

# Markham Economist and Sun

## New way to get downtown?

Markham

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### **Peterborough train could have local stop**

*By: Frank King*

If you work in downtown Toronto, you may have a new way to get there, thanks to the federal government's plan to restore a rail link between the Kawarthas and Toronto.

The plan, announced in last week's budget and followed up by a report from Peterborough Conservative MP Dean Del Mastro, would see two trains running weekdays from Peterborough to Union Station as soon as 2010.

Mr. Del Mastro's report recommends the service have eight stops, including Locust Hill and either Steeles Avenue (east of Hwy. 48) or Box Grove in the town's east end.

"Development has exploded in this area in the last 10 years," the report says in reference to the proposed Steeles and Box Grove stops.

"And walk-in ridership potential exists because of its proximity to existing and development areas and also to TTC bus routes."

As for Locust Hill, it was a stop on the previous VIA service, which was cancelled in 1990. It could serve the Cornell development and future east-end housing projects, the report says.

While cheering the Markham connection, council member John Webster says Locust Hill would be the best locale for a stop because it would draw traffic east, instead of feeding into west and southbound congestion.

"It will also get traffic from Pickering and Green River, which would not have to go through Markham (to connect with a commuter train)," he said.

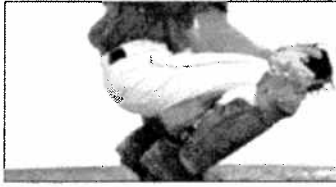
However, there are environmental issues that must be addressed, he noted, because the increased traffic, construction of a parking lot and potential other services might run afoul of the Rouge Park corridor, which helps form part of Locust Hill's boundary.

"There are some who feel there should be nothing developed east of Reesor Road," said Mr. Webster, whose ward includes Locust Hill.

Restoring existing tracks, repairing bridges and crossings for the entire line would cost about \$88 million, the report says. Locomotives and passenger cars would cost \$20 million, based on the latest numbers from CP Rail.

The previous Peterborough-Toronto route was a big money loser, so Mr. Del Mastro's report recommends a stripped-down service with two-car platforms, limited weekend and holiday service, crews of two or less and stations with just simple shelters.

Fares would be priced using a formula similar to GO rail fares. As of March 15, a (Markham) Centennial GO Station-Union Station day pass is \$11.40 for adults and \$5.70 for seniors and children. Adult monthly passes are \$186.



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## No-frills rail link outlined

**Kawarthas proposal announced in the budget includes 2 trains, 8 stops – and no luxuries**

March 04, 2008

**TESS KALINOWSKI**  
TRANSPORTATION REPORTER

Peterborough commuters would be able to choose from two trains daily to Union Station and would even see limited weekend service, according to the proposal that won Ottawa's support for a restored rail link between the Kawarthas and Toronto in last week's federal budget.

Peterborough Conservative MP Dean Del Mastro says it would cost \$88 million to restore the existing tracks, repair bridges and crossings, as well as \$20 million for locomotives and passenger cars, based on the latest numbers from CP Rail.

The rail route would also offer some Durham Region commuters an alternative to the lack of parking and "poor reliability" of GO Transit's Lakeshore East line, says his report. But passengers shouldn't anticipate the luxury of VIA-1 or even Comfort class economy service aboard the proposed train, which could be on track by 2010, according to Del Mastro's report, which was released yesterday.

It wouldn't stand a chance of recovering its costs if it were run the same way as the old VIA line, which generated only 23 per cent of its operating costs and ran at a \$2 million annual deficit.

Del Mastro suggests the service would offer only two-person train crews, no ticket agents unless a third-party vendor took on the job, no separate management structure and bare-bones station facilities such as shelters and two-car-long platforms.

He estimates total annual operating costs of about \$3.5 million, about \$237,000 less than the revenue that would be collected from 903 regular passengers.

Del Mastro says his fare projections are based on GO's distance-based ticket prices and

are competitive with bus travel and the cost of driving. He puts the price of a monthly pass to Peterborough at \$498 (a distance of more than 120 km), as compared with \$347 a month for GO's Barrie service (96 km).

Yesterday, Del Mastro defended the controversial proposal, which has been dubbed "the pork-barrel express" because it would serve a number of Conservative ridings, including that of Finance Minister Jim Flaherty.

"It's not mutually exclusive of transportation projects in the GTA or in Toronto, because we do consider ourselves to be part of the GTA, certainly the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

"Those projects that have been proposed could be brought forward for federal consideration, as can the broader (MoveOntario) 2020 plan," said Del Mastro, who calls his projection of 903 riders conservative, based on population projections for the Durham and Kawartha regions. "The area has exploded."

CP Rail, which uses the proposed commuter line to carry freight for Peterborough-area industry, has agreed to pay some of the cost of restoring the track, and the Ontario government is welcome to contribute, Del Mastro said.

His report recommends only eight stops for the new service: Peterborough, Pontypool, Myrtle, Claremont, Locust Hill, Steeles, Agincourt and Union.