

MEETING DATE October 19, 2005

SUBJECT: Staff Response to Commission Inquiry - Transit Service To Scottfield Drive – Yee Hong Centre

At its meeting of August 31, 2005, the Commission, following deputations concerning new bus service on Scottfield Drive, requested that:

In consultation with the Yee Hong Centre, staff be directed to respond to the request to detour the 39D and 130A bus routes on to Scottfield Drive along with the creation of two new bus stops, and

Review in their report any potential Wheel-Trans service options that may be available in addressing or supporting this request from the Yee Hong Centre.

This memo responds to these directives.

Staff have met with representatives of the Yee Hong Centre, on site, to discuss improved conventional bus service to this facility. Following the meeting, passenger counts were taken at bus stops close to the Centre to better understand passenger movements in the community. Based on the information assembled, several options were evaluated for providing TTC conventional bus service to Scottfield Drive, or to revise bus stop locations in the area. None of the options reviewed are recommended for implementation, however, because they would inconvenience more customers than they would benefit.

TTC staff have formally requested City of Toronto Transportation Services to consider installing a traffic signal on Finch Avenue at Scottfield Drive/Tiffield Road where the closest bus stops to the Yee Hong Centre are located. Installation of such a signal would provide residents of the Yee Hong Garden Terrace building with improved access to the bus services on Finch Avenue.

Wheel-Trans staff have reviewed the opportunities for increased service into the Yee Hong Centre, either with additional to-the-door service or with Community Bus service. They have concluded that additional service is not warranted at the present time. Wheel-Trans will, however, hold an information session for the residents at the Centre and, if there is strong interest, hold a registration day for potential Wheel-Trans customers.

Background

The Scarborough-Finch location of the Yee Hong Centre is comprised of two facilities located on the north side of Scottfield Drive, a crescent-shaped street that links Middlefield Road, south of Finch Avenue, with Finch Avenue, east of Middlefield Road (see Exhibit 1, attached). The Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care, located at 60 Scottfield Drive, includes a 280-bed nursing home, rehabilitation centre, medical offices, and a community centre. The geriatric unit is located on the north side of Scottfield Drive approximately 200 metres east of Middlefield Avenue. The Yee Hong Garden Terrace, located at 90 and 100 Scottfield Drive, provides housing for 500 to 600 residents in 308 units. The Yee Hong Garden Terrace is comprised of two residential buildings that are connected by a walkway with direct access to Scottfield Drive, approximately 25 metres from Finch Avenue.

The TTC currently operates three conventional-service bus routes within walking distance of the Yee Hong Centre:

- The 39 FINCH EAST bus route provides accessible service eastbound and westbound along Finch Avenue between Finch Station on the Yonge subway line and Neilson Road. This service operates 24 hours per day, seven days per week. In addition, the 139 FINCH EAST bus route provides peak-period service eastbound and westbound along Finch Avenue between Don Mills Station on the Sheppard subway line and Neilson Road. Both of these routes serve bus stops at the intersection of Finch Avenue and Scottfield Drive/Tiffield Road. This intersection is not signalized, however, so customers from the south wanting to use the westbound stop must cross Finch Avenue at an unsignalized intersection.
- The 130 MIDDLEFIELD bus route provides weekday and Sunday service northbound and southbound along Middlefield Road between Scarborough Centre Station and Steeles Avenue. The northbound stop is located on the east side of Middlefield Road, just north of Orator Gate which is approximately 150 metres north of Scottfield Drive.

The Yee Hong buildings are well-served by these three bus routes. The TTC's service standards state that areas which are within 300 metres of a bus route are adequately served. The Yee Hong Garden Terrace building is approximately 25 metres from the eastbound bus stop at Finch Avenue and Scottfield Drive/Tiffield Road and approximately 90 metres from the westbound bus stop at Finch Avenue and Scottfield/Tiffield Road. The building has been designed for good walk access to Finch Avenue. This allows residents to use the frequent, accessible bus services on Finch Avenue. However, the lack of a traffic signal at the intersection of Finch Avenue and Scottfield Drive/Tiffield Road makes access to westbound service more difficult.

The Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care building is not as well located. It is about 190 metres from Middlefield Road, and walk access to the building is less convenient because the entrance to the building is set back approximately 60 metres from Scottfield Drive. The stops at Middlefield Road and Orator Gate are an approximately 400-metre walk from the entrance to the Centre. The Geriatric Care building is also approximately 375 metres from the stops at Finch Avenue and Scottfield Drive.

Use-of-stop counts were conducted in September 2005 at both the Middlefield Road/ Orator Gate stops on the 130 MIDDLEFIELD route and at the Finch Avenue East/Scottfield Drive stops on the 39 FINCH EAST route, to determine the total number of customers currently using the stops and the direction that they walk to or from the stop. Approximately 70 passengers-trips per day are made at the bus stops located on Middlefield Road and Orator Gate, of which 15-to-20 are to and from Scottfield Drive.

