# 1
# DRAFT YORK REGION TRANSIT/VIVA 2009 SERVICE PLAN (PLAN09)

**The Transit Committee recommends the following:**

1. **The presentation by Irene McNeil, Manager, Service Planning, York Region Transit, be received;**

2. **The recommendation contained in the following report, September 24, 2008, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services, be adopted.**

## 1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The York Region Transit/Viva Draft Annual Service Plan 2009 (PLAN09) *(Attachment 1)* be circulated to the local municipalities in York Region, partner transit systems including Toronto Transit Commission, GO Transit, Brampton Transit, Durham Region Transit, local Transportation Management Associations and York Student Transportation Services by the Regional Clerk for their review and requesting comments by November 28, 2008.

## 2. PURPOSE

The Draft PLAN09 provides a framework for the next year's expansion of the transit network (coverage area and service frequency) in order to attract new customers and increase overall transit market share.

This report presents the draft plan to Regional Council and requests authority to circulate the draft plan for comments to partners and stakeholders.

## 3. BACKGROUND

The York Region Transit (YRT)/Viva system consists of:

- Base routes (including Viva and other YRT routes that operate in major arterial corridors).
- Feeder or local routes (operate in local neighbourhoods).
- High school specials (focus on specific student demand).
- GO train shuttles.
- Express services.
- Community Bus and demand-responsive (Dial-a-Ride) routes.

Each route category serves a particular transit market and each route plays an important role in the success of the overall system network. Although every route is reviewed individually, the overall YRT/Viva system goals are considered when evaluating changes or improvements.

In 2007, the combined YRT/Viva system consisted of over 120 routes (including school specials) carrying 18.2 million revenue passenger trips. By the end of 2008, it is estimated that the system will carry over 20 million revenue passenger trips. On an average weekday, the system carries approximately 66,000 revenue riders with an overall system cost recovery of approximately 38%. During 2008, it is estimated that 1.1 million revenue hours of service will be operated. All of the above figures include the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) contracted routes operating within York Region.

The YRT/Viva Five-Year Service Plan (2006-2010), completed in 2006, responded to the anticipated challenges of the next five years by refining the service standards into effective planning tools. Services are evaluated on the following basis:

- Use of well-defined service standards and objectives adopted by Regional Council to assess new and existing transit services.
- Detailed route assessments.
- Data collection program required to support the review process.
- Comprehensive consultation process engaging local municipalities, general public, external and internal stakeholders, neighbouring GTA municipalities, local Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) and transit providers.

The Five-Year Plan also developed a comprehensive communication plan process, outlined service initiatives and growth requirements, and explored new ways YRT can continue its innovative development. An updated annual planning cycle and consultation process were also approved.

PLAN09 continues to implement the recommendations that were originally identified in the Five-Year Service Plan.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

### Consultation was conducted to obtain input from the public and stakeholders

As part of the review process, YRT staff evaluate both the effectiveness and efficiency of the YRT/Viva system. The evaluation process considers the effectiveness of not only the individual routes, but more importantly, the system as a whole. Consideration is given to the financial efficiency (revenue/cost ratio) of each route, effectiveness in terms of route/network connectivity, service area coverage and ability to meet demand.

In order to proactively engage the public, Public Information Centres (PICs) were held on June 10 and 16, 2008, for southern and northern York Region, respectively. The PICs were held at local venues in order to solicit feedback and gather comments from those residents and customers most affected by the proposed changes.

In addition to Public Information Centres, extensive consultation was conducted with various focus groups, transit terminal public consultation centres and web surveys. In addition, feedback relating to transit issues from various municipal consultation initiatives was also taken into consideration. Table 1 shows the chronology of the stakeholder consultations.

