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### **JUNE SERVICE CHANGE COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES**

**The Transportation Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated May 27, 2010, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services.**

#### **1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

#### **2. PURPOSE**

This report updates Regional Council on York Region Transit (YRT)/Viva's initiatives to market and communicate service changes taking place on June 27, 2010. The service changes for June are based on recommendations from the YRT Run Time Review Committee.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

**The Run Time Review Committee was established to analyze data from YRT buses to determine service reliability. This will assist in addressing customer concerns regarding bus arrival times**

The YRT Run Time Review Committee is an internal, cross-functional team made up of staff from Operations, Service Planning, Customer Service, Transit Management Systems and the operating contractors. The team recommends operational and schedule changes to improve overall service reliability and on-time performance.

YRT's buses are equipped with a Computer-Aided Dispatch and Automatic Vehicle Locating System (CAD/AVL). The data from this system will be utilized on an on-going basis to determine service reliability and to measure the contractors' performance as stipulated under the performance-based contract.

Data from other information sources was cross-referenced against the data from the CAD/AVL system. These included:

- 2009 Customer Action and Response System Reports.
- 2009 Contractor Report Card.
- 2008 Customer Satisfaction Survey.
- Inspector, bus operator and contractor feedback.

In the first quarter of 2010, the committee identified that all five Viva bus rapid transit routes and eight conventional YRT base routes require service adjustments immediately. The adjustments are being implemented on June 27.

**Table 1 below outlines the routes identified by the committee as requiring scheduling changes which are being implemented on June 27**

**Table 1**  
June Service Changes

| Route                                           | Municipalities Served                              | Schedule Changes                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Viva blue/Viva blue A                           | Newmarket, Aurora, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Markham | Schedule adjustment to accommodate five new morning and five new afternoon rush hour trips.                                                         |
| Viva purple                                     | Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Markham                    | Schedules will be adjusted to better reflect travel times, improving on-time performance and schedule adherence.                                    |
| Viva green                                      | Markham                                            | Schedules will be adjusted to better reflect travel times, improving on-time performance and schedule adherence.                                    |
| Viva pink                                       | Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan                    | Schedules will be adjusted to better reflect travel times, improving on-time performance and schedule adherence.                                    |
| Viva orange                                     | Vaughan                                            | Schedules will be adjusted to better reflect travel times, improving on-time performance and schedule adherence.                                    |
| Route 4/4A – Major Mackenzie                    | Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan                    | Schedules will be adjusted to better reflect travel times, improving on-time performance and schedule adherence.                                    |
| Route 20 – Jane-Concord                         | Vaughan                                            | Schedules will be adjusted to better reflect travel times, improving on-time performance and schedule adherence.                                    |
| Route 23 – Thornhill Woods                      | Vaughan                                            | Schedules will be adjusted to better reflect travel times, improving on-time performance and schedule adherence.                                    |
| Route 54 – Bayview North                        | Newmarket, Aurora                                  | Extended to Yonge Street via Wellington Street. Will no longer service Stone Road.                                                                  |
| Route 85/A/B – Rutherford–16 <sup>th</sup> Ave. | Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan                    | Schedules will be adjusted to better reflect travel times, improving on-time performance and schedule adherence.                                    |
| Route 88/88A/88E – Bathurst                     | King, Richmond Hill, Vaughan                       | Schedules will be adjusted to better reflect travel times, improving on-time performance and schedule adherence.                                    |
| Route 90/90B – Leslie                           | Richmond Hill, Markham                             | Schedules will be adjusted to better reflect travel times, improving on-time performance and schedule adherence.                                    |
| Route 91/91A/91B/91E – Bayview                  | Richmond Hill, Markham                             | Schedules will be adjusted to better reflect travel times, improving on-time performance and schedule adherence. Two additional buses are required. |

**To advertise service changes, the YRT Marketing Team co-ordinates, designs, and executes communications before each service change**

A Marketing and Communications Plan is created eight weeks in advance of any service change. The plan outlines all initiatives to be communicated to customers before the changes take effect.

For the June 27 service change cycle, YRT Marketing is communicating the message that YRT is listening to its customers and making the changes they have requested, based on the results from the Run Time Review Committee.

**4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS**

**YRT/Viva advertised the service changes on the entire YRT/Viva fleet, at transit shelters, terminals and through the media, across York Region**

Councillor Memos

During the week of June 7, a memo was sent to the Mayor, Regional and local councillors and CAO in each local municipality outlining the changes happening in their respective municipality. Accompanying the memo was a copy of the *MyTransit* newsletter.

MyTransit Customer Newsletter

The summer edition of *MyTransit* was available to customers the week of June 7. It is distributed on all YRT/Viva buses, at municipal displays, in transit shelters and at transit terminals.

The June edition of *MyTransit* featured the changes identified by the Run Time Review Committee as well as addressing the upcoming seasonal service changes. *MyTransit* allows YRT to communicate directly with customers on the bus. It allows customers to plan ahead and directs them to YRT's website (yrt.ca) for complete service change information.

YRT/Viva website - yrt.ca

Yrt.ca is the main resource used to communicate customer information. The website features the most up-to-date schedules, customized trip plans, real-time information, transit alerts and transit news.

The June service change cycle updates on yrt.ca are:

- May 31 - Summary of the June service changes available.
- June 7 - Trip planning options for June 27 available.
- June 14 - Printable Route Navigators (schedules) available.

#### Social Media Websites

Social media was not utilized for the purpose of communicating this information to the public as the Region's current guideline does not permit the use of social media. This is currently under review.

#### Advertisements in Local Community Newspapers

Paid advertisements and community page advertisements have been placed in the local newspapers, throughout the nine municipalities, beginning the week of June 9.

#### On-Street Communications

On-street communication material was available beginning the week of June 7. Communication material includes updated YRT/Viva shelters maps, terminal information displays, bus stop notices and Infoposts.

#### Corporate Communications

Working with Corporate Communications, YRT developed a media release and key messages to advertise the June changes. Corporate Communications concentrated on highlighting the changes on the five Viva routes, in particular the new Viva blue A service.

#### Special Action Plans and Community Outreach

Extra initiatives are developed to communicate service changes affecting a large quantity of customers. In the week leading up to the June 27 cycle, Marketing and Customer Service staff were visibly present on-street and at terminals handing out information regarding the adjustments to the Viva schedules. Staff were available to speak with customers about the Viva blue A service, as well as educating customers on how to use the fare system.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

YRT/Viva service change communication plans are identified and planned for in the yearly budget process.

The cost implications to implement the service changes identified in Table 1, which have all been identified as corrective measures to existing service schedules, are estimated to be three to five million dollars annualized.

Sufficient funds are available in the 2010 operating budget.

## **6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT**

YRT/Viva customers will benefit from the services changes being implemented for the June 27 cycle. The changes improve on-time performance and increase overall service reliability throughout York Region.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The YRT/Viva Run Time Review Committee recommended that, in addition to regular pre-planned service changes, all five Viva routes and eight conventional YRT routes required changes immediately to improve overall system reliability. These changes are a good news story. It shows YRT's customers, contractors and local municipalities that their suggestions are being heard and their concerns are being responded to. It demonstrates that improvements are being made to the overall YRT/Viva system.

It is the job of the YRT/Viva Marketing team to communicate to customers how these changes will affect them. The successful, timely and accurate execution of the June 27 communications plan will ensure that riders are aware of, comfortable with and have time to plan their new travel schedules. A successful communications plan has the potential to gain rider loyalty and increase overall transit ridership.

For more information on this report, please contact Christine Terin, Marketing Supervisor at Ext. 5835.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.