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DATE: May 25, 2009

REPORT TITLE: **UPDATE AND STATUS REPORT ON THE ACCESSIBLE  
TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION OFFICE (ATCO)**

FROM: Dan Labrecque, Commissioner of Environment, Transportation  
and Planning Services

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## OBJECTIVE

To provide a status update on the Accessible Transportation Coordination Office

### REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- This report provides an overview of the development and activities of the Accessible Transportation Coordination Office since its inception in 2006;
- Highlights include initiation of the Passenger Assistant Program, the imminent start of the Community Bus program and the ability for users to use conventional transit as a result of several initiatives, including fare incentives;
- A Taxi Scrip pilot project will also begin in the summer of 2009.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Background

In 2004, a "Study of Transportation of Persons with Disabilities" (STPD) was completed as part of the Planning Department's review of the Regional Official Plan. The review resulted in a report and recommendations adopted by Council to move towards a "family of services" or brokerage model as the most cost effective approach for addressing the full range of transportation needs of persons with a broad range of disabilities and ill health. The Social Services Department was initially responsible for implementation of this model. In May 2006, Council received a report outlining a recommended conceptual framework and a first stage implementation plan of a "family of services" model.

Following the STPD, an "Accessible Transportation Business and Operational Plan and Federal Gas Tax Allocation" report was prepared in October 2006. This report requested that approximately \$13.9 million be allocated from Federal Gas Tax funding to support the following "family of services" model service delivery components:

- **Establishment of an Accessible Transportation Coordination Office (ATCO)**
- **On-going Provision of the Red Cross Dialysis Transportation Program**
- **Development and implementation of a new Passenger Assistant Program (PAP)**
- **Development and implementation of a Community Bus Demonstration Project**

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- **Development and implementation of a Taxi Scrip Program**
- **Initiatives to improve access to and use of conventional public transit by persons with all disabilities (Conventional Transit Access Initiatives)**
- **TransHelp expansion and facility improvement/relocation or development of a brand new facility (Discussion of progress made in these areas is outside the purview of this status report)**

In addition to funding these initiatives, \$13.9 million was allocated to cover expansion and replacement vehicles and for acquisition and operation of information and technology resources within both TransHelp and ATCO.

**2. Status of The Accessible Transportation Coordination Office (ATCO)**

In accordance with the 2006 report, the ATCO office has been created. The current key functions of the office are:

- To act as a gateway to direct users to appropriate services and screen applicants
- To provide support to transit, including Transhelp, to optimize access to and use of their services
- To serve as a brokerage to administer community transportation services aimed at providing additional travel supports for all passengers with disabilities
- To coordinate and ensure the provision of health and social transportation that cannot be offered by local transit or TransHelp (Peel's para-transit system)
- To conceptualize, develop and implement new (often untried and untested) transportation supports and services for residents of Peel with all types of disabilities
- To develop and improve the Family of Services Transportation model by maximizing use of available resources and developing and implementing new supports and services as required, based on community consultation and feedback
- To assist persons with disabilities, their families and caregivers to identify appropriate transportation services and community resources, and work to develop strategies to help people with disabilities access and use these services to enhance their mobility in the community.

Currently the office does not directly provide any transportation service. All transportation is provided through contractual arrangements with third party providers. The office currently has three staff. A Transportation Accessibility Specialist and two Transportation Resources Coordinators.

**i) ATCO Budget**

In 2009, the ATCO office has an operating budget of \$1.2M and a capital budget of just over \$1M. Over the next ten years, the proposed capital budget is approximately \$8M. All of ATCO's capital costs are currently funded through Federal Gas Tax funding. A significant amount of capital funding is and will continue to be required in the first few years following creation of the office, to initiate most of ATCO's programs and services. An exception is the Taxi Scrip program which requires no capital outlay, because private sector vehicles are used. Also the planned development of the ATCO programs will require increasing operating funding.

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**ii) Issues and Challenges**

ATCO staff need to continually support and encourage potential users of its services and their families who may never before have considered allowing their loved one to be transported by someone other than a family member. There are unique family dynamics and cultural beliefs that strongly influence "uptake" of new and "unfamiliar" services by various communities of people. ATCO staff and service provider staff are making special efforts to assist users and their families. Users have responded positively to these efforts.

