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## Public invited on board for transit talks

By LAURA CZEKAJ, SUN MEDIA

The first of six public open houses kicks off tonight as the city seeks input from citizens about the recommended downtown rapid transit plan.

The meetings will be held at public venues across the city up until May 6. The deadline for receiving comments is May 7.

City staff and councillors are hoping for a good turnout as they prepare to make some concrete decisions on the future of Ottawa's transit system.

"We are at a critical point of a transit plan that will shape the city for decades," said Coun. Peter Hume. "We need as much public feedback and input as possible."

The recommended option for the transit system includes a light rail transit tunnel under the downtown core; converting the east-west bus Transitway from Blair to Baseline roads into light rail; and extending the O-Train to a not-yet-constructed Bowesville transit station, east of the Riverside South community.

### CITIZEN SUPPORT

Hume said the public open houses will be beneficial to both transit users and motorists who will be able to weigh in on the city's recommended transit plans.

Hume said the city needs to show its federal and provincial government funding partners that not only elected officials, but also citizens are in support of moving forward on the transit issue.

"Ultimately we are going to have to go to them and say 'We need some money to help make this a reality,' " he said.

During the previous round of consultations there was a "pretty good" turnout in the Orleans area, said Innes Coun. Rainer Bloess.

"I expect more people to come out this time because they will be able to see more specifically how it applies to themselves and their neighbourhood," he said.

Citizens who can't attend the meetings can also make their voices heard online at [ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca), by e-mail at [plan@ottawa.ca](mailto:plan@ottawa.ca) or by calling 311.

"The time for citizens to influence the decision making is during this phase, as opposed to waiting until it's before council and decisions along the way are being made already," said Bloess.

But the east-end councillor added that despite the need for construction to start on an enhanced transit system, it's more important the city gets it done right the first time around.

"As much as people want to see the plans before them, they want to see a decision made and to see actual building or construction going on, as opposed to just talking about it," said Bloess.

### OPEN HOUSE

Here is a list of the open houses being hosted by the city regarding the recommended downtown rapid transit network:

- Today: Bob MacQuarrie Orleans Recreational Centre, 1490 Youville Dr., 7-9 p.m.
- Thursday: OC Transpo, Commissioners boardroom, 1500 St. Laurent Blvd., 7-9 p.m.
- April 28: Jim Durrell Recreation Centre, 1265 Walkley Rd., 7-9 p.m.
- April 29: Lansdowne Park, Coliseum Building, 1015 Bank St., 7-9 p.m.
- April 30: Nepean Sportsplex, Salons A and B, 1701 Woodroffe Ave. 7-9 p.m.
- May 6: Holy Trinity School, 180 Katimavik Rd., Kanata, 7-9 p.m.