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YORK REGION TRANSIT MOBILITY PLUS REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL CROSS-BOUNDARY LOCATIONS

(Regional Council at its meeting on February 16, 2006, adopted the following report, subject to requesting Staff to provide clarification to the next Transit Committee meeting regarding the 4256 Bathurst Street location as an additional cross-boundary location).

The Transit Committee recommends:

1. The presentation by Brian Drew, Manager, Specialized Transit be received; and
2. The recommendations contained in the following report, January 26, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be adopted, subject to adding Recommendation 3 as follows:
 - “3. Staff be requested to forward a letter to the Toronto Transit Commission to request that a reciprocal arrangement be set up for the provision of cross boundary service from the City of Toronto into the Region of York.”

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The two additional locations - 4000 Don Mills Road and 4700 Bathurst Street - be added to the current list of 36 destinations approved for the provision of cross-boundary Mobility Plus service into the City of Toronto, on a one-year trial basis.
2. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee for their information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to recommend the addition of two cross-boundary locations for Mobility Plus specialized transit service into the City of Toronto.

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 the City of Toronto on a one-year trial basis.

At that time Mobility Plus cross-boundary service was provided from the City of Vaughan only into the City of Toronto (Highway 401 to the south, Yonge Street to the east, and the Peel Boundary to the west) on a single-fare basis without transfers. This situation was a continuation of a policy that existed in Vaughan prior to Regional transit amalgamation. 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 by Regional Council to conduct a one-year trial project whereby all Mobility Plus registrants would be offered cross-boundary service, with no additional fare requirement, to selected City of Toronto destinations, with the southerly boundary being Highway 401. The selected destinations (totalling 36 locations) included hospitals and major medical facilities, social service agencies, major educational institutions, and three accessible subway stations (Finch, Don Mills and Downsview). Effective October 3, 2005, Mobility Plus undertook the pilot project by extending cross-boundary travel to all registrants in the Region for the one-year trial period.

Staff continue to monitor demand for cross-boundary service and have noted two additional locations in which requests for service have been made. They are 4000 Don Mills Road (a residential apartment complex) and 4700 Bathurst Street (the National Council of Jewish Women).

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

With respect to 4000 Don Mills Road (located approximately 185 feet south of the Steeles Avenue border with the City of Toronto), Mobility Plus has been contacted by Participation House (a project of the Cerebral Palsy Parent Council of Toronto) which is located in the Town of Markham. This location houses ten Participation House clients who have previously received specialized transit services (fixed route “Connector” and door-to-door service) originally with the Town of Markham and continued with Mobility Plus. These clients have resided at 4000 Don Mills Road for 25 years and attend adult education/physiotherapy and pool therapy programs at Participation House. Based on a review of door-to-door service requests in 2005, a total of 380 trips were generated both to and from 4000 Don Mills Road.

The Don Mills Road location was not originally selected as a destination for cross-boundary service since the criteria for location selection was based on serving trip demand to major destinations for residents of York Region. The customers at this location are residents of the City of Toronto. However, concern has been expressed by Participation House that many of these clients are wheelchair-bound requiring them to cross Steeles Avenue in order to access Mobility Plus service, thereby putting them at great risk. The alternative service arrangement is to avail themselves of the Toronto Transit Commission's specialized transit service, Wheel Trans. The concern expressed by Participation House and the clients is that the wait times to make connections would impact the various client program schedules.

Staff have reviewed this request and would recommend that service to this location be provided for the balance of the one-year trial to give Participation House and the clients the opportunity to review alternative service arrangements based on the ultimate outcome of the one-year cross-boundary trial.

The second requested location, 4700 Bathurst Street (the National Council of Jewish Women), conduct a variety of seniors programming on a regular weekly basis. Total trip demand to this location in 2005 was 50 trips to and from, and therefore did not appear on the original recommended destination list approved by Regional Council for the trial period. However, based on a staff review of this request, it is noted that this location is adjacent to the Lipa Green Building (4600 Bathurst Street) and the Bathurst Jewish Community Centre (4588 Bathurst Street), which are both approved locations. The approval of this location (based on its proximity to the other locations) would not negatively impact Mobility Plus service and would possibly offer greater share riding opportunities, thereby reducing overall average trip costs to this complex of buildings. It is therefore being recommended as an additional location during the cross-boundary trial period.

4.1 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 calls for the provision of an integrated and accessible transit network. To support this goal, YRT Mobility Plus has identified and implemented specific service initiatives, such as the introduction of cross-boundary service to selected locations on a one-year trial basis within the City of Toronto (south to Highway 401), to address client trip demand for service. This report proposes to add two additional locations to the approved 36 locations to address customer trip demand and service efficiencies.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The approval of the additional two locations as described above would not negatively impact the budget provision for cross-boundary service to selected locations within Toronto for the one-year trial period. The approval of 4000 Don Mills Road would add little to the cost of operation based on its proximity to the existing Mobility Plus service area. The 4700 Bathurst Street location may result in improved trip share-riding efficiencies due to its proximity to existing approved locations.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The implementation of cross-boundary service into the City of Toronto on a one-year trial basis to selected locations removes the previous service inequity as described in this report, and provides travel opportunities to all Mobility Plus registrants in the various local municipalities throughout the Region. The addition of two locations to the existing approved destinations, as recommended in this report, supports and addresses client needs during this trial period.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the review conducted by staff, it is recommended that Regional Council approve the addition of the two locations described in this report to the existing approved list of cross-boundary destinations into the City of Toronto for the balance of the one-year trial period. Staff will be preparing a report on the outcome of the trial period of cross-boundary operation for submission to Transit Committee and Regional Council in the Fall of 2006.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.