

MINUTES

TRANSIT SERVICES COMMITTEE

OTTAWA-CARLETON REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMISSION

CHAMPLAIN ROOM

WEDNESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 1999

8:45 A.M.

PRESENT

Chair: A. Loney

Members: M. Bellemare, W. Byrne, L. Davis, C. Doucet D. Holmes, H. Kreling,
J. Legendre

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

That the Transit Services Committee confirm the Minutes of the 23 June 1999 meeting.

CARRIED

REGULAR ITEMS

PRESENTATION

1. MARKETING INITIATIVES

- Transit Services Committee Co-ordinator's report dated 12 Aug 99

The General Manager, OC Transpo, M. Sheflin, began by saying staff have been given the mandate to increase ridership and strengthen marketing efforts. He said the presentation will describe the community and marketing communications activities undertaken over the past few months. Mr. Sheflin advised OC Transpo had had ridership gains of approximately 10% in June and July, bring the year to-date increase to approximately 4.23%, and this bodes well for reaching the 3% goal set for year end.

Oxana Sawka, Manager, Marketing and Customer Services, provided Committee with an overview of OC Transpo's achievements to-date, using a video presentation. The following initiatives were highlighted:

- The maple leaf bus paint job (as suggested by an employee) was unveiled and will appear on all future buses.
- A “Try Transit Month” was launched jointly with Nortel Networks, which attracted some 1300 employees and increased ridership by about 25% to the Carling site. Approximately 34% of these employees participated in a survey and will be getting together with their TTM coordinator to see what can be done about a second wave to increase ridership.
- In March, an extensive Transplan public consultation program on service was held, which involved advertising and a lot of staff resources.
- Day passes and time period transfers were launched in late spring. The day pass launch took place at the NCC info centre where tourists can now buy their day pass and get transit information. More than 12,000 day passes were sold in July and it is anticipated these numbers will grow. Advertising included bus posters, shelter ads, Where Magazine, point of purchase items, door stickers, mobiles, tent cards, hotel staff briefings and TV guide channel ads.
- Over the summer, OC Transpo participated in many festivals and special events such as the Tulip Festival, the Jazz Festival, Canada Day, the Air Show and the Super Ex.

The Student Campaign

- Students are a very important market for OC Transpo; 68% of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 use transit. The goal is to keep them as customers as they grow older and embark on their careers.
- Staff worked closely with the Ottawa District School Board to reach the 2600 students who are no longer eligible for school busing.
- An annual pass is now available for high school, college and university students and to-date, 504 annual passes had been sold. During the pilot program for University and College students, 1000 were sold in a year.
- A student ride guide was produced and printed and distributed by the Board to all the students in June. A special back to school student edition of Circuits was also produced.
- A web page dedicated to students was created, where they can access route maps for all of the high schools and other pertinent information. Fabulous feedback on this web site has been received to date.
- With the help of the advertising agency, Acart, new posters were designed, aimed at students. The posters were selected after focus group testing (made up of young people).
- Transit shelters have been positioned close to high schools, universities and shopping malls. Banners (displaying the student promotion) have been hung at the Super Ex and the Rideau Centre (at the MacKenzie King Bridge entrance). Banners will also be hung on the wall of Zellers at Gloucester Shopping Centre facing the Queensway traffic and on the OC Transpo building.
- For college and university students, OC Transpo is featured on student guides, frosh kits, calendars, and campus newspapers and there is a banner hanging at the University of Ottawa. Radio ads have also been produced geared to students.

The Seniors' Campaign

- In 1999, the International Year of the Older Person, the price of the Senior's pass was lowered to \$19.99. A successful launch was held at Carlingwood Shopping Centre, where a few hundred seniors came for cake, coffee and free photo IDs. Free photo IDs for seniors are being offered until December 31. Senior Monthly pass sales have climbed by 1000 over last year for both June and July and the mail received from seniors on the discounted passes has been very positive.
- OC Transpo information officers were at the July 1 Seniors' breakfast.
- Hundreds of posters were distributed to Seniors groups and organizations and the message for Senior's was simple "Get on Board, Enjoy Life". Ads in seniors' magazines and in mall posters were featured. 66% of seniors visit a mall at least once a week and four out of five visit a mall at least once a month.

