



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

**CITY WIDE
IMPLICATIONS**

To:	Chair and Members Public Works Committee		
From:	Gerry Davis, CMA Acting General Manager Public Works	Telephone: Facsimile: E-mail:	905 546-2313 905 546-4481 Gerry.Davis@hamilton.ca
Date:	March 26, 2009		
Re:	Seniors Golden Age Bus Pass (PW09024)		

Council Direction:

Through Report 08-033, dated November 26, 2008, Council gave direction for staff to implement the "Golden Age Bus Pass" on the HSR as a 2009 approved service enhancement.

The pass will entitle seniors eighty (80) years of age and older to ride the conventional transit (HSR) service for free.

Information:

Free transit for seniors is an unprecedented initiative in the Canadian public transit industry. It is a demonstration of Council's strategic commitment to increase alternative transportation usage in areas such as transit, walking and cycling.

Additional detail associated with this program is being provided to Council for their consideration prior to the planned implementation date of May 1, 2009, (concurrent with the annual renewal date for the Senior's Annual Pass).

The City faces a yet-to-be-determined future exposure to additional costs and legal implications associated with this policy should requirements set out in the Final Proposed Transportation Accessibility Standard developed under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, S.O. 2005, Chap. 11 (AODA) become law. The Final Proposed Transportation Accessibility Standard, once law, would impose stated long-term objectives and technical requirements on the City to prevent and remove barriers to persons with disabilities in the use of passenger transportation services by January 1, 2025. The costs and operational implications will be very significant relative to the current cost of the specialized transit program.

The Final Proposed Transportation Accessibility Standard requirements, while still very wide in scope at this juncture, include a proposal for base fare policy harmonization between the conventional transit (HSR) and specialized transit (ATS) programs. In addition, the Proposed Accessibility Standard outlines specific timeframes for the implementation of its various requirements once the Accessibility Standard has been adopted and becomes law. For example, it is proposed that a transportation agency

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providing an accessible public transit service within a single tier municipality would have 2 years from the date of the adoption of the Final Proposed Transportation Accessibility Standard to implement base fare policy harmonization between conventional and specialized transit programs.

At the time of this report, there is no associated funding from the Province to cover the additional costs on the City relative to the Final Proposed Transportation Accessibility Standard. The 2009 Transit Division Budget submission included a recommendation that staff include harmonization of ATS and HSR fare structures in their 2010 budget submission as a service enhancement for Council's consideration.

The conventional (HSR) and specialized (DARTS) transit programs have always had separate and distinct fare policies. For example:

- The ATS service has no fare boxes;
- The ATS program has only one fare, the single ticket fare while the HSR has cash, tickets and passes and discounts based on demographics;
- People with personal mobility devices (PMD) being those using a wheelchair, walker or scooter currently have optional fare payment on the HSR. It is estimated that there were 58,000 free PMD trips on the HSR in 2008. It is anticipated that by year-end 2009, 100% of HSR will be provided by a fully accessible low floor fleet.
- HSR is a bus stop-to-bus stop service and ATS is a door-to-door service.

Upon a review, staff identify four potential alternatives to the current direction to provide the program only on the HSR for Council's consideration to mitigate the City's future financial exposure:

- 1) Do not implement the "Golden Age Bus Pass";
- 2) Defer the implementation of the "Golden Age Bus Pass" pending adoption of the Final Proposed Transportation Accessibility Standard developed under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*;
- 3) Expand the "Golden Age Bus Pass" to include ATS (DARTS) clients;
- 4) Expand the "Golden Age Bus Pass" to include ATS (DARTS) clients and amend the age of eligibility for the "Golden Age Bus Pass" to mitigate the budget impact of extending the program to include ATS (DARTS) clients.

There would be a \$41,000 reduction in the 2009 budget submission associated with implementation of alternatives 1) & 2), above.

