

## By bus, plane, road or train - the economics of moving people

By: Sandra Dueck, Policy Analyst, Peterborough Chamber of Commerce

I often find myself travelling to Toronto for roundtable and consultation events. This past week was no different, as I headed out to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's (OCC) Transportation Report consultation kick-off event. My journey is usually the following: drive to the Oshawa GO station (about one hour), hop on the train (another hour) and then walk to my final destination from Union Station. The appeal of train service directly out of and returning to Peterborough grows with each of these journeys.

As I was on my way to attend the transportation consultation event, I was hyperaware of my trip - how I used the system, the connections I made, the municipalities and regions I travelled through and how most have both urban and rural components, as does Peterborough.

Transportation is an issue that is critically important to the city and county of Peterborough, particularly as officials work to meet government growth and settlement mandates around the Places to Grow Act. The predicted increase in residents and workers leads to questions as to how our communities will move those people in and around our municipal boundaries, as well as across the region and then into adjacent trading areas such as Durham, City of Kawartha Lakes, the GTA and to the east.

Recently, I was part of a committee that attempted to take a peek into the future to understand where our connectivity falls short and perhaps plant the seeds for future solutions. This particular group was formed out of Minister Monsef's Jobs and Quality of Life Summit. Ultimately, the group agreed that supporting the VIA Rail High Frequency Project should be a federal government priority, as well as consideration for funding for identified local pilot projects to help test creative solutions for our local communities.

Fresh off the discussions of that committee, the OCC project is very timely.

One of the key messages around transit is that in order to encourage participation the mode and its schedule needs to be frequent, reliable, convenient and, from an operational view, financially sustainable over the long term.

There were four sessions at the consultation:

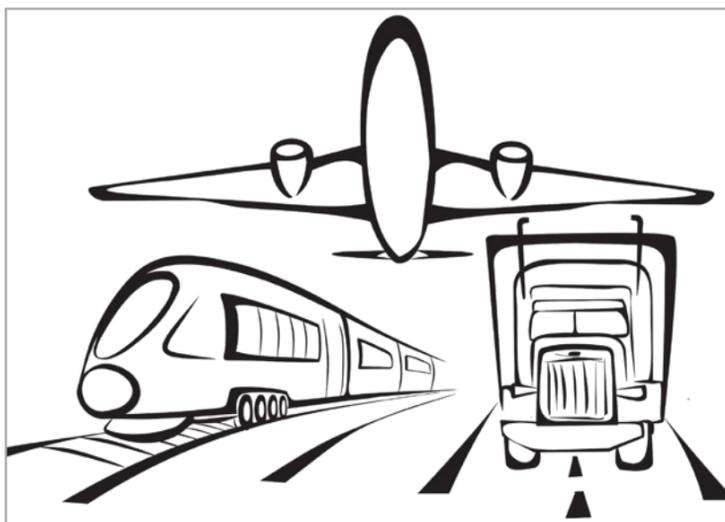
1. The Role of Governance in Transportation Planning
2. Rail's Role in Transportation Solutions in Ontario
3. Creative Transportation Solutions
4. Autonomous Transit Solutions

### Role of Governance in Transportation Planning

For me this discussion led to more questions than answers. Who does what and how do we plan to meet the needs and goals of municipalities, the province and the federal government? How does our ability to be weather resistant impact our infrastructure needs and funding of projects? Will linking funding to outcomes be more efficient? How do we start to harmonize movement? It's also important to ensure that the officials in the right departments are talking to each other and aware of projects and needs.

### Rail's Role in Transportation Solutions in Ontario

Rail is an economic enabler because of its ability to move a lot of people/product fairly quickly over a distance. An example of the efficiency of rail, as one speaker told us, is trains have the capacity to move 50,000 people per hour and in order to move that number of people on a highway that



highway would have to be 25 lanes wide. Stations become transit and economic hubs by default, providing opportunities to transition from rail to other modes of transportation, as well as other economic options such as retail or office uses. Trains provide productivity time, are able to run in all weather, and help decrease greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Some of the challenges of trains are the crossing of many geographic boundaries; the need for multi-level government cooperation; intense capital needs, particularly at the beginning of a project; and the role of the private sector.

### Creative Transit Solutions

This was an interesting conversation about how people get to those transit hubs we've created. How can technology help with first/last mile options? Will there be varying options from bikes to scooters to carpooling along with the traditional transit bus and taxi option? What are the bylaws required by municipalities?

The example of the Municipality of Innisfil collaborating with Uber to help solve its transit challenges is now legendary. What can other communities take away from that example? Is Uber interested in expanding that model?

How interconnected can transit systems be with fares between different modes and an increasing number of regions. For example, instead of trying to figure out and fund moving people from one of our northern townships to Peterborough, can we more easily solve getting those folks to a slightly larger community such as Buckhorn

and then from Buckhorn get them to Peterborough? This way transit, especially in more rural communities, potentially has a better opportunity to meet the requirements of frequency, reliability, and convenience.

### Autonomous Transit Solutions

This line of thinking worked its way into all three of the other discussions as well, but not necessarily in the way I imagined. There is definitely opportunity to see the benefits, but there was also discussion about how an increased use of autonomous vehicles could also create more traffic if the technology is not applied smartly.

One of the most interesting pieces of information around autonomous solutions was on the headway of trains. By safely decreasing the distance between trains, operators can increase the number of trips a train can make in a day, making train options and timing more efficient.

Riding the train and driving back to Peterborough offered more opportunity for reflection. Our population is aging and a portion of our younger generations is finding ways to live without automobiles, so the opportunity for transit to fill a need is there. How do we become more interconnected in our movement of people, students, employees and employers between rural, suburban, and urban, as one speaker put it? How does the new 407 factor in? How do we finance and fund our solutions?

I look forward to hearing from you on this issue. What do you think? How do you see transportation being used in the future?

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- **We Design Group** has moved to the Venture North building at 270 George Street North
- **Kawartha Lakes Construction** is celebrating its 30th anniversary in business with a 30 Acts for 30 Years campaign
- **Diatom Professional Consulting & Training** has launched a new website

- **Ben vanVeen Century 21** will be morphing into **TEAM VANRAHAN** as he is joined by his partner, Catherine Hanrahan
- **The Silver Bean Cafe** raised \$2,012 from their morning fundraiser on July 6th for **Habitat for Humanity Peterborough & Kawartha Region Women Build**
- **Canadian Mental Health Association - Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge Manager** of Community Engagement Kerri Davies will be retiring this year. Congratulations!
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