

MINUTES

TRANSIT SERVICES COMMITTEE

OTTAWA-CARLETON REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMISSION

CHAMPLAIN ROOM

27 JANUARY 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 28 October 1998.

CARRIED

PRESENTATION(S)

1. TAX-EXEMPT EMPLOYER-PROVIDED TRANSIT PASSES - UPDATE

The Transit Committee heard from Ms. Amelia Shaw, Co-Chair of the National Task Force to Promote Employer-Provided Tax-Exempt Transit Passes (TEI). Ms. Shaw brought the Committee up-to-date on recent developments related to the campaign and she circulated related documents for the Committee's information.¹

The Committee Chair, A. Loney, commended Ms. Shaw for the excellent work undertaken in pursuance of the TEI initiative. He noted by both she and her Co-Chair, Ms. Donna Lynn Ahee, provided invaluable assistance when making a presentation on this matter to the Standing Committee on Finance late in 1998.

¹ Newsletters 1 through 3 and a Current List of Supporters of the Employer-Provided Tax-Exempt Transit Pass Initiative dated January 26, 1999 are on file with and available from the Committee Co-ordinator.

Moved by D. Holmes

That the Transit Services Committee receive this report for information.

RECEIVED

2. **SNOW CLEARING**

- Committee Co-ordinator's report dated 21 Jan 99
- Verbal Presentation

The Acting Manager, Transportation Division, OC Transpo Commission, Mr. M. Bellinger, said there have been ongoing discussions between himself and B. Beveridge, Director, Infrastructure Maintenance Division, Region of Ottawa-Carleton, on this issue. It has emerged that various bodies have various responsibilities, e.g., on roadways and around transitway platforms, in park-and-ride facilities, on city streets and sidewalks, and all these must mesh in order to clear snow away while travelling on roadways and not letting other vehicles interfere with clearing operations. Mr. Bellinger spoke about the cost impact of clearing a 30 cm snowfall, that is, between \$25,000 and 30,000 in additional wages to drivers who are delayed while on service, and other related compounded costs. Another cost is the lost productivity experienced by organizations and businesses whose staff arrive late for work because of bus delays. Mr. Bellinger posited that increased cooperation with the RMOC on snow clearing initiatives will help the Commission increase service reliability and meet the ridership targets set by Council.

Mr. Beveridge began by saying he is available and prepared to assist in establishing a one-stop shop for OC Transpo to help improve the level of service currently provided. His concerns center around costs, and finding ways to cover these costs. He spoke about the first priority being to clear the roadways that carry 99% of bus trips, saying this is to be done within 48 hours after the end of a storm. Mr. Beveridge expressed the view that 48 hours is likely not good enough and the reason complaints are received: clearing bus stops begins after snowplowing operations are completed. Using staff already engaged in snowplowing to perform this service represents the least cost approach although it may provide the least level of service. Mr. Beveridge posited what is required is to clear the bus stops almost at the same time as plowing the streets and recognizing the cost implications of establishing this standard.

The Interim Manager, OC Transpo Commission, M. Sheflin, explained, in reply to a question from Chair A. Loney, that the City of Ottawa, as the Region's contractor, does what the Region tells it to do and that any additional work requested has to be compensated. Chair Loney wanted to know whether the City is paid for clearing bus stops on a contractual basis. Mr. Beveridge replied that the Region is still responsible for the work, whether it is done by its own forces or through the contractor. He said he has requested from both the City of Ottawa and the City of Vanier (both under contract to the RMOC) data on the incremental costs of moving from a 48 hour standard to a 24 hour standard. This information has not yet been received, but the cost is estimated to be in the range of \$450,000 to clear out approximately 6,000 bus stops.

Mr. Sheflin added that a halved standard is being instituted on a pilot project basis to determine the costs and this will require a "level of service" decision from Committee and Council. The average cost of winter control to 150,000 households is \$45 per household; a 20% increase would represent \$9.00 per year. He continued by saying staff have done an astounding job using roadway information systems and have actually decreased the cost of winter maintenance while maintaining quality. He indicated that the estimated \$450,000 for improved bus stop clearance would likely be covered by the improvements in cost effectiveness realized by the Region's Maintenance Division in the past year. In response to a question from Chair Loney, Mr. Sheflin confirmed there will be refinements to this estimate before the end of the 1999 budget deliberations.

