

Joell Ann Vanderwagen

• Oshawa, Ontario • Canada

TO: Durham Region Transit Executive Committee June 5, 2024
FROM: Joell Vanderwagen
RE: Need For Continuous Service On Arterial Roads Plus Story Of Joell's Recent Trip Experience

INTRODUCTION

On March 6th I came before your Committee to recommend that DRT have continuous transit service on the grid of major roads—east/west and north/south—as the best possible framework for the entire system.

Today I want to continue that topic and focus on two routes:

Wilson Road in Oshawa and the **Bloor/Victoria/Bayly** corridor across the south of Durham.

We can look at the **system map of the DRT** that I have included on the last page of this submission.

WILSON ROAD

From Conlin, the **Wilson #405** bus travels **south on Wilson** past Taunton, past Rossland to Adelaide where, for some reason, it **turns westward and goes along Adelaide** all the way to Thornton Road. There it turns south and heads down to Gibb. Then it turns east on Gibb and heads to the Oshawa Centre terminal. On the return trip to Wilson it does that in reverse.

My husband knows this route well because once a week he goes to a site on Wilson where he has some management duties. He is 76 and gave up his car two years ago. He catches the #403 bus to the Oshawa Centre and then rides the **#405** up to Wilson, first having to travel well out of his way west along Thornton.

Luckily, he can reach his destination. But, if he needed to go to a location further south, he would be out of luck. **South of Adelaide, there is no transit service on this long stretch of Wilson**, down to Bloor Street and Wentworth. Yet the route is bordered by continuous residential, commercial, and industrial properties.

BLOOR/VICTORIA/BAYLY

On this **major arterial across the south part of the city**, there is **no continuous service** from Bloor in the east to Brock Road in the west. Yet, the stretch of Bloor west of Park Road, for example, is continuously bordered by commercial and industrial businesses, including a car-rental place and two hotels, and finally, the Oshawa GO station. West from there the name changes to Victoria and reaches the **Thickson Ridge Power Centre**, which contains **39 major businesses** such as Home Depot, Canada Computers, Winners, etc.—with **no transit service to this major shopping location**.

When I moved from Toronto to Oshawa in 2016, I lived at 408 Bloor East. Next to my building was a bus stop. Great. Uh-Oh, it was **rush-hour-only**, being useless if I wanted to go to the shopping plaza at Thickson. I would have to go in the morning, wait for the stores to open. Shop, then wait around until the evening rush hour to return home. The same was true of using the GO train. That was when I realized I needed to purchase **MY FIRST CAR**.

Rush-hour-only service may not even be good for many kinds of work-trips. For example, young man in my building, at that time, worked at the Loblaws food terminal at 500 Bayly Street East. He couldn't use rush-hour-only transit because he was on a **shift work schedule**. Thus, a friend had to drive him there.

TEST RUN

On May 22, 2024, I undertook to do a test run on DRT to try to go from a bus stop on Bloor near Simcoe, west to Vandermeer's nursery on Victoria at Lakeridge Road—the **southernmost east-west corridor** that I have described. If you look at the **system map** on the last page you will see the tangle of routes that are involved.

On the next page I have described **my actual experience** in detail, step-by-step. **In summary**, it was awful. What should have taken an hour's round trip, if it were direct service, instead took three hours, involving a lot of confusion, long waits, and a needless detour. Please take the trouble to read through the on-the-ground details of my **rider's experience**.

BUS DRIVERS SHOULD BE INCLUDED

On this trip I took **four different buses**. On each one of them I **talked with the driver** and asked about their experiences with the system and what suggestions they might have. They all said that **no one in transit operations or management is interested in feedback from the drivers**.

The drivers are the ones **on the front lines**: they work with the routes and schedules and passengers. They not only have to try to keep to a schedule while managing traffic and boarding passengers, they are also the most immediate **source of trip information** for the passengers, in spite of unexpected changes in schedules and routes. Another driver volunteered that the top priority would be to have **direct routes** across all the main roads, N/S and E/W. All of the complicated tangents are confusing to riders. The drivers all thanked me for my interest and for speaking to your committee, encouraging me to continue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Bloor/Victoria/Bayly** should have the **same kind of 900 Pulse Service** that is on Taunton, Rossland, and King.
2. **Wilson Road** should have continuous north-south service.
3. **Rush-hour-only** service is useless, even to workers.
4. Ridership on rush-hour-only routes is not an indication of potential travel demand on those routes.
5. **Bus drivers should be included** in planning and decision-making about transit operations. They should be encouraged to call, email, speak to staff, and attend meetings.

