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YORK REGION TRANSIT 2005-06 MARKETING PLAN

The Transit Committee recommends:

- 1. The following report, January 20, 2005, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be received; and**
- 2. The York Region Transit 2005-06 Marketing Plan be approved, subject to reducing the amount of the marketing plan budget to \$700,000.00, such reduction to be reallocated within the YRT budget.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The York Region Transit 2005-06 Marketing Plan, as outlined in this report, be approved in principle subject to the approval of the 2005 Business Plan and Budget.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Transit Committee and Regional Council with an overview of the proposed York Region Transit 2005-06 Marketing Plan and to seek approval in principle of the plan. This new Marketing Plan will summarize research efforts to effectively target marketing and communication strategies recommended in the plan as well as outline the strategy for refreshing the York Region Transit (YRT) image in order to convey the family of transit services available in York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

At the October 14th, 2004 Transit Committee, the 2005-06 Marketing Plan was deferred pending further clarification on the combined marketing strategies and costs for both York Region Transit and Rapid Transit. A presentation to Transit Committee was delivered on January 13th, 2005 to address the above request.

During the last three years, much of YRT's marketing efforts have been focused on building awareness of the system's identity as YRT, providing customers with information they need to ride the system and grow the customer base. Marketing staff now need to review and measure the marketing strategies to ensure they are meeting the needs of our customers and the community. In addition, with the introduction of rapid transit in 2005, staff want to ensure that the marketing and communication strategies are synergized to effectively communicate a family of transit choices available in York Region.

In January 2004, Gee Jeffery and Partners were retained to produce a Marketing and Communications Plan for York Region Transit. Their work included:

- An audit and assessment of the YRT brand objectively against both customer perception and best practices.
- A detailed research plan, including both qualitative and quantitative elements, designed to fill information gaps and uncover deeper insights into our customers.
- A marketing plan recommending key target markets which will provide the foundation for upcoming marketing activities, communications objectives and the key messages.

Each stage of the process involved input from the Transit Committee, Senior Management at the Region, transit customers and even non-riders.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The York Region Transit 2005-06 Marketing Plan (*see Attachment 2 – Executive Summary*) is based on the foundation of a series of research studies conducted with existing riders as well as non-riders. It is written as a business plan, and focuses upon three essential target markets:

- Existing customers.
- Potential customers who we can reasonably convert to transit use.
- Key influencers (people who need to support public transit even if they themselves do not use it i.e. businesses in the Region).

Each of these groups is fundamental to the growth and development of a strong and viable public transit system. For each of the groups, strategies or activities are provided which will communicate the benefits of public transit and encourage ridership growth. The strategies will strive to put the customer first and to position York Region Transit as the transportation choice of the future.

The marketing plan focuses on using a variety of communications channels to build familiarity and support of YRT. These include:

- Community outreach programs.
- Customer information.
- Stakeholder activities (i.e. promotions).
- Media activities.

A key consideration in the development of YRT's 2005-2006 Marketing Plan is the introduction of bus rapid transit services in September 2005. The new rapid transit services are expected to have a positive impact not only on the quality of life in the Region but also on the perception of transit services provided by the Region. The introduction of the new rapid transit service brand makes this an appropriate time for

YRT to refresh its marketing image to ensure that transit services in York Region are viewed as a family of travel options.

YRT and YRTP staff have been working together to develop marketing activities and communication messages that are synergistic, complimentary and use the resources of both services effectively.

While the YRTP Marketing Plan is focussing on the brand launch, the YRT Marketing Plan will concentrate on the following:

- Informing current riders of service changes and improvements by producing on-street communication material such as route maps, infoposts, shelter maps, etc., and updating the YRT web site.
- Building awareness by organizing marketing campaigns, participating in community events and initiating educational programs for schools, riders and non-riders.
- Developing strategies to “refresh” the YRT look to maximize the effectiveness and synergy of the YRT and YRTP brand.

4.1 Relationship to Vision 2026

As a part of Vision 2026, York Region has identified the need to improve transportation opportunities for residents and businesses in the Region. YRT is crucial for sustaining the healthy and vibrant environment required to meet the needs of business and residential growth in one of Canada’s fastest growing communities. A strong marketing and communications plan will inform, raise awareness and generate support for public transit in order to build it the preferred mode of transportation in York Region.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In 2004, YRT marketing and communication costs were \$700,000; projected costs for 2005 are \$975,000. The estimated breakdown of the costs is outlined in Table 1 below. The estimates are based primarily upon ‘external’ costs and do not include YRT staff time. Additional costs are related to the growing ridership levels on YRT, the introduction of new targeted marketing campaigns, a brand refresh and Rapid Transit costs after the start of operation (September 2005) (*see Attachment 1*).

This funding proposal is included in the 2005 draft Transit budget and will be referred to the Business Plan and Budget process for review.

Table 1
Estimates for Marketing Programs

Programs	Cost
Customer Communications (includes all design, printing and brand refresh)	\$355,000
Community Relations & Events (including Community Safety Village)	\$215,000
Web Site	\$80,000
Mapping	\$80,000
Customer Satisfaction Survey	\$40,000
Fare Media (Printing only)	\$100,000
Mobility Plus	\$65,000
Rapid Transit (Sept.- Dec. 2005)	\$40,000
TOTAL	\$975,000

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The York Region Transit 2004-05 Marketing Plan will assist in furthering the transportation goals of the local municipalities, particularly by increasing public transit's market share. Most of the marketing strategies will be system wide, thus their effects will be felt across the entire Region.

7. CONCLUSION

Given the growth of public transit (including the addition of the bus rapid transit network) it is a critical time to communicate transit as an important part of the quality of life in York Region. A strong and targeted marketing and communications plan, which effectively meets the needs of its customers and potential customers, is required for 2005. The development of this marketing plan was based on extensive market research and therefore, the strategies recommended in the report will allow YRT to target its marketing and communication resources effectively in 2005.

The Executive Summary of the plan is attached to this report (*see Attachment 2*) and the complete plan is available for review from the YRT offices.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)