The next stage in the evolution of the "family of services" model is to initiate partnerships with more agencies and to develop appropriate technologies and systems that would allow "buying" and "selling" of unused seats. This will increase the service level, service flexibility and cost effectiveness. These improvements will be considered in 2010 and beyond.

ATCO staff are currently planning improvements in its passenger registration process to more easily track interest in and uptake of services. Also information collection will be improved to better understand the users and their needs. Such information will be critical for improving current services, planning new services and improving cost effectiveness.

**3. Status of ATCO's Service Delivery Components**

**i) Red Cross Dialysis Transportation Program/Passenger plus Program**

To effectively meet the needs of dialysis-specific trips, in June 2003, Council approved funding to Red Cross for the purchase of a dedicated fleet of seven vehicles. These vehicles serve clients attending hospitals three times weekly for life-preserving dialysis care.

Number of rides:

An estimated 26,000 rides will be provided in 2009.

Number of current vehicles:

The Red Cross currently owns seven vehicles dedicated to dialysis transportation. One expansion vehicle was ordered and delivered in 2008. In addition, one expansion vehicle is on order for 2009.

In 2009, the dialysis transportation program will be re-named Passenger Plus and the 2009 dialysis vehicles will get a new look (gold and black stripping on a white vehicle). These changes will allow ATCO to support a fundamental principle of the "family of services" model which is to maximize the use of all available resources. Since the new dialysis vans will closely resemble the Passenger Assistant Program vehicles, the plan is to begin to use either vehicle interchangeably by deploying it in either the dialysis service or the Passenger Assistant Program depending on the particular needs of the day.

Ten year capital plan:

The current plan is that the dialysis transportation program will be expanded by one new dialysis vehicle in each of ten years.

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Service provider:

The Canadian Red Cross provides this service.

**ii) Passenger Assistant Program (PAP)**

This program provides supervised transportation to passengers with disabilities who cannot safely travel alone. The focus of this program is on the delivery of assisted transportation to adult day programs within the Region of Peel, serving seniors, adults with intellectual disability, and those living with mental health disabilities. Each passenger is supervised and assisted while in transit by a trained passenger assistant and met at each end of their trip by designated caregivers.

Number of rides:

This program has been in the pilot stage since June 2008. The pilot phase (June 2008-May 2009) operated using just one four-person vehicle. From June - December 2008, 2,103 one-way rides were provided. Full program implementation began concurrently in March 2009 using five additional vehicles. In the first quarter of 2009, 2,043 one-way rides were provided. Our target is to provide 20,000 one way rides in 2009.

Number of current vehicles:

We currently have five vehicles that accommodate 11 passengers each. Each vehicle accommodates ten passengers plus 1 passenger assistant. These vehicles are becoming fully operational with full program implementation.

Ten year capital plan:

The current plan is that the Passenger Assistant Program will expand by two new vehicles per year in each of ten years.

Service provider:

Currently the Canadian Red Cross provides this service.

**iii) Community Bus Program**

Community bus is potentially an effective alternative to para-transit for persons with disabilities who require fixed route service because of their disability. Community buses make regularly scheduled stops at multi-unit buildings with high concentrations of seniors and people with disabilities to take people to places of common interest and necessity i.e. day programs, grocery stores, community centres. Anyone can travel for a transit fare, including people without disabilities. This service will begin in June 2009 and the user cost is \$3.00 per one-way ride.

Number of rides:

Our target is to provide 7000 one-way rides in 2009

Number of current vehicles:

One 31-passenger vehicle ordered in 2008 for a delivery in March 2009. The vehicle can carry 26 ambulatory passengers with room for 2 people who use wheelchairs. If wheelchair accessible seating is not in use, 31 seats are available.

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Ten year capital plan:

The current plan is that the Community Bus Program will expand by one new vehicle every two years. However, staff will investigate various vehicle sizes and configurations after the pilot phase of the program to determine the type of vehicle that will best meet program needs

**iv) Taxi Scrip**

This program will provide spontaneous transit to low income passengers with disabilities in the Region to access urgent appointments and visits to Long Term care facilities. A small pilot of 10,000 rides on taxi scrip is planned beginning August of 2009. This will allow spontaneous travel to urgent appointments including medical appointments, and visits to Long Term care facilities.

Number of rides:

In 2009, during the pilot phase of this program, the number of rides will be limited to 10,000

Number of clients served:

The total number of participants would be limited to 275 pilot participants.

