

Dufferin County Council eying possible regional transit service

By James Matthews

Public transit could be the ribbon that better ties Dufferin County municipalities.

And with that in mind, Shelburne Deputy Mayor Steve Anderson said the county possibly leasing one or more Orangeville Transit buses would be a step in the right direction toward addressing some of the transportation shortfalls.

County council at its Oct. 10 meeting unanimously supported Coun. Anderson's motion to have staff to look into the possibility of leasing one or more of the Town of Orangeville's transit vehicles to service communities outside of Orangeville. Council asked staff to provide details of the potential costs and service options.

Coun. John Creelman, who is also Mono's deputy mayor, said using Orangeville buses should not absolve Metrolinx and GO Transit from providing a good transportation service to Dufferin County.

"This is not a substitution for a good, reliable, well-thought-out community bus service connecting Dufferin to Brampton and what's beyond," said Coun. Creelman.

Coun. Sandy Brown, Orangeville's mayor, said the transit task force only just recently had its first meeting. It's very much still in its infancy, he said, but improving transit in the county is very much a main priority for the group.

"This issue of Dufferin County transit is in the terms of reference of that committee, so we will be working towards that," the mayor said. "I just caution you, it's going to be a little bit of time before it gets sorted out."

Coun. Anderson said he's been working with Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones to have public transit in and out of Shelburne. And county council's support is a "giant step forward towards finally getting wheels rolling in our town," he said.

He said Shelburne residents of all ages know first-hand the need for a reliable bus service. Some Shelburne seniors have difficulty getting to medical appointments at Headwaters Health Care Centre in Orangeville because they don't have a ride.

"A taxi ride down to Orangeville is about \$60," said Coun. Anderson, who added many senior citizens work to make ends meet on a fixed income.

There are van services that ferry people to medical appointments, but he said many people languish on long waiting lists to get those rides. And those services don't cater to people who need rides for reasons other than medical appointments.

Transit throughout the county would also open employment and business opportunities for people in many more municipalities.

"The community wins with ease of access," Coun. Anderson said.

He said the benefits for everybody in Dufferin County that can be realized through a reliable transit service can not be overstated.

County Warden Darren White, who is also Melancthon's mayor, agreed.

"Nothing good comes without a few bumps in the road and maybe a couple of cuts and bruises," he said. "And that's just the way it is."