

5

YORK REGION TRANSIT GEORGINA MOBILITY TRANSIT PILOT UPDATE

The Transit Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, April 23, 2008, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Region continue to support the concept of community-based transit services in rural areas of the Region where residents' transportation needs cannot be currently addressed by York Region Transit's conventional public transit or specialized transit services.
2. York Region Transit staff continue to monitor the Georgina Mobility Transit program to ensure there is no duplication of services with those provided by York Region Transit.

2. PURPOSE

Georgina Mobility Transit reports to its funding partners annually

The purpose of this report is three-fold:

- To review the results of the 2007 transit pilot project with Georgina Mobility Transit, concerning the provision of "community-based" transit services for residents of the Town of Georgina.
- To update Transit Committee and Regional Council on the 2007 funding allocation to secure a storefront location and thereby increase service quality.
- To obtain continued support for the concept of providing "community-based" transit services in other rural parts of the Region.

3. BACKGROUND

Funding has allowed Georgina Mobility Transit to continue building its community-based transportation service

Georgina Mobility Transit Inc. and Transit Georgina amalgamated in June 2005 to form one consolidated non-profit charity to improve the transportation services for the residents of Georgina. Today, this combined operation addresses the transportation needs

of those residents who are not currently able to access York Region Transit's (YRT) conventional or specialized services.

In April of 2007, Georgina Mobility Transit was awarded funding from the Regional Municipality of York in the amount of \$40,000 allowing the continuation of transportation to the large and growing numbers of working poor families living in rural areas of the Town.

An agreement was developed which, among other things, indemnifies the Region from any claims arising from the provision of funding by the Region. In addition, Georgina Mobility Transit is required to provide the Region with performance statistics on a quarterly basis, to enable York Region Transit to assess future planning needs for conventional and specialized services within Georgina.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Georgina Mobility Transit provides a low-cost transportation alternative to those who do not have access or meet the eligibility criteria for YRT services

The mission of Georgina Mobility Transit is to provide and facilitate transportation for those who are restricted by poverty and circumstance, physical disabilities, mental illness, and developmental disabilities. The service gives these residents access to the basic necessities of life including medical, employment and educational opportunities.

In 2007, Georgina Mobility Transit provided an average of 940 trips per month. This is a substantial decrease from the average monthly trips of 1,250 in 2006, and may be the result of additional YRT conventional services within the Georgina area and the increased monitoring of the program to ensure there is no duplication of services provided by York Region Transit.

Rides for medical purposes and food procurement continue to be most prevalent reasons for trip requests

This transit "partnership" is supported by York Region Transit since it addresses the requirement for a transit service to meet the needs of Region residents in a cost-effective manner which cannot currently be supported due to the rural nature of the trip requests or other needs currently not addressed by public transit. Medical trips to facilities not serviced by Mobility Plus e.g. Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Princess Margaret Hospital and St. Michael's Hospital, and trips to locations providing the necessities of life (e.g. Georgina Food Bank, Supper Clubs and grocery stores) continue to be the predominant reasons for travel.

Education, employment and fundraising trips make up the remainder of the trips as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1
Trip Destination Profile

Purpose of Trips	Number of Trips (annual)	Percentage of Overall Trips
Health/Medical	5,287	47%
Food Bank, Supper Clubs, Prescriptions, Groceries	2,307	21%
Education	1,975	18%
Employment	1,610	14%
Fundraising Trips	101	<1%
Total	11,280	100%

Georgina Mobility Transit transports a large percentage of people who have been diagnosed with mental health issues

Passengers who suffer from mental illness and have no physical disability currently are eligible to travel with Mobility Plus to day programs or work placements only. Transportation to other locations is provided by Georgina Mobility Transit. For example, Georgina Mobility Transit has taken a grieving mother to medical appointments in Mississauga, grief counselling in Newmarket and to her son's grave in a Mississauga cemetery.

Passengers with mental health issues make up 48% of the trips.

The centrally located storefront office space has created a "Community Connection" within Georgina

Regional Council approved the use of a portion of the 2007 funding allocation to secure a storefront location for business purposes. In May 2007, a storefront office space at 112B High Street, Sutton was acquired. For the first time, the Dispatcher and the Executive Director are able to work together under the same roof. As anticipated, the centrally located storefront has created a presence in the community and increased the quality of service. Community members are dropping in to book rides and the broader community is offered resource information. York Region Transit has provided the office with a display for current transit schedules, bulletins, newsletters and Mobility Plus application forms.

Georgina Mobility Transit and YRT are also investigating the possibility of selling YRT fare media from the storefront location.

4.1 RELATIONSHIP TO VISION 2026

The financial support of an efficient and effective “community-based” transit service, in the absence of available conventional public transit services, will address the Region’s goal of making transit more accessible throughout the Region.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Georgina Mobility Transit requests continued funding from the Regional Municipality of York for 2008 in the amount of \$50,000

The 2008 Business Plan and Budget for York Region Transit contains an allocation of \$50,000 as a grant in support of the Georgina Mobility Transit operation. With Georgina Mobility Transit’s projected annual ridership of 12,000 trips in 2008, the Region’s grant provides a contribution of \$4.17 per trip.

The per trip contribution of \$4.17 is below the gross cost per trip for conventional transit of \$5.91 and Mobility Plus of \$28.24. The provision of continued funding from the Town of Georgina and the Regional Municipality of York will allow Georgina Mobility Transit to continue to provide this essential service to the residents of Georgina. In return, they have committed to maintaining the current high level and quality of service provided to the community as well as carefully managing available resources.

Future financial support will be based on Georgina Mobility Transit’s ridership growth and expansion of conventional services

Georgina Mobility Transit’s actual ridership in 2007 was 35% lower than projected. Any future increases in continued funding should be determined after reviewing the performance statistics from the quarterly reports.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The provision of a financial grant for the operation of “community-based” transit services addresses the needs of residents within the Town of Georgina who are unable to avail themselves of conventional or specialized services provided by York Region Transit.

7. CONCLUSION

Georgina Mobility Transit relies on the continued support from the Regional Municipality of York to provide this essential service

Georgina Mobility Transit provides an alternative transportation service to meet community transit needs of individuals who live in rural areas of Georgina and are at risk of social isolation. The continued provision of financial support in the form of a grant to offset operating costs provides an effective and efficient way of meeting the transit needs of Region residents. This essential service allows the forming of a close partnership with a local municipality to resolve a pressing community need.

Future financial support will be based on the requirement for transit service and the existing and planned expansion of conventional transit services.

In addition, staff also recommends, where appropriate, the application of this financial support concept to other parts of the Region.

For more information on this report, please contact Sharon Doyle, Manager, Mobility Plus (ext. 5634) in the Transit Branch of Transportation Services.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.