Commissioner L. Davis asked whether the companies that advertise in the bus shelters are responsible for clearing out the ones from which they derive income. Mr. Beveridge indicated the ad companies are responsible for cleaning the interior of the shelters and for maintaining and cleaning the glass around the shelters. OC Transpo clears the surface approach to the shelters and the Region clears the bus bay, that is the portion of the roadway where a vehicle pulls out of traffic to stop. Councillor Davis asked if there was a schedule to ascertain who goes first, noting that the vehicles used to clear sidewalks can be seen as another "player". Mr. Beveridge said he would like to be able to say all the services are coordinated, because this should be the case, however, there are situations where this is not the case.

In response to further questions from Councillor Davis, Mr. Beveridge indicated that the Region and the City have done beat optimization, both outside the Region and within the City. This is computer software that indicates which activity should be undertaken first. Councillor Davis wanted to know whether other contractors are called to ensure bus stops are cleared by the morning after a storm. Mr. Beveridge replied that both regional and city staff can call private service providers from a standing offer list to ensure the 48 hour standard is met. Councillor Davis inquired whether staff have calculated the cost of providing extra work crews versus the cost of lost ridership and declining revenues. Mr. Beveridge indicated this cost analysis will be part of the pilot study.

Commissioner W. Byrne asked how well regional staff are managing the contract with the City of Ottawa and whether a performance review process is in place to ensure minimum standards are met. B. Beveridge said the new technology implemented by the Region is not available throughout Ottawa-Carleton. He noted that the new technology has helped in the decision-making process and that the Region expects the service will be seamless. Mr. Sheflin added that the City of Ottawa has provided good service, as evidenced by the fact that buses operated at all times during the last storm. In reply to a further question from Councillor Byrne, Mr. Beveridge indicated that better cooperation is required to ensure the same level of service in every municipality and he noted the process has already begun.

Commissioner J. Legendre described a situation of his knowledge where it apparently took more than a week to clear bus stops near a seniors' building. He asked if staff could indicate when the contract with the City of Ottawa is up for re-negotiation. B. Beveridge said the date of renewal is 31 Aug 99. In reply to further questions from Commissioner Legendre, Mr. Sheflin noted that complaints could be forwarded to Mr. Kerry O'Leary, Manager, Customer Relations and Security, to Mssrs. Beveridge and Bellinger, to the Region's 24-hour information line and directly to OC Transpo.

Chair A. Loney pointed out it is difficult for Councillors to know "who does what" and consequently, the public become exasperated with the response they get from their elected representatives. He requested staff report back at the end of the winter season providing figures related to reducing standards from 48 to 24 hours and identifying the costs to provide the best service. Commissioner D. Holmes asked for an information report on "who does what" to help Commissioners respond to their constituents' concerns. In addition, she directed that staff consider what would be the best way to clear intersections.

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

RECEIVED

REGULAR ITEMS

1. FARES FOR FULL-TIME STUDENTS OF PROVINCIALY-REGISTERED PRIVATE VOCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

Dr. Helen Gault, Manager, Planning and Development, presented the report on the subject of extending student passes to students of registered private vocational institutions, subject to certain criteria.

Dr. Gault indicated a similar report was presented to the Commission in the summer of 1996. At that time, it was decided not to proceed, because revenue losses were projected

to be \$150,000 per year and there were administrative concerns about how to manage the program. Since then, and as a result of correspondence from the institutions, staff have looked for ways to ease the administrative burden and have devised a scheme by which this would be manageable. Dr. Gault said that the projected revenue loss for the 3,000 to 4,000 students who attend these institutions, assuming that approximately half of them purchase bus passes, is \$150,000. She stressed the importance of restricting the privilege to students attending institutions that are registered with the Province, for the purpose of the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). Mr. Gault noted there are currently 23 such institutions in the Region of Ottawa-Carleton.

