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YORK REGION TRANSIT TRANSIT GEORGINA UPDATE

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated June 4, 2009, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Region continue to support the concept of community-based transit services in rural areas of the Region where residents' transportation needs cannot be addressed by York Region Transit's conventional public transit or Mobility Plus services.
2. York Region Transit staff continue to monitor the Transit Georgina program to ensure there is no duplication of services with those provided by York Region Transit.
3. A formal request be made asking for a name change for Transit Georgina, so as not to confuse it with York Region Transit, the public transit agency in York Region.

2. PURPOSE

This report:

- Reviews the results of the 2008 Transit Georgina Annual Report concerning the provision of "community-based" transit services for residents of the Town of Georgina.
- Updates Regional Council on the 2008 funding allocation of \$50,000 to Transit Georgina.
- Requests continued support for the concept of providing "community-based" transit services in other rural parts of the Region.

3. BACKGROUND

Funding has aided Transit Georgina in building its community-based transportation service for people at risk of isolation

In June 2005, Georgina Mobility Transit Inc. and Transit Georgina amalgamated to form one consolidated non-profit charity to improve the transportation services for the residents of Georgina. Today, this combined operation continues to address the transportation needs of those residents who are currently not able to access York Region

Transit's (YRT) conventional or Mobility Plus services. The Region has supported this initiative with annual funding of \$30,000 in 2005, \$35,000 in 2006, \$40,000 in 2007 and \$50,000 in 2008 and 2009. In addition, the Town of Georgina, the United Way of York Region and the Ontario Trillium Foundation have also provided funding.

An agreement was developed which, among other things, indemnifies the Region from any claims arising from the provision of funding by the Region. In addition, Transit Georgina is required to provide the Region with performance statistics on a quarterly basis, to enable York Region Transit to assess future planning needs for conventional and specialized services within Georgina.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Transit Georgina provides a low-cost transportation alternative to those who do not have access to or meet the eligibility criteria for YRT services

Transit Georgina's mission is to provide and facilitate transportation for those who are restricted by poverty and circumstance, physical and developmental disabilities, and mental illness. The service gives these residents access to the basic necessities of life, including medical, employment and educational opportunities. Currently, there are 1,934 registrants for this service. The service that Transit Georgina provides does not duplicate the service provided by Mobility Plus.

In 2008, Transit Georgina provided an average of 963 trips per month. This represents a 2.5% increase in trips over 2007, but is still a significant decrease from the average monthly trips of 1,250 in 2006.

Rides for medical purposes and education are the most prevalent reasons for trip requests

This transit partnership is supported by York Region Transit since it addresses the requirement for a transit service to meet the needs of Region residents in a cost-effective manner which cannot currently be supported due to the rural nature of the trip requests or other needs currently not addressed by public transit. Medical trips to facilities not serviced by Mobility Plus (e.g. Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Princess Margaret Hospital and St. Michael's Hospital), and trips to educational facilities (e.g. Sutton District High School, Keswick High School, Learning Centre for Georgina) are the predominant reasons for travel. Food banks, shopping, employment, legal and financial support make up the remainder of the trips, as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Trip Destination Profile

Purpose of Trip	Number of Trips (annual)	Percentage of Overall Trips
Health/Medical	5,779	50
Education	2,240	20
Employment	1,837	16
Food Bank, Supper Clubs, Prescriptions, Groceries	1,550	13
Legal and Financial Support	149	1
Total	11,555	100%

Transit Georgina's client profile consists of clients with mental health issues, those restricted by poverty, seniors, children, Aids patients and others.

Passengers who suffer from mental illness and have no physical disability currently are eligible to travel with Mobility Plus to day programs or work placements only.

Transportation for all their other client groups to other locations is provided by Transit Georgina.

Transit Georgina/Georgina Mobility Transit are names that are easily confused with the services of York Region Transit

Residents and stakeholders are very confused with the similarity in names between York Region Transit and Transit Georgina. All of our communications to residents state that the municipal transit systems within the Region amalgamated in 2001 and are called York Region Transit.

Transit Georgina has a storefront which not only gives their clients an opportunity to go in to book rides, but is also a community information centre and a Georgina Food Pantry Depot.

Staff are recommending a formal request for a name change be made to Transit Georgina to better reflect the services it provides to the community, and to eliminate any confusion with York Region Transit. A possible suggestion would be Georgina Access. This truly reflects the services provided by this charity.

Relationship to Vision 2026

The financial support of an effective and efficient "community-based" transit service, in the absence of available conventional public transit services, will address the Region's goal of making transit more accessible.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Transit Georgina has requested continued funding from York Region for 2009 in the amount of \$50,000

The 2009 Business Plan and Budget for York Region Transit contains an allocation of \$50,000 as a grant in support of Transit Georgina. With Transit Georgina's projected annual ridership of 12,600 in 2009, the Region's grant provides a contribution of \$3.97 per trip.

The per trip contribution of \$3.97 is below the gross cost per trip for conventional transit of \$6.84 and Mobility Plus at \$31.91. The provision of continued funding from the Town of Georgina and York Region will allow Transit Georgina to provide this essential service to the residents of Georgina. In return, they have committed to maintaining the current high level and quality of service as well as carefully managing available resources.

Future financial growth will be based on Transit Georgina's ridership growth, need, and expansion of conventional services

In June 2008, the United Way of York Region notified Transit Georgina that they no longer qualified for funding as they do not align appropriately with the specific priorities set out by the organization. This meant an annual loss of \$41,453.

After reviewing the current economic climate, combined with the financial requirements of Transit Georgina, it was determined no further funding increases from either the Town of Georgina or York Region would be required at this time. Instead, they would continue to focus on building collaborative partnerships with the greater community in hopes of potentially securing funding opportunities.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The provision of a financial grant for the operation of "community-based" transit services addresses the needs of residents within the Town of Georgina who are unable to avail themselves of conventional or Mobility Plus services provided by York Region Transit.

7. CONCLUSION

Transit Georgina relies on the continued support from York Region to provide this essential service.

Transit Georgina provides an alternative service to meet community transit needs of individuals who live in rural areas of Georgina and are at risk of social isolation. The continued provision of financial support in the form of a grant to offset operating costs provides an effective and efficient way of meeting the transit needs of Regional residents. This service allows the forming of a close partnership with a local municipality to resolve a pressing community need.

A formal request to Transit Georgina for a name change is recommended. This will hopefully alleviate any confusion or comparisons to York Region Transit and will better reflect the complete scope of resources it provides to the community.

Future financial support will be based on the requirement for transit service and the existing and planned expansion of conventional transit services in the Town of Georgina.

In addition, staff also recommends, where appropriate, the application of this financial support concept to other parts of the Region.

For more information on this report, please contact Sharon Doyle, Manager, Mobility Plus, at Ext. 5634.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.