

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Transportation Services
March 12, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Transportation Services

2019 York Region Transit Annual System Performance Report

1. Recommendation

Council receive this report for information.

2. Summary

This report provides Council with an overview of York Region Transit's (YRT) 2019 system performance and includes an update on ridership, revenue, service reliability, highlights, and accomplishments.

Key Points:

- Approximately 38,000 citizens used YRT services for their daily commute; number of revenue rides increased by 2.3% over 2018
- YRT's revenue-to-cost ratio was 40.8% - an improvement over 2018
- On-time performance continued to remain high with an average of 91.7% for all YRT services
- Staff piloted innovative service initiatives, opened the Smart VMC Bus Terminal, started operating 15 new kilometres of bus rapidway and ordered the Region's first electric buses
- Fare integration continued to be a priority – Staff worked with Metrolinx and the other Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) transit agencies to take the next steps towards a harmonized fare structure

3. Background

York Region Transit delivers a variety of services to meet the unique needs of communities across the Region

York Region's large geographic area and unique mix of rural, suburban and urban communities, along with the commitment to deliver transit services in all nine municipalities, requires YRT to operate economically and innovatively.

YRT offers travellers a variety of service types that together create the Family of Services:

- Viva bus rapid transit
- Conventional base routes -operate on major arterial corridors
- Local routes - operate in neighbourhoods
- Express routes - provide direct service to subway stations or employment hubs
- High School Specials - provide direct services to high schools
- GO Shuttles - provide direct service to GO train stations
- Seasonal Services - operate to key destinations such as recreational facilities, shopping malls, and amusement parks
- Mobility On-Request, Conventional - fully accessible request-response transit service designed to provide immediate local travel, within a defined geographical area, where demand for transit service is low
- Mobility On-Request, Specialized - door-to-door, shared-ride, accessible public transit service for people with disabilities

4. Analysis

Total number of transit trips taken by travellers on York Region Transit services increased in 2019 to 22.7 million, an increase of 2.3% over 2018

Ridership increase was a direct result of the number of travellers using the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) Line 1 Subway. Routes servicing the subway had an average weekday ridership increase of 10.8%. Ridership on TTC's Line 1 along the portion operating in York Region increased 29% over 2018 to 4.5 million.

Conventional and specialized Mobility On-Request services also experienced increases over 2018. Conventional Mobility On-Request ridership increased 51.8% to 41,070 and total specialized Mobility On-Request ridership increased 5% to approximately 427,389.

Ridership increase on conventional Mobility On-Request resulted from the introduction of a pilot in January 2019 for travellers going to and from the Aurora GO Station using a self-serve mobile application to book their ride. The pilot area increased over the year and resulted in 70 daily trips, reducing the number of cars competing for parking at the Aurora GO Station. In addition, Mobility On-Request service operating in the Town of East Gwillimbury was expanded to replace existing routes during select non-rush hour periods.

Specialized Mobility On-Request delivered approximately 1,500 weekday trips representing a 4% increase over 2018. Weekend travel increased 13% over 2018 to approximately 500 trips on both Saturday and Sunday.

York Region Transit met its goal of 40% revenue-to-cost ratio in 2019, up from 39.8% in 2018

In 2019, YRT's revenue-to-cost ratio was 40.8%.

Revenue-to-cost ratio is calculated using the Canadian Urban Transit Association definition. All Canadian transit agencies report their calculation annually by dividing their total operating cost by total revenue received, excluding Provincial Gas Tax funding. Five elements are included in direct operating expenses:

- Operating costs
- Fuel for vehicles
- Vehicle maintenance
- Property and facility maintenance
- General and administrative

Increases in costs presented challenges in meeting the 40% revenue-to-cost ratio target

YRT's increase in costs were due to annual contract cost adjustments, operationalizing new infrastructure and the impact of construction on YRT's ability to maintain scheduled service without the use of additional resources.

Staff modifies services on a regular basis to be more efficient and adjusts service levels to meet traveller demand and changing customer and operational needs. Ongoing analysis of each route allows YRT to monitor and adjust services on an annual basis.

Attachment 1 summarizes net cost per passenger by route to operate transit services in York Region. Select low-performing, high-cost routes were cancelled, as identified in the approved 2019 budget. Some conventional routes were cancelled in whole or in part, or replaced with the lower cost Mobility On-Request service.

In addition to service changes, staff implemented a number of efficiencies throughout the YRT system to help reduce operating costs, including: negotiation of a lower hourly operating rate for the Southwest Operations and Maintenance contract, installation of LED fixture retrofits on buses and in facilities and a transition to new electric technology, replacing older diesel bus components.

York Region Transit maintained a high level of reliability in 2019

On-time performance is a measure of the quality of service operated by YRT. Operating schedules are compared to real-time operating data and adjusted six times per year.

Service is also monitored in real-time through the Centralized Control Centre. This allows for immediate service adjustments to address delays and reduce traveller wait times.

In 2019, on-time performance reached 91.6% for conventional service, 91.1% for Viva and 92.4% for specialized Mobility On-Request. The average wait time for riders travelling on conventional Mobility On-Request service was 17 minutes.

