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### **MOBILITY PLUS 'FAMILY OF SERVICES' DELIVERY MODEL**

**The Transportation Services Committee recommends:**

- 1. Receipt of the presentation by Sharon Doyle, Manager, Mobility Plus, Transit, Transportation Services; and**
- 2. Adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated February 9, 2012, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Community Planning, amended as follows:**

**'The Regional Clerk circulate this informational report to each of the local municipalities, their Accessibility Advisory Committees and the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee.'**

#### **1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that:

1. The Regional Clerk circulate this informational report to the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

#### **2. PURPOSE**

This report updates Council on the new 'Family of Services' status for Mobility Plus passengers. York Region Transit's (YRT) Family of Services includes conventional YRT service, Viva rapid transit service, community bus routes and Mobility Plus door-to-door service.

Mobility Plus Family of Services (MP-1FS) eligibility status was created for clients who are able to travel using YRT's Family of Services for all or part of their trip.

### 3. BACKGROUND

**Mobility Plus is York Region's door-to-door specialized transit service for those who are unable to use the accessible, conventional transit service for all or part of a trip**

On January 1, 2001, all municipally-operated transit systems within York Region were amalgamated into a single Regional system known as York Region Transit (YRT), and included the specialized transit services for people with disabilities.

One of the key objectives at that time was to effectively integrate the former specialized municipal services into a new Regional system, with the coordination of eligibility, operations, and administration.

During the early years of amalgamation, registered Mobility Plus passengers either had permanent or temporary status. In January 2006, Council approved the expanded eligibility criteria for Mobility Plus services, based on a 'functional' model. An applicant would now be eligible if he/she was unable to use conventional services due to a physical or functional limitation, defined as "any condition, either short-term or long-term (e.g. paraplegia)", and may include physical, visual, sensory and cognitive disabilities, as well as individuals undergoing dialysis treatment. York Region's functional eligibility criteria are broader than other specialized transit systems in the GTA (e.g. TTC, Durham, and Peel), whose criteria are restricted to physical disabilities only.

The eligibility criteria are based on five guiding principles:

- Mobility Plus service is not for those who find it more difficult or who are reluctant or unwilling to use an accessible public transportation system.
- Mobility Plus does not provide attendant care service but if a passenger requires an attendant, the attendant rides free.
- Eligibility is not based on a particular disability and persons are approved on a case-by-case basis.
- Eligibility is not based on income.
- Eligibility is not based on the lack of availability of accessible conventional transit in the area in which the person resides.

Eligibility for Mobility Plus is approved on the basis of "levels of eligibility" falling into three categories:

- Unconditional – a person with a disability that prevents them from using conventional transit.
- Temporary – a person with a temporary disability that prevents them from using conventional transit.
- Conditional – a person with a disability where environmental or physical barriers limit their ability to consistently use conventional transit.

The 'Family of Services' status is conditional eligibility. Each trip is evaluated on a case-by-case basis and a determination is made how to best deliver the service to the passenger using all transit options.

***The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Integrated Accessibility Standard became law in June 2011***

The AODA Integrated Accessibility Standard states that "A specialized transportation service provider may deny requests for specialized transportation services to persons who are categorized as having temporary eligibility or conditional eligibility if the conventional transportation service is accessible to the person and the person has the ability to use it."

The goal of Mobility Plus is to provide a transit service that serves those individuals who, even when the conventional service in their area is fully accessible, are not able to utilize the service because of their disability. As such, promoting the integration of conventional services and specialized transit, besides accomplishing cost efficiencies, promotes independence, inclusion, integration and self-sufficiency in the passenger. In addition, it allows specialized vehicles to be available for those who have no other option.

**The 2012-2016 Five-Year Service Plan addresses challenges Mobility Plus faces with respect to demographic changes, AODA legislation and ridership growth**

The Five-Year Service Plan projected ridership growth for Mobility Plus by examining past and current growth rates of individual markets served by the system. These include day programs, dialysis treatments, commuter trips and other day-to-day requests. The Five-Year Service Plan also considered modest growth in trip requests among existing passengers and the effects of service changes required to meet the requirements of the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standard.

Total demand for Mobility Plus Service is expected to reach 424,000 in 2016 from 336,500 in 2011, an increase of 5 per cent over ridership in 2010 and an increase of approximately 25 per cent in ridership in the next five years. The Five-Year Service Plan includes a strategic framework to guide Mobility Plus in its response to these challenges. One of the key strategies identified in the plan is the integration of specialized services with the conventional system.

#### **4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS**

##### **Efforts continue to improve the accessibility of conventional transit services**

All York Region Transit buses are accessible (low-floor or lift-equipped) and are identified with the blue and white ISA (International Symbol of Accessibility) wheelchair symbol.

