

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Transportation Services
March 7, 2019

Report of the Commissioner of Transportation Services

2018 York Region Transit Annual System Performance Report

1. Recommendation

1. Council receive this report for information.

2. Summary

This report provides Council with an overview of York Region Transit's (YRT) 2018 system performance and includes an update on ridership, revenue, service reliability, technology, innovation and system safety. See Attachment 1 for full details.

Key Points:

- York Region Transit supports travellers with their local transportation needs and connects them to urban centres and a regional and inter-regional rapid transit network.
- YRT revenue riders reached approximately 22.2 million
- Revenue rides on the York Region portion of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) Line 1 Subway Extension reached approximately 3.4 million
- YRT service was significantly impacted by major construction projects along key York Region corridors. By staff implementing delay mitigation practices, service reliability remained high
- YRT continued to meet the Council-approved revenue-to-cost ratio target of 40 per cent, even with growing operating and maintenance costs associated with new infrastructure, and to assist in achieving this target, service rationalization and construction mitigation service reductions were required
- YRT continued to respond to customer expectations through technology and innovation
- Traveller safety and system security remained a top priority

3. Background

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

York Region stretches north from the City of Toronto to Lake Simcoe with an area of 1,776 square kilometres.

The Region's unique mix of rural and urban communities and the commitment to deliver transit services in all nine municipalities requires innovative thinking as to how service is delivered to meet YRT business and customer needs.

YRT offers travellers a variety of service types which together create YRT's Family of Services:

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

4. Analysis

The number of transit riders across the York Region Transit system remained stable in 2018 reaching 22.2 million riders, with an additional 3.4 million riders at stations on the TTC Line 1 Subway extension in York Region

York Region Transit routes servicing the TTC Line 1 Subway extension carried an additional 37,000 travellers throughout the year. High ridership routes operating in key Regional corridors under construction, such as Yonge Street, Bathurst Street and Highway 7 West, saw a reduction of 730,735 trips, or approximately 285,443 revenue riders. A similar trend

was experienced along Highway 7 East and Davis Drive during rapidway construction. Experience shows that ridership returns within one year following construction completion, and growth occurs in the second year and beyond.

Mobility Plus service revenue riders reached 406,504, consistent with 2017, with an average of 1,425 daily travellers.

On-Demand Service revenue riders reached 27,044, an increase of 14.4 per cent over 2017.

York Region Transit maintained a 40 per cent revenue-to-cost ratio in 2018

Total revenue collected in 2018 was approximately \$72.6 million, and total direct expenditures were \$182.8 million.

Revenue-to-cost ratio is calculated using the Canadian Urban Transit Association -definition. All transit agencies across Canada report their revenue-to cost ratio annually. The result is derived by dividing the total operating cost by total revenue received. Five elements are included in the direct operating expenses total:

- Operating costs
- Fuel for vehicles
- Vehicle maintenance expenses
- Property and facility maintenance
- General and administrative expenses, including York Region corporate allocations

York Region Transit maintained an average annual revenue-to-cost ratio of 40 percent for the entire transit system while additional operating infrastructure was opened to the public and service delays due to construction were being addressed to keep service on-time. To achieve the 40 per cent recovery-to-cost ratio, transit services across the Region were rationalized by changing service frequencies to better meet current ridership, and services to mitigate rapidway construction were reduced.

Staff continually modifies services to be more efficient, adjusting service levels to meet traveller demand and to meet changing customer and operational needs. Ongoing analysis of each route allows YRT to continually monitor and adjust services on an annual basis. Attachment 2 identifies the net cost per passenger by route to operate transit services in York Region. However, YRT continues to operate many routes that do not meet Council-approved performance indicators, such as ridership targets, cost effectiveness and economic performance.

In 2018, staff implemented other efficiencies throughout YRT's system. LED fixture retrofits were completed on buses and in facilities, and older bus components continued to be replaced with new electric technology, which helped reduce operating costs.

York Region Transit and the operating contractors managed on-street operating delays, enabling service reliability to remain high in 2018

The on-time performance target for conventional service is 90 per cent; Viva, 95 per cent; and Mobility Plus, 92 per cent. Despite ongoing service delays due to construction on key York Region corridors, changing traffic patterns and car volumes and Mobility Plus transitioning to two new operating contracts, YRT maintained a high level of reliability with on-time performance of:

- Conventional service – 92 per cent
- Bus rapid transit service – 92 per cent
- Mobility Plus service – 91 per cent

On-time performance is a measure of the quality of service scheduled by YRT staff, and is delivered by the operating contractors. Fixed operating schedules are compared to real-time operating data and formally adjusted by staff approximately six times per year. Service is monitored in real-time on a daily basis through the YRT Centralized Control Centre. This allows for immediate service adjustments to address delays and reduce traveller wait times.

