

1

YORK REGION TRANSIT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

The Transit Committee recommends:

- 1. Receipt of the presentation by Caroline Berryman, Marketing Supervisor, York Region Transit; Diana McDonald, Senior Research Associate, Environics; and Rupen Seoni, VP, Practice Leader, Environics Analytics; and**
- 2. Adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated April 30, 2009, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report updates Regional Council on the highlights of the 2008 York Region Transit/Viva Customer Satisfaction Survey.

3. BACKGROUND

As part of the on-going effort to measure customer satisfaction with York Region Transit and Viva services, a customer satisfaction survey is undertaken bi-annually

Previous surveys were conducted in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2006. These surveys established a benchmark for customer satisfaction with York Region Transit (YRT) services.

In 2008, the customer satisfaction survey for conventional transit was conducted between November 25 and December 17. This is the second customer satisfaction survey since the introduction of the Viva bus rapid transit service in September 2005. The timing was delayed as long as possible after the fall 2008 Viva strike without encroaching into the Christmas season.

A Customer Satisfaction Improvement Team comprised of YRT staff will be responsible for reviewing the results of the customer satisfaction survey and identifying areas of improvement. The team will work with staff groups within YRT and the service contractors to recommend solutions for consideration by senior management.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In November 2008, a total of 7,040 on-board and at-stop interviews were conducted for conventional YRT and Viva services

EnviroNics Research Group was selected to co-ordinate and analyze the results of the survey. A geo-demographic analysis was also conducted using the survey data, combined with census data, to identify lifestyle clusters that will be used to target riders and non-riders in future strategic marketing initiatives.

The surveys were administered on the bus by a third-party agency, Advitek Inc. Surveys were completed using the traditional paper and pencil method. Each survey took approximately six to eight minutes to complete. A copy of the survey questionnaire is included as *Attachment 1*.

A representative sampling of riders by percentage of ridership in each service division was obtained (see Table 1 below). Survey sample size and interview length are similar to past surveys.

Table 1
Surveys Completed by Division

Contractor	Average Weekday Boardings (Sept. '07-'08)	As a % of Overall Ridership*	Number of Completed Surveys	As a % of Completed Surveys*
Miller - Markham	9,630	9%	670	10%
Miller – Richmond Hill	9,509	9%	642	9%
First Student (Laidlaw)	5,997	6%	402	6%
Tokmakjian (Can-ar)	26,869	26%	1,860	26%
TTC	14,919	14%	1,010	14%
Veolia	34,821	34%	2,456	35%
YRT/Viva Total	101,745	98%	7,040	100%

Note: *quotas were set to ensure that the actual survey breakdown resembled actual ridership. A few routes were not surveyed (mostly GO shuttles and community buses). These routes account for 1,826 average weekday boardings or 2% of overall ridership.

The 2008 survey was based on the 2006 model, with four new survey questions covering the following areas: service improvements, rating scale to encourage more frequent use of public transit, country of birth and postal code. Survey questions covered topics such as overall performance perceptions of YRT and Viva; rider satisfaction with vehicles, drivers, contractors and support services; usage patterns; changes in rider satisfaction in the past few years; insight into whether service contractors are attaining their contracted service obligations; and areas and opportunities for service optimization. There were two instances where the category of options was updated from the 2006 so as to reflect the introduction of web trip planning technology (RideQuest Click), telephone technology (RideQuest Call), bus arrival technology (NextBus) and next stop audio announcements on buses.

4.2 RESULTS

Overall, 67% of YRT and 79% of Viva respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with public transit in York Region

This represents a slight decline over the previous survey in 2006 where 75% of YRT and 82% of Viva respondents were satisfied or very satisfied.

In terms of performance by divisions, 93% of respondents gave the Viva service, and 72% the YRT service, either a good, very good or excellent rating

This represents a slight decline over the previous survey in 2006 where 96% of respondents gave the Viva service, and 81% the YRT service, either a good, very good or excellent rating.

Performance ratings shown as a percentage in each service division was obtained (see Table 2 below).