**Table 1**
Stakeholder Consultations

| | **Stakeholder Consultations/PICs** | **Consultation Date** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Markham Senior Consultation | July 2, 2008 |
| 2. | Web Survey | June 2008 |
| 3. | Promenade Terminal Information Centre | June 26, 2008 |
| 4. | Richmond Hill Centre Terminal Information Centre | June 18, 2008 |
| 5. | Oak Ridges Community Workshop | June 17, 2008 |
| 6. | Northern Public Information Centre | June 16, 2008 |
| 7. | Newmarket GO Bus Terminal Information Centre | June 12, 2008 |
| 8. | Southern Public Information Centre | June 10, 2008 |
| 9. | Newmarket Senior Consultation Meeting | June 7, 2008 |
| 10. | Transit Partners – Other Transit Agencies | May 27, 2008 |
| 11. | YO! Focus Group – High School Transit Ambassadors | May 26, 2008 |
| 12 | Municipal Partners – Neighbouring Municipalities | May 21, 2008 |
| 13. | Large Employers Group – York Region | May 20, 2008 |

| **Additional Local Municipal Surveys** | | |
|---|---|---|
| 14. | Newmarket Municipal Survey | September 2005 |
| 15. | Click with Markham – Town of Markham | November 2007 |
| 16. | People Plan Consultation – Town of Richmond Hill | October 2007 |

YRT staff asked two critically important questions to York Region residents and stakeholders:

1. What would encourage you to use public transit more frequently?
2. Where do you think YRT/Viva should focus its service improvements?

Figures 1 and 2 provide a graphical presentation of the survey results received from approximately 600 respondents. Seventy percent of the respondents indicated that more service (coverage, frequency and service span) would increase their use of the system. Another 21% indicated improved schedule adherence would increase their use, while 11% indicated improved pedestrian connections as the critical factor in their transit use decision making.

