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2003 – 2006
TRANSIT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to outline major accomplishments and successes achieved by the Transit branch during the current Regional Council term.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region Transit (YRT) was established in 2001 with the amalgamation of five conventional transit systems and seven specialized transit systems for the disabled that were previously operated by the local municipalities in the Region. The establishment of YRT began an aggressive program of transit investment and transit supportive strategic initiatives with the goal of growing transit ridership and transit market share.

In 2002, York Region formed the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation (YRRTC) with a mandate for the planning, design and construction of the Region's new bus rapid transit service, Viva.

The current Regional Council term has seen a continuation of the growth in the transit program, the highlights of which will be described in this report.

The Region's comprehensive approach to transit planning and ridership growth includes a variety of transit supportive policy initiatives including:

- The York Region Transportation Master Plan (2002)
- Vision 2026, York Region's Strategic Plan (2002)
- The York Region Official Plan and its Regional Centres and Corridors Strategy (2004)
- The York Region Great Regional Streets Study (2005)

The unprecedented level of investment, political support and record ridership gains are a direct reflection of the Region's commitment to providing high quality public transit services, and in doing so, achieving greater balance in its overall transportation network.

It is noteworthy that York Region has received two significant awards in 2006, one from the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) and the other from the American Public Transit Association (APTA), as follows:

- CUTA 2006 National Transit Corporate Recognition Award (Corporate Exceptional Performance/Outstanding Achievement) for record breaking ridership and service growth.
- APTA 2006 Innovation Award to the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Transit revenue vehicle hours operated in York Region have grown from 555,400 in 2003 to 965,000 in 2006. During the same period, ridership has increased from 10.3 million revenue passengers to 17.5 million revenue passengers. While some of this growth is attributable to the take-over of GO Transit services on Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue, ridership growth has still averaged more than 10% each year not including those services.

Besides service and ridership growth in the conventional YRT program, the Region has also introduced the first phase of its Viva bus rapid transit (BRT) program. Viva is the first BRT service of its kind in the Greater Toronto Area and features 85 state-of-the-art BRT vehicles, 109 stations, a new terminal (Richmond Hill Centre Terminal), 127 off-board fare vending machines, queue jump lanes, a traffic signal priority system, real-time bus arrival information at all stations, and many other technological features. Planning and preliminary design work is underway for Phase 2 of the program, which will see dedicated rights-of-way constructed for the operation of BRT vehicles. YRT staff played an integral role in preparing for the successful implementation of Viva in the fall of 2005.

2006 also saw a provincial government announcement to extend the Spadina Subway into York Region to the Vaughan Corporate Centre. Subject to confirmation of funding from the federal government, construction is expected to begin on this project in 2008.

The Region's conventional public transit program, encompassing YRT services, Viva BRT services, and the subway extension, is an integral element of the Region's Transportation Master Plan, which contemplates a significant shift from private automobile use to public transit over its 25 year term. A more balanced transportation network is required in order for the Region to maintain its pace of population and employment growth. Overall, an increase in transit modal share from 8% to 17% (am peak period trips) Region-wide is required to meet the objectives of the plan. The

Region's investment in its public transit program is setting the stage to achieve these transportation goals.

4.1 Service Planning

Major accomplishments in the Service Planning section of YRT include the following:

- Introduction of 25 new routes and 7 restructured routes.
- Development of a small bus strategy and introduction of a pilot project in the Newmarket area.
- Development of a new 5-year service plan (2006 – 2010) including new service standards (i.e., standards for new service introduction and coverage, frequency and span of service and standards to measure service efficiency and effectiveness).
- Preparation and submission of a Ridership Growth Strategy and an Asset Management Plan to the Ministry of Transportation.
- The section commented on approximately 200 development applications annually to ensure transit supportive land-use guidelines are applied.

4.2 Operations

Major accomplishments in the Operations section of YRT include the following:

- Negotiated contract extensions and updates to performance-based contracts for all three conventional transit operations and maintenance contractors. Three, four and five-year contracts are now in place for each service provider, who have also concluded concurrent collective agreements with their respective Amalgamated Transit Union locals.
- Assisted in development of operations and maintenance contract for Viva bus rapid transit service, and the selection of Connex as the new operations and maintenance contractor for the service.
- Developed new contractor report card program to measure and monitor contractor performance.
- Oversaw ordering and delivery of 90 Viva BRT vehicles, 80 conventional transit buses and 19 Mobility Plus vehicles.
- Oversaw major refurbishing of 14 buses.
- Re-built the Promenade Transit Terminal in the City of Vaughan.
- Introduced a new waste and recycling program for YRT and Viva stops and terminal facilities, including installation of 260 waste/recycling containers.
- Established new fare enforcement group for the Viva off-board fare payment system, including receiving Special Constable status for several enforcement staff.
- Installed 75 new transit shelters and benches and improved concrete standing areas at some 200 bus stops.
- Oversaw the construction and opening of the new Vaughan Mills Transit Terminal.
- Participated in hybrid bus demonstration project.

