KEN KLASSEN

enough". In Canada's largest urban centers, the need for transportation alternatives to the highway network is becoming increasingly acute.

Use of corridors for non-rail transportation purposes has already been demonstrated in several Canadian cities. For example the Region of Sudbury has converted former rail corridors to major arterial roads serving the downtown. The Region of Ottawa-Carleton converted a former railway right-of-way to serve as part of the extensive transitway system.

As a consequence of increasing traffic congestion and the difficulty of creating new transportation corridors, the availability of existing rail corridors for transportation purposes may offer a much more significant benefit than in the past. Rail corridors may, in fact, offer the most feasible opportunity to provide additional access to downtown areas. It would be short sighted to allow them to be abandoned for public use without extensive review and discussion on a corridor-by-corridor basis.

On the basis if these findings we have concluded that the answer to the question as posed is unequivocally 'yes'. We have also found that there are many other transportation-related purposes to which an abandoned rail corridor may be put. The provision of adequate transportation facilities does not involve just one mode of transportation. Walking, bicycling, public transit, automobile facilities, and a variety of rail-related transit facilities are all needed in varying degrees in different locations to provide the transportation network required to meet demand both today and in the future. As one of the most significant costs in developing new transportation facilities is the creation of a corridor on which to provide the facility, railway corridors represent a very significant potential asset.

The Federal Interest

The question has been posed as to what Federal interest would be served by becoming involved in urban transportation issues. Perhaps it is more instructive to ask if the current abandonment provisions and processes are serving the Federal interest. There are three reasons why the Federal interest may not be served by the current legislation.

Rail corridors are unique resources in our cities - Nearly four out of five Canadians now live in cities with more than half of Canada's population living within potential commuter rail distance of our three largest centres. Losing potential future regional rail corridors or urban transit corridors will reduce the ability of our cities to function with an acceptable quality of life. In some cases rail corridors are not realistically able to be recreated as the social and political costs are too high. In these cases the corridors should be treated with the same degree of significance as a unique environmentally sensitive area, as they are irreplaceable and essential to the functioning of the urban system.

The success of the local transportation network is important to the national system - Federal interests in air, water and rail transportation are potentially affected if the air, water and rail terminals in our cities cannot be adequately accessed. The national transportation network is dependent on all aspects of the system functioning well as part of integrated system.

(AUGUST 14, 2003 REPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, PROPERTY AND DEVELOPMENT TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROPERTY AND DEVELOPMENT)

The cost to construct a pathway on the CNR Oak Point Subdivision lands or the alternative lands has been estimated to cost $85,000 and $200,000 for an 8 foot wide granular pathway or a 10 foot wide asphalt pathway respectively. Construction of a pathway on the alternative lands would also require the construction of a 6 foot chain link fence to separate trail users from the active CPR rail line directly west of this site. This cost is estimated at approximately $150,000.

Transit Corridor

The CNR Oak Point right-of-way provides an excellent opportunity to improve transit service that currently operates on Kenaston Boulevard. As part of Winnipeg's proposed Rapid Transit System, a transit corridor built in the railway right-of-way between Portage Avenue and Taylor Avenue would provide substantial benefits to transit passengers. Because the busway would permit buses to avoid traffic congestion on Kenaston, travel times could be significantly reduced. This would improve the speed and reliability of the service provided by six existing transit routes that connect the River Heights, Southwest Winnipeg, and Charleswood areas with Portage Avenue at Polo Park. The CNR Oak Point Subdivision is a 99-foot right-of-way. There is sufficient space in the right-of-way to build the transit corridor, a recreational path, and to provide noise attenuation between the corridor and adjacent properties.

Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision specifically identifies the CNR Oak Point Subdivison between Portage Avenue and Academy Road as a transit corridor in Policy Plate B. During the development of the most recent Plan Winnipeg, the Transit Department had recommended that the entire Oak Point subdivision between Portage Avenue and Taylor Avenue be protected for a transit corridor for the reasons identified above. However, this recommendation was not adopted.

Contrary to the adopted Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision, a portion of the lands identified for a transit corridor between Portage Avenue and the Assiniboine River has in fact been sold to private interests for surface parking purposes. Unless these lands are purchased or expropriated, the current situation precludes the use of the CNR Oak Point subdivision between Portage and Academy for a transit corridor.

