

CITY OF HAMILTON

***PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Transit Division***

Report to: Chair and Members Public Works Committee	Submitted by: Scott Stewart, C.E.T. General Manager Public Works Department
Date: June 5, 2007	Prepared by: Andy McLaughlin Extension 1809

SUBJECT: Extended Free Transit Service (HSR and DARTS) on New Years Eve (PW07083) - (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

That staff be authorized and directed to permanently extend Transit (HSR and DARTS) regular service hours on New Years Eve until 2:00 a.m., and that the service be free from 6:00 p.m. onward.

Scott Stewart, C.E.T.
General Manager
Public Works

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Staff committed to report back to Council respecting the extension of Transit Service (HSR and ATS) on New Year's Eve arising out of community conflicts which arose out of a unilateral staff decision not to extend service on New Year's Eve 2006.

The extension of Public Transit service on New Year's Eve night until 2:00 a.m. will provide a safe and reliable transportation alternative for those who have chosen to celebrate away from their homes. Free fares after 6:00 p.m. are recommended for the benefit of making the service easy and convenient to use. Some 1800 Hamiltonians took advantage of the extended service in 2006. The lost revenue due to the service being free is estimated at \$4,000. Incremental operating costs associated with staff overtime and running costs such as fuel to provide the extended service is approximately \$3,000. This includes a limited number of DARTS trips for those that are unable to use Accessible Low Floor HSR buses. Staff will commit to finding offsetting savings in 2007 and will build the associated costs into future budgets.

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The Transit Division will promote the New Year's Eve service through a variety of mediums including the Public Works website, newspaper ads, The Bus News (HSR), Chats Newsletter (ATS) and a media release to all local outlets.

All Statutory Holiday service levels have been reviewed. Service levels have been set based on successful historical experience.

BACKGROUND:

Community conflict surrounding a staff decision not to extend service on New Year's Eve 2006 precipitated a commitment from staff to seek the direction and approval of Council respecting the provision of extended service on New Year's Eve in the future. This action would provide a travel option for many in the community who attend New Year's Eve celebrations at various out-of-home venues.

Eliminating transit fare collection past 6:00 p.m. and the extension of service on December 31, 2007, had extraordinary results well in excess of expectations with transit use well above the norm for a comparable day of the week. Some 1800 Hamilton residents responded to Council's provision of a public transit alternative to the private automobile on New Year's Eve demonstrating our citizen's commitment to socially responsible decision-making. In retrospect, it was a win-win decision for the City, our residents, and the Transit system serving as an example in reminding us that convenient access to Public Transit serves the broader community goals.

ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

This initiative is largely focused on providing a viable alternative to drinking and driving. There is an ongoing awareness about the dangers inherent when auto drivers choose to drink and drive when their judgement, reaction and other skills necessary to properly drive a car has been impaired by consuming alcohol.

MADD Canada, the Police Service, the Trauma Prevention Council and other agencies promote the importance of planning ahead in terms of personal transportation requirements at the conclusion of a function where alcohol has been consumed. For those travelling as a group, appointing a designated driver is one idea that has gained acceptance in recent years. For those without a car or those travelling alone, a taxicab ride is another option. However, it is sometimes difficult to recruit a designated driver and the taxi industry has a limited capacity to accommodate all New Year's Eve trip requests in a timely manner.

Walking to/from a party can be an option for some, but this mode represents a small proportion of total New Year's Eve travel and its choice is limited by distance and weather conditions.

On December 31, 2007, the approved service level for conventional transit service (HSR) operates on a regular weekday schedule, with last departures from the Downtown at 1:00 a.m. and 1:20 a.m. Specialized transit (DARTS) operates until 11:00 p.m. For the future, Council's approval of the report recommendation will see both transit services extended to 2:00 a.m.

By allowing free rides from 6:00 p.m. onwards, customers can choose to use public transit for the trip to their event and then home again.

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ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

N/A

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial - The foregone fare box revenue from 6:00 p.m. until 1:20 a.m. is estimated at \$4,000. Incremental operating costs to provide transit service until 2:00 a.m., is estimated at \$3,000 for 2007.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

Council authority and direction to extend the approved service levels for HSR and ATS.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Staff has discussed the setting of HSR service levels for New Year's Eve and Statutory Holidays with the ATU Executive. The ATU has formally responded that the setting of service levels is sole responsibility of the employer and the City and decline to offer a position.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the "Triple Bottom Line", (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. Yes No

Transit provides a safe and convenient alternatives to the private automobile.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. Yes No

Transit provides a more environmentally friendly alternative to the private automobile.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. Yes No

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?

Yes No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?

Yes No