**Figure 1: YRT/Viva Customer Survey**

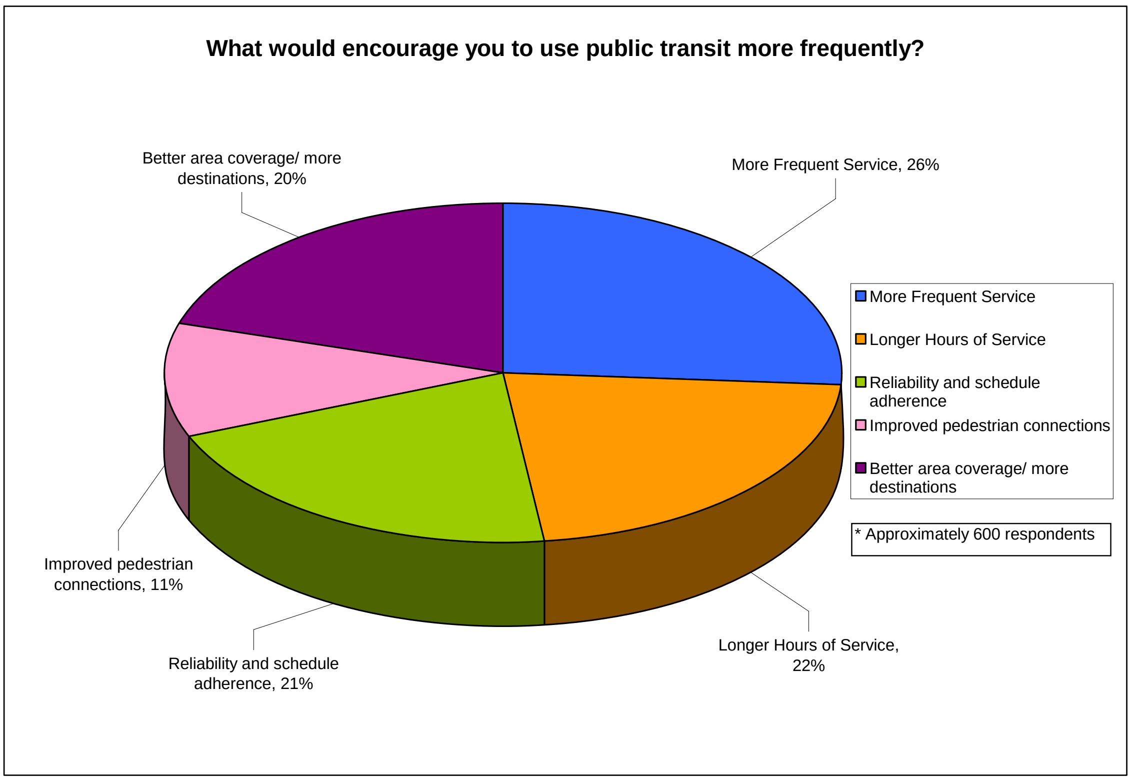

**Figure 2: YRT/Viva Customer Survey**

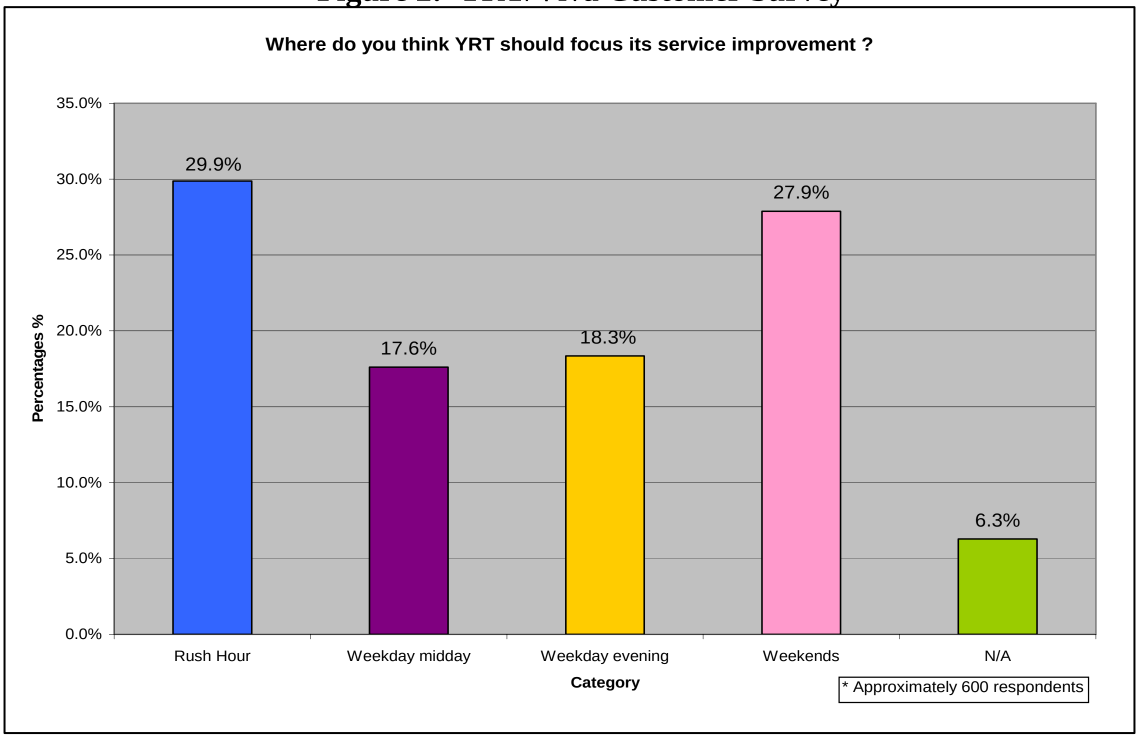


Figure 2 represents the responses to the question of where to focus service improvements. Interestingly, there is almost an equal split between the desire for improved peak periods service (29.9%) and weekend service improvements (27.9%).

Figures 1 and 2 indicate that respondents are in support of increasing transit services and are interested in both higher service levels and improved pedestrian amenities to increase the overall transit market share.

## Service standards are used to develop the plan

There are two route-specific service standards used to ensure individual routes are designed to be attractive to customers and to perform at a satisfactory level. Minimum service frequency and minimum performance (boardings/revenue hour) are used to evaluate each route's operation. Each route category has different standards according to its role within the network. For example, a base or Viva route which serves a TTC subway station, would be expected to have a higher efficiency rating than a local neighbourhood feeder route. A base route's alignment is also more direct in order to minimize travel time, whereas a local feeder route is designed to maximize customer convenience within a catchment area, thereby forfeiting some of its efficiency (refer to Table 10 in the PLAN09 document).

### Financial efficiency is measured

One of the factors which measures the efficiency of a route is the cost recovery or revenue/cost (R/C) ratio. The revenue/cost ratio is a direct reflection of a route's farebox revenue versus the total operating cost. In 2007, the YRT system had a cost recovery of 40%. The 2008 R/C ratio is projected to be 38% (revised forecast) due to higher fuel costs. The 2009 R/C ratio is likely to remain constant. Any anticipated revenue increase due to ridership gains and fare increase will be offset by higher fuel and operating costs.