Commissioner J. Legendre asked whether staff could expand on the criteria. Dr. Gault introduced Mr. John Davison, Planning and Development, who indicated that the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training receives requests from each institution to register its programs as being eligible for OSAP loans and bursaries. Once the Ministry accepts the programs, the institution is assigned a registration number and staff are proposing the bus pass privilege be granted to these institutions.

Commissioner Legendre wanted to know why one particular institution does not appear on the list provided by the Ministry. He added that, to his knowledge, the program offered by this institution is just as recognized as that offered by la Cité collégiale. Mr. Davison said he expects a number of institutions will apply for consideration and, at that time, he will seek confirmation from the Ministry as to whether they have an OSAP registration number. He will also try to ascertain why the institution in question does not appear on the list provided by the Ministry.

Replying to a question from Commissioner M. Bellemare, Dr. Gault indicated the 23 institutions are Ontario-registered institutions; staff have no information about institutions in the Province of Québec. Commissioner Bellemare suggested the new policy be implemented in one step, i.e., extend the privilege to students who reside in Ottawa-Carleton but who attend private institutions located in the National Capital area.

In response to a question from Commissioner W. Byrne, Dr. Gault said she did not believe the Société de transport de l'Outaouais (STO) provides student bus passes to those attending private vocational institutions.

Peter Davidson, Director, Ottawa Campus, Toronto School of Business

Mr. Davidson spoke in support of extending student bus passes to persons attending private vocational schools. He noted that people in post-secondary institutions are generally there to get marketable skills, and having a student pass will help them achieve their goal. He said a survey done at the Toronto School of Business found that a significant number of people would take advantage of student passes, and, on that basis, OC Transpo's revenues would increase. He posited that attracting students to the public transit system at this juncture may contribute to their remaining public transit users once they find employment.

Mr. Jeff Stelick, Director, Ottawa School of Art, began by saying the school is celebrating its 125th anniversary in 1999. The changes in post-secondary education are reflected in the growth of institutions such as the School of Art and its pre-professional programs, which currently number three, and which are geared to further education or career development. There has also been an increase in the number of students moving from traditional institutions to facilities such as the School of Art. Upon doing this, they are immediately confronted with the loss of their bus pass. Mr. Stelick said he would encourage Commission members to allow School of Art students to purchase student passes. This would reflect a recognition of the changes in post-secondary education.

In response to a question from Commissioner Legendre, Dr. Gault provided a brief history of the Commission extending the student bus pass privilege to students of post-secondary institutions. She reiterated that, at the time the policy was first approved, there were concerns about cost implications and the price of all student passes was upwardly adjusted to maintain revenue neutrality.

Commissioner Legendre said he was extremely supportive of the proposed initiative and of extending the privilege to students in the National Capital area. He pointed out that a student is a student, and most students face extreme budgetary difficulties as they attempt to become contributing members of society. He expressed the view that the existing policy has been discriminatory, and he said he was pleased to see this situation being rectified.

Commissioner H. Kreling said he thought consideration of this item could be deferred to the budget deliberations. He indicated that, while he supports the intent of the recommendation, he has little or no information about what is being approved in financial terms.

Moved by M. Bellemare

That the university/college student pass privilege be extended to full-time students of provincially-registered private vocational institutions in the National Capital Region.

CARRIED, as amended

2. **BICYCLES ON BUSES**

The Manager, Planning and Development, Dr. H. Gault, indicated staff have undertaken a survey of other transit properties and have examined OC Transpo's current policy which allows bicycles on buses at the operator's discretion and only when the bicycles don't pose a danger or are an obstacle to other passengers. She posited the bus would have to be lightly loaded to make this possible. In other properties, bicycle racks on the fronts of buses are being used. Dr. Gault indicated the intent is to bring back for consideration, plans for a pilot project to be undertaken during the 1999 bicycling season.