Community Marketing

- The community marketing campaign was the first of its kind in North America.
- An enthusiastic and dedicated team of 15 transit experts visited 747 households in the Craig Henry area in the last 2 weeks of August, just before the service change, to provide transit information and assistance. Marketing items such as canvas bags, door hangers, magnets and a letter (including a photo of the group) introducing the volunteer team were distributed
- a follow-up survey will take place in a couple of months which will indicate if this new strategy has increased ridership and by how much. Following this a full report will be brought to the Committee.

Rack and Roll Program

- Route 97, which now goes to the Airport, is the designated Rack and Roll route.
- Two demos were held, one at 111 Lisgar and one at the Nortel site and they were extremely well received. Over 200 people in total attended over the lunch hour.
- Approximately 30 cyclists a day use this service and it is an example of the partnership OC Transpo has with the Citizens for Safe Cycling, who have been extremely supportive and helpful. Citizens for Safe Cycling staffed the Sunday Bike days along the parkway explaining this new feature to bicycle riders, every Sunday during the entire month of July.
- The program was launched in June at the University of Ottawa and Fresh Air Experience, a local bicycle retailer, donated two bikes, one for a draw for employees and one for riders.

New Fall Service

- In terms of the preparation involved in the enormous service change, more than a million time tables were produced, 250,000 system maps, 100,000 service change brochures, 2000 bus stops were refitted, maps at hundreds of shelters were updated, 40,000 copies of the special back to school edition of Circuits were distributed.
- The internal communications challenge, critical to the successful implementation of the program, was huge. The intent was to provide as much information to the employees as possible, so they could assist customers. This was achieved by issuing the weekly Transpo Express (outlining the changes) to all OC Transpo employees, employee briefings were held and special information was placed in the operator docketts.
- A team of twelve staff, were deployed to designated locations across the Region (the last week of August and the first week of September) to assist customers.

- Service information brochures were placed on windshields of Park and Ride lots, handed out to commuters going to Hull and distributed at MacKenzie King Bridge (one of the busiest transit locations).
- Supporting these efforts were radio ads, interior transit cards, detailed ads in newspapers, public service announcements, wide distribution of the system map through the Citizen and Le Droit.

In concluding her presentation, Ms. Sawka noted until the end of the year, OC Transpo's marketing initiatives will be focused on commuters. She noted the intent is to get major employers on board to participate in the Eco-pass Program, which allows employees to pay for their transit pass through pay-roll deduction. In exchange for a one year commitment, OC Transpo offers a 15% reduction and a one part photo-pass which does not need to be renewed monthly. Treasury Board has been approached to participate in the pilot project and staff are awaiting their response. Mr. Sheflin added that, with respect to the massive service change, staff anticipated more problems than did occur in the first few days.

Commissioner Legendre said it was an impressive marketing campaign and congratulated staff in this regard. In terms of the distribution of the material, the Commissioner asked how Circuits was distributed. Ms. Sawka advised the pamphlet was available on the buses and as well, it was sent to the Universities and Colleges. Commissioner Legendre suggested these pamphlets be distributed to the libraries. Ms. Sawka also confirmed for the Commissioner, the student guides were available in both English and French.

Committee Chair Loney noted he had met with the group of volunteers who participated in the marketing campaign in the Craig Henry area. Some of these residents indicated they had not taken a bus since the last strike, and said their enthusiasm has been renewed. Chair Loney commented that such disruptions in service have a high cost and it takes a long time to recover. He felt if an effort such as the community marketing campaign can get riders back, it would be worth doing more of them. The Chair also noted Newbridge had recently approached him about participating in the corporate program and he hoped to have a meeting set up for the following week.

On the issue of the service change, Chair Loney, stated he was convinced that, except for obvious glitches that could be corrected quickly, OC Transpo should "hang tight". He said his office had received numerous phone calls about the new service and his response has basically been that the Transit Commission realizes that not everybody will be better served, but the vast majority will be better served by this changeover. The Chair pointed out the considerable public participation that was involved with the comprehensive review and the Transplan for this year, which led up to the service changes.

That the Transit Services Committee receive this presentation for information.