Staff delivered key initiatives with a focus on traveller experience, safety and the environment

Staff continued delivering programs to advance YRT and corporate strategies including:

- Followed through on Council's direction to continue to focus on high ridership services by reallocating valuable resources from historically under-performing bus routes
- Ordered six electric buses - a first for York Region.
- Piloted Mobility On-Request using a new self-service application focused on the Aurora GO Station. Approximately 70 weekday trips were consistently taken.
- Expanded Mobility On-Request using the self-service application in the Towns of Georgina and East Gwillimbury and more than 20,000 trips were taken by travellers in these municipalities - an increase of approximately 40% over 2018.
- Received a Corporate Leadership Award from the Canadian Urban Transit Association for leadership in innovation for Mobility On-Request service.
- Piloted an employer-funded shuttle for Aviva that provided employees with direct service from points in Toronto and Mississauga to the Markham Centre in downtown Markham. 890 PRESTO cards were issued and 690 Aviva employees used the service, resulting in approximately 74,000 trips during the first nine months.
- Opened the Smart VMC Bus Terminal in the City of Vaughan and 15 new kilometres of bus rapidway.

- Negotiated and obtained the required approvals for purchase of the Newmarket Bus Terminal in partnership with York Region Property Services.
- Upgraded 124 bus stops, installed 45 new bus shelters and 12 solar variable messaging signs.
- Provided oversight in the manufacturing process and took delivery of and commissioned 11 expansion and 15 replacement buses.
- Developed, tested and installed pedestrian detection, vehicle monitoring and driver behaviour systems on new buses.
- Launched the Transit Assistance Pilot Program for persons living on low income in partnership with Community and Health Services and in 2019, 548 citizens participated in the program.
- Hosted the 2nd Annual Transit Enforcement Women's Symposium - Applications received increased by 300% over the 2018 Symposium across the three participating transit agencies. In 2019, YRT hired two Symposium attendees.
- Provided over 600 individual and group travel training sessions, and 20 presentations to social service agencies, day programs and seniors groups to help them and their clients learn how to use transit services.

Significant focus on fare and service integration initiatives has resulted in a two-year plan

Since December 2018, staff from the Province, Metrolinx, the Region and local municipalities has continued to meet to address fare and service integration across the GTHA. The structure consists of three groups:

- Region Roundtable - Metrolinx and TTC Chief Executive Officers, municipal and transit agency Chief Administrative Officers and City Managers
- Fare Integration Forum - Senior officials from GTHA transit agencies
- Fare and Service Integration Working Group - Service planning and customer service representatives from GTHA transit agencies

Each group has specific mandates, with a focus on aligning key transit fare integration priorities, generating solutions, enhancing collaboration and establishing the direction to advance fare and service integration in the GTHA.

The short-term vision for integration is the harmonization of fare concessions across the GTHA and the modernization of the PRESTO system. In addition, TTC and YRT are working towards a common fare approach and better use of buses to improve the traveller experience and operational efficiency for both transit agencies.

York Region Transit's 2020 initiatives continue to support the York Region Strategic Plan

YRT initiatives continue to support and advance priorities identified in the Council-approved Strategic Plan including boosting economic prosperity by increasing access to efficient transportation options, and supporting sustainable communities and protecting the environment.

YRT increases economic prosperity by focusing on services that give travellers better access to higher-order transit and easier ways to pay for travel. Key activities advanced in 2019 that will continue into 2020 include:

- Increasing connections for travellers to all transit including GO trains, TTC subway lines and the base YRT network
- Upgrading PRESTO equipment to make the system more reliable and offer features not currently available such as the acceptance of debit and credit cards and more flexibility to set special fare concessions
- Advocating and partnering with Metrolinx and other GTHA transit agencies to find a GTHA fare integration solution
- Opening new sections of the Viva bus rapid transit rapidways
- Continuing work to advance the Yonge North Subway extension into York Region
- Working towards the conversion of the Region's transit fleet to new electric bus technology starting with operationalizing the six electric buses and associated infrastructure, and finalizing a business plan with the results being reported to Council

5. Financial

York Region Transit's 2019 revenue was approximately \$76.5 million

In 2019, fare revenue totalled \$73.7 million, with additional revenue of \$2.8 million from bus and shelter advertising. In 2019, total revenue increased by 3.7% over 2018.

Total savings from efficiency initiatives, other than service changes, resulted in a savings of approximately \$2.5 million.

6. Local Impact

Well-planned transit services help to shape and connect communities. The Region's investment in public transit provides citizens with an enhanced, efficient and reliable transportation choice.

Public transit continues to be one of the most cost-effective transportation options, even with rising transit fares. Transit maintains its competitive price advantage over owning and operating a private vehicle.

Reliable, safe, traveller-friendly transportation options attract new citizens, businesses, and investors to York Region and provide economic benefits.

7. Conclusion

York Region Transit met its primary service objectives in 2019

In 2019, total transit trips taken on the YRT system reached 22.7 million, and 4.5 million rides were taken on the TTC Line 1 Subway Extension in York Region. On-time performance remained high despite several operating challenges, primarily related to larger construction projects along Regional corridors. With the implementation of efficiencies across the transit network, York Region Transit was able to meet a 40.8% revenue-to-cost ratio.

York Region Transit will work towards fare and improved service integration with the Toronto Transit Commission, and moving travellers faster

YRT staff is currently drafting the 2021-2025 York Region Transit Service and Initiatives Plan. The plan will address connecting travellers to GO Transit and the TTC Line 1 Subway, and will also focus on more direct services. Fare integration, the modernization of PRESTO, and services that address the needs of the most vulnerable will continue to be priorities.

For more information on this report, please contact Ann-Marie Carroll at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75677. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by: **Paul Jankowski**
Commissioner of Transportation Services

Approved for Submission: **Bruce Macgregor**
Chief Administrative Officer

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