



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Transportation Services Committee

FROM: Kathleen Llewellyn-Thomas, Commissioner of Transportation Services

DATE: October 22, 2009

RE: September 2009 Ridership Statistics

September 2009 ridership is down approximately 7.6% in comparison to September of 2008 and down 3.5% overall year to date. Generally, ridership for other transit systems within the GTA has also recently been on the downward trend. Although TTC and GO Transit experienced modest ridership increases in September of approximately 1.3% and 0.2% respectively, Brampton Transit is reporting that their ridership likely decreased by approximately 7.5%.

The reasons for the drop in overall YRT ridership this month are similar to those for August 2009: unemployment, the effect of the last fare increase, followed by the unforeseen economic downturn and the significant reduction in gas prices over the same period in 2008.

Also, as a result of the Veolia strike which affected Viva services starting September 25th, 2008, it should also be noted that the relative decrease in revenue boardings this year can also be attributed to somewhat 'overstated' ridership for September 2008. This uncommon occurrence was the result of customers purchasing their fare media in advance, but not being able to use their fares until after the strike was resolved.

Additional factors affecting this September's ridership include:

- A lower transfer rate in September 2008 compared to this year
- Labour Day weekend fell relatively later this year. This likely resulted in fewer fare media sales in September 2009, compared to sales volumes generated for the same month last year

Unemployment

Unemployment numbers specific to York Region are not available separately but are included within the unemployment numbers for the City of Toronto. The unemployment numbers remain standing at 10.0% which is 3% higher than the same time last year.

This increase in unemployment has manifested itself into fewer work related trips. The drop in work related trips is supported by the drop in boardings on several GO Shuttles that take residents into the City of Toronto to Union Station: Newmarket GO Shuttle (-22.5%) and Mill Pond GO Shuttle (-16.7%).

Ridership on several TTC routes serving the City of Vaughan is still declining, which is not surprising given that they serve mainly industrial and commercial areas. For example, boardings on Jane 35D is down 17.7%, Route 37D Islington, down 22.8% and Keele 107 down 17.9%. These routes carry many cross-boundary passengers from the City of Toronto that work in York Region and with higher unemployment rates, those TTC routes are taking a large hit in ridership.

In addition, boardings on VIVA Green is also down by 11.3%. Lack of anticipated development along the VIVA Green line is hurting ridership as well. Overall, however, due to the Veolia strike which affected Viva services last Fall, total Viva boardings have increased by 17.8% for the month of September 2009.

Fares

York Region Transit's cash fares are now the highest in the GTA. YRT/VIVA's cash fare is \$3.25 which is the highest especially in comparison to the TTC which held the line at \$2.75 while still investing heavily into service improvements. TTC's decision to not proceed with a fare increase did not help the situation for YRT/VIVA.

High Gas Prices

Higher gas prices do encourage people to shift from their cars to using transit. Gas prices have stabilized below the \$1.00 per litre mark during 2009 and this has negatively affected ridership. Transit has to work harder on keeping those choice riders.

Kathleen Llewellyn-Thomas
Commissioner of Transportation Services

Copy to: Sabbir Saiyed, Program Manager, Service Planning

e-Docs#1250448