

November 19, 2009

Regional Councillor Vito Spatafora, Chair
York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee
c/o Town Clerk's Office
Town of Richmond Hill
Box 300, 225 East Beaver Creek Road
Richmond Hill, ON L4C 4Y5

Dear Regional Councillor Spatafora:

Re: Travel Training Pilot Program Results

Regional Council, at its meeting held on November 19, 2009, adopted the following recommendations of the Transportation Services Committee regarding the report entitled "Travel Training Pilot Program Results":

1. Council approve the York Region Transit "myRide" Travel Training program as a permanent program.
2. This report be forwarded to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for their information.

A copy of Clause No. 2, Report No. 3 of the Transportation Services Committee is enclosed for your information.

Please contact Piragal Thiru, Planner for Accessible Services, Transit Branch, at 905-762-1282 ext. 5826, if you have any questions with respect to this matter.

Sincerely,

Denis Kelly
Regional Clerk

B. Bridle
Attachment

Copy to: K. Llewellyn-Thomas, Commissioner, Transportation Services
P. Thiru, Planner, Accessible Services, Transit Branch

Clause No. 2 in Report No. 3 of the Transportation Services Committee was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting on November 19, 2009.

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TRAVEL TRAINING PILOT PROGRAM RESULTS

The Transportation Services Committee recommends:

- 1. Receipt of the presentation by Piragal Thiru, Planner, Accessible Services, Transit Branch, Transportation Services Department; and**
- 2. Adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated October 21, 2009, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services.**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council approve the York Region Transit “myRide” Travel Training program as a permanent program.
2. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee for their information.

2. PURPOSE

This report updates Regional Council on the results of the York Region Transit’s “myRide” Travel Training pilot program and recommends its continuation.

3. BACKGROUND

The Travel Training Program provides individualized assistance to help customers travel independently on public transit

The York Region Transit (YRT) Travel Training program (myRide) prepares customers to make safe and confident journeys on public transit. It responds to individual needs and abilities with services ranging from familiarization group sessions on how to use transit to intensive one-on-one sessions to teach essential skills and verify that the trainee can safely use transit independently for important regular trips.

Travel training is for people of all ages and abilities who need additional knowledge and skills in order to use conventional YRT and Viva buses effectively. The following groups are potential candidates for YRT's Travel Training program:

- Individuals with physical disabilities.
- Individuals with certain sensory disabilities.
- Individuals with cognitive or intellectual disabilities.
- Individuals with communication disabilities.
- Seniors not familiar with taking transit.
- Recent immigrants.

Partnering with community agencies and school boards, YRT launched the one-year Travel Training pilot program in May 2008.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

OVERVIEW

YRT has partnered with 14 training partners across the Region who work with people with various types of disabilities

Partnering with school boards, day programs, and service agencies, YRT staff provided training and materials to over 80 trainers who then carried out the myRide training to their clientele. YRT staff provided ongoing assistance and support to the trainers by providing materials such as: trainer manuals, handbooks for the trainees, orientation on a bus, and presentation materials. The trainers provided regular updates to YRT staff on the progress of the program and provided feedback on the materials. In accordance with the YRT fare policy, complimentary fare media was also provided for the purpose of conducting travel training.

Partnering agencies for the pilot included:

- CNIB.
- Ontario March of Dimes – York Region.
- Community Living York South.
- Community Living Georgina.
- York Region District School Board.
- York Catholic District School Board.
- Step-by-Step Day Program.
- LEAPP Day Program.
- REENA Toby and Henry Battle Developmental Centre.
- Autism Ontario.
- Able Network – Aurora.
- Markham Gateway Public School.

- Epilepsy York Region.
- COSTI Employment Services – Vaughan.

