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YORK REGION TRANSIT
YRT/VIVA AND MOBILITY PLUS
2006 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS

The Transit Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The presentation by Mary Lou Johnston, Manager, Marketing and Customer Service, be received;**
- 2. The recommendation contained in the following report, March 28, 2007, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works, be adopted.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the results of the 2006 York Region Transit/Viva and Mobility Plus customer satisfaction surveys be referred to the York Region Transit staff improvement teams for the development of action plans.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Transit Committee and Regional Council of the highlights of the 2006 York Region Transit/Viva and Mobility Plus Customer Satisfaction Surveys.

3. BACKGROUND

As part of the on-going effort to measure customer satisfaction with York Region Transit (YRT), Viva and Mobility Plus services, a customer satisfaction survey is undertaken bi-annually. Previous surveys were conducted annually on YRT and Mobility Plus in 2002, 2003 and 2004. These surveys established a benchmark for customer satisfaction with both YRT and Mobility Plus services. Based on the measurements established in these initial surveys, it was determined that future customer satisfaction surveys could effectively be undertaken every two years.

In 2006, the conventional transit and Mobility Plus customer satisfaction surveys were conducted between November 20 and December 9. This is the first customer satisfaction survey since the introduction of the Viva bus rapid transit service in September 2005. As a result, the survey questions were updated to reflect the addition of Viva, but still maintained measurable consistency with previous survey questions.

As part of our commitment to customer service, customer satisfaction improvement teams are established, made up of internal YRT/Viva and Mobility Plus staff. The staff teams will be responsible for reviewing the results of the customer satisfaction surveys, identifying areas of improvement and developing action plans. The teams will work with staff groups within York Region Transit, as well as various contractors, to identify solutions and produce recommendations for improvement to the transit management team. Each improvement will be considered and identified in the current or upcoming budget, as necessary.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Survey Methodology

4.1.1 YRT/Viva

In November 2006, a total of 6,027 riders participated in the customer satisfaction survey for YRT and Viva. The surveys were administered on the bus by a third party agency, Oxygen Research Group Inc. Surveys were completed using a combination of interviewer-led questions capturing the data via a hand-held computer (Palm Pilot), and rider self-completes using the traditional paper and pencil method. Each survey took approximately five to eight minutes to complete.

A representative sampling of riders by percentage of ridership in each service division was obtained (see Table 1 below). Survey sample size and interview length are similar to past surveys.

Table 1
Surveys Completed by Division

Division/Contractor	Municipality/Service	Surveys Completed
Division 1 – Miller Markham	Markham, Whitchurch-Stouffville	638
Division 2 – Laidlaw	Aurora, Newmarket, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King	269
Division 3 – Miller Richmond Hill	Richmond Hill	395
Division 4 – Can-Ar	Vaughan	1,645
Division 7 – Veolia	Viva	1,928
Division 8 – TTC	North of Steeles Avenue	1,152

The 2006 survey was based on the 2004 model, with updates both in terms of application and content, to reflect the addition of Viva. Survey questions covered topics such as overall customer satisfaction, reasons for using/not using transit, travel patterns, important service attributes, driver behaviour/knowledge and assistance, awareness of

YRT/Viva services and information, customer safety and security, vehicle/terminal/shelter cleanliness, and demographics.

4.1.2 Mobility Plus

Mobility Plus is a door-to-door accessible public transit service for people who are unable to use regular public transit due to a functional disability. To use this service, customers must register and meet specific eligibility criteria. There are approximately 14,000 registered users of the system.

Due to the nature of this service, the Mobility Plus surveys were administered by telephone using Oxygen Research Group. There were 401 telephone surveys completed which lasted 15 minutes each. A sampling from all nine municipalities was obtained.

The 2006 Mobility Plus survey questions were very similar to the 2004 survey to enable comparison of satisfaction levels. Questions covered included overall customer satisfaction, reasons for using/not using the service, trip frequency/patterns/fares, drivers, vehicle/service attributes, call centre staff, trip booking, service information, customer safety/security and demographics.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 YRT/Viva Overall Satisfaction

Significant investments have been made in the improvement of transit in York Region and the results from the survey reflect those improvements. Overall, 75% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with public transit in York Region. This includes all public transit services provided in the Region including YRT, Viva, GO, TTC and Brampton services. This represents a significant increase over previous surveys where only 66% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied in 2004, and 65% in 2003.

Overall satisfaction with public transit in York Region by contractor has also risen since the 2003 and 2004 surveys (see Table 2 below).

Table 2
Satisfaction Ratings

Contractor	2003 % Satisfied & Very Satisfied	2004 % Satisfied & Very Satisfied	2006 % Satisfied & Very Satisfied
Division 1 – Miller Markham	66	71	74
Division 2 – Laidlaw	77	63	85
Division 3 – Miller Richmond Hill	67	69	79
Division 4 – Can-Ar	67	68	78
Division 7 – Veolia	n/a	n/a	82
Division 8 – TTC	53	54	68

With respect to Viva and YRT services specifically, 96% of respondents gave Viva, and 81% of respondents gave YRT, either a good, very good or excellent rating.