Approximately 235 customer-trips use the 39 FINCH EAST stops located on Finch Avenue East and Scottfield Drive, of which approximately 105 are to and from the south. Half of these trips to/from the south are destined for a factory located on the east side of Scottfield Drive, across from the Yee Hong Garden Terrace buildings. The remaining 55 customer-trips are to/from the Yee Hong Garden Terrace building.

Conventional Route Changes Evaluated

As described below, four routing options were evaluated that could provide bus service to Scottfield Drive and the Yee Hong Centre. In each case, the inconvenience to customers using the current routing would be greater than the benefits for customers who would use the revised services. For this reason, none of the routing changes are recommended.

130 MIDDLEFIELD – Service on Scottfield Drive

An option was examined that would change the 130 MIDDLEFIELD route from Monday to Friday to operate via Scottfield Drive. Northbound buses would operate north on Middlefield Road, east and north on Scottfield Drive, west on Finch Avenue, and north on Middlefield Road. Southbound buses would operate south on Middlefield Road, east on Finch Avenue, south and west on Scottfield Drive, and south on Middlefield Road. Service would be removed from Middlefield Road between Scottfield Drive and Finch Avenue.

This change would be made with no additional operating cost. The interval between buses would be increased, from every 15 minutes to every 16 minutes in the morning peak period, and from every 22 minutes to every 23 minutes in the midday, afternoon peak period, and early evening.

It is projected that approximately 15 customer-trips each weekday would be made on the new service on Scottfield Drive. These customers would have a shorter walk to the Yee Hong Centre. Approximately 45 customer-trips each weekday that are made at stops on Middlefield Road between Scottfield Drive and Finch Avenue would be made with a longer walk to the nearest bus stop. Approximately 1,980 customer-trips each weekday that are made on the route would be made with a longer wait. Approximately 1,230 customer-trips each weekday that are made on the route north of Finch Avenue would be made with a longer travel time, as they would be carried out of their way via Scottfield Drive.

The change in weighted travel time shows that the inconvenience of a longer walk, a longer wait, and a longer travel time for a large number of customers is more important than the benefit of a shorter walk for customers travelling to and from the Yee Hong Centre. As a result, this service change is not recommended.

39 FINCH EAST – Service on Scottfield Drive

Three options were examined that would change the 39 FINCH EAST route to serve Scottfield Drive and provide westbound service closer to Yee Hong Centre.

The first option examined would divert all 39 FINCH EAST buses to operate on Middlefield Road and Scottfield Drive during the midday and in the evening time periods. This option would add approximately 3 minutes of travel time in each direction for the 1,700 passengers per day who currently use the route in this area. It would also be confusing for passengers if 39 FINCH EAST buses were to operate on a different routing during the midday and evening than they do during other times. As few passengers would benefit from the diverted service, and the inconvenience to existing passengers would be substantial, this option is not recommended.

The second option examined would extend the 39A FINCH EAST (Finch Station - McCowan) and 39C FINCH EAST (Finch Station - McCowan Express) branches from McCowan Road to Scottfield Drive. Buses would operate from Finch Station, east on Finch Avenue, south-west on Scottfield Drive, north on Middlefield Road, and west on Finch Avenue to Finch Station. Service would be operated during the morning and afternoon peak periods from Monday to Friday (the only periods during which these branches operate). Service would be removed during the peak periods from the current on-street loop on McCowan Road and Sandhurst Circle. This change would be made with no additional operating cost.

It is projected that approximately 40 customer-trips each weekday would be made on the new service on Scottfield Drive. These customers would have a shorter walk to or from the Yee Hong Centre. Approximately 155 customer-trips that begin or end each weekday at stops on Finch Avenue between McCowan Road and Scottfield Drive would have a shorter wait for a bus. Approximately 200 customer-trips each weekday that now begin or end at 39A/C FINCH EAST stops on McCowan Road and Sandhurst Circle would be made with a longer walk to the nearest 39 FINCH EAST bus stop.

The change in weighted travel time shows that the inconvenience of a longer walk to the nearest stop for existing customers on Sandhurst Circle is more important than the benefit of a short wait or a shorter walk for customers travelling to the Yee Hong Centre. As a result, this service change is not recommended.

The third option examined would implement a new short-turn branch of the 39 FINCH EAST route between Finch Station and Scottfield Drive during the midday and early evening from Monday to Friday. Every second bus on the 39D FINCH EAST (Finch Station - Neilson) branch would be changed to operate only as far east as Scottfield Drive. Buses would operate from Finch Station, east on Finch Avenue, south-west on Scottfield Drive, north on Middlefield Road, and west on Finch Avenue to Finch Station. This change would reduce operating costs because one bus fewer would be necessary during the midday and early evening.

