

MEMORANDUM

TO: Cordelia Abankwa-Harris
Director, Policy & Program Support
Community Services and Housing

FROM: Barbara Bridle
Committee Coordinator

DATE: April 24, 2007

RE: **York Region Transit Mobility Plus Cross-Boundary Trial Service Report**

Regional Council, at its meeting held April 19th, 2007, adopted, as amended, Clause No. 3, Report No. 3 of the Transit Committee regarding the above-noted matter.

By adopting the recommendations in the March 27, 2007 report of the Commissioner of Transportation and Works, Council authorized the following:

1. The York Region Transit Mobility Plus one-year cross-boundary trial service to selected locations within the City of Toronto, as noted in this report, be continued.
2. A formal request be sent to the Toronto Transit Commission's Wheel-Trans requesting eligibility reciprocity for registered YRT Mobility Plus customers.
3. York Region Transit staff conduct an annual review of Toronto destinations with the objective of adjusting the number of locations based on usage and the availability services within York Region;
4. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee for information, and to the Toronto Transit Commission.
5. York Region Transit staff be requested to prepare a report and a resolution requesting the Ministry of Transportation's intervention on the issue of eligibility reciprocity with the Toronto Transit Commission's Wheel-Trans service.

Attached please find the Council Extract and background information contained in Clause No. 3, Report No. 3 of the Transit Committee. Please confirm if you would like this communication placed on the next AAC Committee agenda for June 20, 2007.

Attachment (1)

Copy to: Bruce Macgregor, Commissioner, Transportation and Works
Don Gordon, General Manager, York Region Transit

Clause No. 3 in Report No. 3 of the Transit Committee was adopted, as amended, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting on April 19, 2007.

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YORK REGION TRANSIT MOBILITY PLUS CROSS-BOUNDARY TRIAL SERVICE

(Regional Council at its meeting on April 19, 2007 amended the foregoing Clause to provide that a copy of the report also be forwarded to the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority.)

The Transit Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The presentation by Irene McNeil, Manager, Service Planning, be received;**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report, March 27, 2007, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works, be adopted with the following additional recommendation:**
 - 5. York Region Transit staff be requested to prepare a report and a resolution requesting the Ministry of Transportation's intervention on the issue of eligibility reciprocity with the Toronto Transit Commission's Wheel-Trans service.**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 1. The York Region Transit Mobility Plus one-year cross-boundary trial service to selected locations within the City of Toronto, as noted in this report, be continued.**
- 2. A formal request be sent to the Toronto Transit Commission's Wheel-Trans requesting eligibility reciprocity for registered YRT Mobility Plus customers.**
- 3. York Region Transit staff conduct an annual review of Toronto destinations with the objective of adjusting the number of locations based on usage and the availability services within York Region.**
- 4. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee for information, and to the Toronto Transit Commission.**

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Transit Committee and Regional Council on the results of the York Region Transit (YRT) Mobility Plus one-year cross-boundary pilot service to selected locations within the City of Toronto.

3. BACKGROUND

At its meeting in September 2004, Regional Council approved a YRT staff report summarizing the recommendations of a study prepared by Entra Consultants regarding a number of Mobility Plus service initiatives planned for 2005. One of the recommendations related to the provision of cross-boundary services to the City of Toronto.

At that time, Mobility Plus cross-boundary service was provided only from the City of Vaughan into the City of Toronto, a policy pre-dating transit amalgamation in 2001. The Toronto service area boundary was Highway 401 to the south, Yonge Street to the east, and the Regional Municipality of Peel to the west. These trips were provided on a single-fare basis. Following amalgamation, this policy continued for Vaughan-based trips; however, Mobility Plus registrants from other parts of the Region could not avail themselves of this service.

Based on the need to remove this service inequity, staff recommended and received approval from Regional Council to conduct a one-year trial whereby all eligible Mobility Plus registrants would be offered cross-boundary service, on a single fare, to selected City of Toronto destinations.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Cross-Boundary Destinations and Ridership

The cross-boundary destinations for the pilot were selected based on the most commonly requested locations north of Highway 401. Included in the list were hospitals and major medical facilities, social service agencies, major educational institutions, three accessible subway stations, (Finch, Downsview and Don Mills) and one residential location, (4000 Don Mills Road at Steeles Avenue, which was added during the trial with Council approval).

