

MINUTES

TRANSIT SERVICES COMMITTEE

OTTAWA-CARLETON REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMISSION

CHAMPLAIN ROOM

WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH 2000

8:50 A.M.

PRESENT

Chair: A. Loney

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

REGRETS L. Davis

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

**That the Transit Services Committee confirm the Minutes of the Committee meeting of 23 February 2000.**

CARRIED

RESIGNATION OF P. MACDONNELL, AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION

Mr. Paul Macdonnell, President, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) informed the Committee that he is leaving the ATU. He thanked Committee members and staff for the years he has worked with them, noting his appreciation for their commitment to transit in the community. On behalf of the Committee, Chair Loney expressed appreciation to Mr. Macdonnell for his leadership in the Union. Commissioner Kreling voiced his appreciation for Mr. Macdonnell's active participation as a resident of Orléans and the contributions he has made to that community.

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- Notes: 1. Underlining indicates new or amended recommendations approved by the Committee.  
2. Reports requiring Commission consideration will be presented to the Commission on 12 April 2000 in Transit Services Committee Report 00-20.

## PRESENTATIONS

1. ACCESSIBLE TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT -  
NOVEMBER 1998 TO OCTOBER 1999  
- General Manager's report dated 14 Feb 00

Jeffrey Alguire, Chair of the Accessible Transit Advisory Committee (ATAC) introduced the new Vice-Chair, Michael O'Riain. Prior to presenting the highlights of the report, Mr. Alguire acknowledged the tragedy that occurred at OC Transpo in April of last year and on behalf of the ATAC, sent his condolences to all those affected. In his review of the report, the following highlights were noted:

### *Low-Floor Buses*

The use of low-floor buses has to be publicized more because ATAC has received feedback from some passengers who do not understand why these buses have low floors and fewer seats; the latter point appears to be bigger issue for some of them;

There may be a need to increase the frequency of some of the routes in order to accomplish the ATAC's longer term goals.

### *Light Rail*

The ATAC is disappointed with the way the accessibility issue at Bayview Station has been handled, but will continue to advise those associated with this initiative to ensure provision for the best accessibility possible.

### *Fare Structure*

This is not their preferred choice for dealing with the provision of service. It would be better that should there be enough resources to not require such initiatives; however, given that this does not appear possible based on feedback from the Transit Services Committee, the ATAC have engaged in a number of fare discussions and the results are before committee today.

There may be a need to examine the fare structure again if they think that doing so would significantly improve service.

### *Cancellation Policy*

Some of those initiatives have been helpful in terms of improving the efficiency of the service.

### *Eligibility Issues*

Between the ATAC and the Ontario Community Transportation Association it is hoped there will be efforts that will compliment each other and result in a favourable outcome for transit in this Region and the province as a whole.

Mr. Alguire wanted to allow more people the freedom associated with a less restrictive scheduling of conventional service and to improve service for those that still require the parallel service; those that require access to that parallel system can get access without having to worry about the limitations on capacity, refusal rates, et cetera.

### *Medical Bookings and Trip Prioritization*

The ATAC was reluctant to approach the issue of trip prioritization, because users are required to identify their trip purpose, something the general population does not have to do. It is because of a belief in the privacy issue that many transportation services over the last decade have moved away from trip prioritization.

However, no one wants anyone to miss a critical appointment on account of capacity problems and therefore, the committee should allow other transportation demand management (TDM) initiatives to have their impact and then examine it in an effort to determine if there is still a significant problem with medical trip refusals. Prioritization should be implemented only as a last resort and medical trips must be defined very narrowly.

### *Computerized Scheduling System*

The success of this system has taken a little bit longer than had been originally anticipated and took a little longer for the ATAC to understand how to use the system, though this was through no fault of staff.

Efficiency rates and trips per hour were roughly at the same level as they were prior to the Trapeze system being introduced, but have increased since the writing of this report; it will soon become apparent what the significant impact of the extra dollars allocated from the reserves will be this year.

