

Consult community in freight train plans

Thornhill Liberal | Apr 27, 2016

Re: York to fight pitch to reroute risky freight trains here, April 14.

It has come to the attention of the Grandview Area Residents Association (GARA) that consideration is being given by Metrolinx and GO Transit to possibly improving passenger traffic on the Milton and Kitchener lines.

Information on the planning process can be found in Report ENG-020-15 “The Missing Link,” as well as the article in The Liberal.

One proposal for achieving this improved service would involve construction of two-way trackage to widen the Milton and Kitchener lines. There is some suggestion in the report that widening would have very severe and serious consequences (not specified in detail) and hence this alternative has been rejected out of hand.

The other recommended model is the construction of a new rail corridor linking the CN bypass line at Bramalea with the CP through route near the Milton-Mississauga border — i.e., the so-called missing link.

In order to make this latter solution viable, additional construction would be required (upgrades and new connections).

The objective in both instances appears to be the reduction or removal of freight train traffic on the Metrolinx tracks in question, while increasing the freight traffic on alternate routes such as the one running through Thornhill and other York Region cities.

Although GARA is in full support of enhancing GO Transit service for commuters, it does not support a solution which would increase the frequency of freight train traffic in our area.

Thornhill, and other York communities that would be affected, are mature residential neighbourhoods which already suffer the effects of rail traffic at the current level.

It appears that there has been no consultation with community groups to date on this proposal and, indeed, the report does not even consider the negative consequences of increased freight traffic in the affected regions.

To illustrate, increased frequency of freight train traffic will generate increased noise, dust, vibration, increased maintenance on rails and bridges, perhaps the need to expand berms, as well as the risk of an increase in accidents and spills of noxious and/or hazardous materials.

This is of particular concern, as our local elementary school is located less than a block from the CN track.

Additionally, any further construction will bring with it a host of undesirable effects on the community.

We respectfully request that these concerns be taken into consideration in any further planning.

Sandra W. Pyke

Member of GRANDVIEW AREA RESIDENTS ASSOC. Executive, Thornhill