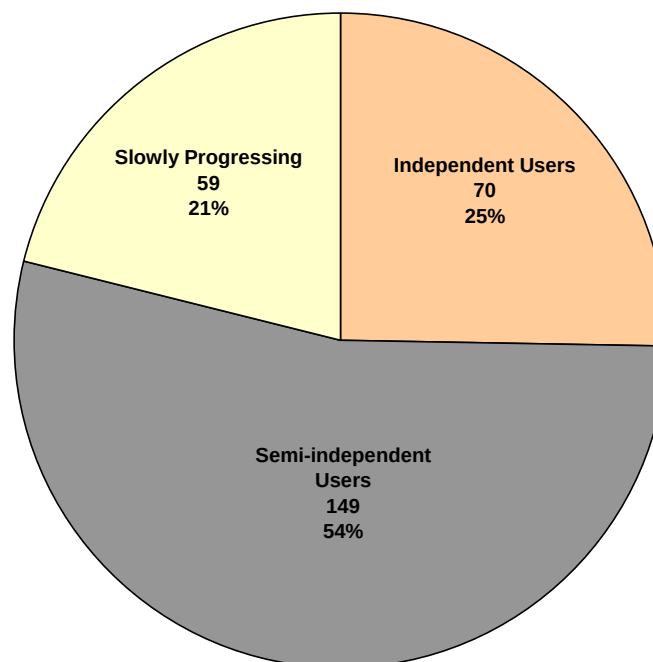
In addition to the above list, there are opportunities for more agencies to partner with the myRide program. YRT staff also conducted one-on-one training to three individuals directly. Individuals were enrolled through community outreach and through the recommendation of Community and Health Services Department. This enabled YRT staff to use and assess the training materials first-hand.

RESULTS

A total of 278 individuals with varying skill levels and abilities participated in the myRide program, with 70% of them now travelling on the YRT/Viva system with greater independence

Through the program, 70 (25%) of the individuals are now able to travel independently and 149 participants (54%) are able to travel semi-independently with some help or using one specific route from point A to point B with no assistance (see Figure 1). The remaining 59 participants (21%) have exhibited slow or limited progress.

Figure 1
Proportion of Customers Responding to Training



Overall, the myRide program has been enthusiastically welcomed by all of the training partners and great interest has been shown by many other service providers. Trainers have provided valuable feedback for improvements to the program. By completing a survey at the end of the pilot, they were asked to rate the format and effectiveness of the travel training sessions, manuals, handbooks and other supporting materials, such as the audio version of the handbook. The myRide program received an average rating of 8.2 out of 10 by the trainers. Overall, the materials received a 7.8 rating.

Independent survey results show an increase in the use of conventional services by Mobility Plus registrants

Results from a survey conducted by Environics Research Group for Mobility Plus in 2008 show that 16 out of 100 passengers have indicated they use conventional services for a portion of their trips - a 100% increase from 2006. This increase is a result of a number of factors including the launch of the Travel Training program, an increase in accessible fleet, and improved accessible infrastructure (i.e. stops, sidewalks, shelters).

NEXT STEPS

Formalizing the myRide Travel Training program would improve overall accessibility of the YRT/Viva system

Based on the feedback from the training partners, the myRide program has proven to promote independence and increase the trainee's confidence in using conventional transit services. The program has given individuals the opportunity to learn a new life skill and improve their confidence while providing them with independent community access. Therefore, it is recommended that the myRide Travel Training Program be approved to be a permanent program.

During the pilot, Mobility Plus registrants were permitted to use YRT /Viva services free of charge using their Mobility Plus registrant identification card. To further sustain and encourage the use of the conventional transit services by persons with disabilities, it is recommended that this practice be continued during the training period only. It should also be noted that Mobility Plus registrants do not lose their eligibility for Mobility Plus service if they use conventional service. It is recognized that some Mobility Plus registrants are able to use regular transit services some of the time – depending on the type of disability and, in some cases, weather conditions.

YRT staff will continue to improve the myRide training materials and find alternate methods of delivering the program

