

Lachine pitches benefits of tram line



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Bombardier Flexity Outlook tram in Brussels. Photo credit: Rejean Benoit. Photo courtesy of GRAME

Lachine borough Mayor Claude Dauphin wants a state-of-the-art tramway system to be built to serve

Lachine and Dorval because the anticipated light-rail system bypasses much of both municipalities.

There was excitement in the West Island when it was announced that the Réseau électrique métropolitain — the REM — would have seven stops serving the core of the region.

But when the preliminary map of the system was released, Dauphin was surprised. He was under the impression the system would follow the Highway 20 corridor that cuts through Lachine and Dorval. In fact, the rail system arcs to the north, bypassing the populated portion of Lachine, then dips south to connect with the airport in Dorval.

“We thought we would be part of the consultation process, but that didn’t happen,” Dauphin said last week after the borough presented a 73-page brief at the BAPE hearings.

The Bureau d’audiences publiques sur l’environnement — Quebec’s environmental review board — is analyzing all the briefs presented by organizations and individuals on the subject of the REM and will present findings and recommendations to the government.

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Lachine’s brief called for either an extension of the REM to serve the borough or the installation of a Dorval-Lachine-Turcot tramway system that would serve the underserved. The brief outlined two possible routes for the tramway – one that would wind its way through the municipalities and

the other that would hug the Highway 20 corridor. Both options would connect with the orange métro line.

“The tram is the Rolls-Royce of public transit,” Dauphin said. “There are 270 cities around the world that have tramways. The federal government has promised \$60 billion for infrastructure projects. I think that puts us on the right track for the future.”

The brief calls for a guarantee that the corridors required to either extend the REM or create a tramway system be reserved and that funds allocated to future public transit projects favour initiatives that reduce the number of cars on the road and thus reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Lachine is not served by the métro and has one train station on the AMT Vaudreuil-Hudson line.

But there is some good news. Dauphin said the new Gare du Canal train station on the Candiac line will be ready by the end of November. The station is being built where St-Joseph Blvd. and Victoria St. intersect at the east end of the borough. Montreal purchased land from a private owner to create a 150-car parking lot to serve commuters.

Dauphin said the Gare du Canal station is being built as a temporary service to help commuters avoid the traffic tangle caused by the overhaul of the Turcot Exchange.

“But once work on the Turcot is finished, they start working on the St-Pierre interchange,” he said. “Our objective is for the Gare du Canal station to become permanent. However, the train doesn’t run on the weekend.”

The brief also asks for guarantees that the Vaudreuil-Hudson and Candiac lines will continue to function after the REM is in place.

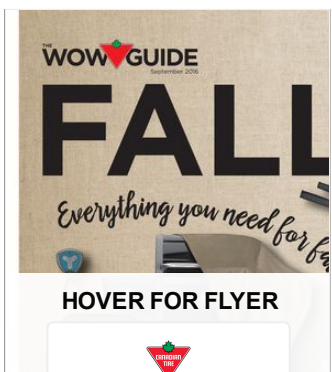
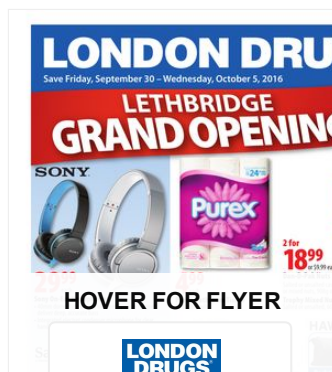
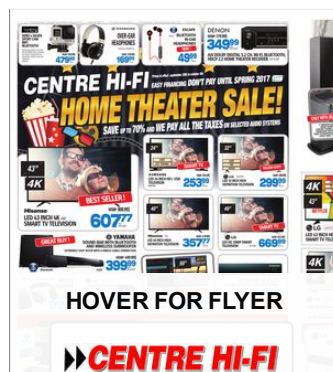
Dauphin said a tram system would be ideal to serve the massive 5,000-unit residential development in the works in eastern Lachine. Each municipality on the island has been asked to comply with the densification requirements detailed in the Montreal Agglomeration Council’s land use and development plan. Access to public transit is a priority when flagging locations suitable for residential development.

“For the development to be considered at TOD (transit-oriented development) we need a tram line,” Dauphin said. “Without efficient public

transit in place, people are going to use their cars. Our research shows that only 23 per cent of people living in Lachine use public transit to get around. With a tram line we think we could increase that to 35 per cent.”

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Paul Broomfield

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