There would be an additional budget requirement over and above the budget submission associated with alternative 3) above. This cost reflects the actual trips taken by this age group on DARTS in 2008. Some growth in demand should be anticipated in view of the free fare. With regard to specialized transit (DARTS), there are approximately 4,100 persons registered for DARTS service who are 80 years of age and older. This specific age group took approximately 73,000 trips on DARTS in 2008. There would be a loss of \$160,000 in DARTS revenues, to be offset by additional budget requirement, should the Golden Age Bus Pass be extended to DARTS users.

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Table 1 below, illustrates the number of registered ATS (DARTS) clients by specific age group for the 80 and older to 85 and older range and shows the number of trips taken on DARTS during the last year (2008), as well as the associated revenue.

TABLE 1

Number of DARTS Clients 80 Years of Age and Older & Trips Taken In 2008

AGE	80 & Older	81 & Older	82 & Older	83 & Older	84 & Older	85 & Older
# OF DARTS CLIENTS	4,097	3,935	3,753	3,561	3,364	3,195
# OF TRIPS ON DARTS	72,912	66,313	58,203	50,193	43,448	36,631
FARE REVENUE (DARTS)	\$160,600	\$145,889	\$128,047	\$110,425	\$95,586	\$80,588

Additionally, the cost of full fare harmonization between the HSR and ATS programs is estimated to be in the order of \$300K, contingent upon Council's consideration of alternatives available at the time of the Final Proposed Transportation Accessibility Standard being adopted.

Staff has consulted with Council's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities Transportation Subcommittee and Seniors Advisory Committee and their recommendations are as follows:

Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities

- That fare parity be given with respect to the Golden Age Bus Pass program; and
- That any decision to extend free bus service to all citizens over 80 be extended to passengers using the DARTS service.

Seniors Advisory Committee

- The "Golden Age" bus pass which will provide free HSR bus transportation to seniors 80 years of age and older be approved; and
- That the "Golden Age" pass be extended to DARTS passengers in the future.

Potential legal implications to the City should the "Golden Age Bus Pass" program be approved in its current form will be discussed *In Camera*.

Gerry Davis, CMA
Acting General Manager
Public Works Department



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**Public Works
Transit Division**

Seniors Golden Age Pass (PW09024)

April 6, 2009

Providing services that bring our City to life !

Background

- Council direction November 26, 2008 to implement Golden Age Pass as 2009 enhancement
- Context has been free rides for those 80 years > on conventional (HSR) service utilizing Pass
- Estimated \$41K cost impact was specific to HSR, recognizing that many 80 years > use specialized (ATS) service
- Questions have arisen re availability for those using specialized (ATS) service, specifically that delivered by DARTS

- Community
- People
- Processes
- Finance



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Existing Fare Policies

- Separate and distinct fare policies for conventional and specialized services
 - HSR has both regular and incentive fares based on demographic considerations i.e. students, seniors, post secondary, voluntary fare for PMD
 - ATS has one regular fare for DARTS - \$2.20
 - HSR passengers pay at the farebox
 - ATS passengers pay the driver by ticket or have pre-arranged accounts

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AODA Implications

- AODA Transportation Standard will require fare policy “harmonization” between conventional and specialized services
- Will not likely require immediate compliance at adoption
- Transit had anticipated consideration by Council of harmonization as 2010 program enhancement

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ACPD and Seniors Advisory

- Seniors Advisory advocates for approval of Pass and supports extension to DARTS, if not this year, in the future
- ACPD advocates for parity to be given with regard to Pass, and any decision be inclusive of DARTS passengers

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2009 Budget Implications

- 73K trips by 4,100 passengers 80 years > on DARTS in 2008
- \$160K in annual revenues – revenue loss of this magnitude not supportable within current 2009 Operating Budget
- Full cost of fare harmonization \$300K +
- Expect further service pressures on DARTS if free trips implemented

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Alternatives

- Do not implement Pass
- Defer Pass implementation pending AODA Transportation Standard and review of fare harmonization strategy
- Expand Pass to include ATS passengers on DARTS
- Expand Pass to ATS passengers on DARTS but amend age of eligibility to mitigate impact

- Community
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