

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Transportation Services
June 15, 2023

Report of the Commissioner of Public Works

York Region Transit Fare Structure and Policy Update

1. Recommendations

1. Council approve:
 - a. York Region Transit fare structure changes including replacement of monthly passes with fare capping and removing the express fare supplement
 - b. Updates to the York Region Transit Fare Policy (Appendix A) incorporating administrative changes identified in this report
2. Council rescind the York Region Transit Ride Free Policy (Appendix B).
3. A copy of this report be forwarded to the Clerks of the local municipalities, Ministry of Transportation Ontario, and Toronto Transit Commission.

2. Summary

This report seeks Council approval of changes to York Region Transit's fare structure and updates to the York Region Transit Fare Policy.

Key Points:

- York Region Transit (YRT) and Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) conducted a five-year fare policy review
- Fare capping (customers travel for free after a specific number of paid trips) is recommended to replace monthly passes in 2024 for all fare categories
- In March 2023, the province announced it will fully fund the elimination of cross-boundary double fares, including those with the TTC, by the end of 2023
- It is recommended the fare supplement of 50 cents on express routes be removed in September 2023

- Administrative changes are required to update the YRT Fare Policy with current information and terminology (Appendix A)
- Updated YRT Fare Policy structure includes details from the YRT Ride Free Policy (Appendix B) which will therefore be rescinded

3. Background

Council approved an update to the YRT Fare Policy in 2016

In [November 2016](#), Council approved updates to the YRT Fare Policy. Highlights of changes included a revenue-to-cost ratio target of 40%, incorporating the YRT Ride Free Policy, fare adjustments for years 2017 to 2019 based on an annual inflationary rate, and changing the name of the student age category to “Youth”. The Transit Assistance Program (TAP) pilot in partnership with Community and Health Services was implemented, as a result of the 2016 YRT Fare Policy update, to assist low-income residents with the cost of transit. In [February 2023](#) TAP was approved by Council as a permanent program through the Community and Health Services multi-year budget submission.

In October 2019, YRT and TTC initiated a five-year fare policy review

In October 2019, YRT and TTC initiated a comprehensive five-year fare policy review consisting of research and analysis, consulting with key stakeholders including customers and the public. Overall, the project strived to improve the customer experience and create a simple and consistent fare system for both the TTC and YRT.

In [September 2021](#), Council received an update on the progress of the five-year fare policy review including emerging insights from work completed to date. Consultations were key to understanding how fare policy and fare collection impact customer experience. Modelling and testing potential fare structures, concessions and pricing provided insight into costs and implications of implementing a combination of fare options.

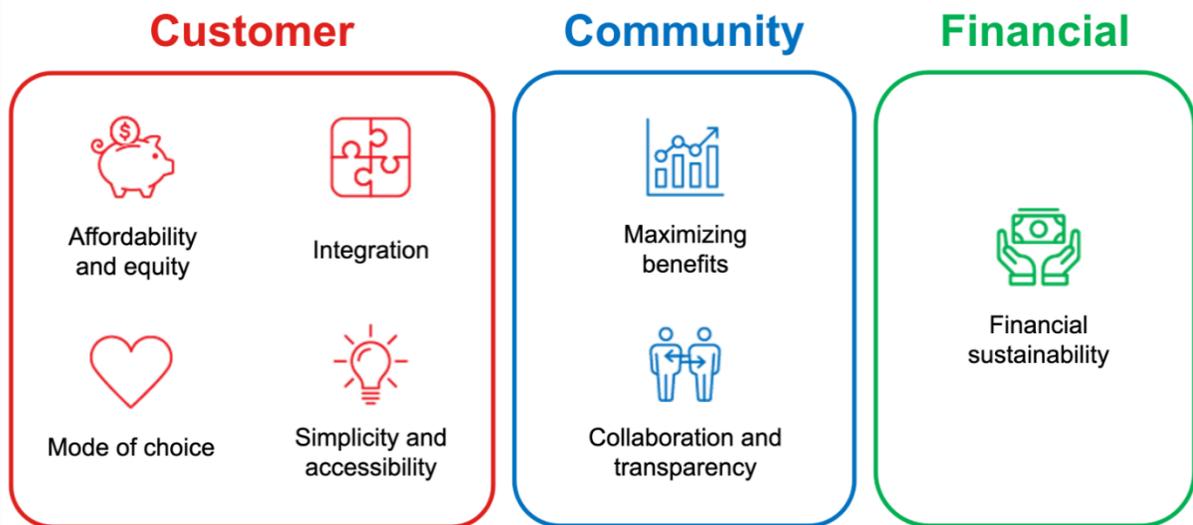
4. Analysis

Three fare policy recommendations resulted from the five-year fare policy review

In 2022, the five-year fare policy review was completed. As part of a fare analysis, several options were explored, ranging from free fares to full-cost recovery.