### *Labour Disruption*

This is a particular concern because a lot of people who use the service do not have other options. There is a need to have a contingency or plan to deal with labour disruptions or any other disturbances that could cripple the parallel system; otherwise, a number of people would be shut-ins for the period of such disruptions.

*Budget Considerations*

The ATAC appreciates the funding allocated from the reserves to increase much needed service; however, they are concerned that at some point next year, those funds will disappear. The Transit Services Committee (or its successor) will have to address the issue of replacing those funds somehow.

*OC Transpo Comprehensive Review*

Some of the comments out of that review have been productive for the ATAC such as demand management strategies. Committee members will continue to see some relevance of the review to the initiatives the ATAC engage in this year, including eligibility and regular bookings.

The review was helpful in giving the ATAC a wider view of the goings-on in other jurisdictions.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Alguire reported that Para Transpo recently celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and he acknowledged there has been a lot of progress. However, the ATAC recognizes there are still things to be done and they will continue to work towards improvements in accessible transit in the Region.

Commissioner Byrne thanked Mr. Alguire for his comments and in response to his remark about low-floor buses, inquired whether something can be done to improve the marketing of these vehicles. Oxana Sawka, Director, Marketing, Communications and Customer Service, advised that staff are currently putting together a comprehensive marketing and communications program to present to the ATAC next week. She indicated there are 10 new low-floor bus routes that will begin April 23; these are geared to serve key destinations along these routes with information. Staff also intend to send mail-outs to Para Transpo customers as well as other forms of advertising. Staff will report back to the committee following the presentation to the ATAC.

Chair Loney recalled that the committee was concerned about too much publicity on the low-floor service until the system was proven to be successful. He believed that with 160 low-floor buses in the fleet and with the new low-floor routes to be implemented in the coming season, OC Transpo will be able to be more vocal about these vehicles.

Commissioner Byrne inquired when Bayview Station would be accessible. Dr. Helen Gault, Director, Planning and Development, OC Transpo, advised that CP Rail has just recently taken on board a consultant to do a conceptual design and staff will work with the consultant over the next few weeks in an effort to improve accessibility within the cost constraints. Commissioner Byrne asked that upon completion, staff bring back a report indicating what the cost restraints are, how accessible the station can be made and what would be involved to make it fully accessible.

Commissioner Byrne questioned whether there was a component of driver training related specifically to seniors and low-floor conventional service. Mr. Bellinger acknowledged there is a classroom component to address those issues in the current training program.

**That the Transit Services Committee receive the Accessible Transit Advisory Committee's Annual Report for information.**

RECEIVED

2. PARA TRANSPO - UPDATE ON SERVICE

- General Manager's Verbal report

Pat Larkin, Manager, Para Transpo provided a brief update as follows:

- ridership is up and trip refusals are down since last year; there will be a total of 21,000 additional new trips in 2000; between January and February 1999, their refusal rate was at 4.8% (5% is the average in the industry) and for the same period in 2000, that rate dropped to 2.7%, a significant decrease over last year's;
- the overall quality of service on Para Transpo has improved and 95% of customers are being picked up and delivered to their destination on time; the quality of that service can be attributed to the Trapeze computerized scheduling system, however, the initial schedules produced by the system are not as efficient as they should be and staff are working very hard to improve productivity and to maintain service levels;
- there are more kilometres being used to provide Para Transpo service i.e. the average trip is taking more kilometres; the consultant Trapeze are aware of that and staff have met with them as well a couple of large operations in the United States with Trapeze and they have found ways of improving productivity and are testing it now; they have asked staff to provide them with some data they can run through their test; the result of this new product should be a decrease in kilometres/trip;
- staff implemented a cancellation policy in 1999 because last-minute cancellations wastes resources and denies transportation for others; a letter is sent to those who are in contravention of the policy and out of the 400 letters sent, service only had to be removed for a one-week period for six customers;
- the effect of this is that in January-February 1999 there were 23,000 cancellations (15.7% cancellation rate) and January-February 2000 there were 19,221 cancellations representing a 12.9% cancellation rate;