RECEIVED

2. EMERGENCY REQUIREMENT TO REFURBISH “NEW LOOK” BUSES
- General Manager’s report dated 20 Jul 99

General Manager Sheflin advised when the planning took place for the service changes that recently went into effect, it was discovered that there would be about 25 too few buses. Staff had to proceed with a re-build immediately to ensure the buses would be on the road for the changeover at the end of August.

Art Phelan, Manager, Equipment Division advised approximately seven buses had been completed and noted service was being met by keeping some of the buses that were to be retired in service. He noted all 25 buses would be back by mid-December.

Chair Loney asked how many of the new Orion 6 buses were now in service. Mr. Phelan advised to-date approximately 60 of these new buses were in service. He said staff were processing about 1 per day, 5 per week and he expected all 140 buses would be in service by the end of January. Mr. Phelan went on to say the plan for the 140 buses was replacement of retired buses, however, because of increased ridership and added service in some areas, more buses are needed; the 140 buses did not contemplate growth.

The Committee then approved the staff recommendation.

That the Transit Services Committee ratify the actions taken as described in the General Manager’s report dated 20 Jul 99.

CARRIED

3. GRANT OF EASEMENT, 2250 QUEENSVIEW DR., OTTAWA
- Planning and Development Approvals Commissioner’s and General Manager,
OC Transpo joint report dated 15 Jul 99

That the Transit Services Committee recommend that the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Transit Commission and Regional Council approve the granting of permanent easement rights over a total of 1042.1 m² of land described as part of Lots 317 to Lot 321, Registered Plan 372212, City of Ottawa, and part of Queensview Drive (Closed), all shown as Parts 1, 2 & 3 on Plan 4R-14678, to Bell Canada for the sum of \$1.00.

CARRIED

4. PARTICIPATION IN OMERS

- General Manager, OC Transpo report dated 6 Aug 99

That the Ottawa-Carleton Transit Services Committee recommend the attached by-law for the participation in the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS), and that the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Transit Commission adopt this by-law.

CARRIED

5. 1998 ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

- A/Co-ordinator, Transit Services Committee report dated 12 Aug 99

Jim English, A/Treasurer and Controller, and Jack LeBelle, Regional Finance Commissioner, appeared before the Committee. Mr. LeBelle commented that the Annual Report reflects the very substantial change that has taken place in the funding of OC Transpo in 1998, as a result of the local services realignment by the Province of Ontario. He noted, fundamentally it means that Provincial support for OC Transpo has all but disappeared. As a result the Committee is now faced with having to fund the delivery of transit services in the community in only one of two ways - either through fares or property tax. Mr. LeBelle went on to address the need for depreciation accounting and noted when depreciation was introduced in 1997, all of the models assumed Provincial support. He pointed out OC Transpo is now faced with having to replace its fleet on a 100% local dollar basis. The General Manager, Mike Sheflin, noted the Province believes that the vacated portion of the education tax will be sufficient to cover the subsidy.

Chair Loney stated that, although the Province is transferring a certain amount of money from the education levy, he cautioned there would still be a large gap in terms of OC Transpo's ability to realize its capital plan and he felt it important that the Committee recognize this. The Chair noted the consultants have recommended that OC Transpo shorten up the length of time it keeps a bus. He said ideally he would like to see buses kept for an average of 12 years, however, he has been advised that given the number of buses in the fleet (greater than 800) and the cost of the new buses (\$420,000 each), this would require a great deal of money and so the Committee will have to aim at something lower than that initially.

The Chair noted he had met with officials from North Carolina (the Mayors and Councillors from Chapel Hill and Durham) who were in Ottawa looking at the transitway as they are considering building one themselves. They were very impressed and, although they will have some rail, the majority of their system will be a bus-transitway model very much like Ottawa-Carleton's. Chair Loney pointed out however, over half of the cost of their system would be funded by the United States Federal Treasury. The North Carolina officials were absolutely amazed that Ottawa-Carleton's system was operated solely on funding from the property taxes. The Chair felt it was very important that the public be made aware of this fact. As well, he

stressed the importance of the Committee members ensuring the entire Commission is fully aware that in committing to the Transportation Master Plan and the Official Plan and the shift away from building roads, they must provide additional funds for the public transit operation.

Mr. Sheflin pointed out that the latest edition of Metro Magazine showcases innovative technology or management techniques that can dramatically alter the way public transit services its customers. The articles also lists Ottawa, Canada, as one of the three most successful Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) operations currently operating in the world.

