

MEETING DATE: October 20, 2004

SUBJECT: 194 Zoo Rocket 2004 Post-Implementation Review

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Commission:

1. Approve the elimination of summer Saturday, Sunday, and holiday express service to the Toronto Zoo on the 194 ZOO ROCKET route, effective the summer of 2005, because of poor ridership and financial performance; and
2. Forward this report to City of Toronto Councillors De Baeremaeker, Cho, and Cowbourne, the Toronto Zoo, and the City of Toronto.

FUNDING

The elimination of this trial service would result in annual savings of approximately \$34,200 in net direct costs.

BACKGROUND

This report is the post-implementation review of the 2004 summer season of operation of the 194 ZOO ROCKET express bus route, which operates between Scarborough Centre Station and the Toronto Zoo. The service was initially introduced in the summer of 2003 as a result of a Commission directive at its meeting of May 14, 2003. In 2003, the service operated seven days a week.

After the 2003 summer season was complete, a post-implementation review was presented to the Commission at its February 25, 2004 meeting. The review recommended that the service not be operated in 2004 because of poor ridership and financial performance. At that meeting, the Commission directed that staff “*maintain Saturday and Sunday service on the 194 ZOO ROCKET for one more summer, including improved advertising of the route*”.

DISCUSSION

Post-implementation reviews

The TTC uses a formal process for planning and evaluating service changes based on a set of Commission-approved service standards. Every new service that the TTC introduces is initially operated on a trial basis. After the trial period, when ridership on the service has approached a mature state, passenger counts are taken, the performance of the route is reviewed, and a recommendation is made regarding its future. All service changes are reviewed to ensure that the original objective of better service for customers has been met. New routes and extensions, which have been introduced at an additional cost, undergo a ridership and financial review to check that the service has met established standards of acceptable ridership and financial performance. The overall review also considers comments that have been received from customers and the community, and the experience that has been gained in operating the service.

A service change, which has met its performance objectives, is recommended to be made a regular part of the TTC system. If a service change has been unsuccessful in some way, then a recommendation is made to either make further changes for another trial period or to remove the service.

The compulsory post-implementation review of every trial of a service change ensures that the success or failure of every service change is assessed consistently and fairly, and that there is full accountability to the Commission on matters which affect the service that is provided to customers.

Most service changes are successful, in that they attract as many or more people than projected, and have a financial performance that meets the TTC's minimum requirement. Of the 54 trial service changes made since 1998, 39 of the changes have been successful in their post-implementation review, and are now a regular part of the TTC system. The post-implementation reviews of the successful trial service changes are usually included in the annual report on Service Improvements. The smaller number of unsuccessful trial services are reported to the Commission separately, as in this report.

194 ZOO ROCKET – Summer weekend and holiday express service to the Toronto Zoo

Trial express bus service to the Toronto Zoo for the 2004 season on the 194 ZOO ROCKET route was operated on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, from Sunday June 20, to Monday, September 6. Exhibit 1 is a map of the route. Buses operated every 20 minutes between approximately 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Buses operated express between Scarborough Centre Station and Meadowvale Road on Highway 401 and then served all stops to the Zoo. Before the 194 ZOO ROCKET began providing service to the zoo in June 2003, summer service to the zoo was provided seven days a week by the 86A SCARBOROUGH (Kennedy Station-Toronto Zoo) local route, and this was supplemented on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays by the 85 SHEPPARD EAST local route, operating from Sheppard-Yonge, Don Mills and Rouge Hill GO stations. No changes were made to service on the 86A SCARBOROUGH or 85 SHEPPARD EAST routes when the 194 ZOO ROCKET was introduced.

To promote the 194 ZOO ROCKET express route for the 2004 season, numerous large- format posters were installed at subway stations providing information about the route. The Toronto Zoo was provided with a supply of these posters for their own use. The TTC advertisement in the daily free Metro newspaper featured the 194 ZOO ROCKET throughout the summer months. The TTC web site featured customer information on the service, including a prominent banner on the home page for the duration of this service. The Toronto Zoo web site also contained information about the 194 ZOO ROCKET service, furnished by the TTC. In addition, the TTC issued two news releases over the summer which highlighted the 194 ZOO ROCKET service.

Counts of passengers taken in 2004 (Table 1, below) show that approximately 320 customer-trips each Saturday and 310 customer-trips each Sunday were made to or from the Zoo on the new service. The overall number of customers travelling by transit to and from the Toronto Zoo has remained approximately the same since before the new route began. The number of customers using the 194 ZOO ROCKET on weekends has also remained approximately the same from the summer of 2003 to the summer of 2004. While count information for a seasonal service such as this is subject to variation as a result of weather and events at the Zoo, the counts show that there are few new transit customers travelling by transit to the Zoo on weekends in 2004 or 2003 compared to previous years before the new service was introduced.

	<i>Route</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>
Average summer ridership, before 194 ZOO ROCKET was introduced	86 SCARBOROUGH	860	770
	85 SHEPPARD EAST	550	500

	<i>Total</i>	<i>1410</i>	<i>1270</i>
Average summer ridership, in 2003, with 194 ZOO ROCKET service	86 SCARBOROUGH	350	280
	85 SHEPPARD EAST	730	590
	194 ZOO ROCKET	430	470
	<i>Total</i>	<i>1510</i>	<i>1340</i>
Average summer ridership, in 2004, with 194 ZOO ROCKET service	86 SCARBOROUGH	390	260
	85 SHEPPARD EAST	860	590
	194 ZOO ROCKET	320	310
	<i>Total</i>	<i>1570</i>	<i>1160</i>

As in 2003, buses on the 194 ZOO ROCKET route were relatively lightly used at all times. During the busiest single hour of service on the route, the average number of customers per bus was 21, down from 26 in 2003. Approximately 80 per cent of the trips had fewer than 10 customers on board. This is significantly below the level of usage of most other TTC bus routes, where the average number of customers per bus is planned to be 36 customers per bus at off-peak times.

The weekend operation of the 194 ZOO ROCKET service increased direct operating costs by approximately \$34,200 for the 2004 season, as two buses were required to operate the service. Few new customers have been attracted to the TTC by the 194 ZOO ROCKET service, and weekend ridership has not increased on this route from 2003 to 2004. Because there has been an increase in operating costs and no substantial increase in ridership, the trial service does not meet the TTC's standard of acceptable performance.

No changes have been found which would improve the financial performance of the service enough to allow it to meet the minimum financial standard. If the service were made less frequent, so that buses operated once every 40 minutes instead of once every 20 minutes, ridership would decline further, there would still be few new customers attracted to the TTC by the service, and the financial performance of the route would remain unacceptable. Service from Monday to Friday, which was the most-lightly used service in 2003, was already eliminated for the 2004 season.

Because the service has low ridership and unacceptable financial performance, and because no service changes have been identified which would bring the service to an acceptable level of financial performance, the 194 ZOO ROCKET service should be discontinued, and should not be operated in the summer of 2005.

With the elimination of the 194 ZOO ROCKET route, customers who used the service to travel to the Zoo would travel instead on the 86A SCARBOROUGH or 85 SHEPPARD EAST routes.

JUSTIFICATION

The post-implementation review of the trial period of operation of new services is an important part of the TTC's service standards. The 194 ZOO ROCKET route is recommended for elimination because it has unacceptable ridership and financial performance. Further changes to this service have been evaluated, and no changes have been found which would improve the financial performance of the route to an acceptable level.

October 6, 2004

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Attachment: Exhibit 1 – 194 ZOO ROCKET route map

