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YORK REGION TRANSIT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

The Transit Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, February 23, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides an update on the status of the Enforcement Unit within the York Region Transit (YRT) branch, and the progress of key milestones achieved since the formation of the unit.

3. BACKGROUND

Viva operates on the premise that customers purchase their fares at fare equipment at the stations before boarding the Viva bus. This improves travel time and convenience by allowing the customers to board and exit the vehicle from all doors with no screening of the fare media by the driver. The off-board fare payment process is an honour system, commonly known as Proof-of-Payment, and is also being used on all GO rail services as well as on the TTC Queen street car line.

Regional Council, at its December 16, 2004 meeting, endorsed the Proof-of-Payment (POP) fare enforcement program for the Viva bus rapid transit service, along with the hiring of Special Constables and Fare Inspectors. Regional Council at its April 21, 2005 meeting approved By-Law No. R-1415-2005-028 that regulates the payment of transit fares and the conduct of passengers on transit vehicles and transit facilities in York Region. Regional Council also approved a recommended Set Fines Schedule, which establishes the level of fines for acts in violation of the by-law.

In June 2005, a Joint Service Agreement between York Region and The Regional Municipality of York Police Services Board for Special Constables was approved. The agreement identified responsibilities for each party with respect to hiring, training, supervision and monitoring of designated enforcement staff.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Partnership with York Regional Police

York Regional Police, under the direction of The Regional Municipality of York Police Services Board, has played an important role in the establishment of the YRT Enforcement Unit. During the summer of 2005, the Enforcement Supervisor and seven Special Constables were selected after a testing and evaluation process with Police staff assistance. The successful candidates were required to pass an extensive training program conducted by York Regional Police and other outside and internal services. The application for Special Constable status was submitted by York Regional Police to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Meetings are scheduled on a quarterly basis with the Deputy Police Chief and YRT staff to review the progress of the Enforcement Unit, and ensure that appropriate data is being collected on enforcement activities.

4.2 Fare Inspection and Security

Viva was launched in several phases between September and December 2005. As noted in Table 1, the number of fares inspected has varied each month due to the focus on customer service and the education role during each phase of the service introduction. The fare evasion rate is expected to drop now that all phases have been launched and the emphasis shifts from education to enforcement. The target fare evasion rate by the end of 2006 is 1.5%. On average, 600 customers are randomly inspected across the Viva bus rapid transit service daily. Statistical data on enforcement is being collected and analyzed which provides trends and patterns that enable staff to schedule proactive fare evasion reduction strategies.

Table 1
Proof-of-Payment Statistics – Sept 2005 to Jan 2006

Period	Fares Inspected	Fare Evasions	Fare Evasion Rate
September 2005	16713	517	3.0%
October 2005	12890	329	2.6%
November 2005	9461	331	3.4%
December 2005	9911	486	4.9%
January 2006	22539	656	2.9%

Uniformed enforcement staff responded to several calls for service since the Viva launch. Mobile patrols have helped reduce the number of active vandalism/graffiti incidents occurring to street level fare equipment, Viva stations, terminals and conventional passenger shelters. The combination of the uniformed staff on the rapid transit buses and the mobile patrols have provided a visible deterrent for low level criminal offences and crime in general, thereby providing for a safer environment and sense of security for the travelling public.

Enforcement has also assisted on the YRT conventional services by addressing isolated cases of fare evasion and customer conduct issues, as well as bus related vehicle accidents.

4.3 Special Constable Status

Special Constable status for enforcement is necessary in order to lay specific charges under the Criminal Code of Canada related to fare evasion. Also, if a customer refuses to provide or provides false identification, charges can be issued where necessary.

York Regional Police submitted an application in support of YRT's efforts to obtain Special Constable status for an 18-month pilot project from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. During the fall of 2005, staff submitted a business case and several meetings ensued between staff from York Region Transit, York Regional Police and the Ministry. In a record setting three months, Special Constable status was granted in December 2005 by the Ministry. The YRT Transit Special Constables were sworn in on January 18, 2006.

4.4 Customer Service

Enforcement staff are uniformed and visible representatives primarily on Viva but also on YRT services. As such, they play a role in customer service in assisting with service, fare and security issues.

The YRT web site was updated in January 2006 and a new section on the enforcement section was launched. This provides customers with vital information on the Enforcement Unit and the fines associated with fare evasion and conduct responsibilities while utilizing the transit service.

Information handouts were developed in January 2006 and are now distributed to the public and York Regional Police. They will provide further information on the Enforcement Unit and the services provided.

4.5 Relationship to Vision 2026

The establishment of an enforcement section in cooperation with York Regional Police satisfies a number of Vision 2026 principles related to customer-centred services, partnerships and safety. This is achieved by providing front line staff members in direct contact with the public, the partnership with York Regional Police and an elevated level of security ensuring customers have the freedom to enjoy safe travel on YRT/Viva.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Fine Revenue Recovery

The 2006 Business Plan and Budget contains approximately \$320,000 in revenues generated from fines for fare evasion and other transit by-law infractions. Given that the proof-of-payment fare system is new with the implementation of Viva, the initial enforcement focus has been on education and warnings. Based on a preliminary review of January 2006 fines issued, fine revenues are tracking lower than budget. As time progresses, fines will be issued to a greater degree to deter fare evasion, and will be monitored regularly.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The special constables traveling on YRT/Viva improve customer security on the vehicles and at the stations. The presence of the special constable also serves as a proactive deterrent in reducing graffiti and vandalism, which enhances community appearance.

7. CONCLUSION

The Enforcement Unit of YRT was launched successfully and is essential to control fare evasion on the Viva service. It also plays an important role on customer service and security.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.