The following features make travelling easier for those taking a conventional bus:

- Kneeling feature that allows the bus to lower to the curb so the first step is easier.
- Ramp for easy boarding, with slip-resistant surface and raised edges to prevent the assistive device, wheelchair, walker or scooter from rolling off.
- Priority seating near the front of the bus for persons with disabilities and other customers who may have difficulty standing on a moving bus.
- Two allocated spaces for persons with assistive devices (which can fit a device measuring 30 x 48 inches, or 762 x 1,220 mm). Each of these spaces are equipped with securement belts. A stop-request button is also located nearby.
- Automatic announcement of next stops over the speaker system inside the bus.
- Visual display of the next stop, destination on a sign inside the bus.
- Visual warning light and audible alarm when the kneeling feature or ramp are being raised or lowered.
- Slip-resistant, low-glare floors.
- Lights to illuminate the doorway, passages and inside of bus during the loading and unloading of customers.
- Colour-contrasted handholds and grab bars.

All new buses are of low-floor design with accessible features. In addition, criteria has been developed to identify accessible routes and stops.

A comprehensive travel training program is currently in place to enable passengers to familiarize themselves with the conventional system and to become confident in using it.

##### **It is imperative to implement a service delivery structure that produces the optimal balance of service quality and cost per trip**

The majority of passengers registered with Mobility Plus use the door-to-door transit service for their requested trips. It has become apparent, through the review of a passenger's travel patterns and destinations, many of the trips can be delivered using a variety of YRT/Viva accessible services.

It is important for staff to proceed slowly through the process for this transition to be successful. Once a travel pattern is identified, staff contact the passenger, describe the 'Family of Services' and explain how the requested trip is to be provided moving

forward. These trips are long trips that utilize the Yonge St. corridor. An example would be a trip from the Newmarket GO Bus Terminal to the Finch Subway, a distance of approximately 40 kilometres. Rather than this trip being serviced exclusively by a door-to-door vehicle, the passenger is picked up at their residence by the Mobility Plus vehicle and taken the shorter distance to a major terminal. The passenger then transfers to the Viva service for the remainder of the trip to the subway.

Educating passengers on the 'Family of Services' is a lengthy but essential element in building community acceptance, if not full support. On the first 'Family of Services' trip, a Mobility Plus inspector, in a customer service role, picks up the passenger at their residence and takes them to the terminal. The inspector shows the passenger where to sit and wait in the terminal, how to purchase and validate a ticket and how to introduce themselves to the conventional driver as a Mobility Plus client. The inspector stays with them while being secured by the driver, if necessary, and then meets the passenger at the end of the trip to answer any additional questions. The inspector continues to support the passenger until they are confident in doing this alone.

### **A thorough eligibility determination process helps Mobility Plus to allocate resources to serve people who truly need the service**

Mobility Plus continues to use a paper application form that was revised in 2006 and again in 2011. Although this application is beneficial, providing complete and detailed information about all issues that affect an applicant's travel is difficult. A Regional public health nurse reviews all applications and follows up with the applicant or the health care provider if there are any questions. An in-person interview combined with a functional assessment may be required if a person's eligibility is still not clear. The findings show 80 per cent of applicants are able to use the conventional service some of the time, but need the door-to-door service under certain conditions.

Where there has been uncertainty on the part of some passengers whose status has changed from 'unconditional' to 'conditional' (Family of Services), Mobility Plus has addressed those questions by educating the agencies that represent the passengers, explaining the status in the Mobility Plus newsletter and by having the Customer Service Representative talk to them directly on the phone.

### **Greenhouse gas emission reductions are achieved when people travel on a bus instead of a single or low-occupancy vehicle**

Conventional services are scheduled to travel along roadways at regular intervals. A green solution is to utilize those vehicles, where feasible, to provide all or a portion of a Mobility Plus trip.

In addition, it allows Mobility Plus the opportunity to use the vehicle for a requested trip for another passenger, thereby providing more trips with the same allocated funds.

It was determined in a recent environmental study that for every two trips using the 'Family of Services', YRT/Viva keeps one passenger vehicle off the road for the day. As this strategy continues to develop and expand, there is potential for further environmental benefits.