- in 1999 they implemented a change in the Para Transpo fare structure i.e. a top-up was required on the seniors pass; when the cost of that pass was lowered, Para Transpo would lose \$85,000 in annual revenue and demand for service would increase significantly; with that top-up, more seniors would be paying the same as other disabled persons on Para Transpo;
- with the introduction of more low-floor bus routes, there will be more seniors using the regular routes;
- there has been positive feedback from both drivers and customers since Para Transpo has had access to the transitway,
- Para Transpo is preparing a pilot project using taxis to supplement the service when it cannot be provided; they will be meeting with staff from the Legal Department and authorities of the taxi industry and should have something to bring forward by the end of May;
- with respect to the Para Transpo eligibility criteria, staff have worked with ATAC who have formed a sub-committee to gather information from other municipalities regarding the processes used to determine eligibility; currently, they are looking at the system being used at the Toronto Transit Commission which uses a point system rather than basing eligibility on information from the health care system; staff hope to bring something forward to the committee in June.

Chair Loney was somewhat concerned that staff are still collecting data with respect to a pilot project for using taxis. He thought they would have been past that stage by now. Mr. Larkin confirmed they were still gathering information because it is important to ensure there is a particular level of service provided by taxi drivers. While there is a potential for cost savings, the main issue is the quality of service. Chair Loney thought cabs would only be used when everything else was booked. Mr. Larkin confirmed that it is to supplement the service. Para Transpo will receive requests for transportation and on an hourly rate can accommodate the vast majority of those trips; during peak demand periods there may be a need to use taxis. Chair Loney asked that for each meeting between now and June, the Committee receive brief updates on this issue.

**That the Transit Services Committee receive this report for information.**

RECEIVED

REGULAR ITEMS

3. TRANSIT SERVICE FOR THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR  
PERIOD IN 2000/2001

- General Manager's report dated 7 Mar 00

Chair Loney explained that he had asked staff to bring this report forward because businesses have complained that not all the people working downtown get off early during specific holidays and as a result, peak service is not always available when their work day is over.

Mike Bellinger, Director, Transportation Operations, advised that holiday schedules are based on a review of what transpired the previous year. Staff canvas businesses and large employers with respect to their plans for closing times on specific holidays and OC Transpo attempts to be as flexible as possible to adjust to this feedback. Dr. Gault added that this year will be relatively straight-forward, with a proposed reduction in service only between the 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of December. She indicated that the Regional Transit Advisory Committee has pressed OC Transpo to move up the service by three hours and advertise that fact so people know what they can rely on. While changing these peak periods will result in finishing three hours earlier, supplementary service will be provided, including to business parks which are only served by peak service routes.

Chair Loney noted that OC Transpo is in the business of delivering service everyday of the year. He did not want to lose sight of the fact there are people who rely absolutely on transit for transportation and when there is reduced service, it can be a severe situation for them. He was reassured by the fact that staff will continue to contact people and adjust right up to the last minute possible with respect to the 2000 Christmas season. He asked that statistics be provided to the committee with respect to how many employers have officially stated that their employees will be off by noon on Christmas Eve, 2000.

**That the Transit Services Committee receive this report for information.**

RECEIVED

4. TRANSIT PRIORITY IN CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS  
- General Manager's report dated 6 Mar 00

Dr. Gault noted that the biggest area for improvement is enforcement and there should be a line item in the budget specifically for this. Further, ensuring the Region's television cameras are well-placed to help with real time traffic signal changes will greatly assist in situations where transit may be caught in congestion as a result of construction. Another area that has been identified for improvement is communicating to the public to take the bus during construction periods. Mr. Bellinger added that in discussions with the Director of Mobility Services and Corporate Fleet Services, it is a matter of co-ordinating all efforts to ensure that whatever obstacles present themselves, particularly in the downtown core, they be quickly removed. This is simply a matter of redefining procedures and re-establishing the lines of communication and the areas of responsibility.