Fare policy goals (Figure 1) were established and provided a foundation for addressing customer experience while recognizing the importance of farebox recovery (the share of operating expenses that are recovered by the fares paid by customers). Fare policy goals balance the need to attract customers and ensure fiscal sustainability is maintained with other community objectives, such as equity and economic opportunity.

Figure 1
Fare Policy Goals



The following three options align with fare policy goals:

- Fare capping – Customers travel for free after a specific number of paid trips are reached within a calendar month. A “cap” is set on a number of paid trips and any trips taken after the “cap” is reached are free. Implementation of fare capping is recommended for 2024.
- Removal of the cross-boundary double fare between YRT and TTC – Eliminates the need for customers to pay a second fare when crossing the municipal boundary between York Region and the City of Toronto and/or transferring between the two transit systems. In March 2023, the province announced that it will fully fund the elimination of cross-boundary double fares, by the end of 2023. Staff will continue to work with the province and the TTC on this initiative as more details are provided.
- Expanding the ability to pay – Offers a low-income concession to a larger proportion of eligible customers. Staff continue to collaborate with Community and Health Services to explore opportunities for expanding the current Transit Assistance Program.

Replace monthly passes with fare capping for all fare categories in 2024

In 2018, YRT partnered with Community and Health Services and launched the Transit Assistance Program (TAP) pilot. The program offered lower-income residents, between the ages of 18 and 64 years, a monthly transit pass, which was half the cost of a YRT adult monthly pass. Participants in the program experienced challenges with the upfront cost of the monthly pass.

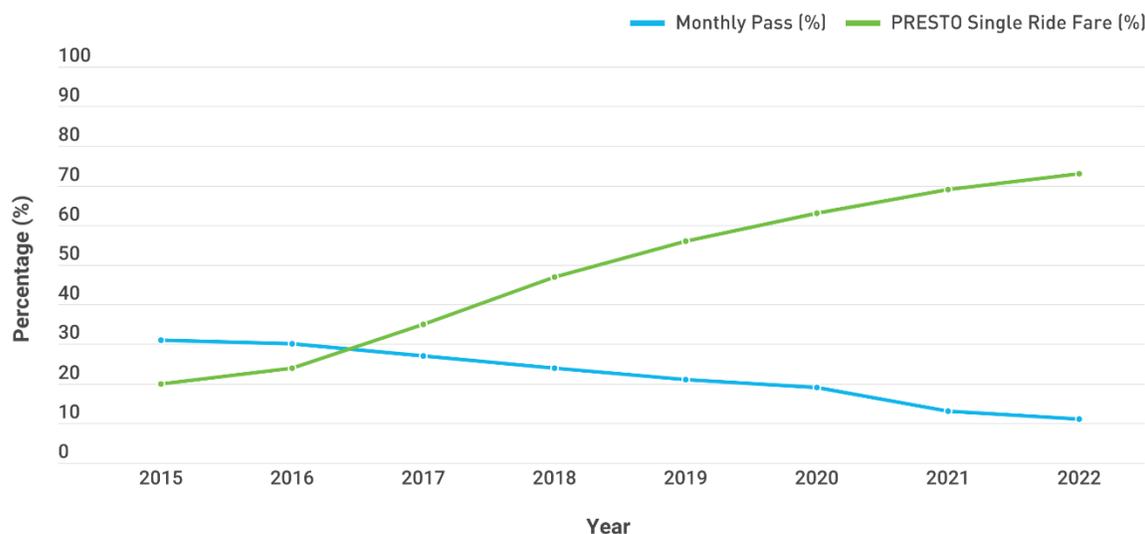
In 2021, monthly passes were removed from TAP and fare capping was introduced. TAP participants now pay half price for a single ride when using PRESTO. After 40 trips per calendar month have been reached rides are free for the remainder of the calendar month. Community and Health Services has also introduced fare capping into the Transit Discount Program for eligible Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients.

