

Regional Transportation Fare Integration

Submitted by the Toronto Region Board of Trade and Vaughan Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Connectivity in modes of transit is essential to the success of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Regional Transit Plan. A crucial element of this connectivity is a one-card fare integration system for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

Although progress has been made in the process of fare integration, there is still more that must be done. To ensure a seamless transportation network, and to build further momentum across the wider region for fare integration, the TTC needs to be integrated with GO Transit and other municipal transportation services. With the anticipated opening in late 2017 of the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension through York University to Vaughan, there is an urgent need to address this issue as soon as possible.

Background

We applaud the federal, provincial and municipal governments for making their largest-ever investments to help fund transit infrastructure within the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). The present transportation system is widely viewed as inadequate and traffic congestion is now a cross-regional issue that affects all municipalities and residents in the GTHA and beyond. The ability of businesses to operate in and around the GTHA and beyond, and the vitality of the regional economy are dependent upon an efficient regional transportation network. This is important to both the region and the province: GO Transit and the municipal transit agencies that connect to it serve two-thirds of Ontario's population (approximately 9 million people).

Network connectivity needs to be the backbone of the regional transportation plan; transfers should be easy and efficient. Connectivity must not stop at any particular municipal boundary; rather it should be continuous throughout the GTHA and be based on an integrated fare system which incorporates "smart" card technology.

GO Transit and the nine municipal transportation agencies in the GTHA have already made progress on fare integration. Currently, GO Transit has signed co-fare agreements (allowing for discounting of fares when transferring from one transit agency to another) with eight municipal agencies. The Presto fare card allows users of more than one transit agency to get an immediate discount when they transfer between GO and one of the participating agencies. In addition, all the 905 transit operators (except Milton) have agreed to accept each other's transfers without additional fares.

In both cases, however, Toronto and the TTC remain unintegrated with the rest of the region. Until recently, the TTC was not able to participate with fare integration as it did not accept the Presto fare card. With the rollout of Presto at all subway stations and, throughout 2017, on the remaining bus and streetcar routes, technology is no longer a barrier. The continued lack of fare integration ensures that thousands of commuters are paying full fares daily for both GO Transit and TTC services, increasing costs and creating incentives for people to drive and increase the wider region's traffic problems.

In addition to the inconvenience and cost to existing commuters, tourists and travellers throughout the GTHA, the construction of new transit lines makes the lack of fare integration an acute problem. An integrated fare card system is fundamental, for example, to the successful implementation of the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension (TYSSE) and to achieving value-for-money for the project. The Government of Canada has committed up to \$697 million to the project while Ontario has provided \$870 million (held in the Move Ontario Trust). In addition, the City of Toronto will contribute \$907 million and the Regional Municipality of York has promised \$606 million.³³

Upon completion of the TYSSE, all regional transit buses will move from the current central location on York University campus to off campus locations. Currently these passengers only pay one fare to commute from their home to York University by one line of public transit. If fare integration is not in place when the TYSSE enters into service, passengers will have to pay multiple fares. This would represent a significant cost increase and inconvenience for customers, particularly low-income students.

To illustrate the above scenario: a student commuting from Ajax to York University would have to pay GO Transit \$7.02 and then pay the TTC \$3.25, for a total of \$10.27 /per trip, an increase of 46% over what they currently pay for the same trip. Alternatively, that student could use a monthly GO pass from Ajax which costs \$154.44 and then use a TTC pass, which costs \$116.75, totalling \$271.19 per month, an increase of 76% over what they currently pay for the same trip.

As a result, many York University staff, faculty and students may decide to drive to the University instead of using public transit as they currently do. York University, with a current population over 65,000 people (staff, faculty, students and Seneca@York), already has the second largest number of daily commuters in the GTHA behind Pearson Airport, representing a significant impact on the region's road network. The potential increase in traffic would be in addition to the many GTHA commuters who are already incentivized to drive, rather than take transit, due to a lack of fare integration.

The implementation of a regional fare integration system is integral to the creation of a sustainable, attractive and efficient transportation network. The benefits of the move to a smart card system will support the development of further infrastructure and will make the regional transportation network more customer-friendly, leading to greater use of the network and ultimately assisting in the alleviation of regional congestion and gridlock. With the forthcoming subway extension in 2017 and the addition of new LRT lines (beginning with the Eglinton Crosstown in 2021), the costs of failing to achieve complete fair integration in the GTHA will only become worse.

Recommendations:

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Through Metrolinx, continue to work with the regional transit operators to finish implementing an integrated fare structure for the GTHA regional transportation system

³³ Toronto Transit Commission, "[Completion of Trackwork for the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension](#)," June 6, 2016.

including GO Transit and all municipal agencies.

2. Implement a fully integrated fare system at the earliest possible opportunity, which will make for a more customer-friendly, seamless, and affordable transit network, and help alleviate wider-region traffic congestion and gridlock. If possible, the final steps of integration should be timed with the opening of the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension through York University to Vaughan in order to achieve the greatest value for money from the significant investments the Federal and Provincial governments as well as York Region and the City of Toronto have already made.

Estimated Financial Impact to the Province

Given that municipalities have budgeted for the implementation of a fare integration system, it is anticipated that the implementation of these recommendations would be cost-neutral.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by the Policy Committee. The Policy Committee supports the resolution as amended.