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PRESTO SMART CARD LAUNCH FOR YRT/VIVA

The Transportation Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated February 11, 2011, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Clerks of the local municipalities.

2. PURPOSE

This report is to provide information on the PRESTO Smart Card for YRT/Viva prior to the public launch scheduled for March 28, 2011.

3. BACKGROUND

The PRESTO smart card will simplify fare payment when using multiple transit services across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA)

PRESTO is a common fare card that allows customers to ride on any participating transit system in the GTHA without pre-purchasing tickets or passes. Customers will not have to know the fare policies for each transit system nor have the exact cash fare as they travel from one system to another. The PRESTO card will allow fare payment and accommodate the fare policies of all transit systems, including intersystem transfers, discounts and customer loyalty schemes. If they choose, customers will still be able to use cash or tickets.

The PRESTO Project is being jointly funded by the Province of Ontario and nine participating municipalities in the GTHA

The Province of Ontario through the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is funding 100% of the initial capital cost and a portion of the operating cost for the common central system required to operate PRESTO. The Province is also funding 33% of capital costs attributed to each transit system's needs. Ongoing operating costs associated with PRESTO smart card equipment on buses and at terminals or stations will be the responsibility of each individual agency.

In 2006, the Province of Ontario made the transfer of gas tax revenues dependant on participation in the PRESTO program. The Region has received \$61.4M in gas tax funding since 2006.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

PRESTO will be available as an additional form of fare payment on YRT and Viva rapid transit routes except those operated under contract with the Toronto Transit Commission

Customers will be able to pay their transit fare using the PRESTO Card on all YRT/Viva buses, at Viva stations and terminals, using GO Transit and at select Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) subway stations.

PRESTO will not be available as a method of payment on Mobility Plus and Dial-a-Ride Services at this time.

An extensive marketing, communications and card distribution plan is in place to educate customers and encourage the use of PRESTO

YRT staff, with support from contracted staff, will be setting up temporary booths at terminals, shopping malls, and community centres on pre-advertised dates and times to allow customers to obtain a PRESTO card.

PRESTO cards will be sold through the existing network of YRT/Viva ticket agents who are strategically spread throughout the Region.

Customer communications regarding PRESTO have already been distributed through the MyTransit newsletter and on yrt.ca. Communication activities for the launch of PRESTO are planned to educate customers about how to use the new fare card.

Additional communication to customers regarding PRESTO will coincide with the March 28 launch. Advertisements will be featured on YRT and Viva buses, in community newspapers, at transit shelters and terminals, local colleges, York University, select malls throughout York Region and GO train stations serviced by the YRT/Viva system.

For up to three months, a team of contracted staff will be located at Viva stations and YRT/Viva terminals to educate customers about the new PRESTO fare card system. During the launch, there will be incentives such as waiving the initial \$6.00 card fee for the first 5,000 York Region customers. The team will also be trained to answer any questions about the YRT/Viva system in general. A PRESTO guide is being developed and will be distributed to all customers. All information will be available and updated on yrt.ca. In addition to the call centre operated by PRESTO, YRT/Viva customer service staff are being trained to help answer any PRESTO-related questions.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of waiving the card fee for 5,000 Regional customers is \$30,000 (5,000 X \$6.00). All necessary funding to implement and operate PRESTO was included in the 2011 operating and capital budget submissions.

There could a minor shift in the fare revenues when customers start using PRESTO instead of cash, ticket or monthly passes. An assessment will be made nine months after the launch of PRESTO to determine the impact to revenues.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The implementation of PRESTO will further enhance public transit as a transportation option by making payment for travel easier. This, in turn, will support the transit modal split objectives of the Region and local municipalities in an effort to have a more sustainable transportation system.

7. CONCLUSION

Council's support for PRESTO signals the Region's commitment to provide convenience to our transit customers and ensures continued gas tax funding support for transit services from the Provincial government. We continue to work collaboratively with our neighbouring municipalities to provide the best possible transit experience for all customers across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

For more information on this report, please contact Steven D. Kemp, Director, Traffic Management and Intelligent Transportation Systems at Ext. 5226.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.