Feedback received during the extensive public consultation on the five-year fare policy review was consistent with feedback received from TAP participants. It was conveyed that the upfront cost of a monthly pass was a financial barrier and/or the product no longer met traveler needs. Monthly fare capping was preferred, by transit users, non-transit users and key stakeholders, over weekly and daily options.

Burlington Transit and Brampton Transit introduced fare capping at the on-set of the pandemic to address declining pass sales. Burlington Transit uses monthly fare capping, while Brampton Transit uses weekly fare capping. Transit agencies around North America have introduced fare capping including Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Authority, New York’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Dallas Area Rapid Transit, and Edmonton Transit. GO Transit offers a complex type of fare capping product where discounts are tiered and increased as the number of monthly trips increase until 41 trips are reached after which the rest are free.

Monthly pass sales have been declining since 2015 for several reasons including the expansion of hybrid work, the upfront cost of the monthly pass, and the introduction of PRESTO fare card on YRT (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Comparison of Ridership Using Monthly Pass and PRESTO Single Ride Fare



After considering, public consultation feedback, customer experience, Regional Council equity goals, review of industry best practices, and monthly pass trends, it is recommended fare capping replace monthly passes for all YRT age-based fare categories using PRESTO single ride fares. Fare capping of monthly trips is recommended to align with current monthly pass pricing across all fare categories. Following the introduction of fare capping, the robust data that it yields on customer travel trends will be analyzed to help inform future fare policy decisions.

Removal of the fare supplement on express routes is recommended for implementation in September 2023

Feedback from the five-year fare policy public consultation concluded that extra fares for YRT’s express services are not justified or equitable for all travellers. Express routes were first introduced during amalgamation of YRT in 2001 using the 407 ETR to provide faster service for business commuters. A fare supplement was introduced to compensate for the cost of 407 ETR. Subsequently, Rapid transit routes (Viva), additional express routes using Regional roads, and other routes using the 407 ETR have been implemented without fare supplements causing confusion for customers and inconsistency in fare collection.

The express fare supplement of 50 cents is recommended to be removed in September 2023.

Simplifying the Fare Structure responds to customer feedback

Easy-to-understand fares and using digital solutions to simplify fares are common themes in customer feedback. Removing monthly passes and the express fare supplement significantly streamlines the YRT Fare Structure (Table 1 is the current and Table 2 is the proposed).

**Table 1
Current YRT Fare Structure**

	Adult	Youth	Senior	Child	Express
Cash Debit or Credit	\$4.25	\$4.25	\$4.25	\$4.25	\$4.75
PRESTO or YRT Pay App	\$3.88	\$3.03	\$2.40	\$2.40	\$4.38
Monthly Pass	\$154.00	\$118.00	\$65.00	\$65.00	\$175.00
Ride to GO	Free	Free	Free	Free	\$0.50

Table 2
Proposed YRT Fare Structure

	Adult	Youth	Senior	Child
Cash Debit or Credit	\$4.25	\$4.25	\$4.25	\$4.25
PRESTO or YRT Pay App	\$3.88	\$3.03	\$2.40	\$2.40
Monthly Trip Cap on PRESTO	40	39	28	28
Ride to GO	Free	Free	Free	Free

Administrative updates to the YRT Fare Policy are needed

In addition to the fare age categories approved by Council in [September 2020](#), other updates to the YRT Fare Policy are needed. These include name changes, such as replacing Mobility Plus with Mobility On-Request, and removal or amendment of references to outdated fare and/or service integration agreements with neighbouring transit agencies.

Council approved the YRT Ride Free Policy in 2005 (Appendix B). The policy identifies who is eligible to ride free on YRT conventional services, including TTC-contracted routes north of Steeles Avenue and Brampton Transit routes operating in York Region. Eligible parties include Emergency Service personnel (in uniform) and members of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Individuals are required to provide proof of eligibility. As these details are now included in the updated YRT Fare Policy, the YRT Ride Free Policy is no longer required and is recommended to be rescinded.

