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YORK REGION TRANSIT LOST AND FOUND POLICY UPDATE

The Transit Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, November 24, 2008, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report responds to Regional Council's direction from its meeting of September 18, 2008, to report back to Transit Committee in two months on the estimated value of lost and found items collected by York Region Transit, and investigate further options for disposal of these items, including the possibility of a public auction.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region Transit staff submitted a report on an amended Transit Lost and Found Policy and was asked to provide further information

Staff submitted a report to the September 11, 2008 Transit Committee meeting which identified changes needed to improve the handling of lost articles and our approach to customer service. Subsequently, Regional Council at its meeting on September 18, 2008, adopted the updated policy but requested further information on the disposal of items left behind by our customers.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

An estimated \$4,000 in lost and found articles and \$1,000 in cash have been turned over to YRT between May 2008 and October 2008

The majority of items turned over to YRT during this period were wallets and purses containing identification, credit and debit cards and cash. Where there was identification, the owner was contacted immediately to claim the item. Other items included electronics (cell phones, pagers, "iPods" and similar devices), glasses, keys, cameras and miscellaneous items such as costume jewellery/watches, cigarettes, books, and

flashlights. The most valuable items were three musical instruments, a billiards cue stick and a portable marketing display board. Staff researched various public sale sites such as eBay and Kijiji, electronics liquidators and musical instrument sales to come up with an estimated value for each item. A snapshot of objects and their estimated value is listed in Table 1.

Table 1
Lost and Found Articles

Item	Quantity	Total Estimated Value
Musical instruments	3	\$2,500
Billiard cue	1	50
Display board	1	50
Electronics		
Cell phones	92	920
Pagers	4	0
Digital Cameras	4	200
Games	3	15
iPods/MP3 players/radio	7	100
Miscellaneous (ear phones, plugs, cords calculators, etc.)	18	100
Wallets/purses/identification	260	0
Key sets	98	0
Glasses/sun glasses	102	0
Costume jewellery/watches	30	0
Total		\$3,935

Used musical instruments retain their value; however, depending on the instrument type, do not always sell quickly. Cell phones and other electronics have a very low resale value, are grouped as 'lot sales' and tend to be slow moving. There is no market for used glasses/sunglasses and a limited market for used watches and costume jewellery.

Staff researched holding a public auction

Staff called a public auction house to investigate the parameters of holding such an event. They discovered a public auction requires the services of a registered auctioneer, administrative support staff and a venue to accommodate the auction. The Region would be required to pay 15% of the total sales to the auction house. In the conversation with the auction house, they asked what the Region had to auction. They indicated that items have a perceived value but the actual auction value is very limited (i.e. electronics-no value). Given the items in the list above, the auction house estimated the value at approximately \$1,000.

The upfront costs to hold a public auction would be the percentage of total sales and rental of a venue. Other expenditures to be considered are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Estimated Costs for Public Auction

Item	Estimated Quantity	Total Estimated Value
Auction venue	1	\$200
15% for auction house based on their estimate of items of \$1,000	1	150
Advertising for auction	1	100
Staff time to catalogue items, transport to auction venue, remain at auction and return unsold items	2 staff 8 hours	500
Vehicle use – mileage and fuel	1	30
Total Cost		\$980

York Regional Police was contacted regarding involvement with the Police auctions

York Region Transit could formally make a request to YRP for a shared service agreement with its auction contract. Discussions at staff level indicate transit staff would be responsible for its own items including storage and transporting to the auction house. As discussed above, the number and value of articles does not cover enough of the cost to entertain such an agreement.

Staff monitor the intake of lost and found items on an on-going basis. It is difficult to project what the annual value of lost articles will be as the type and quantity changes from year to year.

Staff recommends the current disposal practice for lost and found items be maintained

At this time, staff do not recommend changing the Lost and Found Policy to include a public auction. Under the adopted policy, all items deemed as lost and found are maintained by the contractor at their facility for 30 days. On the 31st day, the contractor is required to turn over all articles to YRT for disposal. The current process for disposal is:

- Identification, debit or credit cards are returned to owner or issuing government agency or financial institution, or turned over to police or destroyed.
- Unclaimed cash is turned over to YRT Finance section to be deposited into a designated Region account.
- Cell phones are turned over to a designated area business for proper environmental recycling.

- Glasses are turned over to a designated area business for recycling of lenses and frames for donation to charity.
- Cameras, electronic devices and miscellaneous items of value are turned over to a designated charitable organization.
- Bicycles are turned over to York Regional Police.
- All other items are appropriately recycled or thrown away.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The quantity and value of lost and found items currently in the possession of YRT would not offset the cost of a public auction. Therefore, staff feel the revenues raised from these items would not be significant considering the expense of such an endeavour.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Lost and Found Policy assists our customers, residents and businesses located within York Region's local municipalities, with the retrieval and protection of lost articles on the YRT/Viva system. It also ensures that these items are traceable and held securely for a specified period of time, and disposed of in a legal and appropriate manner.

7. CONCLUSION

At this time, there is no financial benefit to holding a public auction for lost and found items held in the possession of YRT or its contractors, and staff recommend that the current disposal practices continue. If quantities and values of items increase in the future, staff will investigate "pooling" of lost and found items with other Regional departments or York Regional Police for public auction.

For more information on this report, please contact Ann-Marie Carroll, Assistant Manager, Operations at Ext. 5677 or Angelo Apfelbaum, Enforcement Supervisor at Ext. 5352.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.