Commissioner Legendre felt it was appropriate for the Committee Chair to flag the many challenges OC Transpo faces, noting he provided an article on this issue in a recent newsletter. The Commissioner thanked staff for producing the Annual Financial Report (in both official languages) and he stressed the importance of relaying this information to the public, particularly in view of the challenges OC Transpo is facing.

That the Transit Services Committee receive this report for information.

RECEIVED

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Committee Chair Loney noted the following two items, which were distributed to members of the Committee the day prior to the meeting, require a Motion to Waive the Rules in order to be considered at this time.

Moved by J. Legendre

That the Rules of Procedure be suspended to consider additional items 6 (Level of Service for January 2000) and 7 (Student Fares For LINC Participants) at today's meeting.

CARRIED

6. LEVEL OF SERVICE FOR JANUARY 2000
- General Manager's report dated 25 Aug 99

Dr. Helen Gault, Manager, Planning and Development, provided Committee with an overview of the staff report.

Committee Chair Loney felt the report should not come as a shock to the Committee citing such things as the wage increases included in the contract recently signed with the largest employee group, the increased service and depreciation of the buses. The Chair noted the 140 new buses OC Transpo is currently receiving, will be the last to be subsidized by the Province.

At the Committee Chair's request, the Regional Finance Commissioner, J. LeBelle, confirmed Chair Loney's statements. He noted, with respect to depreciation, it is often too easy in the public sector to set aside the reality of a depreciation expenditure because it is not always seen to be real. Regional Council and the Commission decided in 1997 to introduce depreciation as a means of maintaining and replacing the fleet and this has been done on a phased-in basis since then. Mr. LeBelle advised that \$38 million dollars will be required every year to sustain the existing fleet (this does not include any increase in the fleet to service new ridership) and he would prefer this start immediately in the year 2000. However, from a budget standpoint, the Region could not afford to move immediately to the \$38 million and Mr. LeBelle indicated he would be making recommendations to the Committee (as part of the 2000 budget) to proceed.

Mr. LeBelle added that staff have been working on the capital program and it is anticipated a report will come before the Committee in a month or so. He cautioned the challenge associated with the capital program will be substantial in light of the requirement to replace the fleet and the costs of servicing ridership objectives.

Commissioner Bellemare posed questions concerning Transplan 99. Dr. Gault advised that, as part of this exercise, the number of service hours was increased by approximately 3%; at the same time, the amount of recovery time to ensure the service provided was more reliable was also increased. The total number of increased hours was approximately 110,000. Mr. Sheflin added the gross increase for Transplan 99 was \$8.1 million, with a net increase of \$4.6 million after revenues. The \$4.6 million was granted to OC Transpo on the basis that it would achieve a 3% increase in ridership, in order to make it part of the base budget.

The Committee then considered the staff recommendation.

- a) **That the Transit Services Committee recommend to the Transit Commission that the level of service provided to customers in the fall of 1999 be extended through to April 22, 2000; and,**
- b) **that the year 2000 service beyond April be discussed as part of the 2000 budget process.**

CARRIED

7. STUDENT FARES FOR LINC PARTICIPANTS

- General Manager's report dated 26 Aug 99

Responding to questions from Commissioner Holmes, Dr. Helen Gault, Manager, Planning and Development, advised staff had received this request from the Ottawa Carleton Immigrant Services organization. She noted, from past experience with vocational private institutions, things went extremely smoothly. Staff plan to use the same administrative approach and are confident they can handle this.

Commissioner Legendre stated he was very pleased with the report and commended staff. However, he felt staff had not gone quite far enough as he felt the focus appeared to be on the institution or the program rather than on the students, where it should be. He said he was looking forward to this program being extended to other similar institutions, and he hoped in the future the focus would be shifted onto the students.

The Committee then approved the staff recommendation.

That the Transit Services Committee recommend to the Transit Commission that concession fares be provided to all full-time students of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program.

