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DATE: 7 March 2000

TO/DEST: Co-ordinator, Transit Services Committee

FROM/EXP: General Manager

SUBJECT/OBJET: **TRANSIT SERVICE FOR THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR PERIOD IN 2000/2001**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That the Transit Services Committee receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

This report outlines the proposed level of service for the Christmas and New Year period in 2000/2001. It discusses the experience gained from past years and summarizes the service proposed for the 2000/2001 Christmas period.

DISCUSSION

Service Concept

The type of service required for the Christmas period depends to a large extent on the day of the week on which Christmas and New Year's Day fall. People make different decisions about holidays depending on whether Christmas Day and New Year's Day fall midweek or at the weekend. The challenge is to set a level of service to match these.

There is no need to operate school service as the schools are closed over this period and this, coupled with reduced demand for commuters, means that it is possible to operate a reduced service on some days. This allows more operators to take vacation time over the holiday period and it is, in fact, part of our labour agreement.

In general, these reductions are made on regular and peak period routes only, and as a rule, there is no reduction applied to local routes.

December 24 and December 31 present an interesting challenge, as many businesses allow staff to leave work early on these days. In fact, this is universally true in the Federal Public Service. In recent years, including the last holiday period, this has been handled by adding extra service from noon onwards.

Past Experience

The Christmas and New Year period just past were unique due to the Millennium celebrations, for which OC Transpo provided a high level of service. The fact that both Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve fell on Fridays, and not midweek, concentrated the holiday period to within one work week extending over two weekends. This made it simpler to communicate to customers than had there been any changes prior to Christmas or after January 2. The service levels operated in 1999/2000 appear in Table 1.

Overall, the service operated well. The reduced service on the weekdays between Christmas and New Year's more than met the demand and was well communicated to customers. There was a brief period on New Year's Eve between 9:30 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. when service did not keep up with demand. This was caused in part by the short duration of the show on the Hill to which destination everyone was travelling at the same time. Also the free fares after 9:00 p.m. may have contributed to the timing of customers' trips in that period

There was some concern about running a Saturday service on January 3. Although it was a holiday for the Public Service, other businesses gave employees a holiday between Christmas and New Year's instead. We were in touch with large employers when the schedules were being set in late September, and had used the information they provided to set the level of service. It appears that later in the year decisions were made about the statutory holiday for New Year's Day of which we were unaware. This year, staff will contact all large businesses both in September and again in early December to ensure that we have adequate coverage.

Customer Service reported that 103 complaints of all types and 22 compliments were received concerning the 1999/2000 Christmas service period in comparison with 164 complaints and 12 compliments the previous year. Of the 103 complaints from 1999/2000, 11 contacts indicated a general disapproval with the service reductions while there were 3 contacts about confusion over the schedule changes.

There was one call about Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve service levels. The customer wanted the express service to start earlier as he was allowed to leave work at noon. Although only a single call, we have received a higher number of calls in previous years and, in addition, the Regional Transit Advisory Committee (RTAC), at its January meeting, raised the same concern. Although additional service was provided at noon, supplementing regular service, RTAC members requested the operation of the full express service from noon onwards and the provision of supplements from mid afternoon until 6:00 p.m. or so.

Plans for 2000/2001

Table 2 shows the service levels proposed for 2000/2001. A full review of experience of the Christmas and New Year's service in 1999/2000 was carried out in January and lessons learned from last year will be incorporated into the planned service for this year. In particular, on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, the express service will start earlier, at about noon. After its completion, supplements will be scheduled to handle the reduced passenger demand for express trips and industrial parks where there is no other service. Also, major employers will be contacted in September and again in December to determine what, if any, special work arrangements are being planned that may affect bus service. These will be accommodated in the schedules throughout the Christmas and New Year's service period.

As in the past, a full information and marketing program will be carried out to ensure that all customers are aware of the planned service.

*Approved by
Gordon Diamond*

TABLE 1**Service Levels for 1999/2000**

Date	Day	Service
December 24	Friday	Regular weekday service, early afternoon supplements
December 25	Saturday	Reduced Sunday
December 26	Sunday	Saturday type service for Boxing day
December 27	Monday	Saturday
December 28	Tuesday	Saturday
December 29	Wednesday	Reduced Weekday
December 30	Thursday	Reduced Weekday
December 31	Friday	Reduced Weekday Plus additional coverage for Millennium celebrations
January 1	Saturday	Reduced Sunday
January 2	Sunday	Sunday
January 3	Monday	Saturday
January 4	Tuesday	Regular Weekday

TABLE 2**Proposed Service Levels: 2000/2001**

Date	Day	Service
December 22	Friday	Express Service will pull out early (about 3 hours but precise time will be confirmed). Extra service will be provided later in the afternoon where there is no other service (industrial parks).
December 23	Saturday	Saturday
December 24	Sunday	Supplemented Sunday service for shopping
December 25	Monday	Reduced Sunday
December 26	Tuesday	Saturday
December 27	Wednesday	Reduced weekday
December 28	Thursday	Reduced weekday
December 29	Friday	Reduced weekday
December 30	Saturday	Saturday
December 31	Sunday	Sunday service with supplemented and extended evening service for New Year's Eve.
January 1	Monday	Reduced Sunday
January 2	Tuesday	Regular weekday