

2

YORK REGION TRANSIT MOBILITY PLUS BUS FLEET PURCHASE

The Transit Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, April 26, 2005, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council authorize a contract with Overland Custom Coach in respect of the purchase of eight new low-floor 25-foot Elf buses, in an amount not to exceed \$1,680,000, pursuant to the sole source provisions of the Purchasing By-law.
2. The Chief Administrative Officer and the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be authorized to execute the contract in respect of this bus purchase on the Region's behalf, subject to prior review by Legal Services.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Transit Committee and Regional Council regarding the current status of the York Region Transit (YRT) Mobility Plus specialized transit bus fleet and to seek approval to proceed with the procurement of eight buses, five for fleet replacement and three to address growth in trip demand.

3. BACKGROUND

Mobility Plus specialized transit service is provided through contracted sedan and minivan taxi service, limited contracted bus service and an in-house bus/minivan operation. It is anticipated that trip demand in 2005 will continue to grow at a double digit level as experienced over the past two years (10% in 2003 and 19% in 2004). Demand for 2005 has been estimated at 288,800 trips. The in-house bus operation accommodates approximately 20% of the total trip demand. Bus service provides the vehicle capacity to accommodate larger mobility devices (e.g. electric wheelchairs, scooters, etc.) that cannot be accommodated by the smaller accessible minivan service. Bus service also provides a more effective and efficient means to handle the transportation of a number of customers at the same time from the same location.

With the formation of York Region Transit in January, 2001, Mobility Plus inherited various bus types (low-floor and lift/ramp access) with various capacity configurations.

Efforts were undertaken in 2003 and 2004 to standardize the vehicle type and capacity with the purchase of eight -25 foot ELF (Economical Low-Floor) buses from Overland Custom Coach. At the present time in the Canadian para-transit bus market, there is not another established product of this configuration available.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Current Fleet Status

The current active bus fleet consists of 14 buses as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1
Current Active Bus Fleet

Bus Type	Model Year
Orion #1006	1989
Orion #8902	1989
Girardin #966	1996
Girardin #1018	1997
Elf #1008	1997
Girardin #860	2000
Elf #381	2003
Elf #382	2003
Elf #383	2003
Elf #384	2003
Elf #385	2003
Elf #481	2004
Elf #482	2004
Elf #483	2004

The design life of a specialized service bus is seven to ten years. Actual operating life cycle is subject to factors such as hours of service, mileage incurred, geographic operating area, road congestion, etc.

To meet projected service demand levels in 2005, a total of 17 buses is required, 15 buses to meet typical peak business day operating requirements, with two additional buses allocated as spares (12% spare ratio).

Vehicle condition audits were conducted on the fleet in late 2004 at both contracted bus maintenance facilities- Laidlaw (Newmarket) and SN Diesel (Vaughan). Based on these assessments, it is recommended that five vehicles be retired in 2005 (#s 1006, 8902, 966, 1018, 1008). These vehicles have reached the end of their design life and to meet safety standards for extended future use, considerable costs would be incurred. In fact, four of

these vehicles have already been removed from service with two Mobility Plus minivans providing service support to the remaining bus fleet.

With the continued growth in registrants and the current ratio of non-ambulatory clients, for every 5% demand growth, an additional bus is required to address non-ambulatory trip demand capacity and mobility aid requirements.

The eight new Elf 25 foot buses will greatly improve system performance and trip reliability Region-wide while at the same time reducing added trip costs associated with vehicle repairs and employing contracted services to handle bus service requests. Fleet standardization will simplify maintenance, parts inventory, training and dispatching.

4.1.1 Planned 2005 Orders and Deliveries

The 2005 Business Plan and Budget has allocated capital dollars for the purchase of the eight buses. It is recommended that the bus purchase be undertaken as a sole source procurement with Overland Custom Coach selected as the vehicle supplier. Overland Custom Coach is the only low-floor small bus provider in Canada and is the current supplier of the Elf vehicle in the Mobility Plus bus fleet. With this purchase, the Mobility Plus bus fleet will be standardized which will lead to certain maintenance and operating economies and provide a more reliable operating fleet. Overland Custom Coach indicates a delivery schedule of approximately six months from the date of order.

4.2 Relationship to Vision 2026

Continued improvement to Mobility Plus service, including the upgrading and replacement of the existing bus fleet, addresses many of the key principles in the Region's Vision 2026. The replacement of older buses contributes to the goal of an "enhanced environment". The provision of reliable service provides the disabled community the opportunity to share in the Region's vibrant economy and addresses residents needs for transportation services to enhance quality of life. The reduction in maintenance costs allows limited financial resources to be redirected and reinvested in the provision of additional customer trips to meet an increasing customer demand for service.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Mobility Plus staff continue to pursue measures to improve service quality and cost effectiveness of this specialized transit service. Cost containment measures are planned for various aspects of the operation in 2005 which, as an example, include the replacement of five buses to reduce vehicle maintenance costs and improve overall system reliability. The growth in trip demand and the continued requirement to address customer mobility needs results in the need to not only to replace the existing fleet but to add three (3) new buses.

The approved 2005 Mobility Plus Business Plan and Budget contains funding for the purchase of the eight buses. The current cost of a 25-foot Elf bus is set at \$210,000. per unit which includes applicable taxes. The contract award to Overland Custom Coach for the purchase of eight buses will have an upset limit of \$1,680,000.

The initial order of ELF buses, received in 2003, cost the Region \$226,700. per vehicle. The new purchase order reflects a unit savings of \$16,700 per bus primarily due to an improvement in the Canadian dollar exchange rate since the bus is constructed in the United States with final finish and preparation carried out at the Ontario-based Overland Custom Coach facility.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The replacement and addition of Mobility Plus buses to improve service reliability, reduce operating costs and address increased customer demand will ensure residents of the various local municipalities with larger mobility devices are afforded an opportunity to obtain specialized transportation services.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on a review of Mobility Plus bus demand requirements in 2005, and the need to reduce overall fleet maintenance costs and provide a more reliable on-time service with a purpose built vehicle that accommodates larger mobility devices, it is recommended that approval be given for the purchase of eight new 25-foot Elf buses. This will standardize the Mobility Plus bus fleet with a new average age of 1.8 years.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.