Currently the City owns four parcels of land, which were once part of the CNR Oak Point Subdivision between Portage Avenue and the Assiniboine River. These are identified as 'Subject City Property" in Misc. Plan No. 11368/5. The City acquired these parcels as street and lane closures in the early 1980's. At this time the Real Estate Division of the Planning, Property and Development Department is negotiating the sale of these parcels to adjacent land owners. This report is recommending that these negotiations be held in abeyance until a final decision has been made regarding acquisition of the Oak Point Subdivision lands.

Had the lands between Portage and the Assiniboine River not been sold, it might have been possible to convert the existing railway bridge over the Assiniboine River for transit purposes. While it would have been preferable to still have the entire Oak Point right-of-way between Portage and Academy available for transit purposes, development of a transit corridor within the Oak Point subdivision between Academy and Taylor would still be a significant improvement. Buses could use the St. James Bridge to access/egress the corridor at Academy Road.

If a transit corridor were to be built in the Oak Point subdivision, the first phase of the busway would extend from Academy to Corydon Avenue. It would be recommended, however, to acquire the complete right-of-way between Portage and Taylor Avenues. Given current rates of development in the southwest part of the city and given anticipated development of the Kapyong Barracks lands, the complete right-of-way between Portage and Taylor would be needed for the transit routes servicing the new developments.

Future development will increase transportation demands on Kenaston Boulevard (Linden Ridge, Waverley West, Kapyong Barracks lands). Plan Winnipeg has objectives to reduce reliance on the private automobile for transportation and to implement "Smart Growth" development planning. In addition, the options to accommodate transportation demand growth solely by additions to the roadway capacity of Kenaston Boulevard are limited. It is therefore recommended that a consultant be retained to undertake an analysis of transportation system options (including a transit corridor with an integrated recreational trail) for the Oak Point Subdivision between Portage Avenue and Taylor Avenue. The consultant study would include the following:

1. A review of current and anticipated land use in the Kenaston and Southwest Winnipeg area.
2. The identification of alternative transportation system options to accommodate growth in transportation demand resulting from new development in the Kenaston area.
3. The preparation of a functional design of an integrated transit corridor and recreational trail in the Oak Point subdivision between Portage Avenue and Taylor Avenue (including land requirements, recommended alignment of busway and recreation path, structure requirements, noise attenuation requirements, drainage requirements, utility requirements, access/egress connections, busway station locations, and a capital cost estimate).
4. An assessment of the impact a transit corridor would have on the need to add roadway capacity to Kenaston Boulevard.
5. Public consultation with affected residents, businesses, and organizations.

The cost for such a study is estimated at $175,000. It is recommended that this amount be added to the 2003 Current Estimates for the Planning, Property and Development Department to undertake the consultant study in consultation with the Transit and the Public Works Departments.

Bridge Condition

The Engineering Division of the Public Works Department has reviewed the Structure Value Assessment report of the bridges prepared by ND LEA Engineers & Planners Inc. for Canadian National Railway and conducted a cursory inspection of the three bridges. The Engineering Division concurs with the Structure Value Assessment report's assessment that the approach spans, over Wellington Crescent and Wolseley Avenue, are unacceptable for any bridge conversion/replacement scenario. They are in fair condition but do not lend themselves well to conversion or long term durability.

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2003

Bus corridor could be unobtrusive

By Craig Mitchell

I live on Centennial Street in River Heights, directly adjacent to CNR's decommissioned Oak Point right-of-way. It is a 90-foot wide by three-kilometre-long stretch of land 150 yards east, and running parallel to Kenaston Boulevard. The traffic woes on Kenaston are well documented.

Three years ago, upon hearing the right-of-way was being considered as a possible transportation corridor, I contacted Coun. Garth Steek, who assured me that I would be hard pressed to find anyone in opposition to any of the decisions he's made as a member of the community committee in regards to land transactions. I had no reason to doubt him. My presumption has been turned upside down since then, and I am not alone. What I have seen, heard and witnessed since, to say the very least, disappoints me.