Attachment 1 includes a complete list of destinations served during the pilot, along with the 11 top locations generating 500 or more trips per year. *Attachment 2* is a corresponding map.

A total of 16,384 trips were made to/from the cross-boundary locations during 2006. This represents a 6% share of the total Mobility Plus trips (284,000) taken over the same period. At a cost of approximately \$26 per passenger trip, the total cost for cross-boundary trips is about \$430,000 annually.

Table 1 categorizes these trips into three distinct categories: subway terminal points, post-secondary schools and an 'other' category relating to medical, day programs, work and social trips. It should be noted that Mobility Plus reservations staff do not ask for the purpose of the trip at the time of booking.

Cross-boundary Mobility Plus trips are further categorized by equivalent trips provided on YRT's conventional transit services. For example, YRT/Viva provides direct (no-transfer) trips to subway terminal locations and post-secondary destinations (York University, Humber and Seneca colleges). When these two categories are removed from the total, less than 5% of the total YRT Mobility Plus trips remain.

Although cross-boundary trips account for a relatively minor portion of total trips, one of the issues raised at an operational level is the limited opportunity for linked or shared trips. As a result, the majority of cross-boundary trips deadhead (i.e. travel without a passenger) in one direction or the other.

Table 1
Cross-Boundary Trip Patterns (2006)

Location and Description	Rationale	% of Total Cross-Boundary	Comments
Accessible Subway Terminals (Don Mills, Finch and Downsview)	Consistent with conventional transit, equivalent service practice as per AODA.	948 (6%)	If eliminated, some customers could transfer to Viva (Markham Centre, Richmond Hill Centre, Promenade Mall or York University).
Post Secondary (Seneca, York U. and Humber)	Consistent with conventional transit, equivalent service practice as per AODA.	2,111 (13%)	Issues arise due to size of campus and multiple destinations on campus, justification for door-to-door service.
Other (medical, social, recreational and work-related)	Serves a variety of customers, especially in southern York Region.	13,325 (81%)	Lack of major hospital facility in south-west area of Region; lack of medical capacity/services in general may be an issue. Includes trips by seniors to day programs, etc.
Total		16,384 (100%)	

4.2 Cross-Boundary Service Options

Based on the results of the trial, three options were considered:

1. Continue cross-boundary as per pilot.
2. Reduce the number of cross-boundary destinations consistent with YRT conventional service policy.
3. Service only the destinations with more than 500 trip requests per year.

4.2.1 Option 1 - Continue Cross-Boundary Service to Current Destinations

There is an obvious lack of major hospital facilities in the south-west area of the Region, requiring some Mobility Plus customers to seek medical care within the City of Toronto. For some customers located in the south Thornhill and Woodbridge areas, Toronto-based facilities may be closer than their York Region counterparts.

Also, the south-west area of the Region appears to be lacking in day programs and other seniors' services, which are readily available south of Steeles Avenue. As noted earlier, the 2006 cost for these cross-boundary trips amounted to less than 5% of the total Mobility Plus expenditures or about \$350,000 annually.

4.2.2 Option 2 - Reduce Number of Destinations to Coincide with Conventional Policy

Currently, direct YRT conventional service is provided to three TTC subway terminals (Don Mills, Finch and Downsview) and to three post-secondary schools (York University, Seneca College and Humber College). By reducing the number of Mobility Plus cross-boundary destinations to include only the subway terminals and post-secondary schools, YRT would be providing "equivalency of service" as referred to in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

With this option and based on 2006 data, only about 3,000 or 1% of the cross-boundary trips would remain with direct service. Cross-boundary costs would be significantly reduced by about \$80,000 per year. However, it is likely that the majority of these customers would have to re-orient to York Region-based destinations, the opportunity for which may be limited. Furthermore, these destinations may be even further away than the Toronto-based destinations.

