



September 13, 2010

The Regional Municipality of York is in the process of exploring the feasibility of creating a transit fare assistance program for individuals with low income within the working age population. As such, we are reaching out to a variety of agencies and community organizations to obtain comments on how York Region might establish a framework for a fare assistance program.

In order to help us understand the needs of persons with low income, we would like to invite you to one of the three workshops. The workshops will be facilitated by Robb Ogilvie of Ogilvie, Ogilvie and Company and will include discussions on the opportunities and challenges of a potential fare assistance program. The findings and recommendations from the workshops will be presented to Regional Council in early 2011.

The workshops will be held on the following dates:

Date / Time	Location
October 13, 2010 1:00 to 5:00 PM	York Region Administrative Building – Seminar Room 17250 Yonge Street Newmarket, ON
October 14, 2010 1:00 to 5:00 PM	Courtyard Marriott 150 Interchange Way Vaughan, ON L4K 5P7
October 15, 2010 1:00 to 5:00 PM	York Region South Services Centre Room 316 – C&HS Board Room 50 High Tech Road Richmond Hill, ON L4B 4N7

Our facilitator Robb Ogilvie may contact you in advance of these sessions to discuss specific areas for consideration in an effort to maximize our workshop sessions.

If you are unable to attend we invite you to complete the attached questionnaire entitled “Community Soundings.” Please feel free to forward this questionnaire to other agencies or individuals that you believe can contribute to broadening our understanding of this issue.

Please RSVP by October 7th to piragal.thiru@york.ca. You may forward your completed questionnaire to:

Piragal Thiru
Accessible Planner
Transportation Services Department
The Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

If you have any questions, please contact Piragal Thiru at (905) 762-1282 extension 5826.

Thank you in advance for your valuable contribution.

* York Region is committed to making its programs, services and facilities accessible for all people, including people with disabilities attending workshops, meetings and events hosted by York Region. All workshops are held at facilities which are accessible and close to a transit route. Please let us know if you require any accommodations.

Exploring the Options for increasing the Transit subsidies for persons with low incomes in York Region

Context

In recent years, the Transportation Services Committee has received multiple requests for reduced transit fares from individuals and agencies representing persons with low incomes. These subsidy requests are above the current 60% subsidy rate already built into the current York Region Transit fare structure. During the Community and Health Services Department's Multi-Year Plan consultation process, access to affordable transportation was cited repeatedly as a critical means of connecting residents to employment and their community. As a result, staff were directed to conduct a peer review of other jurisdictions in Ontario and explore options for a new special transit fare assistance program for individuals with low incomes.

Community Soundings

The purpose of these community soundings is to create a dialogue with a cross-section of agencies and organizations who provide services to persons with low incomes within the working age population in York Region. This dialogue is an exploratory investigation into the transportation needs of people with low incomes and the options that could be considered by York Region Transit for a special transit fare assistance program for individuals with low incomes. The findings from these dialogues will be used to forge a staff report to Regional Council on the options and overall feasibility of a special transit fare assistance program for individuals with low incomes.

These Soundings are being launched by York Transportation Services Department in collaboration with York's Community and Health Services Department. Ogilvie, Ogilvie & Company has been retained to design, facilitate and summarize the findings of the Soundings process.

3 Mini-Workshops

We will be inviting a cross-section of agencies and community organizations to help us explore the feasibility of creating a new special transit fare assistance program for individuals with low incomes.

These mini-workshops will be held on the following dates and locations:

October 13, 2010 1:00-5:00pm
NEWMARKET
17250 Yonge Street
Admin Bldg - Seminar Room

October 14, 2010 1:00-5:00pm
VAUGHAN
Courtyard Marriott, 150 Interchange Way

October 15, 2010 1:00-5:00pm
RICHMOND HILL
50 High Tech, Room 316 CS&H Boardroom

Although we are not able to engage all the agencies and community organizations who have an interest in this issue, we would encourage those not invited to send us your suggestions and advice in answer to the questions posed in this Discussion Guide.