**Exploring and implementing new technology opportunities will allow the potential for further and significant increases in the number of people taking the 'Family of Services'**

Presently, all 'Family of Services' trips are scheduled manually by the Trip Reservationists using a combination of the specialized scheduling software and the Trip Planner on the YRT website. Staff will explore an automated solution that will allow an interface between the specialized and conventional scheduling systems. This will give the Trip Reservationist several options to choose from when providing a trip to a Mobility Plus passenger.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Mobility Plus seeks to make the most effective and efficient use of its resources**

At the end of 2011, there were approximately 10,000 customers registered for this service, taking approximately 336,500 trips, an increase of 4.2 per cent over 2010 and 12.6 per cent over 2009. At the same time, contractor costs and ridership is expected to increase by 20 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively over the next five years. The increased contractor costs, trip demands, and the resulting projected increase in the cost per trip have led staff to develop operational strategies to ensure the continued viability of this necessary service for those who have no other transit option. The results to-date have seen the average cost per passenger trip increase by just over \$2.68 per passenger or 9 per cent from 2009, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Average Cost per Passenger Trip

| <b>2009</b> | <b>2010</b> | <b>2011 Forecast</b> |
|-------------|-------------|----------------------|
| \$33.10     | \$33.07     | \$35.75              |

In the first six months of 2011, 900 trips have been serviced by a combination of the specialized and the conventional system (Family of Services). Typically, these trips are longer than the average trip length (9.5 km) and an example of the cost differential can be seen in Table 2. This is the comparable cost and kilometre difference between a trip being serviced exclusively by a door-to-door vehicle (pick-up at residence to drop-off location) and by using the door-to-door bus to pick-up at a residence and taken the shorter distance to a major terminal to transfer to a conventional vehicle.

**Table 2**  
Trip Cost Savings for a One-Way Trip from Newmarket to Finch Using a  
Combination of Mobility Plus and Viva  
(April 2011)

| Status                              | Distance (km) | Average Cost per km. | Option 1 Trip Cost | Option 2 Trip Cost   | Trip Savings |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Option 1 - Using Mobility Plus only | 57            | \$2.13 (per km)      | \$121.41           |                      |              |
| Option 2 - Using Family of Services |               |                      |                    |                      |              |
| • Mobility Plus to Terminal         | 3             | \$2.13 (per km)      |                    | \$ 6.39              |              |
| • Using Viva to Finch Terminal      | 54            |                      |                    | \$ 5.26 <sup>1</sup> |              |
| Total Trip Cost                     |               |                      | \$121.41           | \$11.65              |              |
| Total Trip Savings                  |               |                      |                    |                      | \$109.76     |

<sup>1</sup> Average cost per passenger on Viva service

### Link to Key Council-approved Plans

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." This program supports that statement by:

- Building an innovative and reliable specialized transit service
- Continuing to expand on the number of opportunities to utilize YRT's 'Family of Services'
- Reducing the carbon footprint by reducing the duplication of trips.

One of the strategic objectives in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan – From Visions to Results, is to foster social inclusion by addressing the needs of a growing and diverse community. An indication of success is to monitor the progress of meeting the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) Integrated Standard. The 'Family of Services' status encourages inclusion, self-sufficiency and removes barriers that may exist.

## **6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT**

The 'Family of Services' status allows the disabled community in each of the municipalities more spontaneous travel options and reduces the passenger's dependence on pre-reserved services. It also allows vehicles to be available for those who are not able to use the conventional service for part of their requested trip. In addition, this status results in positive impacts to the natural environment within a community.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

Mobility Plus is not an independent service. Passengers are required to book and cancel within pre-set parameters. York Region's disabled community must be given the same opportunity for spontaneous travel and the 'Family of Services' status allows that, using resources already in place.

York Region Transit is the first transit system within the GTA to implement this status and is being watched closely by its transit peers. A webinar on the benefits of this model is currently being prepared and will be presented to the Canadian Urban Transit Association in March 2012.

Mobility Plus will continue to move ahead with this program in a way that is respectful to the people it serves.

For more information on this report, please contact Sharon Doyle, Manager, Mobility Plus at Ext. 5634.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

# Mobility Plus Service Delivery Pre-Amalgamation to 2012

Presentation to  
Transportation Services Committee

Sharon Doyle  
February 29, 2012

## Background

For 20 years, the municipalities of Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Newmarket and Aurora operated specialized transit services as part of their municipal transit operations.

On January 1, 2001, The Regional Municipality of York assumed responsibility for the delivery of public transit services.

## Pre-Amalgamation Service Delivery



- ❑ Ten buses were owned, operated and maintained by each municipality
- ❑ Local taxi companies
- ❑ Private bus companies
- ❑ Ten contractors
- ❑ Service hours
- ❑ Municipal boundaries and designated transfer points



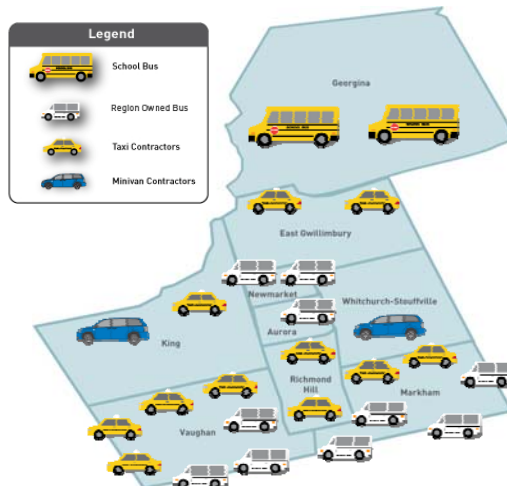
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## Service Delivery 2001-2003