As Mr. Steek wrote two weeks ago, "In the fall of 2002, after extensive public consultation, city council unanimously turned down CN's application to rezone these lands for infill housing. During the course of this rezoning, area residents (400-500) indicated that they wished to see this area left in green space and that it should be a linear parkway through the southwest quadrant of the city. The area residents were equally adamant in their opposition to a transit corridor, and I am in complete agreement."

Stop right there.

Thrust upon us was not the idea of an unobtrusive, quiet, dedicated bus and bicycle corridor. It was, rather, fear-mongering that our back lane could become a transportation corridor replete with the potential 40,000 cars, trucks, buses and semi-trailers that traverse Kenaston daily. That is what was portrayed throughout the initial stages of this fiasco.

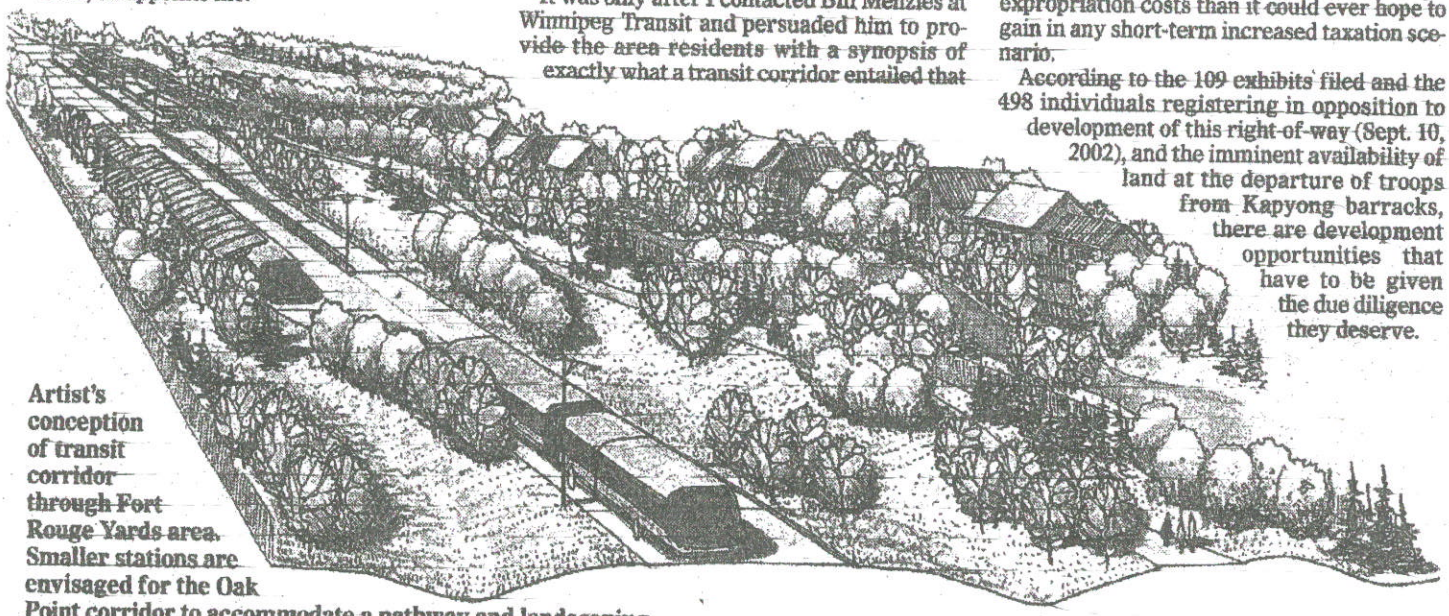
It was only after I contacted Bill Menzies at Winnipeg Transit and persuaded him to provide the area residents with a synopsis of exactly what a transit corridor entailed that we got the truth.

Guess what? A delegation of 25 residents of Centennial, Lockwood and Beaverbrook streets listened and were astounded that this information was never brought to light.

I'd like you to ask Mr Steek which "informed" area residents are opposed to a transit corridor. Because, although the logical choice is a recreation trail linking the neighbourhoods and fitting perfectly in with the Winnipeg Plan 2020 vision, every one us in that room on Nov. 18 with Mr. Menzies would prefer to see Winnipeg benefit from acquiring that property for its golden potential as a transit corridor, rather than see the continuation of piecemeal developments that only Coun. Steek supports.

