

MINUTES

TRANSIT SERVICES COMMITTEE

OTTAWA-CARLETON REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMISSION

CHAMPLAIN ROOM

17 FEBRUARY 1999

8:45 A.M.

PRESENT

Chair: A. Loney

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

Regrets: R. Chiarelli

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

**That the Transit Services Committee confirm the Minutes of the meeting of
3 February 1999.**

CARRIED

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

September 1998

October 1998

November 1998

RECEIVED

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- Notes: 1. Underlining indicates new or amended recommendations approved by Committee.
2. Reports requiring consideration by the Commission will be forwarded to the meeting of 10 March 1999 in Transit Services Report 99-11.

REGULAR ITEMS

1. BUS FLEET - CURRENT AND FUTURE
 - Verbal Presentation

The Interim General Manager, Mike Sheflin, began by saying that buses are the Commission's most basic commodity and if vehicles are not in top shape, there will be system-wide problems. A vehicle which is on the road and is not in good shape pressures everyone to put out service which is neither suitable nor sustainable. The absence of vehicle purchases and efforts at maintaining a system increasingly difficult to maintain contributes to staff making decisions that should not be made. Mr. Sheflin reiterated that the Commission must only put out what it can sustain and the highly-skilled technicians at OC Transpo must have the tools they need to do their job.

Mr. Art Phelan, Acting Manager, Equipment, circulated a document entitled Bus Fleet Report, OC Transpo, Current and Future Fleet. The Committee was shown a video on some of the repairs done to the fleet. Mr. Phelan described the vehicles that comprise the fleet, highlighting problems encountered, normal hours of usage, monthly kilometers and the cost of refurbishing vehicles which averages between \$60,000 and \$80,000 per vehicle and has to be done every 6 to 9 years.

Mr. Phelan spoke about customers' expectations which include: that the vehicles be clean, have a reasonably quiet interior, comfortable seats and standing locations, adequate heating and ventilation, good window visibility. Persons with mobility problems expect easier access, lowered handholds, and low-floor vehicles with ramps. Taxpayers expect transit to be reliable and cost-effective, and meet all community expectations. Drivers expect vehicles to have ergonomic controls, good visibility, heating, ventilation and lighting as buses are their personal work area for up to eight hours a day.

Speaking to corporate expectations, Mr. Phelan said these include equipment designed and integrated as a complete system, with parts and technical support available from the manufacturer. He expressed the belief it is possible to have a bus that lasts 18 years and OC Transpo is working with other major transit properties on Common Design Requirements to achieve this goal. There are indications transit properties would be prepared to negotiate price increases if vehicles could last longer.

Mr. Phelan described the current fleet, noting there are reliability problems, i.e., service is not provided on really cold days, maintenance costs are high, buses are not air conditioned, newer buses have hard shell seats with no cushioning. He spoke about the Nova low-floor buses, saying they have been unable to perform as wheelchair-accessible vehicles. There were problems with the ramp, the lack of straps, and the fact that the buses do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

When these buses come into use, there will be a 20% reduction in capacity as they only have 35 seats. Mr. Phelan described a number of other problem areas that are currently being addressed, including brakes that squeal badly, ramp parts that are unavailable and defective gear sets.

Mr. Phelan described the Orion V as a good, reliable and dependable vehicle, however the seats are not comfortable, there are problems with heat control where the operator sits, and with vehicle vibration. Typically, this vehicle is out in local service for up to 20 hours.

Speaking about future purchases, Mr. Phelan said the 140 Orion VIs will feature air conditioning, new fabric seats with foam cushions, a rear door behind the back wheel (safety feature). This will be a full, low-floor vehicle with a ramp at the front. Mr. Phelan noted staff expect the vehicle to be available for testing within the next week. The New Flyer 60 foot, low-floor articulated bus, will have a capacity of 54 and will be built more like a traditional bus; it will have two wheelchair positions and a front ramp. Mr. Phelan said this vehicle can be counted on to improve the fleet and to increase ridership and reliability, as per the KPMG recommendations. The Commission has asked the Ontario Ministry of Transportation to re-evaluate its stand and allow the New Flyer low-floor, wheelchair accessible 30 foot bus to be used (Ontario is the only jurisdiction that does not allow its use). This vehicle could be used to replace the Communibus which has not performed to expectations.

Mr. Phelan concluded his presentation by describing a number of new maintenance features, such as servicing air conditioning equipment, shampooing cushioned seats and flooring material on vehicles, all of which have not hitherto been done. He indicated that three new positions have been added to deal with these issues and the expectation is more people will be needed for maintenance purposes. He made reference to information on historical vehicles which is contained in the report.