The Committee heard from Mr. John Calvert, Vice-President, Citizens for Safe Cycling. He began by pointing out that carrying bicycles on buses through racks on the front of the bus is common in North America. Cities where this service is available include Spokane, Washington; Tampa, Florida; San Diego, California; Brockville, Ontario, West Covina, California; Everett, Washington; Salt Lake City, Utah; Duluth, Minnesota; Seattle, Washington; Ithaca, New York; Portland, Oregon; Rochester, New York; St. Louis, Missouri, and Burlington, Vermont. Many of these cities have either all their buses with racks, or a substantial number of them. Having bicycle racks on the front of buses is something many transit properties consider standard equipment. Mr. Calvert said that, in terms of making transit more relevant to the community, the Commission could not afford not to provide this service.

Mr. Calvert made reference to OC Transpo's comprehensive review and the intent to provide better service to the suburbs. He posited that combining the bus and the bicycle might persuade some people to take the bus where they would not before because of infrequent bus service or because of the distance to the nearest bus stop. He spoke about serving the student market, saying that students are already comfortable using bicycles, as well as buses: combining the two may generate more people using transit because it provides a combination of their needs. Mr. Calvert suggested that allowing bicycles on buses could contribute to recreation and tourism by allowing cyclists to access bicycle trails in the Greenbelt and in other areas. He concluded his presentation by saying that alternative modes of transportation need to work together. Both transit and cycling are expected to increase their modal share, and can help one another achieve this goal. A study found that a large proportion of commuter cyclists use transit as their first

alternative: data in both Toronto and Ottawa suggests an inter-dependence between bicycles and public transit, and these facts illustrate the importance of combining bicycles and transit.

In response to a question from Commissioner C. Doucet, Dr. Gault indicated the intent would be to cover an entire line with buses equipped to carry bicycles. If a pilot project is approved, the Commission would appreciate input from Mr. Calvert and Citizens for Safe Cycling on how to make the service more effective.

Commissioner J. Legendre asked whether Mr. Calvert would comment on the effectiveness of exterior bicycle racks as opposed to racks inside the vehicles. Mr. Calvert indicated the majority of cities he referred to have racks on the front of the bus; these are very successful and popular and present fewer technical problem for operators in terms of washing, installation and parking. In Phoenix, Arizona, operators say they carry 36,000 bikes a month, and this illustrates the scope and the quality of the "hardware".

The Committee Chair, A. Loney, said the input from drivers is that they are not keen on this idea. He asked whether this was an issue that would have to be addressed as the Commission moves to the pilot project. Dr. Gault expressed the hope that the experiences garnered from other properties would help address some of the drivers' concerns. The Acting Manager, Transportation, Mike Bellinger, said this has been the focus of discussion in the driver empowerment group struck for the Comprehensive Review. His view was that the pilot project would provide a controlled environment where the pros and cons can be evaluated and the concerns of drivers can be addressed.

Chair Loney read a Motion from Commissioner D. Holmes, calling for a pilot project to be undertaken in 1999 and that a detailed report be provided to Committee prior to implementation. Mr. Calvert asked if the current policy, which leaves the decision about allowing bicycles on buses, to the discretion of the driver, could be clarified.

The Interim General Manager, M. Sheflin, suggested Mr. Calvert work with Dr. Gault and her staff in this regard. He acknowledged there are problems on the part of some drivers and issues which still need to be resolved.

Chair Loney said this matter has been the focus of discussion in the driver empowerment working group formed for the purposes of the Comprehensive Review. He indicated that a draft drivers' handbook is being circulated to clarify the situation for drivers and he expressed the hope this will have positive results.

Moved by D. Holmes

That a pilot project of bikes on buses be conducted in 1999 with a detailed report to come back to the Transit Services Committee.

CARRIED,as amended

COUNCILLORS' ITEM(S)

3. REQUEST FROM THE BANK STREET PROMENADE - CITY OF OTTAWA
MANAGEMENT OF PARKING LOT AT 318 LAURIER WEST-
166 - 184 BANK STREET

- Committee Co-ordinator's report dated 21 Jan 99

The Committee heard from Mr. G. Lepage, Executive Director, Bank Street Promenade. He began by saying he was impressed with the Commission's initiatives to promote transit usage. He spoke about the Bank Street Business Improvement Area (BIA)'s request to the City of Ottawa to assume management of the parking lot at 318 Laurier West, and the subsequent refusal of the City to take on this role. The BIA is asking the Transit Commission to provide a statement in support of its request. The aim of both the BIA and of the Transit Commission is to minimize the number of long-term parking spaces and maximize short-term parking spaces; the latter is good for both entities whereas the former mostly benefits persons working in the downtown core who drive to work.