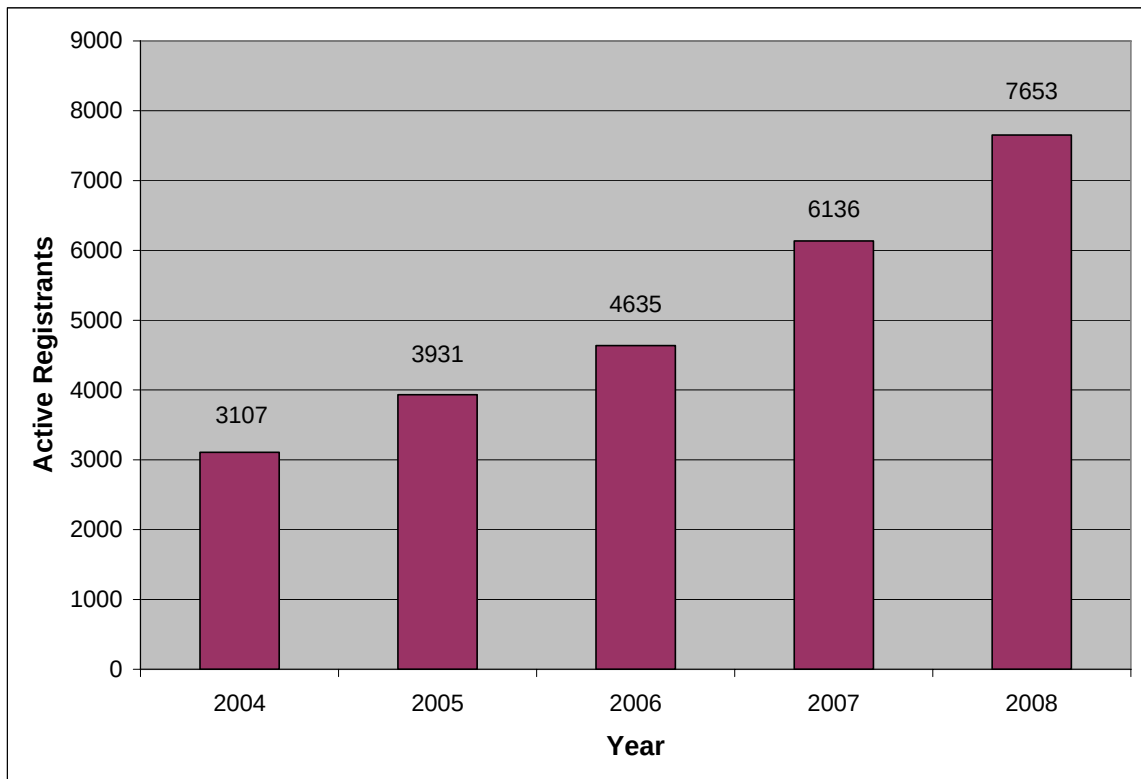
As part of the ongoing improvements, YRT staff will review the feedback provided by trainers on the training program and incorporate the suggestions to continue to enhance the program. YRT staff are investigating the possibility of producing a video training tool to further assist with the delivery of the training.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Travel training program creates opportunities for cost avoidance

Now that the program is developed, the cost to maintain this program (updating materials, agency liaison, training trainers) is approximately \$40,000 annually. The average net cost per passenger on the YRT/Viva system is \$3.71 while the cost per passenger on the Mobility Plus door-to-door service is \$31.91. Over the last five years, approximately 1,100 new customers registered for the Mobility Plus service annually (see Figure 2). Further increases are expected when the Transportation Standard of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is legislated.

Figure 2
Increase in Active Mobility Plus Registrants



During the pilot, three Mobility Plus registrants volunteered to participate in the Travel Training pilot. The trip-making patterns of the three registrants were observed, with the result being an average 33% shift in trips from Mobility Plus to conventional transit, resulting in annual savings of \$2,130 per registrant during the pilot year.

While eligible riders have continued access to the Mobility Plus door-to-door service, the myRide program provides an individual with other travel options, namely spontaneous

travel with no pre-booking requirements. On average, if only 10% of the annual 290,000 Mobility Plus trips were to shift to conventional services, a savings of \$700,000 could be realized annually.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

York Region residents can benefit from the Travel Training program as it will increase their level of independence and ability to travel within the community using conventional and rapid transit services.

7. CONCLUSION

The results of the myRide Travel Training Pilot program have been extremely positive. The program has been embraced by community service providers across the Region. The program has enabled people with varying disabilities and skill levels, seniors, and new immigrants to familiarize themselves with using the conventional transit system.

For more information please contact Piragal Thiru, Planner for Accessible Services at extension 5826.