Doug Brousseau, Director of Mobility Services and Corporate Fleet Services agreed that more can be done in terms of having OC Transpo staff on the street observing a problem and establishing a line of communication directly to the Region's traffic operation centre. He advised that during the construction in the downtown last year, there were numerous challenges posed by congestion and reduced capacity. While priority was always 'transit first', enforcement was not always available. It is a challenge for the police to provide the resources to enforce the by-laws associated with transit service and therefore the Department has to purchase that service and budget for it accordingly. Chair Loney was concerned about the everyday service of transit and not just during construction periods. He noted that the province has recently approved an increase in the fines levied against motorists in the bus lanes, but if the regulations are not enforced, the message will not be heard.

D. Brousseau advised that the challenge facing both the Transit Services and the Transportation Committees is how to manage congestion. He agreed there is a general disregard for regulations on the roadways during peak periods and he recommended that more enforcement is necessary. To this end, he suggested that the committee convey this message to the police and to the by-law enforcement people at the City of Ottawa.

Commissioner Holmes hoped that the fine revenues previously mentioned would come to the new City by 2001 thereby providing the necessary funds for enforcement. With this in mind, she proposed that staff bring forward a report in the fall on the 2001 budget which includes a line item for enforcement. She believed there has to be enforcement on the bus-only lanes, especially on Albert and Slater through the central area and this also be a tow-away zone. Chair Loney did not think there would be much objection to this, especially when costs would be covered by the revenues collected through fines.



With respect to the use of television cameras at construction locations, Commissioner Holmes wanted assurance that these will be installed for the period of the construction. Mr. Brousseau confirmed that cameras would be installed in temporary locations to support the management of transit through construction projects.

Commissioner Legendre referred to the mis-use of the bus-only lane on Montreal Road. He said that as a member of the Police Services Board, he has requested additional enforcement. However, as a result of one of those enforcements, he received a complaint from a motorist who was justified in being in that lane because he was making a right turn. He wanted to emphasize the fact that the police have the responsibility to enforce these lanes correctly.

Michel Charbonneau, Official Observer, Société de transport de l'Outaouais (STO) indicated that the signs for the HOV lanes on the Portage Bridge from the Ottawa side of the river across to Hull, designate it for 2 persons per car, but where the lane crosses over into Hull, the sign changes to 3 persons/vehicle. This discrepancy is causing a lot of confusion for motorists crossing that bridge. He stated that the STO has raised this many times with the National Capital Commission but nothing has been done to rectify the situation. He believed it would assist both OC Transpo and the STO if the signs could be changed from 2 to 3 persons/vehicle. He suggested the answer might be to prohibit all cars from using the HOV lanes on the bridge.

Dr. Gault explained that staff also raised the issue of HOV for 2+ persons/vehicle with the NCC, noting that the same situation will arise when the third lane is open on the Champlain Bridge. Staff are disappointed with the fact there has been no change.

Chair Loney suggested that perhaps the Committee should take an official approach and request that the HOV lanes be for transit use only on the Portage Bridge, as well as the Champlain Bridge when the third lane is complete.

Moved by D. Holmes

**That the HOV lanes on the Portage Bridge be bus-only lanes and that the proposed HOV lanes on the Champlain Bridge also be designated bus-only.**

CARRIED

Moved by D. Holmes

**That there be a report in the fall of 2000 on an enforcement line item in the 2001 budget to provide for ticketing and towing in bus only lanes including Slater and Albert Streets and that the report be listed on the Transit Services Committee Agenda.**

CARRIED

INQUIRIES

1. Price of Oil and Gas

Chair Loney remarked on the escalating price of oil. He noted that the Finance Commissioner has confirmed there will be sufficient funds in the year-end reconciliation of surpluses for OC Transpo to cover the increase. OC Transpo will not have to look at a further ticket price increase for the balance of 2000.

