1
YORK REGION TRANSIT
DRAFT ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN 2005

The Transit Committee recommends:

1. The presentation by Irene McNeil, Manager, Service Planning, be received; and

2. The recommendations contained in the following report, September 23, 2004, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be adopted:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The York Region Transit Draft Annual Service Plan 2005 be received for information and referred to the 2005 Business Plan and Budget process for review.

2. The Draft Plan be forwarded by the Regional Clerk to the Clerks of the local municipalities and to the Toronto Transit Commission, Brampton Transit and GO Transit for information and comment regarding impact on interconnecting services.

2. PURPOSE

The main objective of the York Region Transit (YRT) Draft Annual Service Plan 2005 is to improve the quality of YRT services in order to attract new customers and thereby increase the overall transit market share. Although a Five-Year Service Plan was completed in Spring 2002 for the newly amalgamated YRT system, it is important to review services on an annual basis in order to gauge how well services are meeting longer-term goals, objectives and standards. It is also important to review services as conditions change, particularly as they relate to future rapid transit services and the impact of new development.

3. BACKGROUND

As part of YRT's Five-Year Service Plan, an annual planning cycle and consultation approach was recommended. The annual planning cycle was based on well-defined service standards and objectives which were adopted by Regional Council. The recommended process included a needs identification stage, a ridership and financial performance review, a process for the development of draft proposals and a stakeholder consultation process. YRT staff have followed the approved approach, with the Draft Annual Service Plan 2005 report being the basis for the following year's planning activities and budget (*see Attachment 1*).

In 2003, the YRT system consisted of over 70 routes carrying over 10.2 million passenger trips, an impressive increase of 9.3% over the previous year. YRT conventional services consist of core routes (operating in major arterial corridors), feeder or local routes (operating in local neighbourhoods), high school specials (focusing on specific student demand), GO train shuttles, and one community bus route (operating in Richmond Hill). Each category of route serves a particular transit market and each route plays an important role in the success of the overall system network. Although each route is reviewed individually, YRT Service Planners consider the overall system goals when evaluating changes or improvements.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

As part of the review process, YRT staff evaluate both the effectiveness and efficiency of the YRT system. The evaluation process considers the effectiveness of not only the individual routes, but also 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.

The annual service review is an inclusive and proactive process. YRT staff take into account comments received from customers, residents, local municipal Councillors, business groups, YRT Customer Service and Operations staff, and comments from associated transit agencies.

In order to proactively engage the public, Public Information Centres (PICs) were carried out over a six-week period (May/June 2004). The PICs were held at local venues in order to solicit feedback and attract comments from those residents and customers most affected by the proposed changes. Over 300 individuals attended the PICs, with many more commenting on the proposed plans via the YRT website or by telephone.

4.1 Service Standards

There are two route-specific service standards used to ensure individual routes are designed both to be attractive to customers and to perform at a satisfactory level. Minimum service frequency and minimum performance (passengers/hour) are used to evaluate each route's operation. Each category of routes has different standards according to its role within the overall network. For example, a core route which serves a TTC subway station would be expected to have a higher efficiency rating than a local neighbourhood feeder route. A core 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.

4.2 Financial Efficiency

One of the factors which measures the efficiency of a route is the cost recovery or revenue/cost ratio. The revenue/cost (R/C) ratio is a direct reflection of a route's farebox revenue versus the total operating cost. In 2003, the YRT system had a cost recovery of

43.7% (*see Attachment 2*). It is estimated the 2004 R/C ratio will be 48%. The five-year target had been set at 60%, recognizing there would be a period of lower cost recovery due to the need to expand services (to meet minimum standards) and a subsequent lag in ridership growth (*see Attachment 2*).

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, re-aligned, reduced or even eliminated. As part of the Council adopted Five-Year Service Plan, it was recommended that new services be given a minimum of one-year trial before any major changes are made. This trial period allows customers to fully familiarize themselves with the service and provides for a trend analysis of monthly ridership.

The Draft Annual Service Plan 2005 recommends a number of route specific improvements. These can be summarized as follows:

- Re-alignment of local feeder routes in the Vaughan, Newmarket, Markham and Aurora areas. The intent is to simplify the routing configurations, provide two-way service (avoiding one directional loops) and eliminate duplication.
- Improve connectivity to more frequent core routes and future rapid transit corridors.
- Route extensions to new subdivision developments in the Vaughan, Markham, Newmarket, Aurora and Richmond Hill areas, as well as a connection from the Yonge corridor to King City.
- Introduction of new Community Bus and demand responsive services in select areas throughout the Region

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

The primary goal of an annual service plan is to ensure the transit system's goals and objectives are aligned with the predetermined longer-range strategic plan. YRT's Five-Year Plan set specific targets including an increase of annual revenue passengers from 10 to 17 million (including GO Yonge 'C' and Bayview) over the next five years. YRT's mandate also includes a major role in contributing to an increase in the Region's morning peak hour modal share from 8 to 12 percent during the same period.

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 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.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations in the Draft Annual Service Plan 2005 will be considered in the context of the 2005 Business Plan and Budget process. The preliminary estimate of costs related to the proposed changes, amounts to approximately $5.2 million with associated revenues amounting to about $1.3 million.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

As noted earlier in the report, a series of Public Information Centres was held across the Region. Input has been received from various stakeholder groups, residents, students, other transit agencies, local Councils, Chambers of Commerce, and Boards of Trade. YRT's Draft Annual Service Plan 2005 recommends a number of service improvements which will impact the entire Region, as well as adjacent transit systems. As such, it is recommended that the plan be circulated to the local municipalities and agencies for information and comment.

7. CONCLUSION

YRT's Draft Annual Service Plan 2005 is a document which will guide the transit planning process for the upcoming year. The recommendations contained in the plan will provide a basis for budget development and ensure the delivery of transit services is consistent with the longer range strategic direction adopted in the Five-Year Service Plan.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(Attachment 2 referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)