It is projected that approximately 25 customer-trips each weekday would be made on the new service on Scottfield Drive. These customers would have a shorter walk to the Yee Hong Centre. Approximately 1,875 customer-trips each weekday that are now made at bus stops on Finch Avenue east of Scottfield Drive would be made with a longer wait for a bus. This reduction in service would result in the loss of approximately 50 customer-trips each weekday.

The change in weighted travel time shows that the inconvenience of a longer wait for the large number of existing customers east of Scottfield Drive is more important than the benefit of a shorter walk for customers travelling to the Yee Hong Centre. As a result, this service change is not recommended.

Possible changes to the bus stop on Middlefield Road

To improve access to the Centre for Geriatric Care, two options were considered with respect to the location of bus stops on Middlefield Road. The addition of new stops on Middlefield Road at Scottfield Drive was considered, but these new stops would be too close (150 metres) to the nearest existing stops, at Orator Gate. Establishing new stops at Scottfield Drive and eliminating the existing stops at Orator Gate would result in approximately 50 customer-trips each weekday being inconvenienced by a longer walk, compared to 20 customer-trips that would benefit from a shorter walk.

Possible new traffic signal on Finch at Scottfield/Tiffield

The installation of a traffic signal on Finch Avenue at Scottfield Drive/Tiffield Road would improve access to the westbound bus stop on Finch Avenue for customers travelling to or from the Yee Hong Centre, because these customers could cross the road more easily at a traffic signal. TTC staff have formally requested City of Toronto Transportation Services to consider the installation of a traffic signal on Finch Avenue at Scottfield Drive/Tiffield Road.

Wheel-Trans options

Seventy of the residents of the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care, and nine of the residents of the Yee Hong Garden Terrace are Wheel-Trans registrants. During the three months of July, August, and September 2005, 308 trips were made to and from the Geriatric Care Centre (approximately 3 per day) and 18 trips were made to and from the Garden Terrace Buildings (one every five days).

In the area bounded by Finch Avenue, Sheppard Avenue, McCowan Avenue, and Markham Road, there are 20 Wheel-Trans registrants, in addition to the 79 living at the Yee Hong complex. In the larger area bounded by McNicoll Avenue, Highway 401, Midland Avenue, and Markham Road, there are 418 Wheel-Trans registrants including the aforementioned 99 registrants. These levels of registration are significantly lower than the areas in which Community Bus service is currently provided.

Seniors citizens who are not Wheel-Trans registrants are also part of the target population for potential Community Bus services. According to demographic information from the City of Toronto, Agincourt North, the neighborhood in which Scottfield Drive is located, has 20% fewer seniors than the average for the City. The larger municipal ward in which the centre is located (Ward 41) has a seniors population of 11.3%, compared to the city-wide average of 13.6%. The seniors population and the number of Wheel-Trans registrants in the surrounding area are not large enough to support a fixed-route Community Bus service.

Possible Community Bus routes

The trip attractors and generators with the most potential for Community Bus routes are all located to the south of Scottfield Drive: Scarborough Town Centre, Bendale Acres, Birkdale Community Centre, Centennial Recreation Centre, Scarborough General Hospital, Scarborough Medical Centre, and seniors buildings on Ellesmere Road. However, these locations are already well-served by conventional accessible routes such as 116 MORNINGSIDE, 133 NEILSON, 134 PROGRESS, 16 MCCOWAN, 21 BRIMLEY, and 9 BELLAMY. To the north of Scottfield Drive, there are fewer trip attractors. Woodside Square Plaza is served by the 39 FINCH EAST accessible route. In the northeast, there is the L'Amoreaux Recreation Centre and, in the northwest, there is the Agincourt Community Centre.

Possible Wheel-Trans feeder service

Wheel-Trans currently operates a unique service from Main Subway Station to Variety Village for people who are not qualified for Wheel-Trans registration but still have difficulty walking between Variety Village and the nearest TTC regular bus stop. This service makes use of available space on the vehicles which already serve Variety Village (about 85 trips per day are operated into and out of Variety Village) and which, otherwise, would be at less than capacity.

This option was also examined for the Yee Hong Centre but, as there are, on average, only 3 Wheel-Trans trips per day into and out of the Yee Hong facility, there are not enough vehicle-trips to allow a service like this to operate effectively.

Summary

A detailed assessment has been undertaken of the services the TTC provides to the Yee Hong Centre on Scottfield Drive. The Centre is well served compared to many other similar locations in the City, both in terms of conventional bus service and Wheel Trans service. A wide range of service change options has been reviewed, but none can be supported at this time.

We have formally requested City of Toronto Transportation Services to consider installing a traffic signal on Finch Avenue at Scottfield Drive/Tiffield Road so that residents of the Yee Hong Centre could have more-convenient access to the bus services on Finch Avenue. In addition, Wheel-Trans staff will hold an information session for the residents at the Centre and, if there is strong interest, they will hold a registration day for potential Wheel-Trans customers.

Chief General Manager

11-55-51

Attachment: Exhibit 1