4.2.3 Option 3 - Service Only Cross-Boundary Location with more than 500 Annual Trips

Of the 38 cross-boundary locations, 11 had over 500 trips, accounting for 11,755 trips or 72% of the total cross-boundary activity. By continuing to serve only these top trip generators, Mobility Plus vehicles would reduce the amount of unpaid deadheading time, increase the opportunity for linked/shared rides and increase vehicle availability north of Steeles Avenue.

This option would result in approximately 4,700 or 28% of cross-boundary trips not served. This represents 1.6% of total Mobility Plus trips and equates to about \$125,000 annually. Again, this cannot be translated into savings, since the majority of these trips are likely to re-orient to York Region-based destinations.

4.2 Lack of Reciprocity with TTC Wheel-Trans Services

One of the major obstacles for York Region residents registered with Mobility Plus is the inability to access TTC Wheel-Trans services.

Within the province of Ontario, most specialized transit operations accommodate cross-boundary travel requests by designating transfer locations on the border between the adjacent municipalities. It is not common practice for specialized services to provide direct trips into the adjacent municipality.

Other than the locations included in this pilot, YRT Mobility Plus has transfer arrangements with both the Region of Peel (William Osler Health Centre) and Durham Region (Markham Stouffville Hospital).

At this time, reciprocal client acceptance is the normal industry practice. Customers registered with one specialized service are automatically accepted by other service providers. However, this is not the case with TTC Wheel-Trans service.

TTC Wheel-Trans eligibility is strictly based only on a physical inability to use conventional transit. YRT's Mobility Plus eligibility criteria are broader and include anyone who cannot use conventional transit services due to a functional disability. Therefore, not all registrants of YRT's Mobility Plus qualify for Wheel-Trans service.

The implications of this eligibility gap means that, without the direct cross-boundary service, many customers destined to the Toronto locations would be without accessible public transit.

4.4 Requests for Additional Cross-Boundary Service

During the cross-boundary trial, Mobility Plus staff received numerous requests, not only to expand the number of locations within the trial boundaries, but also to add locations south of Highway 401. Examples of such requests include Sunnybrook Hospital, St. Michael's Hospital and Yorkdale Mall.

4.5 Operational Impacts of Cross-Boundary Service

The provision of this trial cross-boundary service has had an impact on service and vehicle availability when trying to accommodate client trip requests within the Region. For example, some of the cross-boundary trips are provided by YRT's small buses rather than minivans or sedans. This is primarily the case when transporting customers who use very large scooters or wheelchairs. As a result, there have been instances where other Regional trips have had to be re-scheduled to accommodate this situation.

Also, due to the relatively infrequent cross-boundary trip activity, bus capacity and linked/shared-ride opportunities are not available, as is the case with Region-based trips. Contracted service providers have also raised this concern, since there is limited opportunity to obtain a return ride, resulting in substantial trip deadheading (without remuneration).

4.6 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 calls for the provision of an integrated and accessible transit network. The trial cross-boundary service addressed an initial inequity that existed for some Mobility Plus customers. The trial also allowed staff to assess the impact cross-boundary service would have on the availability and efficiency of providing service within the Region. Based on the results of the trial it is obvious that transportation needs of Regional residents are not necessarily met by services provided within the Region itself. By providing limited cross-boundary direct transportation, the Region provides a responsive and unique transit solution for individuals who need the service to maintain and enhance their quality of life.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

With an average cost per passenger in 2006 of \$26.17, the annual cross-boundary trip cost is approximately \$430,000. This amount represents only 6% of overall contracted trip expenditures. Due to the vast geographic nature of the Region, there does not appear to be a major per trip cost difference for intra-Regional vs. cross-boundary trips.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The implementation of the cross-boundary trial service to selected locations within the City of Toronto addressed the need to provide a more equitable service to all registrants of Mobility Plus regardless of their place of residence within the Region.

7. CONCLUSION

The “Mobility Plus Service Implementation Initiative” report, as approved by Regional Council in September, 2004, was directed at moving YRT Mobility Plus closer to its goal of a mobility vision wherein seniors and persons with disabilities will have convenient access to a variety of transportation options. The provision of cross-boundary trips to selected locations within the City of Toronto on a one-year trial basis was undertaken to remove an existing inequity to the registrants of Mobility Plus and to allow staff the opportunity to measure the operating and financial impacts of providing this service.

