homegrown country and western musicians with 8 Juno Awards to their credit! And last but not never least; we honour Elvis Stojko, Richmond Hill Olympic medalist twice in Figure Skating!

Richmond Hill - Some Living History



Thank you for reading my newsletter. *Brenda*

If you have any comments or questions...

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