

COMMUNITY

Seeking feedback on electrification of express rail line

Feb. 17 deadline for comments

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About 20 residents from along the rail corridor that runs from Union Station to the Toronto Pearson Airport attended an open house in Liberty Village to hear about future plans to electrify the trains that will run on the Union Pearson (UP) Express, which will run through the former city of York.

On Monday, Metrolinx, which initiated an Environmental Assessment (EA), and Hydro One hosted one in a series of public information sessions on the UP Express Electrification Environmental Assessment.

This project, though currently unfunded, would involve electrification of about 25 kilometres of track along the Union Station GO rail corridor and the Kitchener Go rail corridor.

Metrolinx held a series of public open houses this summer to share project updates and seek feedback on the conceptual design. This second round of joint public open houses involves both Metrolinx and Hydro One project components.

The open house featured a series of display boards set up around Locus 144 Restaurant that explained the UP electrification EA.

The purpose of these information sessions is to update the public on the EA and seek out their input.

"If they have any concerns or comments that they want us to take into consideration as we develop our plans, that is the purpose of these (meetings)," said Karen Pitre, Metrolinx's executive director of electrification.

EAs and the issue of electrification can be complicated, but Pitre said she has seen a well-informed group of people coming out to the sessions.

"They are the people who have been following this for

UPCOMING
The final public open house on electrification takes place Monday, at Lithuanian House, 1573 Bloor St. W., from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

a long time," Pitre said. "But it is very complicated and we are trying our best to explain in a relatively straightforward way what we are talking about building."

Although electrification is not funded yet, Pitre said it's part of the next wave of projects in the Metrolinx file.

The panels shown at the meetings will be available on the Metrolinx website - www.metrolinx.com/en - by mid-week next week and the public can comment on the EA until Feb. 17.

With all these comments under consideration, Pitre said her team will develop the environmental project report, which will be available for public comment.

The final report is to be completed by the beginning of April and then there will be a 30-day public review period when people can make comments to the Ministry of Environment.

South Parkdale resident Ric Amis was prompted to attend the meeting. He said he feels it is important the trains used on that line are not diesel as is planned when the service begins running in time for the 2015 Pan Am Games.

He said he was disappointed to find the meeting was presented as a series of panels as opposed to a presentation by Metrolinx followed by a question-and-answer period.

"They gave me a list of terminology," Amis said, holding up an eight-page glossary of terms. "I could be here all night just reading the acronyms."

i For more on the Union Pearson Express, visit www.upexpress.com

York West Active Living Centre aims to answer the question: 'Where are the guys?'

Programs are designed by men, for men

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While Vincent Knap never minded being the lone man in classes filled with women at York West Active Living Centre, he admits he often wondered how to get other men to join in.

"I've been going there a few years now. There's not enough guys. Where are all the guys?" the 73-year-old retired mediator laughed.

Some of the few men who go to the centre have told Knap they are self-conscious about joining activities when 98 per cent of the participants are women.

That's why Knap is applauding an initiative launched by the centre to focus on the programming needs of older men, a population that, unlike, for example, children, new moms and women, traditionally hasn't enjoyed activities geared specifically to them.

It's important to find ways to get men involved in fitness routines and teach them about healthy lifestyle choices in ways that are relevant to them, said Knap, who lives in the area of Lawrence Avenue and Jane Street.

Men's only classes also provide a social outlet because participants feel more free to talk about topics like last night's hockey game than if the activity is dominated by women, he said.

Providing fitness and social opportunities is especially important for older men, who may have lost those connections when they retired, Knap said.



Staff photo/NICK PERRY

Vince Knap takes part in a Nordic pole walking class at York West Active Living Centre Monday afternoon.

"Their jobs defined them. It was their whole life," he said, adding many retired men end up just "puttering around the house."

Knap is helping to recruit men to the new programming, known as Men: Be Active, Live Healthy.

"It's what is really needed," he said. "Once it gets off the ground and gets a little success, it breeds success."

The idea of getting older men involved in activities came out of a strategic planning process the centre conducted in 2012, which showed many men aren't even aware of community programs available for them, said Shannon

Trapman, co-ordinator of Men: Be Active, Live Healthy.

York West Active Living worked with St. Clair West Services for Seniors, Syme 55+ Centre, Rexdale Community Health Centre and York Fairbank Centre for Seniors, which each held focus groups asking men what types of programming they want.

The centres are also sharing information about research and programming.

Once men find out there is programming available, the next steps are getting them to participate and persuading them to encourage other men to get involved, Trapman said.

The centre also wants men to shape future programming, she said.

For example, baby boomers entering retirement are looking for more physically challenging programs such as Nordic pole walking as opposed to cards and billiards, which traditionally attract older men, she said.

Many men are reluctant to participate in co-ed activities because they are afraid of appearing like failures and even unmanly if they can't keep up with women in the class, said the centre's executive director, Suzanne Teixeira.

As a result, the centre has begun offering a men's only exercise class taught by a male instructor, she said.

Men are also offered pre- and post-program physical assessments so they can objectively see the benefits of physical activity.

In addition to pole walking, other programs include a cycling repair and safety class, a cooking and nutrition program geared to men, a monthly Brain Cafe to discuss health issues and a men's club.

"I think the key point of this program and initiative is it's men's programming designed by men for men," Teixeira said.

"They are directing us on what they want to see at the centre. It's not us sitting in an office saying, 'This is what we think you would like to do.' They come to us and we're implementing it."

Men: Be Active, Live Healthy, a two-year program, is possible thanks to a \$47,000 grant from the provincial government's Ontario Sports and Recreation Community Fund.

i For more information, visit www.yorkactivelivingcentre.ca or call 416-245-4395.