The continuation of cross-boundary service to selected destinations within the City of Toronto is recommended for the following reasons:

1. Cross-boundary trips generate a relatively small portion (less than 6%) of total Mobility Plus trips.
2. Cross-boundary trips provide York Region residents with access to important medical services and day programs that may not be available within the Region.
3. There is no basis to assume that a similar trip within the York Region boundary would be shorter in distance or cost less.
4. Without reciprocity with TTC Wheel-Trans service, many current cross-boundary customers would find themselves without accessible transit services.

For more information on this report, contact Irene McNeil, Manager, Service Planning, (ext. 5628) in the Transit Branch of the Transportation and Works Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)

Locations within the City of Toronto Served by Mobility Plus in 2006

Name	Address	Comments
Bathurst Walk-In Clinic	4430 Bathurst St.	
Baycrest	3560 Bathurst St.	
Fed. Gov't. Building	4900 Yonge St.	
Bloorview McMillan	25 Buchan Ct.	now closed
Branson Hospital	555 Finch Ave. W.	
Cliffwood Manor	4000 Don Mills Rd.	
Cummer Lodge	205 Cummer Ave.	
Don Mills Subway Station	1700 Sheppard Ave. E.	
Downsview Subway Station	1035 Sheppard Ave. W.	
Earl Bales Park	4169 Bathurst St.	
Fairview Mall Medical	5 Fairview Mall Dr.	
Finch Medical Centre	80 Finch Ave. W.	
Finch Subway Station	5700 Yonge St.	
Humber College	205 Humber College Blvd.	
Humber River Hospital	200 Church St.	
Jewish Community Centre	4588 Bathurst St.	
Kipling Acres	2233 Kipling Ave.	
Lipa Green Building	4600 Bathurst St.	
Medical Clinic	1100 Sheppard Ave. E.	
Medical Clinic	6257 Bathurst St.	
Medical Centre	120 Overbrook Pl.	
Nat. Jewish Women's Council	4700 Bathurst St.	
Norfinch Medical Centre	2100 Finch Ave. W.	
North York Medical Building	1017 Wilson Ave.	
NorthView Centre	4949 Bathurst St.	
Northwood Community Centre	15 Clubhouse Ct.	
North York General Hospital	4001 Leslie St.	
OHIP Office	4400 Dufferin St.	
Scarborough Grace Hospital	3030 Birchmount Rd.	
Scarborough North Medical	4040 Finch Ave. E.	
Seneca College	1750 Finch Ave. E.	
Seniors Centre	2 Buchan Ct.	service ended
St. John's Rehabilitation	285 Cummer Ave.	
Vita Community Living	4301 Weston Rd.	
Wagman Centre	55 Ameer Ave.	
William Osler Health Centre	101 Humber College Blvd.	
York Finch Hospital	2111 Finch Ave. W.	
York Finch Medical Centre	115 Finch Ave. W.	
York University	4700 Keele St.	

**Mobility Plus Top Cross-Border Locations by Total
Number of Trips (500+) for 2006**

Name	Address	Total Trips*
St. John's Rehabilitation	285 Cummer Ave.	2012
Vita Community Living	4301 Weston Rd.	1842
Baycrest Centre	3560 Bathurst St.	1701
York University	4700 Keele St.	1110
Seneca College	1750 Finch Ave. E.	987
Jewish Community Centre	4588 Bathurst St.	876
Federal Gov't. Building	4900 Yonge St.	848
William Osler Health Centre	101 Humber College Blvd.	702***
Finch Subway Station	Finch at Yonge St.	624**
Kipling Acres	2233 Kipling Ave.	551
North York General Hospital	4001 Leslie St.	502
Total		11,755