If looking at a map today doesn't reveal how beneficial this land is to Winnipeg, it most certainly will in the future, at which time it is going to cost the city much, much more in expropriation costs than it could ever hope to gain in any short-term increased taxation scenario.

According to the 109 exhibits filed and the 498 individuals registering in opposition to development of this right-of-way (Sept. 10, 2002), and the imminent availability of land at the departure of troops from Kapyong barracks, there are development opportunities that have to be given the due diligence they deserve.



Artist's conception of transit corridor through Fort Rouge Yards area. Smaller stations are envisaged for the Oak Point corridor to accommodate a pathway and landscaping.

Transit corridor might be best bet

Coun. Garth Steek, in his letter to the editor Nov. 26, stated that 400 to 500 residents wanted the CNR Oak Point Right of Way (ROW) established as a greenspace. A representation of the Centennial Street west-side residents conducted a 100 per cent door to door survey in 2002 that supported the greenspace by over 95 per cent of the 175 residences. These survey results are on file with the city.

Steek then stated that an equal amount of residents were opposed to a transit corridor on the ROW. Where and how did he gather this information? There is no evidence that he conducted a survey or opinion poll to arrive at this conclusion.

Did Steek explain what impact a transit corridor would have on the adjacent homes from expert information from the Winnipeg Transit Commission; that it would include a recreation path and buffering on each side of the ROW; that the vehicles would be low emission, quiet hybrid buses at present and fuel-cell powered buses in the near future; that the completion of the transit corridor at this location would take place in the second phase of rapid transit systems in Winnipeg, probably not for several years.

Many of us residents are confident that if these design plans were explained to the residents who supposedly were in opposition to a transit corridor, they would change their minds, especially faced with the alternative of commercial and multiple-housing development on the ROW and increased traffic on the streets and lanes.

DOUGLAS C. GEDDES
Winnipeg

DEC. 10, 2003

NOV. 24, 2004 WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

New Flyer receives award for eco-friendly transportation

By Martin Cash

NEW Flyer Industries, a leader in hybrid fuel technologies for the public transit market, has received one of the industry's most prestigious awards in recognition of its efforts.

New Flyer has won the Blue Sky Award, given for outstanding marketplace contributions to advanced, sustainable transportation that cleans the air, improves energy efficiency and helps reduce greenhouse emissions.

New Flyer joins General Motors, Ford and the U.S. Postal Services as other winners of the award presented by Weststart-Calstart, a Pasadena-based not-for-profit transportation industry consortium, since 1996.

"New Flyer is honoured to have our company's commitment to fuel-efficient transit systems recognized," company CEO John Marinucci said in a prepared statement.

Bill Van Amburg, senior vice-president of Weststart-Calstart, said hybrid fuel technologies are growing "like crazy" in light duty vehicles, but also in the heavy duty sector that includes buses.

"New Flyer is the leader in hybrids in the bus market," Van Amburg said in a telephone interview from Pasadena, Calif. "I think Canadians generally pay more attention to global warming issues."

Van Amburg said the trend toward the use of more hybrid fuel buses means greatly reduced fuel emissions compared to traditional diesel engines, less greenhouse gas emissions and cuts down on fuel consumption.

"In any successful business, you have to anticipate the customers' future needs and this (hybrid fuel technologies) is definitely what is coming on the horizon," he said.

New Flyer now has hybrid fuel buses in 21 communities in North America. Its diesel/electric hybrid, for instance, uses electric power in acceleration, making it a less noisy part of the bus's operation and dramatically reduces the exhaust emissions typical in an accelerating diesel bus.

Marinucci has acknowledged in the past that the hybrid fuel buses cost about 50 per cent more than traditional diesel buses, but the additional cost is covered off in seven years of operation due to lower fuel costs and reduced wear and tear on the engine.

In addition to significant technological and commercial strides New Flyer is making in hybrid fuels, it is also improving on the impact its manufacturing operations have on the environment.

According to a company release, its Winnipeg plant has reduced harmful volatile organic compound emissions by 46 per cent since 2002. Its plant in St. Cloud, Minn., was recently acknowledged as being a significant contributor in helping St. Cloud win the Most Valuable Pollution Prevention Award from the National Pollution Prevention Council.

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