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YORK REGION TRANSIT BICYCLE RACKS ON BUSES

The Transit Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, June 6, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Ministry of Transportation, Ontario be requested to amend the Public Vehicles Act to permit the use of bicycle racks on buses crossing municipal boundaries.
2. Staff review the opportunity for bicycle racks as part of the 2007 Business Plan and Budget.

2. PURPOSE

There has been growing interest from Canadian transit systems on installing bicycle racks on buses. The intent is to make public transit more convenient to customers who are also cyclists and, at the same time, encourage ridership from a new customer base. York Region Transit (YRT) staff has researched the feasibility of installing bike racks on YRT services and are presenting the findings to Transit Committee through this report.

3. BACKGROUND

Currently, YRT customers are able to bring bicycles into the interior of the bus if it does not inconvenience or jeopardize the safety of other passengers, and there is space in the bus to allow free passage and storage. Normally, bicycles would not be allowed inside the bus on major routes during weekday peak periods due to the number of passengers on board. There is some difficulty with placing bicycles inside the bus as additional time is needed on boarding, and other customers can be inconvenienced during boarding and exiting the bus. There is also a safety consideration as the customer/cyclist must hold on to the bicycle as well as securing him/herself in a seated or standing position.

Bicycle racks are an alternative option to allow a customer to travel with a bike at all times.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Legislative Requirements

The *Public Vehicles Act (1990)*, Section 24, states that a public vehicle shall not carry or transport luggage, baggage, package, trunk, crate or other load that extends beyond the limits of a vehicle. The Act, as currently written, restricts public vehicles from crossing local municipal boundaries with bike racks as the racks extend beyond the body limits of the vehicle.

Many YRT/Viva core routes cross local municipal boundaries within York Region as well as the municipal boundaries with Toronto and Brampton. These cross-boundary routes would also generate the greatest demand for bike racks. However, buses equipped with bicycle racks would not be allowed to operate on these routes. A number of transit properties operate under similar cross-boundary scenarios and are also affected. The Ontario Community Transit Association, supported by a number of transit agencies, has approached the Ministry of Transportation to seek a change to the Act. A Private Member's Bill is also expected to be tabled in the fall of 2006. This issue would need to be addressed prior to considering bicycle racks for YRT/Viva. Regional Council support to amend the Act would be beneficial in permitting the use of bike racks in the future.

4.2 Experience of Extended GTA Transit Systems

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) has recently equipped 98 units of its 1,600 plus bus fleet for a test program. All of these buses operate out of one garage and serve a specific set of routes. The buses equipped with bicycle racks are not assigned to TTC cross-boundary routes into York Region and Mississauga due to the legislative restrictions noted earlier in this report.

Burlington Transit conducted a pilot project in 2005 and has subsequently received Council approval to install racks on all 48 of their conventional buses.

Grand River Transit in the Kitchener-Waterloo area has installed bike racks on all 160 of their buses after a pilot project in 2000.

4.3 Supporting Initiatives

The proposed installation of bicycle racks is in keeping with a number of York Region initiatives such as the Transportation Master Plan and the Smart Commute program. These initiatives are supportive of travel demand management and increasing the travel mode share for both transit and biking. In addition, the Region is working on a Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan, which is expected to be completed in March 2007.

4.4 Operating Practices

Bicycle racks accommodate two bicycles and are installed at the front of the bus. The racks are in a stowed position when not in use and are extended manually when needed. One of the key features of the racks is that there is no bus operator intervention required. The customer is responsible for opening and closing the rack and loading/unloading their

bicycle onto the rack itself. The process takes about 30 to 45 seconds. Providing customers are prompt and familiar with the process, the time to load/unload a bike does not make a noticeable impact on schedule adherence.

4.5 Training and Marketing

Guidelines would need to be developed related to the use of bicycle racks, such as minimum age of the user and size of the bicycle. A training program would also need to be developed for all applicable bus operators as they would need to know how to operate the bus installed with a bicycle rack, answer customer questions about the use of the rack and implement procedures when a customer has not loaded a bicycle properly. An educational and promotional campaign would also need to be developed to advise our customers and staff of this new feature.

4.6 Aesthetics

While this feature is becoming common on various transit systems with an assortment of bus model types, it is necessary to acknowledge that when in use, the aesthetics of a contemporary bus may be impacted. The installation of a rack on a YRT or Viva bus would obscure the front YRT or Viva logo.

4.7 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 includes a goal statement that the Region will have effective, efficient and environmentally sensitive transportation, waste management, and water systems. To support this goal, the Region has identified an action item to continue to improve service and infrastructure for successfully integrated transit service. Implementation of bicycle racks would improve the integration of transit service and provide additional options for the travelling public.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost to supply and install a bicycle rack would be approximately \$1,200 per bus. To equip all existing 262 conventional YRT buses and 85 Viva rapid transit buses would cost approximately \$417,000. The program could be phased-in over several years and, if appropriate, will be included in the 2007 Business Plan and Budget.

There would be some start-up operating costs of approximately \$20,000 associated with an educational and instructional program for transit customers and cyclists. Also included would be a parallel program to train bus operators and associated staff.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

If the program proceeds, cyclists in the local municipalities will be provided with greater transportation options on public transit.

7. CONCLUSION

Installation of bicycle racks on transit buses provides greater flexibility to the traveling public and new ridership opportunities on YRT and Viva services. Changes to the Ontario Public Vehicles Act are necessary however, to permit the use of bicycle racks on cross-boundary routes in York Region. It is therefore recommended that Regional Council formally request the provincial government to amend the Public Vehicles Act to permit the use of bicycle racks on buses crossing municipal boundaries.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.