2. American Public Transit Association

Chair Loney advised that the APTA has a major effort to lobby Congress on the requirements of public transit each year and in a recent visit to Washington, he was very impressed with this procedure. It is a very professional organization and he indicated his intention to bring forward a report to the committee, as well as to the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA), suggesting that similar efforts need to be made here in Canada. He believed the CUTA has to be more effective and OC Transpo needs to become more aggressive in this regard. He noted that the American federal tax on gasoline funds most of their highways and transit programs and if Ottawa-Carleton were to receive a portion (3 cents/litre) of the gas tax from both federal and provincial governments, it would net the Region, annually, \$60M for transit and road infrastructure.

3. Minutes of 26 January 2000

Commissioner Holmes referred to Item 3 of the Minutes of the Transit Services Committee of 26 January 2000 in which she had proposed the following Motion: *That \$10,000 be provided to the Women's Action Centre Against Violence (WACAV) for safety audits of transitway stations in 2000.* While the Committee approved the Motion, it has not been forwarded to the Commission for consideration, which she believed should have happened. She thought there may have been some confusion with another Motion approved during consideration of the same item, which addressed the issue of a specific police constable being part of the design team for future transitway plans, but not to do safety audits of presently constructed stations. She asked that the Motion be placed on the Commission Agenda for consideration and that the Committee re-approve the Motion

accordingly. She emphasized that the Motion deals with safety audits of presently constructed transitway stations, not of new plans of future stations and it is much easier to use police officers from the local districts who will be policing those stations to do the safety audit with residents, rather than with the specialist, Constable Van Ryswyk.

Chair Loney understood that staff were going to meet with the parties involved to map out what stations would be done and to continue accordingly. Dr. Gault confirmed that the money has been identified in the transitway budget. It was her understanding that the program would be developed jointly with the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Division of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Services and OC Transpo's own security staff and with WACAV to do audits of current transitway stations. She indicated that there is a proposal to do all the stations within the next two years.

Commissioner Holmes explained that it was never her intention to have a "specific" police officer involved in the presently constructed stations because she believed it was better to train the officers working in that area and have them go through those audits with the residents. Dr. Gault advised that the Constable is actually providing a training course on a widely spread basis and they will find a way to do a systematic audit of the stations. Commissioner Holmes believed, however, that the best training comes from spending time with transit station users and the residents about what problems have been identified.

Commissioner Byrne suggested that perhaps it should be run by the police officers in that area as to whether or not they feel comfortable doing that unless they have the training and the Staff Sergeant's approval to take on that responsibility. She believed the police themselves should be a part of that discussion as to who actually does the audit.

Moved by D. Holmes

**That the Transit Services Committee recommend that the Commission approve that \$10,000 be provided to the Women's Action Centre Against Violence (WACAV) for safety audits of already constructed transitway stations in 2000.**

CARRIED

#### Calendar of Events

The General Manager briefly highlighted the upcoming events for OC Transpo. In addition, he noted they have met with some difficulty of staffing 109 positions that need to be filled because of new Transition Board regulations. He advised that he will be meeting with the Chief Administrative Officer and the Commissioner of Human Resources to look for solutions to the matter.

Commissioner Legendre suggested the committee send a letter to the Transition Board making the point that amalgamation is transparent for OC Transpo because it is a service already being provided to the entire Region and it will continue to serve the new City of Ottawa when it is in place.

Chair Loney noted there are some positions that might be transferable between the Region and/or the municipalities and OC Transpo. He agreed that the letter should be drafted along the lines suggested but also include provision that regional and municipal staff would be canvassed with respect to filling these positions. The General Manager concurred this would be the normal practice.

### OTHER BUSINESS

#### 1. Transit vs Light Rail

*Harry Gow, Transport 2000* presented a letter dated 21 March 2000 from Mr. R.D Howey of Ottawa. Essentially, Mr. Howey is requesting the cessation of any present or future construction projects for the transitway system, pending OC Transpo providing information on its actual cost per passenger mile operation, until such time as the results of the Light Rail Pilot Project are known. Mr. Howey also wanted the cost of road-based systems such as transitways to be made comparable in accounting terms to the cost of rail-based systems such as the Light Rail Pilot Project. Mr. Gow advised that Transport 2000 supports this request in principle.

