

Criticism greets Tremblay's transport plan Mayor shares vision for next 20 years

By LINDA GYULAI GAZETTE CIVIC AFFAIRS REPORTER The Gazette 12 Jun 2007

They came with concerns about road extensions, accessibility for disabled people on public transit, abandoned rail lines and government financing.

About 40 people attended the start of public consultations on Mayor Gérald Tremblay's \$8.1-billion, 20-year transportation plan last night.

And although the first meeting of the island council's transportation committee was intended only as an information session on the 151-page plan before it accept briefs from the public in late August, it drew a diverse group.

The transportation plan isn't even accessible to visually impaired people, Mathilde Le Bouédec, who works with a transit coalition that's seeking to improve accessibility for disabled people and seniors, told city officials. The plan is available on the city's website; however, it's not in a word-processing program that would be compatible with software that could convert it into an audio file, she said.

It's one example of why Montreal should consider accessibility needs as readily as it thinks about sustainable development when it draws up plans, she said.

Her group, the Regroupement des usagers de transport adapté et d'accessibilité de l'île de Montréal, is critical of the transportation plan because other than proposing to add elevators in métro stations and add audible traffic lights, it does not improve accessibility, she said. For instance, the plan is silent on whether tramway lines and new train routes that it proposes would be accessible.

"What's in the plan is insufficient," she said. "Universal accessibility has to become a basic concept in city planning."

Avrom Shtern, a member of ecology group the Green Coalition, was one of several people to question why the transportation plan doesn't propose to re-use abandoned train lines, like the Doney Spur in the West Island.

The city of Côte St. Luc was also represented at the meeting, by residents and a town planner who oppose the delay in the transportation plan of the longpromised Cavendish Blvd. extension through Côte St. Luc.

The plan proposes a tramway network, métro extensions, a shuttle service between downtown and Pierre Elliott Trudeau airport, rapid-bus lanes, double the number of bicycle paths, reduced speed limits and adding more buses.

The plan calls for a \$5.1-billion investment during the next 10 years alone, with Montreal and the island's 15 suburbs to cover \$2.4 billion, or \$240 million a year.

The plan proposes the city install tolls at entry points around the island, which would generate \$300 million a year. The other \$2.7 billion needed over the next 10 years depends on the higher levels of government.

The city will hold another information session on the transportation plan on June 20. Members of the public will be able to present briefs in late August.