Commissioner H. Kreling began by thanking staff for bringing the information forward. He expressed concern about the fact the Commission is spending large sums of money adapting buses because manufacturers are delivering vehicles that don't last as long as the customer would like them to last. He said he thought manufacturers rely too much on transit properties to do this work, and he wondered how the Commission could express its dissatisfaction about this state of affairs.

Mr. Phelan indicated, in response to a further question from Commissioner Kreling, that one vehicle costs approximately \$400,000, tax included. Commissioner Kreling posited that the manufacturers should be made aware of the Commission's concerns; further, it should be pointed out that paying that amount for a vehicle gives the client the right to expect a good product. Commissioner Kreling said he did not want to see the Commission facing some of the problems experienced by other transit properties.

Chair Loney made reference to the 1998 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) where problems with low floor buses were discussed. At the time,

manufacturers indicated they were working hard to correct all problems. Chair Loney pointed out that the Province once had a say in which vehicles transit properties could buy, and if manufacturers spent a lot of time trying to make the list, they may not have spent as much time ensuring their products were as reliable as they should be. Chair Loney posited one of the advantages of not receiving provincial funds is that transit properties can now be more demanding of manufacturers that want their business.

Mr. Sheflin pointed out that if vehicles lasted 18 years, the manufacturers' market would consist of 700 buses a year: in one year, less than 300 buses were purchased throughout Canada. Things have now shifted from no one buying buses to everyone buying buses and suppliers can't keep up with the demand. Both Mr. Sheflin and Mr. Phelan reiterated that, in some cases, claims for compensation were made to Orion and some reparation has been made, however, these did not address putting service on the street.

Commissioner M. Bellemare asked whether staff have a complete list of manufacturers for the Canadian climate and whether European manufacturers have been considered. Mr. Sheflin indicated that the Icarus is a European vehicle with some parts manufactured in Ontario. The Commission did purchase Volvo buses, however the company went out of business and the vehicles were not delivered. With the U.S. going to low-floor buses as a standard, transit properties will know in the future that all the bugs have been worked out of the vehicles and this may result in a vehicle specifically tailored to their needs.

Chair Loney thanked Mr. Phelan for his presentation, and the Committee received the report.

Moved by M. Bellemare

That the Transit Services Committee receive this report for information.

RECEIVED

2. INTERPROVINCIAL TRANSIT SERVICE
- CEO and General Manager's report dated 8 Feb 99

Dr. H. Gault presented the report. She began by saying that, in 1995, OC Transpo worked with the Société de transport de l'Outaouais (STO) to find ways to improve joint interprovincial services. Some of the joint initiatives included scheduling changes and public information improvements, specifically, a joint service map. Dr. Gault indicated both entities work and meet on an ongoing basis at the staff level. At the moment, the STO is developing a "smart card" for use by students, and discussions include how these will be accommodated by OC Transpo. Other discussions focus around transportation requirements related to major National Capital events. Dr. Gault noted that Transplan will propose changes to improve the reliability of interprovincial service and its convenience as it relates to persons coming from the west end.

Commissioner M. Bellemare asked whether the reciprocal arrangement whereby OC Transpo and STO's bus passes are honoured could be extended to cover bus tickets, which are also pre-paid items. Dr. Gault said one of the concerns in this regard is that more STO clients use OC Transpo than the reverse. The STO's bus tickets are more highly priced than OC Transpo's and, if tickets were accepted on either side of the river, clients would likely buy the cheaper tickets and use them, generating revenue losses.

Commissioner Bellemare put forth a Motion calling for the Chair of the Commission to write to his counterpart requesting there be a reciprocal agreement related to honouring one another's tickets. He expressed the view that both entities should be looking into these matters from a policy standpoint and trying as much as possible to mesh the systems across the river. This will result, in the long term, in increased usage and will encourage further interprovincial travel. Commissioner Bellemare posited that matters such as revenue slippage could be addressed, as well as issues related to identification.

Chair Loney suggested softening the language of the Motion to ask that OC Transpo and the STO look into the matter and not request a reciprocal agreement at this juncture. Commissioner D. Holmes called for a report back from staff. Commissioner Bellemare withdrew his Motion in favour of a report back from staff.

Moved by H. Kreling

That the Transit Services Committee receive this report for information.

RECEIVED

3. **COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW - FINAL REPORT**
- Interim General Manager's report dated 9 Feb 99

The Commission Chair, A. Loney, recalled that the consultants presented their final report on 8 Feb 99. The recommendation before Committee asks that the report be referred back to staff for their input and their best advice on cost implications.