JOELL'S TRANSIT TRIP, MAY 22, 2024

I decided to take a trial run to **test one part of the system**: service along Bloor/Victoria/Bayly. I wanted to go **from Bloor and Simcoe to Vandermeer Nursery at Victoria and Lakeridge Rd.**

I went to the DRT website and looked at the **system map of transit routes** for Durham.

If you look at the **system map** (below) you will see on Bloor only gaps in a **patchwork of routes** that dip south or turn north. Please have a look at the crazy service patterns on Bloor.

On the map, I saw that the #411 Westbound would go from Ritson up to the Oshawa Centre, where I would have to transfer to take the **#917 Westbound** to Vandermeer's.

I called Customer Service to confirm my plan. They said that during the day, I would have to take **#421 Westbound** up to the Oshawa Centre (unlike what I saw on the system map). I asked about the discrepancy with the System map and he said he doesn't look at the map.

I looked up the **schedule** for #421 and the next one leaving Bloor at Simcoe was at 3:10 pm.

I arrived at the stop at 3:00pm. **No bus at 3:10.** At 3:20 I called Customer Service and they said it was running late and would arrive at 3:30. OK, I got on after standing at the stop for half-an-hour. Happily the bus was full of young people.

We arrived at the **Oshawa Centre terminal.**

I asked my bus driver (when I had come back to the terminal from my trip to Ajax) if I would find that same bus to go the other way—a **#421 Eastbound**, to the stop on Bloor at Simcoe. The driver said the #421 Eastbound would be in the same place.

Then, I transferred to the **#917 Westbound**, which went along Champlain Ave. and Consumers Drive to the Whitby GO station, turned south to Victoria Street and then continued westward past Lakeridge. I got off in front of Vandermeer nursery. Luckily there was an eastbound transit stop on the opposite side of the road. I asked the driver what the service frequency was and he said **"every 15 minutes."** Great, I wouldn't have to worry about the schedule.

I went to Vandermeer's and bought seeds.

Then I went to stand at the east bound stop. After 15 minutes I finally **saw the #917 pass, in the opposite direction** toward Pickering. So, I had to wait until it went past Ajax to the Pickering GO station, and finally made its way back eastward. I probably stood at the stop for 45 minutes.

Finally, after a lot of tortuous twists and turns and bumps and grinds, we arrived at the **Oshawa Centre terminal.**

So, I looked for my **#421 Eastbound**. No such thing. I asked another driver and he said the #421 doesn't operate from here at this hour. I asked him how I was to get back to Bloor and Simcoe? He said I would have to **go to the Oshawa GO station** to pick up the #421—and he was going to the GO station. So, I rode with him to the GO station and he said to **wait at Stop #7**. So, I waited awhile and #421 showed up and it took me along Bloor to my stop at Simcoe. Total travel time: three hours + the half-hour at the nursery.

If we had gone in a straight line the round trip would have been one hour. Hence, the need for direct, continuous service—a **Pulse 900**.

South Durham Map - Frequenc X +

https://www.durhamregiontransit.com/en/travelling-with-us/resources/2023-High-school-trav

1 of 2 80%

The map displays a network of bus routes in South Durham, Ontario, with various lines color-coded and labeled with route numbers. Key features include:

- Major Routes:** 916 (PULSE), 900, 901, 901A, 901B, 901C, 902, 902A, 902B, 902C, 903, 903A, 903B, 903C, 904, 904A, 904B, 904C, 905, 905A, 905B, 905C, 906, 906A, 906B, 906C, 907, 907A, 907B, 907C, 908, 908A, 908B, 908C, 909, 909A, 909B, 909C, 910, 910A, 910B, 910C, 911, 911A, 911B, 911C, 912, 912A, 912B, 912C, 913, 913A, 913B, 913C, 914, 914A, 914B, 914C, 915, 915A, 915B, 915C.
- Stations and Landmarks:** Whitby Station, Lakeridge Health Whitchy, Trent University, Oshawa Centre Terminal, Oshawa Station, Durham College, and various health centers.
- Geography:** The map shows the coastline of Lake Ontario to the south and east, with major roads like Hwy 401 and Hwy 7.
- Map Interface:** The browser window shows the URL, page number (1 of 2), and zoom level (80%). The Windows taskbar at the bottom indicates the time is 10:58 AM on an English system.