In some general comments about today's committee proceedings, Mr. Gow spoke to the issue of the use of taxis for Para Transpo and noted how such a system is used in Quebec. As a transit user himself, Mr. Gow supported the Committee's position taken with respect to HOV lanes on the Portage Bridge.

*Tim Lane, Transport 2000* advised that there appeared to be an error on the Region's website with regards to the operation schedule of the light rail pilot project. The information refers to 15-minute service during peak periods and ½ hour service during off-peak hours, whereas he believed the rail was to operate at 15-minute service at least until 10:00 p.m. He advised that Dr. Gault has assured him there was indeed an error on the website, which he hoped would be corrected as soon as possible. Mr. Lane then related a recent experience on a low-floor bus and the fact he had to stand for most of the trip because there were no seats available. He suggested that routes with these vehicles may have to be run more frequently to handle the demand. With regards to accessibility of the Bayview Station, he indicated that he has some photos which illustrate how the railway track could be raised to reduce the climb from the transit station to the light rail platform. In a closing point, he remarked on how impressed he was with the frequency with which the buses arrive within 30 seconds of their scheduled arrival time.

In response to Mr. Lane's comment about information on the website, Dr. Gault clarified that during the week the service would run every 15 minutes until 10:00 p.m. and then every 30 minutes until midnight. On Saturday there would be 15-minute service between 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. and half-hour service in the evening and half-hour service all day Sunday.

*David Glastonbury* referred to the Committee Chair's comments about the lobbying efforts of the APTA and indicated that something similar does take place here. He explained that he was part of the annual Railway Association of Canada's 'Day on the Hill', which he believed is also done by the Canadian Ship Owners. He advised that the Railway Association of Canada is moving from Montreal to Ottawa this summer and he anticipated that the General Manager of OC Transpo would become a member of that association since he'll be taking care of the rail service to be provided in Ottawa.

With respect to Mr. Howey's letter, Councillor Legendre believed that his request for the cost components for road, transit and light rail was a reasonable one and suggested staff would simply have to pull together all the right line items from the various budget books. He was of the opinion that this would be an extremely useful exercise to do in any case because once the pilot is in operation, a true comparison between the different transportation services can be drawn.

Chair Loney advised that since the letter had only just been distributed, staff should be given an opportunity to examine the request and report back. He wanted to ensure a fair comparison was made. The General Manager acknowledged that while all of the information is available, he asked for the committee's patience while staff investigated the matter and then report back.

## 2. Hydrogen Powered Buses

Commissioner Legendre explained that he first became aware of hydrogen-powered buses in 1996 when he attended an exposition in Anaheim, California. Both Vancouver and Chicago decided to conduct trials of these types of buses and in the latter instance, their transit authority insisted on an equity position with Ballard, the makers of that technology. As it happened, they were so successful, they funded the entire trial out of the equity and therefore spent nothing in the operation of the trial bus technology. He wanted staff to contact the appropriate authorities in Vancouver and Chicago, as well as at Ballard and others and, should the trials in those cities come to their natural end, there may be an opportunity for Ottawa-Carleton to use those vehicles for a trial period. If that is not an option, he suggested staff could still explore the possibility of getting buses that can have the hydrogen power unit installed instead of a diesel-run engine.

Chair Loney suggested to the General Manager that the APTA headquarters in Washington, D.C. may be able to provide staff with the base of information, including this extended trial.

Moved by J. Legendre

**That staff explore the feasibility of conducting trials with hydrogen-powered buses such as are currently on trial in Vancouver and Chicago and report to committee in June 2000.**

CARRIED

NEXT MEETING(S)

<b>Transit Services Committee</b>	<b>26 April 2000</b>
<b>Transit Commission</b>	<b>To be confirmed</b>

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

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CHAIR

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A/CO-ORDINATOR