- ❑ Buses were owned, operated and maintained by the Region
- ❑ Municipal drivers became Regional employees
- ❑ Service hours
- ❑ Local taxi companies
- ❑ Additional services
- ❑ Toronto locations



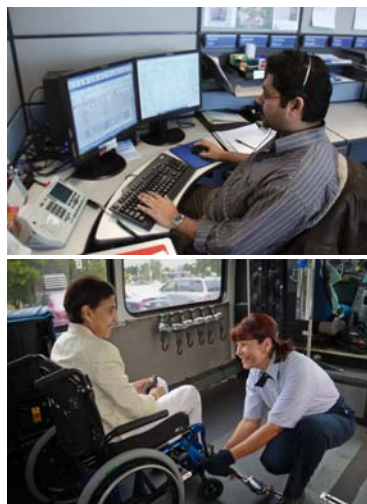
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## Service Delivery Concerns



- ❑ Customer Service
- ❑ Scheduling software capabilities
- ❑ Sedan and mini-van maintenance
- ❑ Driver training
- ❑ Taxi chit verification process
- ❑ Driver refusal of short trips
- ❑ No Show/Late Cancellation levels
- ❑ Contract administration of thirteen contractors



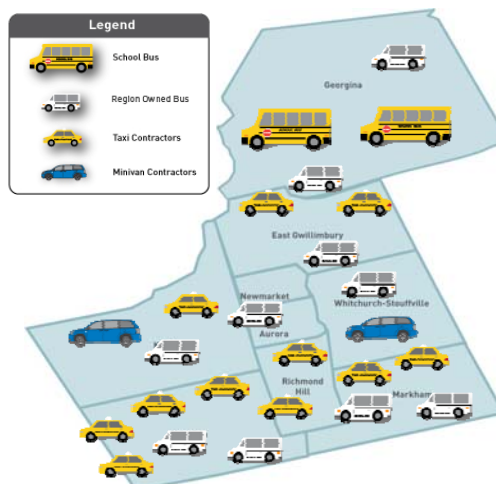
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## Service Delivery 2004-2006



- ❑ Scheduling software
- ❑ Taxi contracts extended
- ❑ Award of Sedan and Mini-van Operating and Maintenance Performance-Based Contract (2006)
- ❑ Award of first Bus Operating and Maintenance Performance-Based Contract (2006)
- ❑ Service hours
- ❑ Additional services



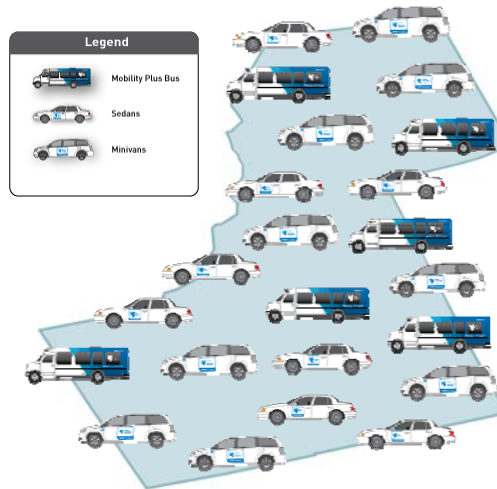
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## Service Delivery 2007-2011



- ❑ Municipal borders
- ❑ Service hours
- ❑ Service monitoring
- ❑ Reorganization
- ❑ IT technology
- ❑ Status change
- ❑ Additional services



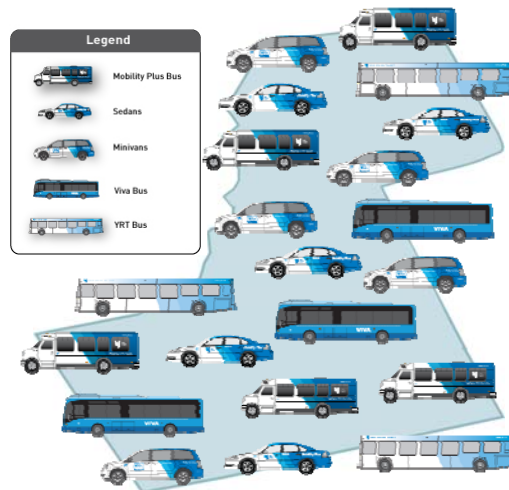
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## Family of Services... one passenger at a time



- ❑ New Performance-Based Contract for Sedans and Mini-vans in 2012
- ❑ Reduce barriers
- ❑ Trip by trip eligibility determination
- ❑ AODA compliance
- ❑ Scheduling software upgrades
- ❑ New bus fleet



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## Questions?