Although the revenue/cost ratio is not the sole factor in determining the viability of a route, it does give a good indication of the overall efficiency of the service. The revenue/cost ratio is used to determine whether or not a route's service coverage and frequency need to be expanded, realigned, reduced or even eliminated (refer to Table 9 in the PLAN09 document).

### Relationship to Vision 2026

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 Region has identified specific action areas. The following action areas have been considered for this report:

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

This annual service plan ensures that the transit system's goals and objectives are aligned with the Region's long-range strategic plan. PLAN09 will play a major role in increasing the Region's morning peak hour modal share from 8 to 12 percent by 2011.

## 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

During the budget review process, the Draft PLAN09 will be reviewed and final recommendations approved for implementation in 2009. The total estimated gross cost of all service improvements in the Draft PLAN09 is $7.9 million for 64,000 hours of service. This includes service hour reductions of approximately 2,100 hours as a result of route restructuring or service cancellation due to low ridership, and approximately 10,700 hours planned for conversion to Dial-a-Ride service.

It is estimated that approximately 25% of the operating costs will be recovered through transit fares within the first full year of operation. The net increase of $5.9 million represents a 1% increase in the tax levy.

The proposed service improvements represent about 6.6% of the total anticipated 2009 operating budget. This does not include other operating cost pressures, including fuel and contractor rates, which will have further impacts on next year's budget.

York Region has made significant investments in public transit in recent years. This includes capital dollars for equipment and infrastructure in addition to dramatic increases in revenue service hours with the introduction of our Viva routes in 2005/06. The proposed PLAN09 service improvements are needed to keep pace with population and ridership growth.

In section 7 of attached PLAN09, individual draft service initiatives are identified. Proposed service initiatives will be considered as a part of the 2009 budget approval process.

## 6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

As noted earlier in the report, Public Information Centres and stakeholder meetings were held in May and June 2008. Input has been received from various stakeholder groups, residents, students, other transit agencies, local municipal staff and local Transportation Management Associations (TMAs). YRT's Draft PLAN09 can now be circulated for final review.

## 7. CONCLUSION

### PLAN09 service improvement recommendations

PLAN09 recommends a number of route-specific improvements. These can be summarized as follows:

- Improvements intended to maintain schedule reliability on existing routes.
- Frequency/coverage improvements designed to bring services closer to standard where warranted, including route extensions into new developments.
- New route services in established subdivisions (e.g. Milliken - Markham, Queen Filomena and Major Mackenzie/Weston Road in Vaughan).
- Service to new subdivisions in Richmond Hill, Markham, Vaughan, Newmarket, Stouffville (e.g. Box Grove, Cornell – Markham; Upper Thornhill Village – Vaughan; Queen Filomena – Richmond Hill; Woodspring/Clearmeadow – Newmarket; Millard Street area - Stouffville).
- Expansion of Dial-a-Ride with new implementation on selected routes.

- New GO train connections in anticipation of GO Transit's proposed new off-peak service expansion for the Barrie corridor.
- Introduction of new limited-stop/express services on existing key corridors such as Bathurst Street, Bayview Avenue and Jane Street.

Additional details regarding draft service initiatives by municipality are provided in Tables 11 to 16 in Attachment 1 – Draft YRT/Viva Annual PLAN09. For the 2009 operating year, the estimated growth-related service initiatives amount to approximately 64,000 revenue hours of service (including expanded coverage, frequency and span of service).

The proposed service hour increases are based on the following criteria:

- Current schedule adherence and overcrowding.
- Residential subdivision currently without service.
- Existing latent demand (based on outstanding service requests/petitions).
- Major trip generators currently without service or minimal service.

The Draft PLAN09 is a document which will guide the expansion and refining of transit services in the upcoming year. The recommendations contained in the plan provide a basis for budget development and ensure the delivery of transit services is consistent with the longer range strategic direction adopted in the latest Five-Year Service Plan (2006-2010).

For more information on this report, please contact Irene McNeil, Manager, Service Planning at Ext. 5628, in the Transit Branch of the Transportation Services Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

*(The attachment referred to in this clause was included in the agenda for the October 16, 2008 Committee meeting.)*