Table 2
Performance Ratings (%)

Rating	YRT						Viva
	Total YRT	Miller – Markham	Miller – Richmond Hill	Laidlaw	Tokmakjian	TTC	Veolia
Excellent	9	12	7	12	9	9	29
Very Good	24	27	24	32 ¹	24	20	40
Good	39	38	40	34 ²	40	40	24
Fair	21	20	22	18	21	23	6
Poor	6	5	7	4	6	8	1

Notes: 1. 5 percentage points or more higher than total YRT response
2. 5 percentage points or more lower than total YRT response
3. Question asked: Thinking about your overall experience with YRT and Viva, how do you rate each transit service for their overall performance?

Data from the analysis conducted as part of the research suggests that decreased satisfaction with both YRT and Viva may be related to frequency of service (at respondent's stop), on-schedule arrival, route hours of service, route area covered, cost of fare and experienced frequency of buses arriving more than five minutes late.

Overall performance ratings are down for both YRT and Viva. YRT statistics show 72% of riders offer good, very good or excellent performance ratings, however, this figure is down from 81% in 2006. Viva statistics show 93% of riders offer good, very good or excellent performance ratings, but this figure is also down from 96% in 2006. Satisfaction is also down slightly with public transit services in general from 75% to 71%. The following sections identify the opportunities for improvement in overall satisfaction levels which include frequency of service, on-schedule arrival, route hours of service and cost of fare.

4.3 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

There are opportunities for improvement in overall satisfaction levels

While there were improvements in many of the survey areas since 2006, customer satisfaction levels remain low in some areas, where only 60% or less of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with a part of the overall service.

The areas that fall below this level will be reviewed by the YRT Customer Satisfaction Improvement Team to recommend solutions for improvement. Some of these areas are outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Areas for Improvement

Area for Improvement	YRT		Viva	
	2006	2008	2006	2008
Frequency of service	47%	43%	76%	72%
On-schedule arrival	61%	58%	83%	80%
Route hours of service	64%	53%	79%	72%
Cost of fare	52%	33%	67%	39%

Note: Data represents positive ratings that respondents gave to these specific areas of service.

Improvement ideas will be generated by YRT Customer Satisfaction Improvement Team to develop recommendations

The Customer Satisfaction Improvement Team will begin to review the survey results and identify improvement ideas for each survey area that received low ratings. This year's team will work with staff groups and various contractors to produce their recommendations for improvement.

Improvements already underway for 2009 include: the YRT/Viva Annual PLAN09 which recommends several service changes to maintain schedule reliability on existing routes, frequency/coverage improvements, and services to new and existing subdivisions.

Traveller information improvements include the following:

- Real time interface between the computer-aided dispatch/automated vehicle location (CAD/AVL) system, the web and interactive voice response (IVR), and the NextBus email system, will be implemented Fall 2009.
- Implemented Google trip planner (January 2009).
- Implementing variable message signs (VMS) for YRT buses at Finch and Richmond Hill terminals for Fall 2009. Will be extended to the other terminals later.
- Commuter e-alert (subscription-based alert notices sent to personal mobile devices) will be implemented in 2009 or early 2010.

Relationship to Vision 2026

The 2008 YRT/Viva Customer Satisfaction Surveys supports the Region's Vision 2026 initiative: Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region. The survey engages the Region's citizens and encourages their feedback for services that affect their lives, such as transit.

Vision 2026 includes a goal statement relating to the development of 'Infrastructure for a Growing Region', which states: *"In 2026, York Region will have effective, efficient and environmentally sensitive transportation, waste management and water systems."*

To support this goal, the following action has been considered for this report:

- Promoting transit usage as a practical and wise alternative to private vehicle use.

The information provided in the surveys is used to help YRT/Viva improve its services. By conducting performance measurement surveys, YRT staff are taking accountability for service performance.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Improvements and enhancements identified by the Customer Satisfaction Improvement Team will be presented to each transit section for consideration in the current or upcoming year's budget.