The YRT fare structure and YRT Fare Policy updates support strategic goals identified in the Region’s Vision, Strategic Plan, and Official Plan

The recommended YRT fare structure and YRT Fare Policy updates support York Region as a place where everyone can thrive by providing equitable payment options for all YRT customers and focusing on what is needed to encourage and sustain economic growth and vitality of the Region.

5. Financial

Recommended fare structure changes managed through the budget outlook

Fare capping for all fare categories is estimated to impact YRT revenue with a forecast annual loss of \$500,000 by 2026 (Table 3). Removing the express fare supplement is estimated to impact YRT revenue with a forecast loss of \$150,000 in 2026 (Table 3).

Table 3
Estimated Revenue Impact of Fare Structure Recommendations

Proposed Fare Structure Change	2023	2024	2025	2026
Implementation of Fare Capping	0	(\$200,000)	(\$450,000)	(\$500,000)
Removal of Express Fare Supplement	(\$40,000)	(\$130,000)	(\$140,000)	(\$150,000)
Projected Total Revenue Loss	(\$40,000)	(\$330,000)	(\$590,000)	(\$650,000)

Fare structure recommendations are driven by customer benefit and equity goals as a significant portion of the revenue impact was likely being covered by lower-income riders paying per trip and ultimately exceeding the cost of a monthly pass.

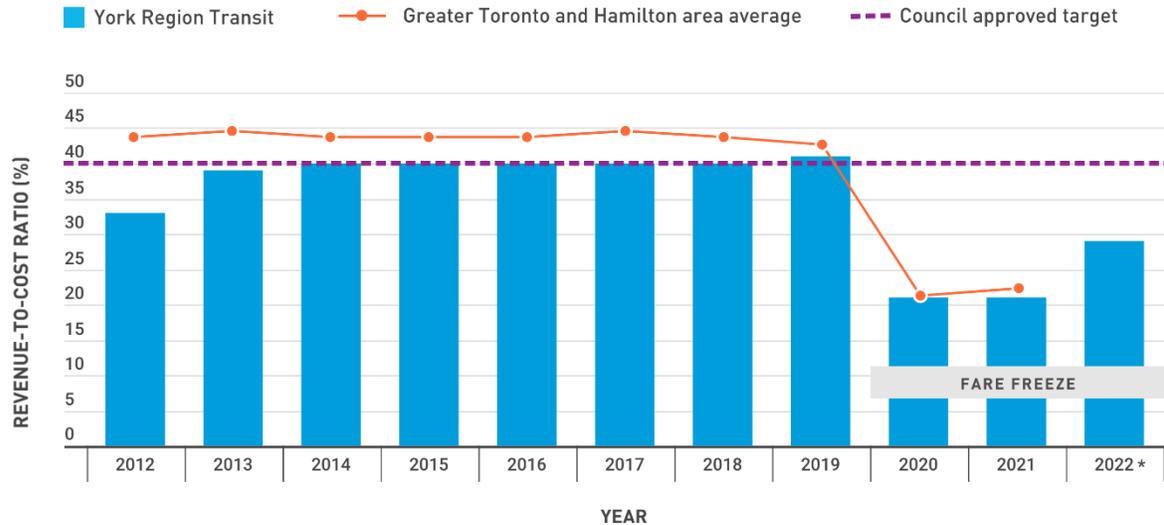
It is anticipated the improved customer experience, provided by the recommended fare structure including fare capping, will contribute to long-term ridership growth. Financial impacts resulting from fare structure recommendations in this report will be addressed through the 2024-2026 budget process.

Revenue-to-cost ratio is recovering from the impact of the pandemic

Revenue-to-cost ratio continues to recover reaching 31.5% for Q1 2023, ahead of the budgeted trend and up from 20.5% in 2020. This recovery is attributed to better-than-forecasted ridership growth following the pandemic.

Prior to and during the pandemic, YRT's revenue-to-cost ratio continued to be comparable to the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area transit agencies' average ratio (Figure 3). Planned fare increases from 2024-2026 will further support recovery of YRT's revenue-to-cost ratio.

Figure 3
Ten-Year Revenue-to-Cost Ratio Trend



* 2022 GTHA transit agency revenue-to-cost ratios currently not available

6. Local Impact

Two virtual Town Hall sessions were held during the five-year fare policy review. Community stakeholder workshops were held with business improvement areas, school boards, shopping malls and a variety of community organizations in York Region to gather information and understand impacts of current fare policies and fare collection systems. Focus groups featuring customers and non-customers were conducted, as well as two public surveys that generated over 6,000 responses. Local municipal staff were consulted as part of the annual transit initiatives consultation process.

