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YORK REGION TRANSIT RECOGNITION BY ONTARIO CENTRE FOR MUNICIPAL BEST PRACTICES SERVICE EXPANSION AND INCREASED RIDERSHIP (2001-2004)

The Transit Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, August 25, 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 advise Transit Committee and Regional Council of the Ontario Centre for Best Practices' recent recognition of York Region's impressive transit service expansion program and resulting ridership increases.

3. BACKGROUND

The Ontario Centre for Municipal Best Practices (OCMBP) was formed in 2002 as a partnership between the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Province of Ontario (Ministry of Municipal Affairs). Its mandate is to use municipal service performance measurement in order to identify the most efficient and effective practises among Ontario's municipalities, and to prepare reports offering guidance and advice to municipal service practitioners interested in evaluating new ways to deliver their services to the public (*see Attachment 1*).

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.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The OCMBP report outlines how two important system performance indicators, ridership and ridership per capita, have tracked favourably over a two to three year period. Taking into consideration service improvements (both the expansion of coverage and increases in service frequency) and the resulting ridership increases, the report demonstrates how an aggressive investment strategy translates directly into significant ridership gains and usage on a per capita basis.

Table 1
Performance Summary

	2001	2002	2003	2004
Ridership (Revenue Trips)	7,602,000	8,432,000	10,259,000	13,816,000
Service Area Population	687,500	802,000	842,000	884,500
Trips / Capita	11.1	10.5	12.2	15.6
Service Hours	395,000	505,200	621,000	694,000

* As reported in the Canadian Urban Transportation Association and reflected in the OCMBP report (October 2005)

The report goes on to state that the York Region experience is an excellent example of how service amalgamation and strategic investment provided the opportunity for significant ridership gains. At the same time, the report cautions municipalities that sufficient time must be afforded for the investment to realize a significant shift in transit travel patterns.

4.1 Relationship to Vision 2026

YRT's original Five-Year Plan (2002-2006) set specific targets, including an increase of annual revenue passengers from 10 to 17 million over the first five years (2006). By the end of 2006, it is estimated that ridership will, in fact, surpass the 17.5 million level.

Vision 2026 includes a goal statements relating to Managed and Balanced Growth, Responding to Needs of our Residents and the Development of Infrastructure for a Growing Region. Within the development infrastructure related goal it states that:

"In 2026, York Region will have effective, efficient and environmentally sensitive transportation, waste management and water systems."

To support this goal, the Region has identified specific action areas. The following action areas have been considered for this report:

- Continuing to improve service and infrastructure for successfully integrated transit service.
- Developing an optimal mix of transit service types.
- Promoting transit usage as a practical and wise alternative to private vehicle use.

As recognized by the OCMBP, York Region continues to develop a transit supportive and thus balanced transportation network.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

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

Since the amalgamation of the municipal transit systems in York Region in 2001, there has been significant growth 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 continues to support the delivery of public transit services that are innovative and effective in contributing to the successful development of a balanced transportation network.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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