As part of the approved 2009 Business Plan and Operating Budget, approximately \$1.9 million (\$1.1 million net cost) or 24,660 revenue hours of service improvements. Other new and more extensive improvements will be considered as a part of the 2010 budget process.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Transit customers and stakeholders from the local municipalities will benefit from the customer satisfaction surveys, as it identifies specific areas for improvement by route, service area and municipality.

7. CONCLUSION

The 2008 Customer Satisfaction Survey provides YRT staff with a valuable tool to identify areas for improvement in transit services. It is also used as a measurement tool

for our performance-based contracts, and allows staff to measure improvements and successes against previous years.

The improvement in customer satisfaction levels in specific survey areas is a direct reflection of the significant investments and improvements made in public transit in York Region. Customers appreciate the Region's commitment to improving their overall experience on YRT/Viva. Customer satisfaction surveys will take place every two years and the next survey is scheduled for the fall of 2010.

For more information please contact Caroline Berryman, Marketing Supervisor at extension 5644.

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



YRT/Viva Customer Satisfaction Survey 2008

November 20, 2008

RECORD:

Route #: _____ Date: _____

Interview Start time:

1. 6:00am-9:30am (am peak)
2. 9:31am-12:00pm
3. 12:01pm-2:59pm
4. 3:00pm-7:00pm (pm peak)
5. Later than 7:00pm

Interviewer: _____

Hello, my name is _____ from Environics Research Group. We are doing a brief 5 minute rider satisfaction survey in order to offer the best possible service. Your individual responses will be kept strictly confidential. Would you have a few minutes to fill out this survey?

First, can I ask if you have completed this survey in the past week either on board or at a bus stop for YRT or Viva?

1. Yes → **DISCONTINUE**
2. No

IF AT PLATFORM, NOT ON BUS, ASK: What YRT or Viva routes will you be travelling today? [Gives interviewer the option of choosing less travelled routes.]

Please answer every question.

1. Thinking about your overall experience with YRT and Viva, how do you rate each transit service for their overall performance?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Don't Know/ Don't Use
YRT						
Viva						

2. Are you a new rider of the YRT and or Viva services in the past year?

1. New to YRT
2. New to Viva
3. New to both

YRT/Viva Customer Satisfaction Survey 2008

November 20, 2008



3. Please indicate how satisfied you are with this route you are currently travelling on/about to travel for the following...

The Reason	Not at all Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't Know / Not Applicable
a. Vehicles are clean					
b. Vehicles are in good condition					
c. Drivers are friendly and helpful					
d. Drivers drive safely					
e. Drivers are knowledgeable about the overall system					

4. How often do you encounter the following situation (s) using this route?

	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always	Don't Know / Not Applicable
a. Overcrowding					
b. Buses arriving on schedule					
c. Buses arriving ahead of schedule					
d. Buses being more than 5 minutes late					

5. Again, thinking about your experience travelling on this route, please rate your satisfaction with...?

	Not at all	Somewhat	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't Know / Not Applicable
Cost of the fare					
The area this route covers					
Walking distance to your YRT/Viva bus stop					
Frequency of buses arriving at your stop					
When the route operates (hours of service)					
Cleanliness of bus stops, shelters & terminals					
Availability of waste & recycling containers					
How well bus stop areas are lit					
Purchasing from ticket vending machines					
<i>If purchase from ticket vending machines:</i>					

YRT/Viva Customer Satisfaction Survey 2008

November 20, 2008



Easy to use					
Reliable					
Using a VivaNow Validator					
If use a VivaNow Validator:					
Easy to use					
Reliable					

6. Please rate your satisfaction with these YRT / Viva services...?

	Not at all	Somewhat	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Haven't Used
Live Call Centre agents					
Ride Quest Call – 24/7 automated schedule information by phone					
www.yrt.ca Website					
www.vivayork.ca Website					
e-mail: transitinfo@ york.ca					
Ride Quest Click – online trip planner at yrt.ca					
YRT route Map					
“My Transit Newsletter”					
Complaint Resolution Process					
Next Bus – schedule information sent by e-mail to your computer or mobile device					
Transit Information at Bus Stops and Shelters					
Availability of Park 'n Ride					
Request Stop Program					
Connection to GO Transit (for 50 cents)					
Availability of accessible buses (kneeling & ramps)					
Ticket agents					
Availability of the fare you want at your ticket agent					
Next Stop Audio Announcements – Driver or Automated					