Residents will benefit from fare capping by removing the upfront cost of monthly passes and the assurance that fares will be capped at a set maximum number of trips per month. Residents using express routes on 400-series highways will also benefit from a more affordable trip. The YRT fare chart will be simplified and easier to understand.

7. Conclusion

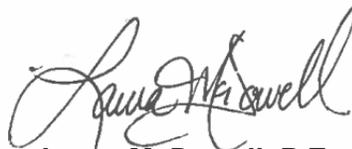
This report seeks Council approval of recommended changes to York Region Transit’s fare structure and updated YRT Fare Policy included in Appendix A. Fare capping would benefit all age categories by removing the upfront cost of a monthly pass and ensuring that customers do not exceed their monthly budget. Removing the express fare supplement will

reduce customer confusion and make riding express routes equitable while further simplifying the fare chart.

Work with the province will continue, regarding support for the double fare removal program, as more information is provided. Staff will continue collaboration with Community and Health Services and assist in reviewing the current Transit Assistance Program exploring opportunities for expansion.

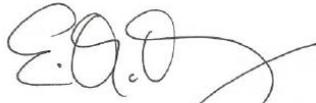
For more information on this report, please contact Kyle Catney, Director, Operations, York Region Transit at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75637. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by:



Laura McDowell, P.Eng

General Manager, Operations and Services, Public Works



Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.

Commissioner of Public Works



Approved for Submission:

Bruce Macgregor

Chief Administrative Officer

June 2, 2023

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Appendix A – Proposed Updates to the York Region Transit Fare Policy

Appendix B – York Region Transit Ride Free Policy



York Region Transit (YRT) Fare Policy

Approved By: Council

Approved On: **Date this version of the policy was approved**

Policy Statement

YRT Fare Policy is based on three guiding principles:

The fare structure should contribute to and support ridership growth strategies that result in net new ridership

The fare structure should support business objectives that aim to balance fare revenue with operating expenditures

The fare structure should be applied proportionately to all fare categories, recognizing the need to meet business objectives

Application

This policy applies to all passengers accessing transit services operated by or on behalf of YRT.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the fare structure which applies to YRT services, including Conventional Bus Service, Viva and Mobility On-Request Services. YRT staff refers to this policy when proposing to adjust fares and implement fare structure changes. All such proposals will be presented to Council for consideration and approval.

Definitions

Conventional Bus Service: Transit service provided by or on behalf of YRT, excluding Viva and Mobility On-Request

Fare Media: Any form of payment that is currently accepted on YRT

Fare Structure: Determines how much a customer is required to pay to access YRT services. The structure identifies fare values based on customer fare categories

Mobile Payment: A smart fare technology accepted on YRT

Mobility On-Request (MOR-CON) Service: YRT's demand-responsive transit service in low demand areas and/or operating periods, connecting passengers within a designated area or to an adjacent fixed transit stop

Mobility On-Request Para transit (MOR-PARA) Service: YRT's specialized transit service for people with physical or functional disabilities who may be unable to use other YRT services for the entire duration of their trip, but who may be able to use these services for a part of the trip

Mobility On-Request Services: Includes both Mobility On-Request (MOR-CON) Service and Mobility On-Request Para transit (MOR-PARA) Service

PRESTO: An electronic fare card accepted on YRT

Proof-of-Payment (POP): Evidence that payment has been made by a customer who is-riding on Viva service, and which must be presented to a Transit Enforcement Officer upon request

Smart Fare Technology: Fare payment using technology and accepted on all YRT services. Smart Fare Technology includes PRESTO, Mobile Payment, and open payment

Special Pass Programs: Provides an additional discounted period pass to those who qualify. Special pass programs may include an employer pass program and the Transit Assistance Program (TAP)

Support Person: An individual who accompanies a person having a disability who requires assistance with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs while travelling on YRT

Viva: York Region's rapid transit service operating on Yonge Street, Davis Drive and Highway 7 corridors, which provides faster service than Conventional Bus Service with off-board fare payment and limited-service stops

York Region Transit (YRT): A public transit agency that offers Conventional Bus Service, Viva Transit, and Mobility On-Request Services in York Region

Description

Fare Policy Objectives

This Fare Policy supports YRT's mission of providing high quality and accessible public transportation services for the benefit of the individuals and communities that it serves.