Commissioner W. Byrne sought clarification on the recommendation calling for the West Transitway to be completed as originally intended. She also wanted to know whether the Motion currently before Council about new initiatives related to the West Transitway was taken into consideration as part of the comprehensive review.

Chair Loney responded by saying the report states that the connection into the Bayshore Shopping Centre should be completed along the lines of what was originally proposed and that this should be done as a priority.

The Committee heard from Mr. Doug Mayhew, Manager, Public Relations, Canadian Automobile Association (CAA). Mr. Mayhew said OC Transpo staff must take into consideration the implications of KPMG's report for automobile users. He indicated that being an automobile association does not put the CAA at odds with public transit, as there are commonalities. Mr. Mayhew stated that the CAA is totally opposed to enabling legislation that would move taxation powers from the Province to any other source as it relates to the automobile. He said the car currently funds a large piece of the consolidated revenue fund, both federally and provincially, and this is not being addressed at either level. He posited that automobile users are about to hear about some of the recommendations and may perceive some of them negatively.

The Interim Manager, M. Sheflin, said one of the measures currently being evaluated is the Greater Vancouver Area initiative which transfers existing tax points for both road maintenance and transit. Mr. Sheflin said he had been extremely disappointed that the CAA allowed the Province to take the entire gas tax, as well as fees from every municipality, and retain everything for itself, providing nothing to maintain roads and run public transit. He pointed out that the CAA had been extremely quick to speak in opposition when the Region recommended the transfer of existing taxes to support the urban areas, and he wanted to make his dissatisfaction publicly known at this time.

Mr. Mayhew advanced the view that the money brought into the Province by the automobile should be put back into services used by automobiles. Almost two-thirds of this money ends up in the common pot, whereas it should be specifically directed at whoever is providing service for the automobile.

Chair Loney asked whether Mr. Mayhew was opposed to part of the gasoline tax coming back into the Regional Municipality. Mr. Mayhew clarified the opposition is to the enabling legislation, not to the concept of it happening: this is seen as opening the door to all kinds of other changes which consumers will not see in the correct light. Other areas of concern include a surcharge on automobile permits and on non-residential parking. He posited that being negative on the car will not promote the use of public transit, as there is a place for both. Chair Loney stated that the Region is not about to build a separate system for cars and buses: roads can be used for both purposes, and earmarking some of the money currently collected for this purpose is entirely appropriate.

Commissioner H. Kreling asked whether it was the CAA's contention that roadways downloaded to the Region by the Province should simply become an added burden on the property taxpayer. In addition, was it unfair that the Region get a portion of the gasoline tax to help cover these costs. Mr. Mayhew said the point he was trying to make was that the Province should use the money received for roads or for automobile-related services. Commissioner J. Legendre said he was dismayed with media stories about increasing fuel taxes to fund public transit requirements, as these stories contribute to anti-transit sentiment. He wanted to clarify that the Region is asking both the federal and provincial governments to provide access to user charges, to remove themselves since they no longer

provide funding, and allow the Region to move into taxation to ensure no increases to users. Commissioner Legendre pointed out that such stories affect the Region's ability to persuade the senior levels of government to make changes, and he asked whether it was known how such items got into the press.

Chair Loney emphasized that the Commission has been vigilant in talking about the transfer of the gasoline tax, and he could only speculate how this had been interpreted in other ways by some. He reiterated that the Region is asking that certain taxes be directed, as not everything can be paid through property taxes.

Chair Loney made reference to correspondence received from the Township of Goulbourn, expressing concern about the implementation of certain sections of the Comprehensive Review and related issues. He indicated he will respond to Goulbourn Mayor Janet Stavinga and will provide copies of his letter to members of the Transit Services Committee.

Moved by D. Holmes

That the Transit Services Committee receive the final report of the OC Transpo Comprehensive Review from the KPMG/IBI Team entitled "The Way Ahead - Becoming the Best of the Best" and refer it to OC Transpo Management for review and the preparation of a comprehensive 5-year business plan.

CARRIED

COUNCILLORS' ITEM(S)

4. **TANDEM PARKING IN THE CENTRAL AREA:**
CITY OF OTTAWA CENTRAL AREA ZONING BY-LAW
 - Councillor D. Holmes report dated 25 Jan 99
 - Deferred from the Transit Services Committee meeting of 27 Jan 99

Commissioner D. Holmes asked that the Commission indicate its support for continuing the prohibition of tandem parking under the City of Ottawa's Central Area Zoning By-law, currently under circulation for comment. She indicated, in response to a question from Commissioner L. Davis, that this activity is ongoing because the City does not enforce its own by-law.

