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## **DEVELOPMENT OF A BRAND IDENTITY FOR YORK REGION RAPID TRANSIT**

**The Rapid Transit Public/Private Partnership Steering Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, March 11, 2004, from the Executive Co-ordinator, York Rapid Transit Plan:**

### **1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

### **2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the status and progress of the branding component of the York Region Rapid Transit Plan program.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

In September 2003, York Consortium 2002, in a joint RFP selection process with YRT, engaged the firm Gee Jeffery and Partners to develop a brand and marketing communications strategy for York Region's rapid transit program. Since then, Gee Jeffery has been working closely with both YRTP and YRT to review the research and work towards a final recommendation.

Selecting the appropriate Brand and marketing communications strategy is vital to the success of rapid transit in York Region. The development of a brand will clearly define the message(s) to be conveyed and entice people to ride the system.

Recognizing that branding is a long-term initiative predicated on building a relationship based on trust, respect and consistency, the branding consultants have developed and are implementing a process through which YRTP, in partnership with YRT, can clearly identify options for the most effective communications, media strategy and creative decision-making in all elements of the program.

Promoting this important new rapid transit service and building upon YRT's solid reputation will reflect positively on York Region's entire family of public transit services.

#### **3.1 Research and Discovery**

Through the months of September to November of 2003, the branding consultants undertook and completed an extensive research and discovery phase. Among the tasks included in this phase of the project were:

- Review of existing plans, designs, schedules and public process documents
- Review of competitive and partner environment including other systems and modes of rapid transit
- Review of best practices where other transit systems (world wide) have succeeded in developing a strong brand and branded experience
- Interviews with key internal and external project stakeholders
- Qualitative consumer research in the form of focus groups comprised of members of key target groups and market segments for the new service

There are three key target markets for YRTP, the first is existing frequent transit users who will find YRTP increases the convenience of their trips. The second group is occasional or infrequent users. For this group YRTP will provide additional incentives to use public transit. The third, and most critical group, is non-transit users. For this group YRTP will offer advantages that will provide a reason to choose transit over their private vehicle for both business and pleasure trips.

### 3.2 Brand Foundation

Completion of the research enabled the consultants to develop a brand foundation that sets out the key elements of the brand: mission/vision, promise, difference, personality, image and experiences. The team found that the key promise, platform and attributes to be reflected in the new rapid transit system brand are:

| Comfort                              | Convenience                            | Fun                         |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Clean<br>Stylish<br>Upscale<br>Crisp | Frequent<br>Fast<br>Reliable<br>Prompt | Spirited<br>Friendly<br>New |

Based on these attributes, the team proceeded to develop name options.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Four criteria were used to guide the development of name options for York Region's new rapid transit service.

- (1) **Simple and Memorable** – The name must be easy to remember and say
- (2) **Appropriate and Distinctive** – The name must strike the right tone and the right sound with the target audience and must differentiate the rapid transit service
- (3) **Linguistics** – The name must have no inappropriate or unintended meanings nor lend itself easily to ridicule
- (4) **Legally Available** – The name must be available for use

It is important to note that in developing the name, we are articulating the positioning, naming, promise and personality of the new service. With all these criteria in mind, the consulting team developed name options that fall into two broad categories:

**Attribute** based names reflect attributes and other factors related to the product/service first. They are based on more rational perceptions and their connection to the service/product being named is inherent. Examples of familiar attribute-based brand names include easyJet, Connexxion, Acela

**Emotive** based names bring a lifestyle element with them. They tap into how we want people to feel first. They are based on a state-of-mind (this may not obvious...at first). Examples of familiar emotive-based brand names include Fido, Apple and Yahoo!

Having developed a list of names, a short list was selected by the project team for further testing. Primary research with consumers was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved qualitative research. Two focus groups were held with York Region residents on January 13th, 2004. Groups were stratified by age, with the first group among those 18-30 years of age and the second group among those 31-60 years of age. Each group consisted a mix of public transit users (GO, TTC, YRT) with whom six distinct names were tested. Learning from the qualitative research enabled the research team to reduce the number of names to four, by eliminating those that received the strongest negative reaction in the groups.

The second phase of research involved quantitative research among York Region residents. A telephone survey among 250 York Region residents was conducted January 14th – 19th, 2004. A sample size of 250 has a margin of error of  $\pm 6.4$  percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.

In addition to consumer testing, the candidate names were subject to legal review to ensure their availability for use in the rapid transit context, as well as to linguistic screening in 14 languages.

At the end of this phase, it was determined that one name best met the criteria and should be advanced for further development. It was agreed that additional names should be considered. The naming criteria were further refined and a second round of name generation undertaken. The linguistic and legal screening was completed and a second round of quantitative research is now underway. Results will be forthcoming at a future meeting.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

All communications efforts are included as part of the YRTP Year Two budget.

## **6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT**

Local municipal communications staff have an open invitation to participate on the YRTP Communication Committee. This is essential if we are to ensure everyone is aware of current activities and they are provided with an opportunity to assist the YRTP team in evaluating the effectiveness of ongoing communications activities.

The marketing communications plan being developed through the branding process is anticipated to be the communications roadmap for rapid transit, particularly as we work towards the launch of Quick Start in 2005. This communications program is being developed in close conjunction with YRT.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

This report presents the status and progress of the branding component of the York Region Rapid Transit Plan program for information.