



Office of the Commissioner
Transportation Services Department

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Paul Jankowski
Commissioner of Transportation Services

Date: May 30, 2019

Re: Mobility On-Demand Update in the Towns of East Gwillimbury, Georgina and Aurora

This memorandum provides Council with information about the York Region Transit (YRT) first-mile, last-mile solution called Mobility On-Demand (MOD). The background information on MOD services in York Region includes an update on the Towns of East Gwillimbury and Georgina MOD services, which connect travellers in rural areas to conventional transit, and an update on the Town of Aurora MOD pilot, which introduced a new mobile application to book travel to and from the Aurora GO Station. In addition, information on an upcoming MOD pilot through Metrolinx is provided.

Mobility On-Demand services were introduced in 2006 as Dial-a-Ride in the Town of Newmarket

In March 2006, YRT launched the Dial-a-Ride service, outside of rush-hour, on Route 44 in the Town of Newmarket. The conventional bus service was replaced with an accessible minivan and customers travelled between YRT stops within the Route 44 area, calling-in during specific times to request their ride.

The introduction of this type of service eliminated conventional bus operation in residential areas during low-ridership times while still allowing travellers to connect to other YRT services in the area.

Initially, ridership was minimal with one to five travellers per hour. Some travellers indicating they disliked sharing the smaller vehicle with other passengers, while others noted high satisfaction as it continued to allow them to travel where they needed locally and outside of the Newmarket area.

Driver feedback suggested that limiting operation of the vehicle to a fixed route did not meet the needs of all travellers. Using this information, staff structured the service to be more flexible. The service continues to operate in Newmarket with other YRT routes converted across the Region since initial launch.

In January 2016, York Region Transit launched Mobility On-Demand services in the Towns of East Gwillimbury and Georgina to deliver expanded transit options in rural areas

In January 2016, building on the popularity of transportation network, companies such as Uber and Lyft, YRT began to pilot MOD services in the Towns of East Gwillimbury and Georgina, aimed at travellers who were not within 500 metres of existing YRT services.

The East Gwillimbury and Georgina pilot introduced new service delivery efficiencies by combining MOD with YRT's Mobility Plus service. MOD trips are delivered using available capacity of vehicles already in operation for Mobility Plus. Sedans, accessible mini-vans or a small bus picks up travellers at a fixed address and takes them to the closest bus stop. Travellers then transfer onto conventional transit to complete their journey. This service is booked in advance through the Mobility Plus Contact Centre. Travellers pay the regular YRT fare and are entitled to travel on any YRT service for up to two hours.

In 2017, Council endorsed the YRT Mobility On-Demand Strategy to help guide staff with the implementation of future services

The YRT Mobility On-Demand Strategy identified short, medium and long-term goals and included the execution of the first MOD operating and maintenance contract and combining services with Mobility Plus. The strategy outlined the areas where service could be expanded, use of technology, a communications plan and rebranding options.

The strategy highlighted goals such as:

- Achieving a high-level of customer satisfaction by limiting wait time, travel time and the need to pre-order or pre-schedule travel
- Reducing traffic around GO Stations by creating more shared rides
- Providing an economical transportation option for those who do not have access to a vehicle or direct transit service
- Reducing the number of vehicles on the road and ultimately, greenhouse gas emissions

A performance matrix on how to measure these goals is currently being explored by staff.

In January 2019, York Region Transit began operating a Mobility On-Demand pilot for travellers going to and from the Aurora GO Station using a self-serve mobile application to book their ride

MOD service to the Aurora GO Station provides travellers with a direct trip between their home, to and from the station, within the designated five kilometre service area, and using a branded YRT vehicle. The service operates on a first-come, first-served basis. Rides may be shared with other travellers and must be booked on the same day of travel.

Using the new MOD mobile application, travellers can book a ride for immediate pick-up. The app is available for free through the App Store and Google Play. Other features of the application include saving favourite trips, reviewing upcoming trips or trip history, account information, password options and information about terms and conditions and the Privacy Policy. Later this year, the application will be made available to all MOD travellers across York Region. Travellers will still have the option to call the Mobility Plus Contact Centre if they require assistance.

Participants in the initial pilot had all previously driven personal vehicles to the Aurora GO Station. The post-pilot survey identified that travellers were very satisfied with the service and would continue to use it. Traveller comments included:

- The drivers are friendly and professional
- The service reduces the stress of finding parking at the station
- The service is flexible and meets the travellers needs
- Incorporate the GO train times into the application
- Expand the hours to include non-rush hour times
- Use electric cars to deliver the service

On June 10, 2019, MOD service will be expanded into the area east of the Aurora GO Station (see Attachment 1). Later this year, the service will also be expanded in the Town of East Gwillimbury, replacing existing Routes 52 and 58 during specified non-rush hours in the daytime and evenings.

Staff is working with Metrolinx on a potential pilot operated by Lyft to deliver service to and from GO Stations in the Greater Toronto Area

In 2018, Metrolinx released an Expression of Interest to establish a six-month promotional partnership with a transportation network company to enhance station access and alleviate the pressure on parking at GO Stations, especially during construction. An explicit goal of the

program is to support multi-modal travel and not to provide trips that replace sustainable modes such as local transit, cycling and walking. Metrolinx continues to work with YRT staff to identify possible pilot programs.

YRT has agreed to continue to work with Metrolinx to identify solutions for the use of demand-response transportation within York Region and to coordinate these efforts as required with the local municipal bylaws regarding ride-sharing. As part of this partnership, YRT will continue to examine the effect of transportation network companies on transit ridership, congestion on Regional roads, impacts to safety and security and accessibility options for all travellers.

YRT's Mobility On-Demand revenue ridership has increased 155 per cent from approximately 10,600 in 2016 to over 27,000 at the end of 2018. YRT estimates an annual operating savings of \$450,000 resulting from the reduction of conventional fixed route services with the implementation of MOD services in low-demand transit areas. Operating savings are expected to increase with ongoing replacement of conventional transit services with MOD and ridership.

YRT will continue to build MOD services, focusing on areas in York Region where ridership does not warrant traditional transit services, with goals of providing access to transit services in York Region for all citizens, maintaining or improving upon the Council-directed 40 per cent revenue to cost ratio target and reducing the number of single occupant vehicles on roads during peak-periods. Staff will report back in the future providing further updates on YRT Mobility On-Demand services.

Paul Jankowski
Commissioner of Transportation Services

Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment (1)
9320989