4.3 Marketing and Customer Service

Major accomplishments in the Marketing and Customer Service section of YRT include the following:

- Developed comprehensive joint marketing plan for both YRT and Viva services and oversaw its ongoing implementation.
- Handle some 200,000 customer calls annually in the YRT call centre.
- Responsible for continuous updating of YRT website, which will have some two million visits in 2006.
- Successfully marketed the new Viva brand during its 2005 launch period in conjunction with YRRTC.
- Oversaw improvements to the CARES complaint tracking system, which handles some 5,000 inquiries annually.
- Introduced on-the-road Customer Information Representatives to assist with the introduction of the new off-board fare payment system for Viva, among other customer service duties.
- Developed partnership with the York Region School Boards to launch the 'Bus it' program into the grade 5 curriculum.
- Partnering with the various Transportation Management Associations in building business support for public transit.
- Introduced live transit updates on the A Channel during the morning news.
- Introducing improved customer information through website trip planning, interactive voice response telephone information, and text messaging at bus stops.

4.4 Transit Management Systems

A new Transit Management Systems (TMS) section was created in 2005 and is responsible for ensuring effective operation of the various Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies on the Viva BRT service, and overseeing the implementation of similar technologies on conventional YRT services. Major accomplishments in the Transit Management Systems section of YRT include the following:

- Implementation of Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) system on Viva.
- Implementation of off-board Automated Fare Collection (AFC) for Viva and ensuing seamless integration of YRT/Viva fare systems.
- Implementation of Transit Signal Priority (TSP) at signalized intersections to provide priority for Viva buses that are running late.
- Participation on various committees for the Greater Toronto Area Fare System (Smart Card) project.
- Upgrade of existing electronic fare box systems from DOS to Windows.
- Responsible for ongoing maintenance of all ticket vending machines across the system.

4.5 Mobility Plus

Mobility Plus is the Region's public transportation service for persons with disabilities. Major accomplishments in the Mobility Plus section of YRT include the following:

- Accommodated a 33% increase in Mobility Plus ridership to a total of some 280,000 in 2006, while maintaining a minimal unaccommodated trip rate.
- Introduced a new service delivery model in which all bus services are now contracted out to an operations and maintenance contractor.
- Performance-based contracts introduced for all bus, accessible minivan and sedan services.
- Undertook upgrades to the Transview automated scheduling system.
- Upgraded the Mobility Plus fleet resulting in an average bus age of only two years.
- Introduced an email trip booking feature.
- Processed some 165,000 calls in 2005 and reduced wait times by 13% and abandoned calls by 21%.
- Updated all client information for applicant information older than three years.
- Reduced application processing time from 4 - 6 weeks to 2 - 3 weeks while processing some 2,300 applications annually.
- Introduced an organizational restructuring aimed at better addressing client needs and expectations.

4.6 Relationship to Vision 2026

The Region's public transit system is comprised of York Region Transit (YRT) services, the Viva bus rapid transit service and the Mobility Plus service for persons with disabilities. These service offerings respond to various Vision 2026 goals including: Enhanced Environment; Heritage and Culture; A Vibrant Economy; Responding to the Needs of our Residents; Managed and Balanced Growth; and Infrastructure for a Growing Region.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report, however, the following table is presented to show the evolution of the transit budget between 2003 and 2006.

Table 1
Financial Summary

	2003 Actuals	2004 Actuals	2005 Actuals	2006 Budget	% Change 2003/2006
Gross Expenditures (\$000s)*	45,026	52,369	68,775	104,081	131%
Revenues (\$000s)#	20,018	26,116	31,220	40,971	105%
Net Expenditures	25,008	26,254	37,556	63,110	152%
R/C Ratio	0.44	0.50	0.45	0.39	

* CUTA definitions (excludes debt charges & occupancy costs).

CUTA definitions (excludes reserves & provincial funding, includes Advertising Revenue)

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The continued development of the Region's public transit system is supportive of the strategic goals of the local municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

The 2003-2006 Regional Council term saw significant progress in the ongoing development of the Region's public transit program. Ridership growth has exceeded 10% annually and is the highest in the country for transit systems of comparable size. Regional Council is delivering public transit services that are both innovative and effective, which are essential attributes in attracting more and more people to this mode of transportation.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.