



GO Transit hopes revised design for layover station will appease concerns

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GO Transit has released its final design for a train layover facility west of Baden and will be taking comments from residents until May 15 for inclusion in its environmental study report to the province.

The revised plans came after outrage over an original drawing forced GO Transit's consultants back to the drawing board in March.

During a public information centre on the proposed Nafziger Road layover facility, many Baden and New Hamburg residents voiced anger at the possibility of having to deal with noise from idling engines, diesel fumes, traffic concerns and plunging property values on homes in close proximity to the tracks.

GO Transit is completing an Environmental Study prior to submitting plans to expand passenger service between Georgetown and Kitchener as early as 2011.

The new site plan places the facility's fueling station, preventative maintenance bays and storage tracks over 500 metres from the backyards of homes on Brenneman Drive. A raised-and-landscaped berm will run along the tracks the entire length of the facility to reduce noise and limit visibility of the trains and buildings.

Also prominent in the new design is an outline for a future passenger boarding station immediately east of layover facility, should local demand and provincial funding make it feasible.

Criticism of the facility has targeted the idea that without a passenger boarding station, Wilmot Township won't benefit from the project despite having to put up with all the noise, pollution and traffic opponents say it will generate.

In response to that concern, GO Transit's project consultant Leonard Rach, pointed to increased tax revenue for the township and the fact that, at the outset, the facility will employ 11 people, with an additional 10 needed when preventative maintenance bays are added.

GO Transit has addressed opposition to layover site's limited benefits to the community by including plans for a boarding facility in its drawing.

A package of information was mailed out to all residents in the vicinity of the facility last week, offering the two-week comment period on the revised concept. An itemized description of the facility seeks to address each of the concerns expressed by residents and the municipality over the last month.

Here are some of the highlights of the report:



This drawing, supplied by GO Transit consultant R. J. Burnside, shows the revised design and details for a fence and raised-and-landscaped berm that will block noise and reduce visibility of the station for homeowners in Baden.

Noise was the biggest concern for many homeowners, in particular the thought of hearing idling diesel engines at 4 a. m.

To prepare for the inbound trip to Toronto, trains will start up at 4 a. m. and idle for about an hour before departing. The last train will depart from the facility around 6:35 a. m. Returning trains will arrive at the station between 6:20 p. m. and 8:55 p. m.

According to a noise study, it won't matter when the trains arrive and depart because no homeowners will hear it. With the landscaped berm in place, it's estimated noise will be reduced significantly and well below provincial requirements.

A noise assessment is being completed for the Nafziger Road layover facility by Aercoustics Engineering Limited and will form part of the ESR.

The Ministry of the Environment recommends that noise impacts due to layover sites should not exceed 55 decibels during day and night-time hours — a sound that's the equivalent to 'normal conversation' levels.

Existing noise levels for the area around the Nafziger Road layover facility would typically be in the range of 35 dBA to 45 dBA depending on the time of day.

With the acoustic barrier in place to mitigate future sound levels from up to eight train storage tracks at the facility, it's expected the sound levels from the layover station will be perceived to be nearly twice as far away at the closest receptor — a farm house 300 metres north of the tracks.

An air quality assessment is also being completed for the Nafziger Road layover facility by Ortech Environmental and will form part of the ESR. The assessment includes air dispersion from predominant wind patterns to assess the impacts to air quality resulting from the development of a layover facility.

According to the report, the calculated maximum contaminant concentrations at the Brenneman subdivision are well below the MOE air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and particulate.

GO Transit is planning to connect its sanitary sewer service to the municipal system, eliminating the need for on-site waste storage.

Once the Environmental Study Report is made available for public viewing, GO Transit will notify residents who will then have 45 days to appeal the report. A request can then be made for a Part II order and a full Environmental Assessment of the proposal by the Ministry of the Environment.

The full information package is available to view on Wilmot Township's website at www.wilmot.ca .

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