This policy sets six objectives critical to achieving the mission of YRT:

Increase ridership and improve service use

YRT contributes to reducing traffic congestion, improving the environment and social determinants of health by providing services that are accessible and efficient. This includes adopting fare strategies that help to increase ridership.

Establish Equitable Fares

YRT's fare structure will support the travel patterns and requirements of transit riders while providing options that take into account the needs of various population groups of York Region and their ability to pay for transportation services. Special pass programs will be reviewed and implemented where appropriate.

An annual adjustment will be applied to calculate and establish any fare changes based on operating and maintaining services. Changes to fare structure will be reflected proportionally across all fare categories. Any fare discounts for different fare categories shall be established using the adult concession fare as the base.

Enhance Mobility and Access

A variety of services and fare options enhance the customers' ability to access YRT services to get them where they need to go, improving their quality of life.

Increasing Revenue

Fare and non-fare revenues are critical to YRT's ability to partially subsidize its operating costs. Fare increases or restructuring of fares need to meet both YRT customer and business needs with a focus on achieving the revenue-to-cost ratio target established by Council. YRT continues to look for non-fare revenue opportunities to help achieve the revenue-to-cost ratio targets.

Maximize Fare Revenue Collection

YRT will implement convenient smart fare technologies, including the use of the PRESTO fare card mobile device payment, and other modes of electronic payment.

YRT will also continually explore ways to optimize the current customer revenue system.

Respect Customer Privacy

YRT recognizes the importance of respecting customer privacy and ensuring the security of personal information and will make every effort to put security features in place that protect YRT's customers.

Fare Structure

Fare Media Types and Structure

YRT accepts various forms of Fare Media. Where amendments to the fare structure (Appendix 1) are approved by Council, a comprehensive public communication strategy will be developed and implemented to advise customers and residents of approved changes to the fare structure.

Fare Levels

One fare will be charged on any YRT services within the two-hour time period allotted.

Fares will be reviewed and updated through the business planning and budgeting process. Should fare changes be implemented, a comprehensive public communication strategy will be developed focusing on informing customers, and residents of changes to fares as approved by Council.

Transfers

Transfers are valid for two hours and can be used in any direction of travel. The trip must be completed by the time of expiry.

Proof-of-Payment

Viva operates on a proof-of-payment system (POP). Passengers are required to carry POP with them at all times and required to present their POP to a Transit Enforcement Officer upon request. Customers are responsible for ensuring appropriate fares, and any applicable fare supplements, are paid for each trip. Customers are required to pay their fare before entering the fare-paid zone or boarding a Viva bus.

Responsibilities

Regional Council:

Review and approve any increase in/or restructuring of fares, as recommended by the Director, Transit Operations

YRT Staff:

Continue to monitor the budget, and ridership and research best practices to help increase the revenues in accordance with this Fare Policy

Legislative and other authorities

- York Region Transit Fare Policy e-docs 6102357

Appendices

- (Provide a hyperlink to eDOCS or website)

Contact

Director, Transit Operations, Public Works, Extension 75637

Approval

(Remove the CAO approval section for policies approved by Regional Council)

CAO Signature: _____
Date Approved: _____

(Remove the Council approval section for policies approved by CAO only)

Council Date: []	Committee Date: []
Council Minute Item: []	Committee Minute Item: []

Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

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YRT Fare Structure

1. YRT Fare Categories

Adult

Applies to any person having reached the age of 20, but not yet having reached the age of 65.

Youth (age 13- 19 years)

Applies to any person from the age of 13 to 19 and must show proof of age upon request.

Senior

Applies to any person having reached the age of 65 and must show proof of age upon request.

Child (age 0 – 5 years)

Children up to the age of 5 years old ride free and must show proof of age upon request.

Child (age 6 – 12 years)

Applies to any person from the age of 6 to 12 and must show proof of age upon request.

