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YORK REGION TRANSIT FARE POLICY UPDATE

The Transit Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, November 25, 2008, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The revised York Region Transit Fare Policy, attached to this report, be approved.

2. PURPOSE

This report seeks Regional Council approval for additional revisions to the existing York Region Transit (YRT) Fare Policy (see *Attachment 1*).

3. BACKGROUND

The review and updating of the YRT Fare Policy is performed on an annual basis, usually in conjunction with the consideration of proposed fare rate changes.

The original Fare Policy was approved in June, 2005. A revised policy was approved in September, 2006 and reflected significant changes that had occurred in the transit environment since 2005, including the impact of the introduction of automated ticket/pass vending equipment and the new fare enforcement program. In 2007, revisions were made mostly to address Fare Enforcement program and Mobility Plus service issues.

In October 2008, the latest revisions were approved. These included recognition of the Employee Commuting Option (ECO) pass program, preparation for a possible U-Pass product, modification to the Ridesaver program and free travel for off-duty police officers, when properly identified.

At its meeting of October 16, 2008, Regional Council directed staff to perform a review on two additional items and report back in December. These were:

- Free travel for emergency service workers (other than police).
- Discounted fares for participants of income support programs.

There were also a few minor housekeeping items that needed to be addressed.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Free travel for emergency service workers has been reviewed against other transit systems

The recent change to allow free travel for police when off duty or not in uniform upon presentation of specific ID was made to align York Region with current policies at all other Greater Toronto Area (GTA) transit systems.

The existing fare policy also allows for free travel for emergency service workers (fire fighters and paramedics) in uniform, while travelling to/from work or while on duty. No change to this practice is recommended. This is also in line with the other GTA transit systems. It should also be noted that permanent full-time EMS employees can apply for the ECO pass.

Discounted fares for participants of income support programs exist at Durham Region Transit and Hamilton Street Railway

A survey of GTA municipalities revealed that only two transit systems have a formal policy or fare media product which specifically addresses residents on income support programs such as the Ontario Disability Support Program.

Durham Region has an “Access Pass” which is available at selected municipal locations and is applicable to Ontario Disability Support Program recipients only. Presentation of a current Ontario Disability Support Program statement is required to purchase the pass. This pass is accepted by both Durham Region Transit and GO Transit in Durham Region. Durham Region Transit has a fare arrangement with GO that maintains the normal level of revenues for GO. Durham Social Services subsidizes Durham Region Transit, so that their revenue levels are also maintained.

Hamilton Street Railway currently has a pilot project entitled “Affordable Transit Pass Program” in conjunction with their Social Services department, for working individuals below a certain income level. Specific funding for this initiative was made available to their Social Services department so that Hamilton Street Railway receives 100% of their normal revenue. It should be noted that this pilot program appears to be directed towards the “working poor” who are not eligible to receive Ontario Disability Support Program or Ontario Works benefits. In these examples, it is important to note that non-transit budget sources are being used to subsidize use of the transit system.

It should also be noted that persons on Ontario Works assistance are eligible to receive transportation benefits for medical treatment or health-related purposes. Transportation benefits may also be issued to eligible participants to cover employment-related expenses. The provincial/municipal cost share for these transportation benefits is 80/20, and in York Region the cost is borne by the Community and Health Services Department.

The York Region Transit Fare Policy as currently written makes no provision for this type of fare discounting. This is to preserve the objective of allocating Regional funding in a way that is both transparent and traceable. In this way, social services-type funding does not originate within the transportation budget.

Housekeeping items

Several sections of the policy are proposed to be revised as follows:

- Section 2 a. (Passenger Fare Classifications) – to modify a) the ‘children ride free’ criteria to align with the current GO Transit policy, and b) the fare category definitions (*see Attachment 2*) to adjust the age ranges for the definition of a child to be 5 to 13 and a high school student to be 14 to 19.
- Section 2 g (Persons with Visual Impairments) – to specify free travel on Viva or YRT conventional services. (paragraph iii)
- Section 2 h. (Travel Training for Persons with Disabilities) – to include tickets as well as passes. (paragraph iv)
- Section 6 (Refunds & Exchanges) - to modify the pro-rata monthly pass refund to be reduced by twice the current cash fare and to modify location for exchange of tickets.

Relationship to Vision 2026

By endorsing an up-to-date fare policy, York Region continues to develop a transit-supportive environment and thereby contributes to the development of a more balanced transportation network.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The impact of the recommendations contained in this report will be consistently applied to all municipalities across the Region.

7. CONCLUSION

It is recommended that Regional Council endorse the revisions to the YRT Fare Policy contained in this report.

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Tobin, Manager, Finance, at Ext. 5691, in the Transit Branch of the Transportation Services Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)