Advancements in technology and providing information the way customers want to receive it helps make transit more convenient while reducing overall operating costs

Transit has been benefitting from advances in information and communications technology, particularly in the areas of customer information and fare systems.

Global access to the internet through mobile devices, and the surge in transit-dedicated applications, enables personalized trip planning and real-time information across jurisdictional boundaries. Mobile fare payment applications, such as the YRT Pay App launched in 2017, allow travellers to load and pay for transit from their smartphones.

In 2017 YRT launched Wi-Fi at its terminals and on select buses using the YorkNet fibre network. In 2018, YRT continued to implement enhancements across the system to improve the customer experience:

- Installed on-bus LCD displays with real-time, next stop and route connection information
- Installed eight solar powered on-street variable message signs with route and next bus information
- Launched Live Chat option on yrt.ca., which allows travellers to connect with staff directly to have their questions answered
- Upgraded scheduling and mobile technology to allow Mobility Plus travellers to book, confirm, or cancel their trips by telephone, internet, or mobile app and these

advancements are making transit more accessible and convenient by allowing travellers to request same day trips and allowing YRT to schedule more efficiently

- Partnered with METROLINX / PRESTO to roll out its fare media retail network with Shoppers Drug Mart in York Region.

York Region Transit invested more in providing safety and security to travellers across York Region

Safety and security issues have become prominent in the transit industry, both personal security of travellers and staff, and other broader security risks. YRT increased safety at all terminals, vivastations, and on buses for travellers, by expanding systems such as real-time closed circuit television video monitoring and emergency phone systems enabled in part by YorkNet fibre cables. In 2018, YRT implemented an additional:

- 156 cameras on vehicles
- Seven new cameras at terminals
- Five new passenger assistance alarms at terminals

YRT Special Constables monitor and respond to issues occurring in real-time, and a Request Stop Program is offered for travelers, riding YRT buses after sunset. Campaigns on-bus and through Crime Stoppers and York Regional Police, encourage travellers to report suspicious activities. New technology being piloted on YRT buses will focus on traveller and pedestrian safety:

- A driver behaviour system that tracks bus operators' driving actions was being tested in 2018. The system emits warning signals and lights that give the operator an opportunity to improve their driving technique. Changes in driving behaviour are intended to reduce the risk of on-bus slip, trip and falls. Proper operation of the bus also improves fuel efficiency, wear-and-tear on bus parts and lowers the possibility of bus idling.
- Emerging collision avoidance systems continued to be piloted throughout 2018 to gather safety data during bus operations. These systems are proactive in providing bus operators with alerts indicating pedestrians or objects in close proximity of the bus.

5. Financial

York Region Transit's 2018 revenue was approximately \$72.6 million

To meet the budget in 2018, YRT recovered a portion of its operating costs through fare and non-fare revenues.

2018 fare revenue totalled \$70.7 million, with additional revenue from conventional bus and shelter advertising providing a further \$1.9 million. 2018 total revenue increased by 0.01 per cent over 2017's total of \$72 million.

In 2018, advertising revenue exceeded the budget estimation by \$100,000. Efficiencies in utilities and fuel totalled \$500,000, which allowed YRT to meet its 2018 operating budget.

6. Local Impact

Well-planned transit helps 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 even though the average cost of auto ownership is falling marginally.

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 2018

In 2018, revenue rides in York Region reached 22.2 million, with additional 3.4 million revenue rides taken on TTC Line 1 subway in York Region. On-time performance remained high despite a number of operating challenges. With the implementation of efficiencies across the transit network, staff was able to maintain a revenue-to-cost ratio of 40 per cent.

Focusing on the future, York Region Transit must consider offering choice and flexibility to satisfy a traveller base with increasingly diverse needs

Citizen engagement will contribute to the successful planning of future YRT services. Growth in the number of seniors and persons having various disabilities will transform the transit market and require the greatest possible integration of conventional and specialized services. This will be accompanied by customer-oriented services to manage demand and maximize traveller satisfaction. Transit services that improve travel options for pedestrians, cyclists and car users will be extended and YRT will work towards being the hub of all travel options within all York Region communities.

In 2019, YRT is partnering with Metrolinx, select local municipalities and the private sector to test alternative service delivery models that would connect citizens to GO Transit stations, meeting the needs of the traveller, and improving overall transit options and service.

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

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Chief Administrative Officer

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Attachments (2)
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