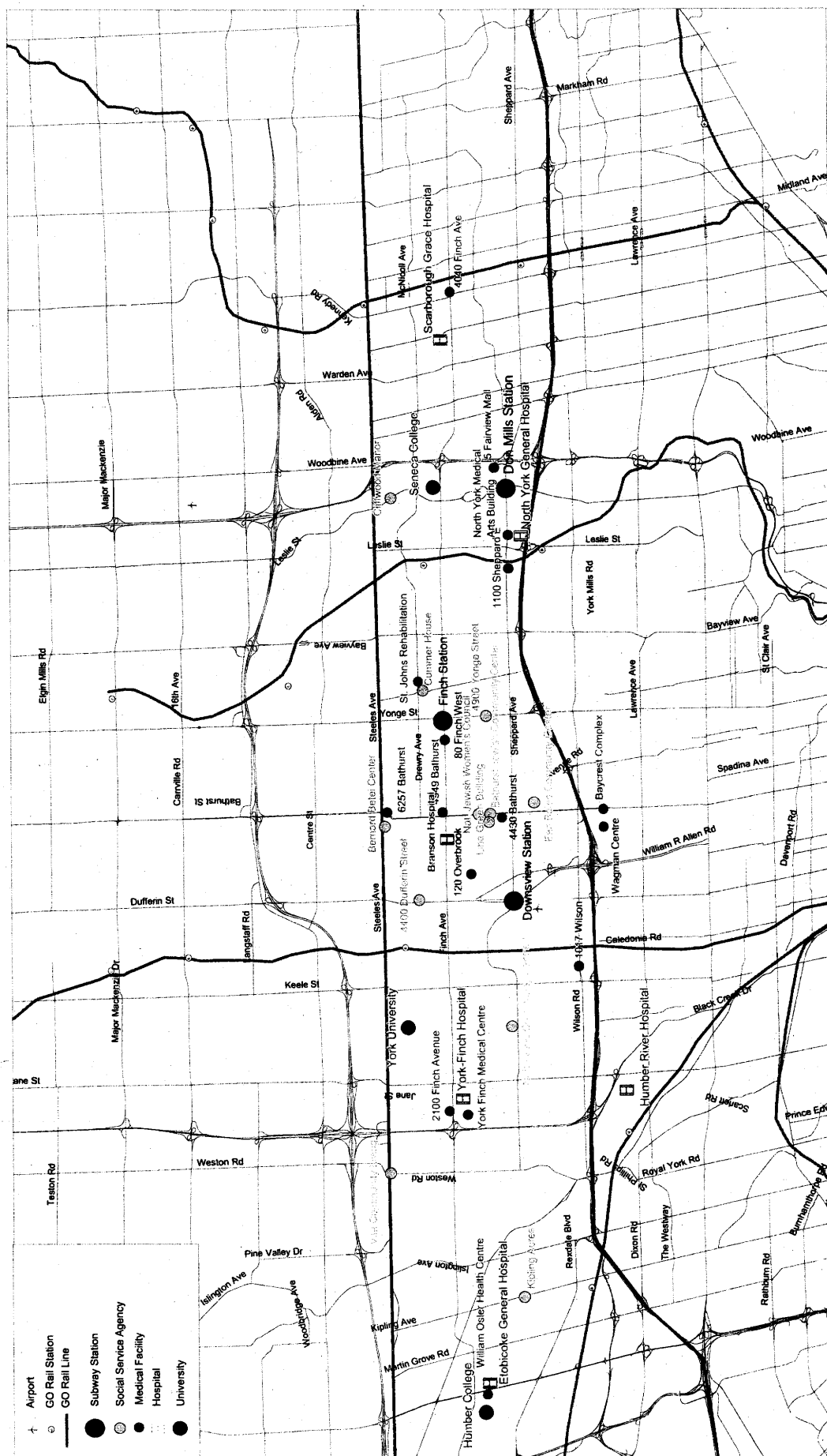
Notes:

The locations above represent 72% of the total cross-boundary trips for 2006

* indicates total trips to and/or from the listed location.

** indicates a potential transfer point to TTC Wheel-Trans or conventional (bus and subway) fleet.

*** indicates a potential transfer point to TTC and/or Brampton Transit.



YRT Mobility Plus Cross Boundary Destinations

Update: March 2007

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