1
YORK REGION TRANSIT
ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN 2004
STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

The Transit Committee recommends:

1. The presentation by Irene McNeil, Manager Service Planning, York Region Transit, be received; and

2. The recommendations contained in the following report December 16, 2003, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be adopted:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The York Region Transit (YRT) Annual Service Plan 2004, and the stakeholder comments related thereto, be received.

2. The recommendations outlined in the Plan be considered as part of the 2004 Business Plan and Budget review process.

3. The request from the Town of East Gwillimbury for the extension of transit service to Mount Albert be considered in the 2005 Annual Service Plan.

2. PURPOSE

The main objective of the YRT Annual Service Plan 2004 is to improve the quality of YRT services in order to attract new customers thereby increasing the overall transit market share. Although a Five-Year Service Plan was completed in Spring 2002 for the newly amalgamated YRT system, it is important to review services on an annual basis in order to gauge how well services are meeting longer-term goals, objectives and standards. It is also important to review services as on-street conditions change including the impact of new development and associated travel patterns.

The purpose of this report is to review stakeholder comments on the 2004 Service Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

As part of YRT's Five-Year Service Plan, an annual planning cycle and consultation approach was recommended. The annual planning cycle was based on well-defined service standards and objectives that were adopted by Regional Council. The recommended process included a needs identification stage, a ridership and financial performance review, a process for the development of draft proposals, and a stakeholder consultation process. YRT staff have followed the approved approach, with the Annual Service Plan 2004 being the basis for next year's planning activities and budget.

In 2002, the YRT system consisted of over 60 routes carrying approximately 8.4 million passenger trips, an impressive ridership increase of 10.9% over the previous year. YRT conventional services consist of core routes (operating in major arterial corridors), feeder or local routes (operating in local neighbourhoods), high school specials (focusing on specific student demand), GO train shuttles, and one community bus route (operating in Richmond Hill). Each category of routes serves a particular transit market and each plays an important role in the success of the overall system network. Although each route is reviewed individually, YRT service planners also consider the overall system goals when evaluating changes or improvements.

The Draft 2004 Service Plan was received by Transit Committee and Council in June 2003. A final stakeholder comment process was undertaken over the Summer/Fall of 2003.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The evaluation process considers the effectiveness and efficiency of both individual routes and, more importantly, the system as a whole. Consideration is given to the financial efficiency (revenue/cost ratio) of each route, effectiveness in terms of route/network connectivity, service area coverage and ability to meet demand.

During the review process, YRT staff consider comments and suggestions from customers, residents, local municipal staff and Councils, business groups, YRT Customer Service and Operations staff, school boards and other transit agencies (TTC, GO and Brampton Transit).

In order to proactively engage the public, a series of nine Public Information Centres (PICs) were carried out over a two-month period (April/May 2003). The PICs were held at local venues in order to solicit feedback and attract comments from those residents and customers most affected by the proposed changes. Over 200 individuals attended the PICs, with many more commenting on the proposed plans via the YRT website, e-mails, letters and telephone.

4.1 Service Standards

There are two route specific service standards used to ensure that individual routes are designed to be both attractive to customers and to perform at a satisfactory level. Minimum service frequency (bus headways) and minimum performance standards (passengers/hour) are used to evaluate each route's operation. Each category of route has different standards according to its role within the overall network. For example, a core route that serves a TTC subway station would be expected to have a higher efficiency rating than a local neighbourhood feeder route. A core route's alignment is also more direct in order to minimize travel time, whereas a local feeder route is designed to maximize customer convenience within a catchment area, thereby forfeiting some of its efficiency.

4.2 Financial Efficiency

One of the factors that measure the efficiency of a route is the cost recovery or revenue/cost ratio. The revenue/cost ratio is a direct reflection of a route's farebox revenue versus the total operating cost. In 2002, the YRT system had a cost recovery of 43.4%. The five-year target has been set at 60%, recognizing that there would be a period of lower cost recovery due to the need to expand services (to meet minimum standards) and a subsequent lag in ridership growth.

Although the revenue/cost ratio is not the sole factor in determining the viability of a route, it does give a good indication of the overall efficiency of the service. The revenue/cost ratio is used to determine whether or not a route's service coverage and frequency need to be expanded, re-aligned, reduced or even eliminated. As part of the Council adopted Five-Year Service Plan, it was recommended that new services be given a minimum of one-year trial before any major changes are made. This trial period allows customers to fully familiarize themselves with the service and provides for a trend analysis of monthly ridership.

