

Cost estimate for light rail doubled over five years

June 05, 2009

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The proposed \$710-million cost to put electric trains Kitchener and Waterloo has doubled in five years.

Building rail transit on the spine of the cities was estimated at \$21 million per kilometre in 2004. Today it will cost \$40 million per kilometre.

In explaining the increase, regional planners point to:

- Annual construction inflation reaching 10 per cent.
- The addition of three kilometres in tracks.
- New structures, higher costs for a maintenance facility and new parking, property and utility costs.

Regional Chair Ken Seiling isn't surprised by the increase, saying other construction projects have seen similar jumps.

He was asked: Is it too much to pay?

"I'll tell you that at the end of the day, when we find out what the federal and provincial contributions will be," Seiling said. "I think that question's premature."

Senior governments have said they are interested in paying most rapid transit costs but have not pledged a dollar amount.

Regional council has been warned local taxpayers might be on the hook for \$150 million.

Critic John Shortreed, a retired transportation professor, contends the cities are too small to justify rail transit costs.

"You can build buses for a lot less," he said. "Buses can do practically everything rail can do, and will do some things a little bit better."

Rapid buses are less than half the cost of trains, according to regional estimates.

Few local commuters ride transit but proponents say trains will draw homes and jobs to neighbourhoods around stations. Council plans to vote on trains June 24.

Fast buses are proposed in Cambridge for an extra \$80 million.

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SOARING COSTS FOR ELECTRIC RAIL TRANSIT

2004 cost =	\$306 million
Add: + \$188M	Construction inflation
+ \$ 64M	Three extra kilometres
+ \$ 50M	Extra utility relocation costs
+ \$ 46M	Extra for maintenance facility
+ \$ 46M	New structures and property costs
+ \$ 10M	Two parking facilities
2009 cost =	\$710 million

Source: Region of Waterloo