Interviewer note: if riders appear confused by which website they are being asked to rate, yrt.ca is the one containing route schedules for both YRT/Viva, and is likely the website that riders are going to (has much higher “hit rate”)

YRT/Viva Customer Satisfaction Survey 2008

November 20, 2008

7. Which method do you most often use to obtain YRT route and/or Viva route schedule information?

1. Live Call Centre Agents
2. Ride Quest Call – 24/7 automated schedule information by phone
3. Website
4. Ride Quest Click – online trip planner at yrt.ca
5. The Next Bus – schedule information sent by e-mail to your computer or mobile device
6. Local community events
7. YRT displays at municipal offices
8. On Bus
9. Bus Shelter/Stop/Info post
10. Viva display at stops and terminals
11. Ticket Agents
12. CIR (Customer Information Representative – at terminals during peak periods)
13. Friend or colleague
14. Other
15. Not applicable / don't use

8. How many one-way trips do you typically make per week? (i.e. to work and back would count as 2 trips)

1. 1-2
2. 3-5
3. 6-8
4. 9-10
5. 11-14
6. 15+
7. Don't know / Occasional rider

9. Over the past six months, has your average number of transit trips taken on the YRT/Viva system increased, decreased or stayed the same compared to the previous six months?

1. Increased
2. Decreased
3. Stayed the same
4. Not applicable / Don't know

10. On a scale from 1 to 8, how satisfied are you with public transit within York Region?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not at all satisfied		Somewhat satisfied		Satisfied		Very satisfied	

YRT/Viva Customer Satisfaction Survey 2008

November 20, 2008

11. Where do you think YRT should focus its service improvements? ONE RESPONSE ONLY

1. Rush hour
2. Weekday midday
3. Weekday evening
4. Weekends

12. The following is a list of things that could be done to encourage people to use public transit more frequently. Rate each of the following on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means weak and 5 means strong in encouraging you to use public transit more frequently.

	Weak				Strong
a. More frequent service	1	2	3	4	5
b. Longer hours of service	1	2	3	4	5
c. Reliability and schedule adherence	1	2	3	4	5
d. Walking distances to stops	1	2	3	4	5
e. Better area coverage/more destinations	1	2	3	4	5

We have a few final questions to classify responses.

13. What is your age?

1. 17 or younger
2. 18 to 24
3. 25 to 34
4. 35 to 44
5. 45 to 54
6. 55 or older
7. REFUSED

14. Do you own a car?

1. Yes
2. No

15. Did you have access to a car today to make this trip?

1. Yes
2. No

16. What is your employment status?

1. Employed
2. Unemployed
3. Retired
4. Student
5. Homemaker
6. Other
7. REFUSED

YRT/Viva Customer Satisfaction Survey 2008

November 20, 2008

17. What is your annual household income? (Interviewer note: respondent does not need to answer if they appear hesitant, uncomfortable, etc.)

1. Under \$25,000
2. \$25,000 to under \$50,000
3. \$50,000 to \$75,000
4. Over \$75,000
5. REFUSED

18a. Were you born in Canada?

- a. Yes
- b. No

18b. If not born in Canada:

How long have you lived in Canada? _____

19. What is your six-digit postal code?

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If respondent does not know his/her six-digit postal code:ASK:

What is the closest intersection to where you live?

In which municipality is this? _____

20. INTERVIEWER RECORDS GENDER.

1. Male
2. Female

21. Do you have any other comments, concerns or suggestions related to YRT/Viva? OPEN
END

Thank you very much for completing this survey. Please return it to the interviewer.

Interview End time:

6. 6:00am-9:30am (am peak)
7. 9:31am-12:00pm
8. 12:01pm-2:59pm
9. 3:00pm-7:00pm (pm peak)
10. Later than 7:00pm