The Annual Service Plan 2004 recommends a number of route specific improvements. These can be summarized as follows:

- Re-alignment of local feeder routes in the Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Newmarket and Aurora areas. The intent is to simplify the routing configurations, provide two-way

service (avoiding one directional loops), eliminate duplication and improve connectivity to more frequent core routes and major destinations.
- Route extensions are planned to new subdivision and commercial developments in the Vaughan, Markham and Richmond Hill areas, as well as a new route for Whitchurch-Stouffville.
- Introduction of new Community Bus routes in Vaughan, Markham and Newmarket.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

The primary goal of an annual service plan is to ensure that the transit system's goals and objectives are aligned with the predetermined longer-range strategic plan. YRT's Five-Year Plan set specific targets including an increase of annual revenue passengers from 10 to 17 million (including GO Yonge 'C' and Bayview) over the next five years. YRT's mandate also includes a major role in contributing to an increase the Region's a.m. peak hour modal share from 8 to 12 percent during the same period.

Vision 2026 includes a goal statement relating to the development of 'Infrastructure for a Growing Region', which states that:

"In 2026, York Region will have effective, efficient and environmentally sensitive transportation, waste management and water systems."

To support this goal, the Region has identified specific action areas. The following action areas have been considered for this report:
- Continuing to improve service and infrastructure for successfully integrated transit service.
- Developing an optimal mix of transit service types.

Promoting transit usage as a practical and wise alternative to private vehicle use.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations in the Annual Service Plan 2004 will be considered in the context of the 2004 Business Plan and Budget review process. The preliminary estimate of costs related to the proposed changes amounts to approximately $3.9 million with associated revenues amounting to about $1 million.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

As noted earlier in the report, a series of Public Information Centres were held in the Spring of 2003 across the Region. Input has been received from various stakeholder groups including local municipal staff, Councils and residents. YRT's Draft Annual Service Plan considered and incorporated many of these comments and recommended service improvements in all nine of the Region's local municipalities. Following the Plan's presentation to Regional Transit Committee and Council back in June 2003, the

Draft Plan was once again circulated to the local municipalities for information and final comment. The following comments were received:

6.1 Richmond Hill

The Town of Richmond Hill requested that consideration be given for direct service from Oak Ridges to Hillcrest Mall. Also, they requested that, before any changes are made to the Route 89 Community Bus route, the changes be presented to the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee for endorsement. YRT staff will develop direct routing options for the Oak Ridges area and bring forward any changes to Route 89 to the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee.

6.2 Whitchurch-Stouffville

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville requested that:

- The proposed route operate along Main and Millard Streets between Ringwood and the 10th Line;
- Off-peak service be considered to the Eastern Gate community and the Lebovic Leisure Centre;
- Introduction of new service to Stouffville be considered for September rather than May 2004.
- YRT staff present the plans once again to Council in February;
- A public forum be held to raise awareness of the pending new services.

YRT staff will work closely with the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville to ensure that transit services are introduced as recommended by Town staff and Council.

6.3 East Gwillimbury

Council has requested that YRT consider the introduction of new service to the Mount Albert community as part of the 2004 Plan rather than waiting until 2005. Also, it is requested that routing be maintained in the Grist Mill subdivision. YRT staff have reviewed these requests and recommend that the introduction of service to Mount Albert be considered in the 2005 planning cycle. The population of Mount Albert is approximately 4,000, well below the minimum standard for the introduction of service. YRT staff recommend that the Grist Mill routing configuration be maintained.

6.4 Georgina

The Town of Georgina requests that consideration be given to introducing a demand responsive service (eg. Dial-a-Ride type) to the rural areas of the Town. YRT staff had already included this request as part of the Plan and recommend that a review be undertaken to determine which service delivery model would best meet the limited demand.

6.5 King

The Township of King requested that introduction of new services be considered to King City, Nobleton and Schomberg as part of the 2005 Service Plan. YRT staff intend to include this review in next year's Service Plan.

With the exception of new service to Mount Albert, all of the above requests have been considered in the 2004 Service Plan and can be accommodated within the budget stated in the Plan.

Other than the comments originally received during the initial consultation process and already incorporated in the Draft Plan, no further comments were received from other local municipalities or transit stakeholders.

7. CONCLUSION

YRT's Annual Service Plan 2004 is a document that will guide the planning process for the coming year. The recommendations contained in the plan provided a basis for 2004 budget development and ensure that the delivery of transit services is consistent with the longer range strategic direction adopted in the Five-Year Service Plan.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the attachment referred to in the foregoing is included with this report and is also on file in the Office of the Regional Clerk.)