Mr. Lepage made reference to the City of Ottawa's response which alludes to the City's management of the Laurier/Slater parking facility. He pointed out that only 200 of the 503 spaces therein are for short-term parking. Car ownership/leasing are increasing at incredible rates, while at the same time there is reduced ridership on public transit systems. In order to create an equilibrium, more short-term parking spaces will be required and long-term parking facilities will need to be discouraged. Mr. Lepage posited the best way of achieving this goal is to have the City of Ottawa manage the facility.

Mr. Lepage continued by saying the City of Ottawa spends less than 1% of its entire Engineering and Works budget to promote its parking facilities, especially west of the Rideau Canal. The BIA spends \$50,000 to 60,000 trying to promote parking facilities, including municipal facilities, but there are non-conforming private operators. The BIA provides free parking in City lots on Saturdays and week-ends whereas private lots don't. Another problem is that private lots don't have sufficient signage, leading to cars being towed away for being parked "illegally". Mr. Lepage posited there is no better way to discourage people from coming back downtown towing away their vehicles. A statement from the Transit Commission about the need for more short-term parking spaces would give the BIA the impetus to approach the City in a more meaningful and substantive way.

Commissioner W. Byrne asked if Mr. Lepage would comment on the role of the Region, given that the City of Ottawa has said it is not interested in taking over management of the lot. Mr. Lepage responded by saying the City has refused other requests, but this doesn't mean the BIA should stop pursuing the matter.

Commissioner Byrne asked staff to comment on how this will impact on the Commission's objective of increasing transit usage in the downtown. Chair Loney said the Commission has been trying to discourage long-term parking since this has a negative impact on public transit. It is thought that having fewer long-term parking spaces in the downtown would have a positive impact on the Commission's objective of increased ridership.

Commissioner J. Legendre pointed out that the BIA, while critical of the management and marketing of the City's lots, is asking the City to take over management of another such facility. Mr. Lepage clarified the request is that the City meter its own lot on Laurier and this has been refused. Commissioner Legendre asked whether the lot owner, Ambassador Realty, has been approached.

Mr. Lepage said there have been discussions but there is little interest since metering the lot would contribute to lost revenues for the lot manager, Ideal Parking. Commissioner Legendre expressed the view that, regardless who manages the lot, there would need to be compensation for lost revenue. Mr. Lepage agreed this was the case, noting what is being sought is equilibrium between the interests of businesses and of the community at large and a healthy balance between car and transit usage.

Commissioner Legendre said he was supportive of increasing short-term parking spaces for the Bank Street Area, but the suggested approach is bizarre and somehow misses the target. He suggested the target should be the lot owner, and compensating that person so he will "buy into" the process. Mr. Lepage assured the Committee this is only a component of the approach and having the support of the Transit Commission would be helpful.

Commissioner D. Holmes pointed out that the process of turning temporary parking lots into permanent lots goes on. The Regional Planning Department condones the City of Ottawa demolishing commercial buildings for this purpose. All long-term parking is in direct opposition to the Regional Official Plans, the Transportation Master Plan and the City of Ottawa's Official Plan. Commissioner Holmes said the Region has to start appealing these applications. Bank Street needs more short-term parking for services, for retail stores, and the BIA has been working to increase the number of spaces available. Short-term parking is constantly undermined, as is illustrated by the response from the City of Ottawa. The Slater/Laurier lot was meant to benefit the downtown businesses, but only 200 of the 500 spaces are for short-term users. The remaining 300 spaces undermine

both the City and the Region's Official Plans and the rationale for creating the lot in the first place.

Commissioner Holmes indicated the City has \$7 million in the parking reserve fund, in addition to \$2 million in revenues from parking meters: some of this money could be used to market the short-term spots. She put forward a Motion, calling for support of the Bank Street BIA's request to have the City take over management of the lot. In addition, the City should be asked to do a better job of marketing the short-term spaces.