Cost of service to the passenger:

Clients with disabilities and seniors will be able to purchase taxi scrip from the Region at a subsidized amount. We will supplement 40% of each taxi ride.

**v) Conventional Transit Access Initiatives**

This program provides a range of opportunities for people with disabilities to become more comfortable and familiar with accessible conventional transit systems. ATCO provides and pays for travel training assessments as well as up to five hours of individualized travel training for those who want to learn to use either Brampton or Mississauga transit. A "how-to" video available on DVD or via the internet, will provide encouragement as well as tips on how to use transit service. In summer 2009, users will have the chance to "try transit for free" for a specific period of time, as part of an overall fare incentive strategy.

Number of rides:

Our target is to provide 1,200 conventional transit rides in 2009 to ATCO clients.

Number of clients served:

To date, the ATCO office has funded assessments and provided individualized travel training session for twenty-three ATCO clients. It is reasonable to expect that the number of requests for travel training assessments and travel training sessions will increase significantly while the fare incentive initiative is operational.

**4. Future Activities and Initiatives**

In 2009/10 ATCO staff will be taking a close look at how dialysis transportation for ambulatory (non-TransHelp eligible) users is being delivered in Peel. The Canadian Red Cross has effectively delivered this service on behalf of the Region since 2003. However, a decline in the number of riders has been noted over time. Using survey methodologies,

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ATCO staff will attempt to identify the reasons for this change and will make adjustments to the current dialysis transportation service as possible and necessary.

ATCO staff regularly attend parent meetings hosted by agencies that focus on various supporting people with various disabilities. Through these meetings, staff identify transportation issues and challenges that are of concern to Peel families. This information is used in the conceptualization and development of new programs and services. Using this approach, ATCO staff have been made aware for example, that there is a need for transportation supports and services for small children with disabilities. As was found to be true when conceptualizing the Passenger Assistant Program, many parents and family members are at risk of losing their jobs because of the extraordinary twice daily efforts they must make to get their children to and from specialized intervention and/or treatment programs while attempting at the same time not to be late for work, staying for the required number of hours, and ensuring that their children are also picked up at the end of their programs on time. ATCO staff are exploring how to meet this need.

Seniors who cannot or do not drive any longer are looking for ways to attend community programs, do necessary shopping and visit spouses or loved ones who reside in Peel's Long-Term Care Facilities. Again, this is an unmet need that ATCO staff hope to address. Similarly there appears to be many unmet medical transportation needs that require further investigation.

**5. Preliminary Outlook for 2010 Budget**

The year 2009 represents only the beginning of our service delivery efforts and our current ride capacity is already fully utilized. There is significant excitement and interest in our services by people with disabilities and there are significant needs that are currently unmet by our initial offering of services. Our current plan calls for gradual expansion of services over the next several years to fulfill more of the unmet needs, subject, of course, to available funding.

In addition, there is an unmet demand for new and expanded programs and services, such as a passenger assistant program for children. Staff will continue to identify service gaps in the specialized transportation sector and develop appropriate solutions.

**CONCLUSION**

The ATCO office was created just three years ago. Since its inception the office has conceptualized and developed four new transportation options that will enhance mobility choices for residents of Peel.

Three of ATCO's programs (passenger assistant, community bus and taxi scrip) are completely untested and new to Peel and therefore require extensive staff time to determine, implement and monitor client referral processes, eligibility criteria, day-to-day operations, evaluation requirements, statistical collection needs and program refinement and expansion.

ATCO staff are also aware of several areas where there is a need for development of new transportation services.

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**Approved for Submission:**



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ATCO Service Provision Summary

Service	Targeted Number of One-Way Rides (2009)*	Actual Number of One-Way Rides Provided as of April 2009	Projected Number of One-Way Rides 2010
Red Cross Dialysis Transportation	26,000	6,860	28,000
Red Cross Passenger Assistant Program	20,000	3,577	28,000
Community Bus	7,000		12,000
Taxi Scrip	10,000		30,000
Conventional Transit Access Initiatives (includes a time limited fare incentive strategy)	1,200		2,400

\*Number of rides for dialysis and PAP will increase as new riders are added to existing routes and as additional vehicles will be acquired for each program in fall 2009

Community Bus Program to begin end of June 2009

Taxi Scrip and Conventional Transit Access Initiatives to be initiated late summer 2009