We need your advice and insights

The literature and case studies in other jurisdictions on access for low income people to transportation illustrates the importance of engaging the community organizations in the design and implementation of such program initiatives.

Local organizations serving these clients have an intimate understanding of their client needs and the feasibility of various options.

As such, we would like to invite you to help us understand the needs of persons with low incomes within the working age population and how York Region might structure a new special transit fare assistance program to meet their needs.

This approach is also consistent with York Region's community collaborative planning approach.



This is an exploratory process... no decisions have been made yet... there is no guarantee that there will be a new transit subsidy for persons with low incomes within the working age population

Program Design Questions To Be Discussed

1. Context

York Region Transit already provides the following subsidies and supports to various target audiences/customer segments:

- Based on 2009 data, the YRT system recovers less than 40% through the farebox (user fees), with the remaining 60% being financed by the municipal tax levy.
- In November 2008, Council approved a pilot program which provides YRT transit tickets at a 15% discount to selected homeless shelters. The pilot program is targeted at a small pre-selected group of agencies whose mandate is focused on providing assistance to persons who are homeless. During the first year of the pilot, approximately \$40K worth of tickets were sold.

2. Guiding Principles

YRT's principles that guide fare policies:

1. The fare structure should contribute to and support ridership growth strategies that result in net new ridership.
2. The fare structure should support business objectives that aim to balance fare revenues to operating expenditures.
3. The fare structure should be applied equitably to all customer categories recognizing the need to meet business objectives.

Any new transit subsidy for people with low incomes should not duplicate or replace funding that is already available from other funding sources.

3. Existing funding for transportation needs of low income people within the working age population

What programs/support exist for helping low income people meet their transportation needs? What are the limitations of these existing programs? How might a new transit subsidy overcome/address these limitations?



4. Target audience

Although the previous submissions to York Region's Transportation Services Committee used terms like "persons with low incomes within the working age population", is it possible to find a better description or to define "persons with low incomes" in a more exact manner? Since any new transit subsidy will have to come from York Region's budget and resources are limited, is there some way in which one could define the target audience as "most in need" or "most needy"? For each definition, how many people would it include?

5. Program Outcomes

If one were to make a case for a new transit subsidy for low income people within the working age population, what outcomes would it be designed to achieve? Outcomes are usually defined as a change in behaviour or change in condition for a target audience. So what changes in behaviour or changes in the condition of the target audience would such a subsidy be trying to achieve?

6. Program Goals

Program goals should follow directly from the program outcomes but should be more specific (SMART) :

- specific,
- measurable,
- acceptable,
- realistic,
- timely

What would be some examples of SMART goals for a new special transit fare assistance program?

7. Size of the subsidy

How much of a subsidy would be needed to achieve the outcomes sought? Given the estimated size of the target audience, what would be the total cost of such a new special transit fare assistance program?



Sponsored by the Transportation Services Department and the Community and Health Services Department of York Region

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Robb Ogilvie, Managing Partner
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8. How would it work?

By this we mean, how would York Region Transit provide the subsidy? What is the most efficient and effective delivery method? Would York Region Transit:

- Sell passes to an agency at a discounted price and let the agency hand-out the passes to the target audience?
- Sell passes at a discounted price directly to the target audience?
- Or...???

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

How would the outcomes and goals be monitored and evaluated to determine their effectiveness? Who would do this? How does one insure objectivity?

10. Pilot Program

If such a program looks feasible on paper, should a pilot program be launched for a trial period to get the kinks out? If so, how could that be done?

11. Other Program Features

Are there any other potential features that should be considered/discussed?

Fare Category	Cash Fare		10 Tickets		Monthly Pass	
	1 zone	2 zone	1 zone	2 zone	1 zone	2 zone
Adult ¹	\$3.25	\$4.25	\$26.00	\$36.00	\$105.00	\$150.00
High School Student ²	\$3.25	\$4.25	\$19.00	\$29.00	\$75.00	\$120.00
Senior ³ / Child ⁴	\$3.25	\$4.25	\$15.00	\$25.00	\$46.00	\$78.00
Express ⁵	\$3.50	--	\$32.50	--	\$125.00	--