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QUICK START FARE POLICY

The Rapid Transit Public/Private Partnership Steering Committee recommends the following report, June 17, 2004, from the Vice President of the York Region Rapid Transit Corporation and the Commissioner of Transportation and Works, be received:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The *Quick Start* Fare Policy framework outlined in this report be endorsed.
2. The final policy be brought forward in September 2004.

2. PURPOSE

This report advises Council of the ongoing efforts to integrate the new YRTP *Quick Start* bus rapid transit system into the family of transit services offered in the region and is brought forward so that stakeholder input can be integrated into the final report recommendations for this fall. An important aspect of this integration is the single fare policy that will be in effect for both *Quick Start* routes and YRT local bus routes in York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

Quick Start Bus Rapid Transit, which will begin service in four corridors in York Region in the fall of 2005, will provide a strong backbone of transit service for the entire region. *Quick Start* is designed to mesh seamlessly with other York Region Transit local bus services in operation, transfers and fares, so that transit riders will experience a seamless system of transit services. The integration will be particularly important in the area of fare collection and transfers.

The procedures and implications of the recommended fare policy and integration strategy for the introduction of the *Quick Start* rapid transit system are summarized below with details provided in the detailed draft Fare Policy Report that is attached to this report (*see Attachment 1*). YRTP and YRT have convened a joint task force for developing this strategy. While the group continues to meet on a regular basis to settle ongoing policy, operations and future maintenance issues, the members recommend the program described below as the optimal path forward on this operations-based topic. This cooperative effort will continue through the commencement of the *Quick Start* system in the fall of 2005.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The *Quick Start* System will possess specific characteristics that allow it to offer a service pattern modeled on rapid transit operating practices. These are discussed briefly below. The following policy framework is recommended for the introduction of *Quick Start* into the fare and transfer practices of YRT.

4.1 Quick Start Fare Characteristics

The most important characteristics of *Quick Start* fare policy implementation are discussed below.

4.1.1 Off-Board Fare Collection

A major feature of *Quick Start* will be off-board fare collection, with Ticket Vending Machines (TVM's) and ticket validators installed at all YRTP stops and terminals and no fareboxes needed on board the YRTP buses. This is a key feature designed to significantly reduce "dwell time" at stops, and thus overall travel time, by allowing passengers to board or alight by any door. Passengers will purchase tickets or validate pre-purchased tickets at the stops before the bus arrives and the arriving buses will open all doors for easy, quick access in a minimum stopped time, similar to a subway operation.

4.1.2 Proof of Payment (POP)

Passengers on board *Quick Start* vehicles will hold valid passes or transfers and properly validated tickets as a proof that they have paid the appropriate fare. If asked by enforcement inspectors to show payment of fare, these fare items will serve as "proof of payment." On a day-to-day basis, passengers on *Quick Start* vehicles will not need to show these to the driver and may therefore quickly board at any door.

4.1.3 Time-Based Transfers

Quick Start will use time-based transfers, which allow unlimited travel on *Quick Start* or other York Region Transit routes within the allowed time, most likely 90 minutes for one zone and 120 minutes for two zones. This policy further simplifies the POP system, allowing validated tickets to be issued by any ticket vending machine and checked easily by any inspector with far less frequency of fare disputes. Although experience in other Canadian cities has been mixed, it increases convenience for passengers (e.g. allowing brief stopovers) and should attract additional ridership, especially in off-peak times. Experience with this system in other Canadian cities shows generally increased ridership with minimal impact on revenues.

4.1.4 Fare Zones

The *Quick Start* system will have the same fare zone structure as that proposed in YRT's 5-Year Service Plan (Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Stouffville in a southern zone, Newmarket, Aurora and East Gwillimbury in a northern zone with an overlap having Oak Ridges able to access either zone for a single-zone fare). This means that most trips on the *Quick Start* routes in York Region will fall within a single zone. The exception will be the longer two-zone trips that go between the northern zone and the

southern zone. Riders making a two-zone trip will be required to purchase two-zone tickets or passes or purchase a second-zone premium in conjunction with, say a single zone transfer or pass. All of these will be available in the *Quick Start* ticket vending machines.

