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YORK REGION TRANSIT GEORGINA MOBILITY TRANSIT PILOT UPDATE

The Transit Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, June 1, 2007, from the General Manager, Transit:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The concept of community-based transit services in rural areas of the Region where residents' transportation needs cannot be currently addressed by York Region Transit's conventional public transit or specialized transit services continue to be supported.
2. The use of a portion of the 2007 funds allocated to Georgina Mobility Transit of \$40,000 to 'bridge' finance the procurement of a storefront office for six months, from May to November 1, 2007, be authorized.
3. The Georgina Mobility Transit program continue to be monitored to ensure there is no duplication of services with those provided by York Region Transit.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is three-fold:

- i) To review the results of the 2006 transit pilot project with Georgina Mobility Transit, concerning the provision of community-based transit services for residents of the Town of Georgina.
- ii) To obtain the support of Regional Council for Georgina Mobility Transit to use a portion of the 2007 funding allocation to secure a storefront location for business purposes.
- iii) To obtain continued support for the concept of providing community-based transit services in other rural parts of the Region.

3. BACKGROUND

Georgina Mobility Transit Inc. (GMT) received a continuation of funding from York Region for its original project in the amount of \$32,500 for the year 2006. The funding has allowed GMT to continue building its service to the residents of Georgina who are

not currently able to access York Region Transit's conventional or specialized transit services.

A contractual arrangement has been developed which, among other things, indemnifies the Region from any claims arising from the provision of funding by the Region. In addition, Georgina Mobility Transit is required to provide the Region with performance statistics on a quarterly basis, to enable York Region Transit (YRT) to assess future planning needs for conventional and specialized transit services in Georgina.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Georgina Mobility Transit provides a low-cost transportation alternative to meet the transit needs of persons who live in rural areas of Georgina who do not have access to conventional public transit service, or do not meet the eligibility requirements for YRT's Mobility Plus service. Georgina Mobility Transit provided approximately 1,250 trips a month in 2006 and projects ridership to increase to an average of 1,445 trips per month in 2007. This projection is based primarily on the number of ride requests currently being rejected because they exceed GMT's resources. Transit service is provided through volunteer drivers and vehicles with trip destinations both within (90%) and outside (10%) the Region. Customers are provided trips, where appropriate, to the nearest GO Transit or YRT bus route.

This transit partnership is supported by York Region Transit since it addresses the requirement for a transit service to meet the needs of Region residents in a cost-effective manner which cannot currently be supported, due primarily to the rural nature of the trip requests. Rides for food procurement (20% of total trips) and medical purposes (12% of total trips) continue to be the most prevalent reasons for trip requests. People with chronic illnesses, including mental illness, and working poor families, comprise the majority of riders.

Georgina Mobility Transit has outgrown the arrangement it currently has of one full-time staff member working out of a home-based office. The plan was to expand into a storefront office in 2008/2009, but GMT has been presented with an unexpected opportunity to take advantage of office space in a preferred location. The storefront is in close proximity to the Sutton Seniors Centre, North Street Apartment for Seniors and the youth shelter, allowing for walk-in support and face-to-face service.

GMT is seeking support from current financial supporters to 'bridge' finance the procurement of this storefront for six months, from May 1 to approximately November 1, 2007, and would use \$200 per month from each funding source as well as \$200 monthly from its own fundraising work to cover the costs. Of the \$40,000 funds allocated by the Region, GMT is requesting to use \$1,400 for the above-noted purpose (see *Attachment 1*).

With respect to the issue of avoiding duplication of YRT services, GMT referred 61 prospective riders to YRT and YRT Mobility Plus and the discontinuation of service to 12 riders who had been approved by YRT Mobility Plus in 2006. This will continue to be closely monitored by both parties.

4.1 Relationship to Vision 2026

The financial support of an efficient and effective community-based transit service, in the absence of available conventional public transit services, will address the Region's goal of making transit more accessible throughout the Region.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2007 Business Plan and Budget for York Region Transit contains an allocation of \$40,000 as a grant in support of the Georgina Mobility Transit operation. With GMT anticipating annual ridership of approximately 17,351 in 2007, the Region's grant provides a contribution of \$2.22 per trip. This figure takes into account the \$1,400 requested for bridge funding to secure the storefront facility.

The per-trip contribution of \$2.22 is well below the average gross cost per trip of conventional transit of \$5.81 and Mobility Plus of \$29.84. The provision of this grant, coupled with a matching grant from the Town of Georgina and other external funding sources, will enable GMT to meet its anticipated trip demand for 2007.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The provision of a financial grant for the operation of community-based transit services addresses the transit needs of residents within the Town of Georgina who are unable to avail themselves of conventional or specialized York Region Transit services.

7. CONCLUSION

Georgina Mobility Transit provides an alternative transportation service to meet community transit needs of individuals who live in rural areas of Georgina in which access to conventional public transit service is limited, or who do not meet the eligibility requirement for Mobility Plus service. Staff recommend the approval of a \$1,400 allotment from the \$40,000 grant to Georgina Mobility Transit to secure a storefront property allowing an opportunity to better serve the community's needs. Future financial support will be based on the requirement for transit service, and the existing and planned expansion of conventional transit services. In addition, staff recommends, where appropriate, the application of this financial support concept to other parts of the Region.

Report No. 5 of the Transit Committee
Regional Council Meeting of June 21, 2007

For more information on this report, contact Sharon Doyle, Manager, Mobility Plus (ext. 5634), of the Transit Branch of the Transportation and Works Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)