

Our File/N/Réf.
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DATE: 11 April 2000

TO/DEST: Co-ordinator
Transit Services Committee

FRON/EXP. General Manager, OC Transpo and
Commissioner, Social Services

SUBJECT/OBJET: **TRANSPORTATION DISCOUNT FOR
ONTARIO WORKS PARTICIPANTS**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That the Transit Services Committee receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

In September 1998, the Transit Services Committee approved the sale of \$1.875 million worth of transit fares at a discounted price of \$1.5 million to Regional Social Services for distribution to its participants in the Ontario Works Program. The objective of the 20% discount was to increase the Social Services' ability to provide Ontario Works participants with the mobility they require to gain as much as possible from the program. The program became effective on January 1, 1999.

Although the Transit Commission provides discounted fares to seniors, students and children, these concessions take no account of the means of individuals who fall into the groups. The policy to provide a discount for Ontario Works participants constituted a significant departure from the Transit Commission's practice and the Transit Services Committee requested a report summarizing the actual experience after one year.

DISCUSSION

The Ontario Works Program was recently instituted by the Ontario government. The objectives of the program are to help people on Social Assistance become more employable and to find work. Bus passes and tickets are currently provided to Ontario Works participants on a selective basis. The participant and his or her Case Coordinator together develop a participation agreement and service plan.

The need for such transportation assistance is established through this negotiated plan. Social Services purchases bus passes and tickets from OC Transpo, and gives them to participants as they consider appropriate.

From Exhibit 1 it can be seen that, following a three-month ramping-up period during which Social Services introduced new administrative practices to ensure that bus passes were provided to clients in a consistent manner, sales levels had, by April 1999, stabilized at approximately 2,000 passes and 40,000 tickets per month. As a result of this ramping up period, \$1.2 million of the transportation budget was spent through the discount program in 1999. This represents approximately 1.38 million rides.

For 2000, a budget of \$1.5 million was also approved for the purchase of \$1.875 face value of fares at a 20% discount. Officials of Social Services estimate that the entire \$1.5 million will be spent in 2000.

To ensure that passes and tickets are only used for their intended purpose, the words “No Refund” have been overprinted across the reverse of all passes and tickets that were given to Ontario Works participants. Based on the fact that virtually nobody requested a refund of these passes and tickets at the OC Transpo sales offices, it can be reasonably concluded that this practice was understood and accepted by all recipients of passes and tickets.

IMPACTS

From a Social Services perspective, the purchase of passes and tickets at a 20% discount has been successful because an average of 341 additional people per month received passes through the program. As a result, the scope of their participation in the Ontario Works Program was extended to employers and training sites located beyond their walking distance.

Transportation assistance is generally provided to assist Ontario Works participants to undertake a range of employment-related activities such as a structured job search, job placement, community placement and/or skills training, thereby helping people to find and maintain employment. In addition, participants with bus passes find they have increased access to a range of other support services in the community, can travel to shops offering better bargains, and participate in free or low-cost educational and recreational activities available in parts of the city outside their immediate communities. In summary, people are better able to meet their basic needs as well as find and make use of any supports they need. More broadly, transportation assistance allows people living in poverty to be included more fully in the social community.

The revenue, ridership and cost implications of this policy upon OC Transpo’s operations are difficult to estimate because it is not possible to ascertain what percentage of these riders are new, versus those who would otherwise have used OC Transpo and paid the full fare with their own resources. However, basic social assistance rates provide for food and shelter but not for transportation assistance.

*Approved by
Gordon Diamond*

*Approved by
Dick Stewart*

1999 Passes Tickets Sold to Social Services

Exhibit 1

	Adult		Student		Adult		Student		Total	
	Transpasses	Quantity	Transpasses	Quantity	Transpasses	Quantity	Transpasses	Quantity	Tickets	Expenditure
									\$	\$
January	649				29,594		-		-	29,594
February	1,055			80,000	48,108		-		48,000	96,108
March	1,462				66,667		-		-	66,667
April	1,438	391		80,000	65,573		14,623		48,000	128,196
May	1,467	464			66,895		17,354		-	84,249
June	1,449	523		80,000	66,074		19,560		48,000	133,635
July	1,436	436			65,482		16,306		-	81,788
August	1,403	355		80,000	63,977		13,277		48,000	125,254
September	1,426	506			65,026		18,924		-	83,950
October	1,510	523		80,000	68,856		19,560		48,000	136,416
November	1,510	528			68,856		19,747		-	88,603
December	1,419	518		80,000	64,706		19,373		48,000	132,080
Total YTD	16,224	4,244		480,000	739,814		158,726		288,000	1,186,540