

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Transportation Services
September 10, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Transportation Services

York Region Transit Fare Age Category Changes

1. Recommendations

1. Council approve the York Region Transit updated fare age categories, making York Region Transit's fare structure consistent with other Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area transit agencies, as a first step towards fare integration. Costs associated with the change would be subject to Council approval of the 2021 budget and would come into effect June 27, 2021 as part of the York Region Transit normal board period process.
2. The Regional Chair ask the federal and provincial governments for a commitment to fund further, future costs resulting from fare integration in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, as a means of accelerating the required economic and transit ridership recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. The Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report to the Clerks of all the participating jurisdictions and the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario.

2. Summary

This report seeks Council approval of proposed York Region Transit (YRT) changes to fare age categories to align with other Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) transit agencies, as a step towards fare and service integration.

Key Points:

- There are currently 11 different transit fare structures in effect across the GTHA (Attachment 1)
- A harmonized fare age category structure has been negotiated across the GTHA and is proposed for YRT adoption (Attachment 2)
- All children ages 0 to 5 years old would ride free and youth 13 to 19 would travel on YRT at the existing Youth fare, removing the requirement to be in attendance at a qualifying educational facility

- The annual cost of the changes to the fare age categories recommended in this report would be approximately \$1.3 million, and based on pre-COVID-19 costs and ridership levels
- Municipalities will continue to be responsible for setting their own transit fare amounts for each age category
- The issue of two fare payments for travel using both a 905 transit provider and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), or a 905 transit provider and GO Transit for one combined trip, remains to be addressed

3. Background

Three components to fare integration exist across the GTHA and are currently being addressed by Metrolinx and the GTHA transit agencies

Travellers can currently ride on multiple systems in the 905 area on a single fare, within a two-hour time period.

The issue of paying two fares when using both a 905 transit system and the TTC for a single combined trip, or paying two fares when using both a 905 transit system and GO Transit for a single combined trip, requires further discussion.

There are three components to fare integration:

- Fare age category uniformity across the GTHA
- Fare cost uniformity across the GTHA
- Double-fare issue between 905/TTC/GO Transit

This report addresses the first component and, to some degree, the second. The future elimination of a double-fare would come at a cost underdetermined at this time.

In 2019, a fare and service integration governance structure was established to advance integration in the GTHA

Early in 2019, Metrolinx, together with GTHA regional and several local governments formed a three-tier governance structure to advance fare and service integration:

- Region Roundtable - Metrolinx and TTC Chief Executive Officers, municipal and transit agency Chief Administrative Officers and City Managers
- Fare Integration Forum - Metrolinx and Senior officials from GTHA regional and local municipalities
- Fare and Service Integration Working Group - Service planning and customer service representatives from GTHA transit agencies. This group interacts with the PRESTO working group

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

Moving towards fare age category uniformity across the GTHA

There are 11 transit agencies in the GTHA and all have different fare structures. The harmonization of fare age categories proposes to establish a common fare structure, simplifying travel and clarity for customers. It is also a first step towards fare integration. The GTHA transit agencies have now agreed on common fare age categories and seek approval by their individual Councils. All approvals are anticipated to be received by the end of 2020.

4. Analysis

Short-term goals and a longer-term strategy have been identified as steps towards a Regional integrated fare and service structure

Metrolinx and the GTHA transit agencies have identified short-term goals and a longer-term strategy. A two-year plan consisting of two elements - the harmonization of fare age categories across the GTHA and the modernization of PRESTO began in 2020.

There is consensus to proceed with harmonized fare age categories by all transit agencies in the GTHA. The proposed fare structure would reduce traveller confusion on understanding the age and age identification requirements when purchasing transit fares. Setting the cost of fares would continue to be the responsibility of each transit agency.

The longer-term vision (2022 to 2025) is to advance towards a Regional fare and service integration strategy, which would include development of fare and service integration initiatives to eliminate two-fare payment between the 905 area/TTC/GO Transit, implement cross-boundary services to the betterment of the traveller, and provide operational efficiencies to the transit agencies.

To move forward with a GTHA-wide harmonized fare structure Council approval is required to amend fare age categories listed in the York Region Transit Fare Policy

The current and newly negotiated harmonized fare age categories across the GTHA are outlined in Table 1. Changes to the Child fare would have all ages 0 to 5 years ride free and children ages 6 to 12 pay the Child fare. All youth ages 13 to 19 would ride at the existing reduced rate without the requirement of enrollment in a full-time qualifying educational institution at the secondary level. This change will benefit youth between the ages of 17 to 19 who are entering the workforce or attending a post-secondary educational institution, with a reduced fare price. There would be no change to the Adult and Senior fare categories other than revisions to the category description.

