

6
YORK REGION TRANSIT
CHARTER SERVICE REQUESTS FOR
SPECIAL AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

(Regional Council, at its meeting on June 21, 2007, amended the following report by adding recommendation 3 as follows:

- 3. The Markham Fair be charged the 2006 Charter Rate and that the Markham Fair be advised that they will be charged the going rate beginning in 2008.)***

The Transit Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, June 1, 2007, from the General Manager of Transit:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Region's existing Charter Policy continue to be applied to all internal and external bus charter requests.
2. The Region continue to support community events by providing bus charters at the discounted rate as identified in the current charter policy.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to address a request from the Markham and East York Agricultural Society and other organizations to provide bus charter service for their respective events.

3. BACKGROUND

Since the amalgamation of the five local municipal transit agencies in 2001, York Region Transit (YRT) has chartered buses for public and private sector organizations throughout the Region.

Regional Council approved an official Charter Policy in April 2002 that included a per-hour fee for external charter requests and a discounted fee which applied to Regional departments, local municipalities, not-for-profit organizations and York Region school boards. The Policy was later revised by Council in January 2004 and in February 2007.

In February 2007, Regional Council approved the latest amendments to the Charter Policy. The amended Policy addresses operating and administrative requirements as well as authorizing an increase to both the regular and discounted charter rates in order to recover current operating costs.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

York Region Transit routinely provides charter service on conventional, Viva and specialized transit buses to public and private organizations throughout the Region. Many internal requests are received including from YRT's Marketing Department (for the promotion of transit), the Region's monthly employee "Welcome Aboard" tour, Public Works Week and various departmental requests. Examples of external charter requests include school charters, the Smart Commute 404-7 'Lunch Express' service and holiday light tours sponsored by the local municipalities. These external charter requests are made by local municipal staff, members of Council and the school boards. Occasionally, private businesses hire YRT to transport staff to conferences and meetings within the boundaries of York Region.

The Charter Policy approved by Council in February 2007 has a provision for a discounted charter fee of \$90 per hour, with a three-hour minimum requirement, to all internal Regional departments, local municipalities in York Region, and registered non-profit groups, including school boards. The discounted charter fee covers the contractor charges and YRT's cost to process and administer the charter. The external rate of \$115 per hour, with a three-hour minimum requirement, earns the Region a nominal profit.

To date in 2007, YRT has operated 70 charters which were eligible for the discounted rate and no charters at the regular rate. The total reimbursement for the charters operated so far this year is approximately \$22,000.

4.1 Requests for Free Charters

Since January 2007, YRT has received four requests from event organizers for bus charters to be provided free of charge:

1. Markham Fair Town of Markham
2. King Fest Music Festival Township of King
3. Festival of India Town of Richmond Hill
4. Police Association of Ontario York Region

The Charter Policy does not make a provision for free charters. Staff have advised the event organizers of the charter fees and the terms and conditions of the revised February 2007 Charter Policy. The financial implications to the Region could be considerable if free charters are made available. Also, criteria to determine who would qualify to receive a free charter service would need to be developed and approved. These organizations continue to pursue their requests. Staff is concerned that accommodating these requests

will establish a precedent for other groups, both internal and external, to request the same.

4.1.1 Markham Fair

The Markham and East York Agricultural Society have made a formal request to YRT to provide a local transit service to and from the Markham Fair. The intent of their request is that YRT would operate this service as an extension of existing conventional services and that the cost to operate this service would not be charged to Markham Fair (see *Attachment 1*).

The Markham Fair operates for four days on the weekend prior to Thanksgiving each year. It is held at the Markham Fairgrounds and has an attendance of approximately 60,000 people. YRT operates two buses to shuttle passengers between Markville Mall and the Fairgrounds, and one bus to shuttle passengers between the Town of Stouffville and the Fairgrounds. In 2006, the three shuttle buses transported 2,250 passengers which is approximately four percent of the overall Fair attendees, and operated for a total of 158 hours. In addition to operating the bus service, YRT and its contractor provide on-road supervision to monitor the service as well as providing a Special Constable to monitor the activity on the buses, in particular the late evenings.

At the direction of the Fair organizers, passengers are charged \$2.50 to ride the shuttle buses. The farebox revenue collected is retained by YRT to subsidize the overall charter operating cost.

Prior to the amalgamation of the local municipal transit systems in 2001, the Town of Markham provided charter services to the Markham Fair in exchange for concession space. The Town retained the revenue collected in the farebox to subsidize their operating cost. YRT has continued to provide the Markham Fair charter service at a capped cost of \$2,000. Fair officials have been advised that any further capping of costs would have to be approved by Regional Council.

4.1.2 King Fest Music Festival

King Fest is a new three-day outdoor festival at Seneca College in King City. The projected attendance is 8,000 people. The Festival will be held June 22, 23 and 24. The organizers have requested that YRT provide at no cost one bus to shuttle people to and from designated parking lots in the vicinity of the campus. In exchange for providing the bus service, the organizers will acknowledge YRT as a sponsor in all festival promotional materials.

4.1.3 Festival of India

This festival is new to the GTA in 2007. The Festival of India is intended to embrace diversity, encouraging others to learn more about the people of India and their cultural heritage. It will be held August 25, 26 and 27 in the Town of Richmond Hill. The organizers are expecting 30,000 attendees over the course of the three days. The

organizers have made an inquiry about a charter service and a possible increase in service hours for existing bus routes, primarily those operating along the Yonge Street corridor.

4.1.4 Police Association of Ontario 75th Anniversary

The York Regional Police (YRP) will be hosting the Police Association of Ontario annual conference in August 2007. It is expected that 250 people will attend and they have requested YRT to operate a charter to and from the Sheraton Parkway Hotel in Richmond Hill to the YRP facility in Newmarket. The YRP is requesting that YRT “donate” the service for this event.

4.2 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 includes a goal statement relating to a vibrant economy and a second goal statement relating to the development of Infrastructure for a Growing Region.

To support these goals, the Region has identified specific action areas that have been considered for this report:

- Promoting our tourism strengths, including forests, historic villages, parks and artistic and cultural activities.
- Increasing businesses’ awareness of the Region’s services.
- Continuing to improve service and infrastructure for successfully integrated transit services.
- Promoting transit usage as a practical and wise alternative to private vehicle use.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2007 Business Plan and Budget is based on the new Charter Policy, which requires all charter trips to at least cover the operating costs. Funding to provide free charters is not available.

The total estimated cost to operate the four requested charters received so far in 2007 is \$35,000 (see *Table 1*).

Table 1
Free Charter Requests – January to May 2007

Estimated Operating Costs

Event	Number of Days	Operating Hours	Number of Buses	Estimated Cost GST Excluded
Markham Fair	4	53	3	\$9,000 (\$15,000 cost to operate, \$6,000 revenue from the farebox)
King Fest Music Festival	3	63	1	\$6,000
Festival of India	3	63	3	\$17,000
Police Association of Ontario 75 th Anniversary	1	8	4/2	\$3,000

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The local municipalities, school boards and non-profit organizations will continue to receive charter services at a discounted rate which is the same rate as the Region's internal departments.

7. CONCLUSION

In order for YRT to recover the cost of providing charter services, staff recommend that the Charter Policy be applied to all internal and external charter requests. The Region will continue to support community events by offering bus charters at the discounted rate.

Where possible, event organizers will be encouraged to utilize the farebox to collect revenue from attendees to reduce their costs.

For more information on this report contact Ann-Marie Carroll, Assistant Manager, Operations (Ext. 5677) or Rick Takagi, Manager, Operations (Ext. 5624), of the Transit Branch in the Transportation and Works Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)