CARRIED

INFORMATION PREVIOUSLY DISTRIBUTED

PURCHASING INFORMATION ITEMS

- General Manager's memorandum dated 3 Aug 99

OTHER BUSINESS

Art Phelan, Manager, Equipment Division, introduced Ms. Cassie Kelly, recently appointed as Director of Plant Engineering. Ms. Kelly comes to the Region from MDS Nordion (Kanata), where she worked as a Quality Control Specialist on a new packaging line for radio isotope medicines. Ms. Kelly has also worked in facilities management for a pharmaceutical firm in Montréal, Québec.

INQUIRIES

1. BIKE RACKS ON BUSES

Commissioner Davis asked if the bike racks were slowing down transit times at all. Michael Bellinger, Manager, Transportation Operations, said he has not been advised this is the case. The Commissioner noted she had spoken with bus drivers, who had experienced sight/distance problems with the bike racks and who felt they had to adjust the distance between their bus and the vehicle in front of them. Mr. Bellinger indicated that, although there were some initial concerns, no negative feedback has been received and the operators are very supportive of the program. He added that the project appears to be a success.

Responding to further questions from Commissioner Davis, Helen Gault, Manager, Planning and Development advised during counts in July and August there were between 30 and 40 uses a day. She indicated staff plan to interview customers and drivers and will report back to Committee in October (the pilot project runs until 31 October 1999).

Chair Loney noted that the pilot project has been well received and there will need to be a decision soon about whether or not to continue with the bike racks on a permanent basis. Commissioner Holmes expressed the hope that a year will not be lost in moving to bike racks on the next route (Route 95). Dr. Gault stated that, assuming the project is as successful as it appears to be, it will be included in the year 2000 budget so it can start at the beginning of the season.

2. REPORT ON THE VENDOR NETWORK

Commissioner Legendre asked when the Vendor Network report will be available.. Oxana Sawka, Manager, Marketing and Customer Services, replied that staff responsible for the report are currently involved in the photo ID program for the schools and will begin work on the Vendor Network report immediately afterwards. Commissioner Legendre asked that the report include adherence to the Commission's vending policy, as the feedback is that very few vendors are respecting the Commission's decision regarding the sale of small numbers of tickets. As well, the report should contain a map showing the extent of the network.

3. REPORT ON BUS BENCHES

Commissioner Legendre asked that a report be provided (including a map) showing the location of bus benches (both with and without advertising) and including an overview of how the program is going.

4. PARATRANSPO SERVICE TO HULL CASINO

Commissioner Legendre asked for a report back on whether it is appropriate for Paratranspo to bring clients to the Hull Casino when requested to do so.

5. AUTO TRADER MAGAZINE

Commissioner Holmes asked if the auto buyer magazine that is available in some of the transit stations, was still allowed to be there. The Commissioner felt it was not appropriate that a magazine offering cheap cars for sale should be offered in a transitway station. The Manager, Marketing and Communications, Oxana Sawka, will check into this matter and will advise the Commissioner.

6. RECYCLING BOXES IN TRANSIT STATIONS

Commissioner Holmes inquired about recycling boxes in transit stations. Mr. Art Phelan, Manager, Equipment Division, advised there are boxes in a number of the larger transit stations, but not in every one. He advised that staff are in the process of preparing a report for the Committee on the cleanliness of the transit stations and shelters and will comment about the cost of dealing with recycled material. Currently, the people cleaning the stations also transfer recyclable materials and they are stretched to the limit in what they can handle in one day; As a result of these extra duties, the stations are not as clean as people would like them to be. Commissioner Holmes expressed the hope OC Transpo staff will meet with Environment and Transportation staff to explore co-operative efforts. M. Sheflin indicated this would be done, however he cautioned that, without the appropriate resources, this will be difficult.

7. NOTIFYING COMMISSION MEMBERS OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Commissioner Davis asked that all members of the Commission be advised when staff are working on projects or when situations (such as the runaway bus) occur. She made the suggestion that a "call-around system" be established to advise Commissioners before they are told of occurrences by the public. Committee Chair Loney said he has brought this matter to staff's attention in the past and he asked that Commissioners be given as much lead time as possible in all cases.

IN-CAMERA

Moved by J. Legendre

That the Transit Services Committee move In Camera to discuss an inquiry of a confidential nature, pursuant to Subsection 11(1) e) “litigation or potential litigation affecting the Regional Corporation, including matters before administrative tribunals”, of the Procedure By-law.

CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

CHAIR

A/CO-ORDINATOR