4.1.5 Fare Passenger Categories and Media

The fare structure on the *Quick Start* rapid transit routes will be identical to the fares of the rest of the York Region transit network. Adult, student, child and senior tickets and passes will be valid on both *Quick Start* and YRT local bus services, including TTC buses operating under contract in York Region. The GTA weekly pass will also be issued and honoured on *Quick Start* as on YRT routes. It is recommended that there be no premium fare charged for use of *Quick Start*, to encourage use of this “subway-like” backbone service in the region and to avoid the complications for both riders and transit operators that would arise from differential fares.

4.1.6 Planning for GTA Smart Card Fare System

While *Quick Start* ticket vending machines have been designed to mesh primarily with YRT tickets and policies, they have been designed to accommodate a simple retrofit to reload value onto the GTA regional smart cards that are currently being developed jointly by the Province, GO Transit and other GTA transit authorities, including York Region.

4.2 YRTP and YRT Fare Integration

It is expected that a significant proportion of transit trips in York Region will start on one service and be completed on the other. Although *Quick Start* will use a Proof of Payment procedure (POP) and YRT local bus service will continue its use of traditional fareboxes, YRTP and YRT have worked closely together to ensure that the two systems will be transparent and seamless for transit riders, including TTC buses operating under contract in York Region. Both *Quick Start* and YRT local bus tickets will be accepted to start a trip on either service, as will cash fares on YRT buses and will reflect payment for either a one zone or two zone trip. A validated *Quick Start* ticket or a transfer issued on a YRT bus will qualify as a proof of payment on *Quick Start* and must be in the possession of the rider during a complete trip. Similarly a validated *Quick Start* ticket will be shown to a YRT bus driver to allow for a transfer onto that bus.

4.2.1 Ticket form for *Quick Start* Ticket Vending Machines and YRT Fareboxes

Quick Start and YRT have coordinated the size and shape of their tickets to strengthen the perception of the integration of the two systems and to facilitate the recognition of both systems’ fare media by transit operators, inspectors and riders. The multiple-ticket packets dispensed by *Quick Start* terminal ticket vending machines will be identical in shape and similar in design to YRT packets distributed through its third-party vendor network. In addition, validated *Quick Start* tickets dispensed singly from ticket vending machines or validated in ticket validator machines at *Quick Start* stations will be recognizable by the two-sided validation printing and a distinctive cut corner. This procedure will emphasize visually that the ticket has been validated and ease recognition by *Quick Start* inspectors and YRT drivers.

4.2.2 Enforcement policies

Currently, enforcement of cash fares and inspection of passes and transfers on YRT local buses is a task performed by the driver as riders enter the vehicle at the front door. This procedure will continue on YRT local buses. The Proof of Payment system to be used on *Quick Start* will allow riders to board at any door, thus relieving the driver of this duty. Periodic inspections of tickets on *Quick Start* will be conducted according to a psychologically and statistically grounded program of systematic checks throughout the system and special emphasis on known problem locations. This will mirror procedures on GO Transit rail and other POP operators in North America and internationally. YRTP and YRT are investigating the by-law requirements that will need to be implemented to enable the POP feature of *Quick Start* in the Ontario legal environment. YRTP and YRT will report further to Council to recommend action to meet those requirements.

4.2.3 Revenue management and tracking

Since the tracking of paper tickets and transfers over an integrated system for revenue tracking purposes is not feasible, further efforts are being made by YRTP and YRT to devise an acceptable methodology for revenue tracking and assignment of revenues to routes consistent with the current practice. This may make use of periodic surveys and other statistical methods. It remains essential that passengers view YRT and YRTP as part of a single, seamless and fully integrated regional transit system.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The implications of the proposed integrated YRTP-YRT fare policy will be reflected in the 2005 operating budget, including the costs of fare media redesign, printing and enforcement.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

There are no municipal impacts from the policies proposed in this report.

7. CONCLUSION

The development of a joint fare policy and service integration strategy for *Quick Start* and YRT is an important aspect of transit service in York Region. The policy and strategy framework outlined in this report will be utilized to finalize the fare policy over the course of the summer based on the input of the various stakeholders.

(A copy of the attachment referred to in the foregoing has been forwarded to each Member of Council with the June 17, 2004 Rapid Transit Public/Private Partnership Steering Committee agenda and a copy thereof is on file in the Regional Clerk's Office.)