Table 1
Proposed YRT Fare Age Categories

Category Description	Current	New
Adult	Applies to any person having reached the age of 20, but not yet having reached the age of 65. Also includes any person between the ages of 13 and 19 who is not enrolled in full-time attendance in a qualifying secondary educational facility.	Applies to any person having reached the age of 20, but not yet having reached the age of 65.
Youth*	Age 13 to 19 - Applies to any person having reached the age of 13, but not having reached the age of 20, and in full-time day attendance at a qualifying educational facility (ticket/pass must be accompanied with a valid Student ID card issued by the facility)	Applies to any person from the age of 13 to 19 and must show proof of age upon request.
Senior	Applies to any person having reached the age of 65. Seniors must show proof of age with tickets and monthly passes.	Applies to any person having reached the age of 65 and must show proof of age upon request.
Child (0-5)*	Children under the age of 1 always ride free. One child up to and including 5 years of age may ride free with a paying adult (16 years of age or older). Each additional child travelling with the same adult must pay the Child fare.	Children up to the age of 5 years always ride free and must show proof of age upon request.
Child (6-12)	Applies to any person from the age of 6 to 12 (elementary school age).	Applies to any person from the age of 6 to 12 and must show proof of age upon request.

*will have a financial impact

Staff will report back to Council at a future date with a recommended change to fare prices. Currently, the Adult fare is used as the base cost for a traveller on YRT services. Children, youth and seniors continue to be significantly discounted, approximately 25% for youth and 50% for seniors and children. The Transit Assistance Program is available to eligible adult

York Region residents who require additional assistance paying for transit. Eligible adults receive a 50% discount.

In addition to the Metrolinx fare and service integration work, an in-depth review of all fare age categories and fare collection processes together with service integration is underway between the TTC and the 905 transit agencies. This comprehensive joint review would lead to a broad Fare Policy Strategy. Staff will update Council with the results in 2021.

5. Financial

Based on 2019 ridership, the recommended fare age category changes could cost the Region an estimated \$1.3 million

The cost to implement the recommended changes to YRT's fare age categories is estimated at \$1.3 million. This total is based on 2019 ridership and does not take into consideration a fare adjustment exceeding the normal annual fare increase.

- Children 0 to 5 to ride free - \$45,000
- Youth ages 13 to 19, eliminating secondary school requirement - \$1.3 million

Loss in revenue for Child fare would potentially be recovered by an increase in the number of adults using YRT services. To recover the \$1.3 million in lost revenue related to the Youth fare, a \$0.24 fare increase would be required. This would increase the Youth fare to \$3.27. The current Adult fare is \$3.88.

The ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the return of students back to the classroom or continued remote studies for both secondary and post-secondary youth will influence the amount of revenue lost due to change in ridership by travellers within the ages of 13 to 19. Staff will monitor.

Elimination of having to pay two fares between the 905 area, TTC and GO Transit could support the economic recovery following COVID-19

There will be an ongoing cost impact to fare harmonization across the GTHA. Two areas of focus will continue to be:

- Continuing to work with all GHTA transit agencies to eliminate a double fare as fare harmonization is going to be a tool in the economic recovery of the GTHA as it relates to getting people jobs
- Working with the Province to tie the cost of fare harmonization to the financial impacts of COVID-19 and the Province's approach to the Federal government for help for all the municipal transit authorities

6. Local Impact

The harmonization of fare age categories establishes a common fare structure, simplifying travel and clarity for travellers across the GTHA. It is also a first step towards fare integration. Fare integration will eliminate the current two-fare barrier and allow travellers to access the full GTHA transit network on one fare. It will improve the user experience, attracting and retaining travellers and supporting the reduction of car usage. Following the impact of COVID-19, fare integration can be a tool in the economic recovery having community, social, household and environment benefits.

Fare integration could be a means of accelerating the post-COVID-19 economic and transit ridership recovery in the GTHA. Transit's economic value includes helping citizens access jobs, education and services they could not otherwise reach; the money saved by families when availability of transit allows them to avoid purchasing a second or third car, and the attraction of global investors and tourism.

7. Conclusion

There are 11 different transit fare structures in the GTHA. Transit agencies are taking steps now to harmonize fare age categories. Staff is seeking Council approval of the changes to the fare age categories outlined in this report. These changes would help simplify travel for customers and take a step towards eliminating the two-fare barrier between the 905 area, TTC and GO Transit.

Other vital initiatives starting in 2020 that could lead to a more regionalized transit system are underway. The standardization of fare policies across the GTHA, PRESTO equipment replacement in the 905 area, ongoing collaboration between Metrolinx, TTC and the 905 transit agencies to identify and implement cross-boundary and fare payment solutions that will improve the traveller experience and operational efficiency. An update on the YRT Transit Fare Policy that reflects details of a greater overall strategy will be provided to Council at a future date.

Organizations such as the Association of Municipalities Ontario, Large Urban Mayor's Caucus Ontario, Canadian Urban Transit Association and Ontario Provincial Transit Association have all sought commitments for further financial relief by both the Federal and Provincial Governments. Transit agencies in the GTHA have identified that a cross-boundary solution eliminating the need for two fares could be a significant tool in attracting travellers to transit by promoting easier and more convenient travel.

The recent announcement by the Province regarding Safe Restart Agreement Phase 2 funding for transit linking eligibility to receive funding to three initiatives, one being fare integration, may accelerate the GTHA transit agencies' ability to move forward with a fully fare-integrated approach. Details of the Phase 2 funding have not yet been provided by the Province.

Continued advocacy for funds to assist transit agencies in the recovery from the impact of COVID-19, including the cost of fare integration in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area,

as a tool to support the economic recovery through the Regional Chair is recommended by staff.

For more information on this report, please contact Ann-Marie Carroll, General Manager, York Region Transit 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

September 2, 2020
Attachments (2)
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