2. Transfers and Fare Integration

Transfers

Transfers will be accepted on YRT from the following transit agencies so long as they have not expired:

- a) Durham Region Transit
- b) Brampton Transit
- c) Mississauga Transit
- d) Oakville Transit
- e) Burlington Transit
- f) Hamilton Street Railway
- g) TTC contracted routes in York Region

Transfers will NOT be refreshed. Customers must retain their original transfer and travel must be completed by the two-hour issuance time.

GO Transit Fare Integration

Ride to GO allows customers to travel on YRT for free when showing proof-of-payment for a trip on GO Transit. Ride to GO is available on any YRT and contracted TTC route in York Region travelling to or from GO Transit services. You must use a PRESTO card, credit or debit card, or valid GO Transit fare to use this fare integration.

GO Transit group passes, e-tickets, and employee passes cannot be used with Ride to GO.

YRT and contracted TTC vehicles will only accept a GO Transit single-ride or day pass if transferring from a GO transit service to a YRT or contracted TTC route. The ticket must show the current date/time cancellation from connecting GO Train or Bus. Travellers connecting to Viva cannot use prepaid GO single-ride or day pass GO fare and must use a PRESTO, credit or debit card to use Ride to GO. Refer to website for latest information and complete details.

<https://www.yrt.ca/en/fares-and-passes/ride-to-go.aspx#How-to-GO>

3. General Conditions for all Fare Media

Fare Media remains the property of York Region Transit and is subject to confiscation without refund if the holder violates any of these conditions. Fare Media must not be altered or reproduced in any fashion.

- Fare Media is non-refundable except for PRESTO e-purse which may be refunded, subject to a 4% administrative fee
- Fare Media will not be replaced if lost or stolen
- Pre-paid credit cards are not accepted as a form of payment at on-street ticket vending machines

4. Support Person Assistance Card

YRT customers who need to be accompanied by a support person are required to carry a YRT Support Person Assistance Card. View Support Person Assistance Card details

<https://www.yrt.ca/en/our-services/mor-paratransit-support-person-assistance-card.aspx>

5. Ride Free

Emergency Service personnel, members of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), and any other organization operating within the Region dealing with persons with visual impairments are permitted to travel free of charge on YRT conventional bus services.

Passengers 100 years old and older are permitted to travel free on all YRT services including conventional bus services, Viva, and Mobility On-Request Services.



STATUS	Final
Council Approved	Y
CAO Approved:	Y

TITLE: York Region Transit Ride Free	Edocs No.: 108598 Original Approval Date: February 17, 2005 Policy Last Updated: February 24, 2005
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POLICY STATEMENT:

York Region Transit (YRT) recognizes the value and importance of emergency services personnel. In this regard, YRT consents to Emergency Service personnel riding free of charge on all YRT operated services (including TTC contracted routes north of Steeles Ave. and Brampton Transit routes within York Region).

Additionally, members of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and any other organization operating within the Region dealing with persons with visual impairments will travel free of charge on conventional transit services with appropriate identification.

APPLICATION:

This policy applies to all York Region Transit conventional routes, including TTC routes north of Steeles Avenue and Brampton Transit routes operating within York Region.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to formalize and identify who is eligible to ride free on YRT conventional services.

DESCRIPTION:

The following table describes personnel that are entitled to ride York Region Transit conventional services at no cost:

Rider	Ride Free Criteria
Police Officer	In uniform only, when traveling to/from work or while on duty. Civilian status does not apply to this policy.
Fire Fighter	In uniform only when traveling to/from work or while on duty.
Paramedic	In uniform only when traveling to/from work or while on duty.
Visual Impairment	Any client of the CNIB or any other approved agency dealing with visual impairments.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

York Region Transit will notify its Contractors regarding the Ride Free policy.

REFERENCE:

Brampton Transit	London Transit
Burlington Transit	Mississauga Transit
Ajax Pickering Transit	OC Transpo
Hamilton Transit	Oakville Transit
GO Transit	Toronto Transit Commission
Grand River Transit	

CONTACT:

Mary-Lou Johnston, Manager, Customer Service & Marketing
Brian Drew, Manager, Mobility Plus
Rick Takagi, Manager, Conventional Operations

APPROVAL INFORMATION

CAO Approval Date:	January 11, 2005		
Committee: Transit	Clause: 2	Report No: 2	
Council Approval:	Minute No. 24	Page: 14	Date: February 17, 2005