

53 Steeles East Extension To Staines Road: Post-Implementation Review

Meeting Date: August 27, 2008

Subject: 53 Steeles East Extension To Staines Road: Post-Implementation Review

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Commission:

1. Approve the extension of the 53 STEELES EAST bus route to Staines Road as a regular part of the TTC route network; and
2. Forward this report to Councillors Cho, Del Grande, Filion, Lee and Shiner, to York Region Transit, and to Metrolinx.

Funding

This report has no effect on the TTC's operating or capital budgets. Funds for the continued operation of this trial service are included in the 2008 and 2009 operating budgets.

Background

A peak-periods extension of the 53 STEELES EAST bus route to Staines Road was implemented in June 2007, as recommended in the May 8, 2007 report Implementation of Deferred Service Improvements. This routing change is the subject of this post-implementation review.

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 a minimum six-month 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 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 implemented through this process have been successful. Of the 85 trial service changes made and evaluated since 1998, 64 of the changes attracted sufficient ridership that they meet the TTC's ridership and financial performance targets, and are now a regular part of the TTC system.

53 STEELES EAST – Extension to Staines Road

Before this service change was made, the main service on the 53 STEELES EAST bus route was operated between Finch Station and Markham Road. Starting on June 24, 2007, the route was extended farther east, to Staines Road, during the morning and afternoon peak period from Monday to Friday, on a trial basis. Buses on the new service operate every nine to ten minutes. The route extension was planned to operate to an off-street bus loop on Steeles Avenue near Staines Road. This loop has not yet been built, and so the service has been operating on a temporary on-street routing via east on Steeles Avenue, south on Staines Road, counter-clockwise via Quietbrook Crescent, north on Staines Road, and west on Steeles Avenue. Exhibit 1, attached, is a map of the route extension.

The new service shortens the distance TTC customers, from the northern part of the Morningside Heights neighbourhood, have to walk to their nearest bus stop, and provides a faster trip or a shorter walk for other customers who use the bus stops on Steeles Avenue between Middlefield Road and Markham Road. Ridership counts taken in mid-2008 show that approximately 250 customer-trips each weekday are made on the new part of the route. These customers have a shorter walk, as much as 20 minutes, to the nearest bus stop. The present ridership is greater than the originally-projected ridership of approximately 150 customer-trips per day.

Service was also improved for customers who begin or end their trips at the new eastbound bus stops on Steeles Avenue, between Middlefield Road and Markham Road. Approximately 160 customers-trips are made at these stops, and these customers have a shorter walk to their nearest bus stop, or have a shorter travel time.

The change made service worse for approximately 1250 customer-trips each day that are made at bus stops on McCowan Road north of Steeles Avenue, and on Elson Road. Service has been slightly reduced

on this part of the route, in order to extend service to Staines Road. These customers have a slightly longer wait for the bus at these stops. An analysis of the change in weighted travel time shows that the benefit of a shorter walk for customers on the new service is more important than the inconvenience of a longer wait for customers on the existing route.

Because one additional bus is required to provide the extended service, a financial assessment was carried out. The comparison of the operating costs with the increase in ridership indicates that the service meets the TTC's financial standard. For this reason, it is recommended that the extension of the 53 STEELES EAST route be made a regular part of the TTC route network.

As part of this post-implementation review, TTC staff also analysed the extension of the 53 STEELES EAST route farther south through the Morningside Heights neighbourhood. An option was evaluated that would extend the service south to loop on the on-street loop served by the 133 NEILSON bus route. Buses on this extended 53 STEELES EAST service would operate east on Steeles Avenue, south on Staines Road, north on Mantis Road, west on Nightstar Road, north on Morningside Avenue, north on Oasis Boulevard, east on Seasons Drive, north on Staines Road, and west on Steeles Avenue. Two additional buses would be required during the peak periods. Because much of the routing is already served by the 53 STEELES EAST or 133 NEILSON routes, relatively few new customers would be attracted to the TTC by the new service. The comparison of the operating costs with the increase in ridership indicates that the service would not meet the TTC's minimum financial standard. For this reason, it is not recommended.

TTC staff are currently working with staff from the City of Toronto to construct a new permanent off-street bus loop on Steeles Avenue, near Staines Road. It is expected that the new loop will be constructed in 2009. When the new loop is available for use, the temporary routing via Staines Road and Quietbrook Crescent will be eliminated.

As part of the TTC's Ridership Growth Strategy, beginning in November 2008, service east of Markham Road to Staines Road will be improved so that buses operate at all times of the week. This change will bring new off-peak service to the northern part of the Morningside Heights neighbourhood.

Justification

The post-implementation review of the operation of new service is an important part of the TTC's service standards. Because the extension of the 53 STEELES EAST route provides an overall benefit for customers and meets the minimum financial standard, it is recommended for continued operation as a regular part of the TTC route network.

July 31, 2008

11-31-JP

