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YORK REGION TRANSIT MOBILITY PLUS MOBILITY PLUS CROSS BOUNDARY EXTENSION REQUEST

The Transit Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, December 16, 2004, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The southerly boundary during the one year trial period for cross-boundary Mobility Plus service into the City of Toronto remain at Highway 401 based on service and financial considerations as detailed in this report.

2. PURPOSE

This report has been prepared to respond to the request made by Transit Committee at its meeting of September 16, 2004, with respect to cross-boundary Mobility Plus service into Toronto. Specifically, staff were requested to respond to the impact of moving the southerly service boundary from Highway 401 to Lawrence Avenue. Highway 401 had been recommended in a staff report entitled “*York Region Transit Mobility Plus Service Implementation Initiative*”.

3. BACKGROUND

At its meeting of September 23, 2004, Regional Council approved a York Region Transit (YRT) staff report summarizing the findings and recommendations of a study prepared by ENTRA Consultants dealing with a number of Mobility Plus service initiatives planned for 2005. One such initiative was approval of cross-boundary service to targeted destinations in Toronto on a one-year trial basis.

Currently, Mobility Plus cross-boundary service is provided from the City of Vaughan only into Toronto (Highway 401 to the south, Yonge Street to the east, and the Peel Boundary to the west) on a single fare basis and without transfers. This situation is a continuation of a policy that existed in Vaughan prior to Regional transit amalgamation. Mobility Plus registrants from other parts of the Region cannot avail themselves of this service. Based on the need to remove this service inequity, staff recommended a one-year trial project where all Mobility Plus registrants would be offered cross-boundary service with no additional fare requirement to selected Toronto destinations, with the southerly boundary being Highway 401. The selected destinations included hospitals and medical facilities, social service agencies, and major educational institutions. It was noted that the list of locations would encompass 60% of the current trip demand originating from Vaughan. During the discussions, Transit Committee requested staff to review the service

impact and costs of extending the recommended Highway 401 boundary further south to Lawrence Avenue.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

A review has been undertaken to determine the service and financial impacts of extending the southerly boundary from Highway 401 to Lawrence Avenue. Based on the same location selection criteria, seven new sites would be added to the destination list: Humber River Regional Hospital - Church Street, Seneca College - Don Mills/York Mills, York University - Glendon Campus, Sunnybrook Hospital, Scarborough General Hospital, University of Toronto - Scarborough Campus, and Scarborough Centenary Health Centre.

It is estimated that the addition of these locations would generate a service requirement to accommodate 1,824 trips annually. This calculation is based on a review of current trips provided to these locations by the Toronto Transit Commission's Wheel Trans service with trips originating from existing cross-boundary transfer points with Mobility Plus, as well as an estimate based on past trip requests for direct travel by Regional clients.

Staff have a concern with respect to the impact on service and vehicle availability that this requested extension would have. Trips currently originating in the Region (Vaughan) and traveling into Toronto are primarily longer, single direct rides during peak travel hours. This results in higher trip costs and the lack of vehicle availability to service other Regional trip demands. The selection of Highway 401 as the southerly limit for the trial period was to maintain the current southerly terminus of the Vaughan service. In addition, Highway 401 provides a clearly delineated boundary across Toronto for all Regional clients and provides easy access in the south to the City's freeway system (Highways 401/400/404) to allow Mobility Plus service vehicles to return to the Region as quickly as possible to meet other customer trip needs. An extension south to Lawrence Avenue would further impact service and costs due to increased traffic congestion, difficulties in accessing the freeway system, and difficulties in vehicle availability to address customer "no shows", etc.

4.1 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 calls for the provision of an integrated and accessible transit network. To support this goal, YRT has identified and will implement specific service initiatives as contained in the 2005 Business Plan and Budget. Cross-boundary service into the City of Toronto, on a one-year trial basis (subject to budget approval), will address the current service inequity that exists for disabled residents of the Region.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The initial proposal to provide service to all residents of the Region to specific destinations south of Steeles Avenue to Highway 401 will result in an estimated reduction in the cost of providing the existing Vaughan cross-boundary trips from \$435,000 to \$261,000, but add costs of \$460,000 to meet estimated demand from the balance of the Region. Therefore, the requested southerly extension to Highway 401 will be \$721,000 or a net increase of \$286,000 to the 2005 operating budget for cross-boundary travel. The \$286,000 increase is included in the proposed 2005 Budget and Business Plan in the service enhancement category. Staff will monitor the demand for service and should costs associated with cross-boundary travel begin to escalate above projections, it may be necessary to cap the expenditures. Mobility Plus will closely monitor this service and associated costs during the trial period and report back to Transit Committee on any potential cost adjustments.

The request to extend the southerly boundary to Lawrence Avenue to serve the locations indicated earlier in this report would require an additional allocation of \$97,000, for a total increase of \$383,000.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The implementation of a one year cross-boundary trial operation to selected locations in the City of Toronto will result in the provision of a more equitable service to all residents of the Region and allow staff the opportunity to review the service and financial impacts of this initiative.

7. CONCLUSION

The “*Mobility Plus Service Implementation Initiative*” report, as approved by Regional Council on September 23, 2004, will move 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 accessible transportation options. The provision of cross-boundary trips to selected locations within the City of Toronto on a one-year trial basis will remove an existing transportation inequity to the residents of the Region and allow staff the opportunity to measure the impact on service and costs in providing service to selected transportation destinations. The request to extend the recommended southerly boundary from Highway 401 to Lawrence Avenue would add an additional operating cost of \$97,000. It is the opinion of staff, however, that such an extension would have a negative impact on the availability of vehicles and the provision of service for residents within the Region. It is therefore recommended that the southerly boundary for the cross-boundary trial remain at Highway 401.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.