Commissioner J. Legendre asked why the Commission should be concerned about this issue, expressing his belief there should be a limit to intervening in private sector business. Commissioner Holmes spoke about the fact that both the Ottawa and Regional Official Plans describe parking lots as a temporary use in the central area, the most desirable use

being high density, commercial buildings that generate good revenue and taxation and contribute to employment in the area. The more revenue temporary parking lots generate, the longer they will remain in existence and the longer it will take for the lots to be re-developed. Commissioner Holmes pointed out some lots have been there since the 1960s. Furthermore, the Region has just provided a major benefit to operators by creating a parking lot class and reducing their taxes. She expressed the view this is moving in the wrong direction, since everything should be done to promote high density commercial uses and to encourage the use of public transit and discourage the use of private automobiles in the central area.

Commissioner Legendre posited that the thing which prevents lot owners from developing their lands is the current state of the economy and he felt sure they would proceed with development as soon as they were capable of doing so. He said he supports public transit, but cannot support this approach, as it seems mean-spirited

Moved by D. Holmes

That the Transit Services Committee recommend the Transit Commission request the City of Ottawa continue the prohibition of tandem parking on surface lots in the Central Area under the provisions of the new “Central Area Zoning By-law”.

CARRIED
(J. Legendre dissented)

INQUIRIES

1. Commissioner M. Bellemare asked whether staff could look into ways of acknowledging 1999 as the Year of the Older Person with initiatives aimed at seniors. The Interim Manager indicated staff will report back with suggestions at a future meeting.
2. Commissioner J. Legendre asked that operators be reminded about the speed limit on St Laurent Blvd, between Hemlock and Sandridge (Route No. 7) being 40 km per hour, as this is a residential area.
3. Commissioner Legendre made reference to the ongoing difficulty in getting enough bus ticket vendors in his constituency; as a consequence, clients have to go a certain distance to purchase tickets and this is sending the wrong message to the public about the bus company. Mr. Sheflin indicated the matter would be given further review.
4. Commissioner Legendre spoke about a situation where an OC Transpo operator was refused the opportunity to be tested in French, both in writing and orally, for a position. As this person has a certain capacity in English he was tested for the position in that language. Commissioner Legendre said Management should understand that a person can

best demonstrate their capabilities when he/she is most comfortable, and he expressed the hope an error was made in refusing to test the candidate in French because the language requirement of the job is English. He felt that, if this is the policy, it is not acceptable.

Ms. E. Cameron, Manager, Human Resources, explained that if there is a requirement for mandatory bilingualism in the position, the testing take place in French and in English: if the position cites bilingualism as an asset, the testing is done in English only. She added that the position has had a unilingual requirement with bilingualism as an asset for a number of years, but this requirement could be reviewed.

Commissioner Legendre said what is at stake is the comfort level of employees and the rights of those who want to move into positions where bilingualism is not required but is desirable. The employee's grievance has to do with the fact he was not able to demonstrate his capabilities as well as he could have had he been tested in French. The Interim General Manager, M. Sheflin, said he has communicated to Management Committee his desire to serve both the francophone and anglophone communities and to treat all Commission employees fairly.

5. Commissioner C. Doucet asked what could be done to ensure OC Transpo buses can park in the arrivals area at Ottawa's MacDonald-Cartier International Airport. The Manager, Planning and Development, Dr. Helen Gault, explained the problem arises because cars are parked at the bus stop and prevent operators from getting in. She said it was the Commission's clear objective to have buses waiting for arriving passengers in the right areas and efforts will be renewed to achieve this goal. Chair Loney stressed the importance of communicating with the airport manager and letting him know of this problem, since he has pledged his cooperation in these matters.
6. Commissioner L. Davis asked whether staff could evaluate the impact of buses coming via the Transitway through her ward without having to stop. She indicated that as many as 10 buses are doing this while groups of up to 30 people are waiting for a bus: this is creating a great deal of discontent. Commissioner Davis said she was more than willing to help improve travel times from the outlying areas, but something must be done to ensure people living near Westboro Station can board the bus at Westboro Station. The Interim Manager, M. Sheflin, directed that this item be part of the Transplan discussion.
7. Commissioner D. Holmes asked whether staff could report on why enforcement of bus only lanes on Albert/Slater has collapsed, and what could be done to bring this back as a priority. Mr. K. O'Leary, Acting Manager, Customer Relations and Security, indicated that discussions are ongoing with City of Ottawa By-law enforcement officials and with Regional Police in this respect and staff will report back on progress.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

A/CO-ORDINATOR

CHAIR