Data suggests that improvements to transit, including the addition of the Viva bus rapid transit service, combined with increased public education and communications, have had a positive impact on the overall customer satisfaction rating.

4.2.2 Mobility Plus Overall Satisfaction

Mobility Plus is delivering a quality service that is greatly appreciated by its customers who continue to give it consistently high ratings year after year. Overall, 91% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with Mobility Plus services. Satisfaction with YRT Mobility Plus continues to register increases in those who are very satisfied with the service, compared to 2004 where there was a more equal split of respondents giving satisfied and very satisfied ratings.

Seventy to 80% of respondents gave the top rating of very satisfied to general services and vehicles, as follows:

- Vehicles are well equipped (80% in 2006 vs. 47% in 2004).
- Cost of fares (79% in 2006 vs. 45% in 2004).
- Vehicles are clean (77% in 2006 vs. 49% in 2004).
- Method of purchasing fares (78% in 2006 vs. 40% in 2004).
- Available destinations (74% in 2006 vs. 42% in 2004).
- Operating hours (71% in 2006 vs. 41% in 2004).

Seventy-eight to 85% of respondents gave the top rating of very satisfied for drivers and call centre staff, as follows:

- Drivers drive safely (82% in 2006 vs., 82% in 2004).
- Drivers are courteous (80% in 2006 vs. 58% in 2004).
- Drivers provide door-to-door assistance (78% in 2006 vs. 57% in 2004).
- Call Centre staff are friendly (85% in 2006 vs. 51% in 2004).
- Call centre staff are knowledgeable (81% in 2006 vs. 47% in 2004).

The significant increase in those respondents giving the top rating of very satisfied can be attributed to ongoing improvements in the Mobility Plus area.

4.3 Areas for Improvement

4.3.1 YRT/Viva

While there were significant improvements in many of the survey areas, there continue to be some areas where customer satisfaction levels remain low, where only 65% or less of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with a part of the overall service.

The areas that fall below this level will be reviewed by the YRT/Viva staff customer satisfaction improvement teams to recommend solutions for improvement. Some of these areas include:

- Fares (48% somewhat/not at all satisfied).
- Service frequency (53% somewhat/not at all satisfied).
- Transit information at bus stops and shelters (43% somewhat/not at all satisfied).
- Availability of waste and recycling containers (38% somewhat/not at all satisfied).
- Complaint resolution process (41% somewhat/not at all satisfied).
- How well bus stops are lit (40% somewhat/not at all satisfied).

The newly-established 2007 customer satisfaction improvement teams, made up of YRT/Viva and Mobility Plus staff, will begin to review the survey results and identify improvement initiatives for each area in the survey that received low ratings. This year's teams will work with YRT staff groups and operations and maintenance contractors to produce recommendations for improvement.

Improvements already underway for 2007 include a new waste recycling program, improved access to route and schedule information (web-based trip planning and 24/7 interactive voice response (IVR) phone schedule information) and schedule information being provided at more bus stops.

Other enhancement ideas generated by this year's improvement teams will be considered in the current or upcoming budget, as necessary.

4.3.2 Mobility Plus

The majority of the ratings and overall customer satisfactions levels were very high, with most being above 80%. However, even with this high rating, specific comments from customers suggest there are still areas where they would like to see improvements, including:

- Vehicles not arriving on time (late for medical appointments).
- Call centre services (calls need to be answered more promptly, faster trip booking, improvements needed to the complaint resolution process, shorter booking times, ease of booking a trip).
- Geographic coverage/further destinations required.
- More vehicles needed.
- Driver behaviour is not always favourable.

Similar to the conventional customer survey results, all customer comments/suggestions and concerns will be investigated by the Mobility Plus staff customer satisfaction improvement team.

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

The 2006 YRT/Viva and Mobility Plus Customer Satisfaction Surveys supports the Region's Vision 2026 initiative, Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region. The

survey engages our citizens and encourages their feedback for services that affect their lives, such as transit.

The information provided in the surveys is used to help YRT/Viva and Mobility Plus improve services. By conducting performance measurement surveys, we are taking accountability for our service and performance.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Improvements and enhancements identified by the customer satisfaction improvement teams will be presented to each section within YRT for action. Those requiring funding will be included in the draft 2008 Business Plan and Budget, where appropriate.

The draft 2007 Business Plan and Budget includes funding for improvements to some areas identified by customers in the surveys.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Transit customers and stakeholders from the local municipalities will benefit from the customer satisfaction surveys since they identify specific areas for improvement by route, service area and municipality.

7. CONCLUSION

The 2006 Customer Satisfaction Surveys provide transit staff with a valuable tool to identify areas for improvements in transit services. They are also used as a measurement tool for YRT's performance-based contracts, and allow staff to measure growth, improvements and successes against previous years.

The considerable improvement in customer satisfaction levels in most of the survey areas is a direct reflection on the significant investments and improvements made in public transit in York Region. Customers appreciate the commitment to improve their overall experience on YRT/Viva and Mobility Plus services. Customer satisfaction surveys will take place every two years and the next survey is scheduled to take place in fall 2008.

For more information on this report, contact Mary Lou Johnston, Manager, Marketing & Customer Service (ext. 5614), Transit Branch of the Transportation and Works Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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