Commissioner M. Bellemare asked whether the 200 short-term spaces are used on a daily basis. Mr. Lepage replied in the affirmative, adding this is irrespective of whether there is more demand. The other 303 spaces are for long-term parking. Commissioner Bellemare said he was given the impression the lot was not being utilized to its full potential for short-term parking. He suggested the Transit Commission should perhaps be trying to influence the ratio between short and long-term spaces as opposed to requesting the City of Ottawa take over management of the lot. Commissioner Bellemare asked whether pricing is a major factor, specifically, do prices vary from lot to lot and who sets them. Mr. Lepage replied there is no standard rate, per se. He added there is no question the City's rates contribute to moderating prices, and there is always pressure on the part of private operators to for rates to increase. The City's rates are, in most cases, more reasonable than those of private operators.

Commissioner Bellemare asked for a comment from the Legal Department as to whether the City would need to compensate an owner for lost revenues through less favourable leasing arrangements. Mr. Paul Hughes, Manager, Civil Litigation, said he was not aware of any authority under which the City can dictate the rates charged for parking. The City's influence is by virtue of its own parking operations. With respect to taking over the operation of a lot, some compensation would have to be paid under the *Expropriation Act* for any loss of business resulting from this change. However, there may be no need to compensate if there is goodwill on the part of the property owner.

Chair Loney suggested there be a minor editorial change to Commissioner Holmes' Motion, calling for the City to offer to take over management of the lot, to negate the perception the City will have to do this through any means, including expropriation.

Moved by D. Holmes

That the Chair of the Region of Ottawa-Carleton write to the Mayor of the City of Ottawa requesting the City offer to manage the Bank/Laurier parking lot, (e.g., install parking meters), and that the letter also include a request for the City of Ottawa to market its lots for short-term parking.

CARRIED, as amended

Moved by J. Legendre

That the Transit Services Committee supports more short-term parking facilities in the downtown area, and asks owners of all parking facilities in this area to be supportive of this strategy by allocating more spaces for short-term parking, and by marketing these spaces more aggressively.

CARRIED, as amended

INQUIRIES

1. BUS SERVICE TO THE OTTAWA-CARLETON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Commissioner D. Holmes asked for an update on discussions between the Commission and the OCDSB relative to OC Transpo providing bus service to high school students in the former Carleton Board if and when yellow buses no longer provide the service. The Manager, Planning Services, Dr. Helen Gault, said there have been several meetings with the Board and the Commission has assured the Board of its complete cooperation. Discussions have focused on whether or not the Board would be prepared to modify school start times, which at the moment are at 8:00 a.m. because of triple-busing by school buses. Dr. Gault noted that, should the Board consider this, OC Transpo staff will prepare a business case on how it intends to provide a cost-effective service for the Committee's consideration.

2. CHANGE IN LOCATION OF BUS STOPS

Commissioner J. Legendre asked about the relocation of a stop at the corner of Bathgate Road and Plummer Street, more specifically whether Commission policy is to do this on a trial basis, and secondly, has the Commission received any input from affected citizens. Mr. Sean Rathwell provided background information and he informed Commissioners that the stop will be restored to its original location, pursuant to discussions with the affected property owner, neighbours and one bus driver.

He confirmed that Commission policy is to make these changes on an interim basis and to evaluate their impact before making them permanent

3. Commissioner Legendre asked that staff report back on a recent occurrence where Bus 198 to Blair was full and had to bypass riders as it went through the neighbourhood.
4. Commissioner Legendre requested additional information on the Agency of Record, as referenced in a memorandum circulated by staff.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. The Committee Chair, A. Loney, wanted to acknowledge that OC Transpo staff have done an admirable job coping with sometimes trying and difficult situations. He mentioned Mr. K. O'Leary as one individual who has provided noteworthy service and he thanked everyone for their excellent work in the last few months.
2. The Interim General Manager, M. Sheflin, made reference to the Commission's new colour scheme and the inclusion of the Maple Leaf logo on vehicles, a suggestion that originally came from the employees. Mr. Sheflin commended Ms. Oxana Sawka for her work in this regard.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

CHAIR

CO-ORDINATOR