

# TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION REPORT NO.

**MEETING DATE:** February 17, 2010

**SUBJECT:** CUSTOMER SERVICE

## **ACTION ITEM**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Toronto Transit Commission's three tenets are, service, safety and courtesy. The TTC remains strongly committed to all three. However, it recognizes and acknowledges that many of its customers have been disappointed and discouraged in recent months. All of us at the TTC - including the CGM and senior managers - must accept responsibility for this, and demonstrate leadership and accountability. The TTC will take the necessary actions described in this report, and beyond, to improve the TTC experience for the 1.5 million people who ride transit in Toronto everyday.

There are short, medium, and long-term steps the TTC can, and will, embark on to effect change. A shift in culture takes time to implement and the TTC recognizes it is fundamental to its success and customer confidence. An advisory panel, as recommended here, will listen to customers and employees through public consultation. It will also review some fundamental practices at the TTC and recommend change where appropriate.

The TTC looks forward to renewing its relationships with customers, employees and the public. The TTC must restore public confidence as one of the safest and most efficient transit systems in the world.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Commission approve the following actions as set out in this report:

- 1) That an advisory panel on customer service be established to help guide the TTC through a customer service transformation; and
- 2) That action be taken to reinforce to employees what customer service expectations are and that all TTC employees are accountable for their performance; and
- 3) That any necessary reassignment of workforce be undertaken to support employees through this initiative; and
- 4) That short-term actions be identified and implemented immediately.

### **FUNDING**

No funding has been included in the approved 2010 Operating Budget for any of the actions referred to in this report. Similarly, no funding has been included to support the Customer Service Advisory Panel or to implement the recommendations that will be made from their work. Any necessary funding will be reallocated from within this budget.

## **BACKGROUND**

On January 20, 2010, a memo from the TTC Chair and the Chief General Manager was adopted by the Commission, outlining steps to be taken to address customer service. On January 21, 2010, a photograph of a TTC Station Collector asleep in his booth began to circulate on Twitter. Subsequently, Toronto media began to inquire about this photograph and the photo was widely published and broadcast that evening and the next day. This caused the public to begin voicing concerns about poor customer service at the TTC. The attached letter (Attachment 1) was sent to TTC employees the following Monday, acknowledging that our customers deserved better service and that we needed to respond well and demonstrate concrete actions to repair our relationship with customers.

On January 27, 2010 a news conference was held by the Chair and attended by TTC staff to formally announce a customer service plan to review current and future initiatives, including the establishment of an advisory panel to assist us in our work.

## **DISCUSSION**

TTC frontline employees, particularly our bus and streetcar Operators, have a tremendous responsibility for the safety of their customers, the collection of fares, and the safe operation of their vehicles. They are well-trained to perform their jobs in all weather and traffic conditions, and at all times of the day. It is a challenging job and they have the TTC's support as they carry out their duties.

A small percentage of our employees, however, are not meeting the expectations of our customers, nor the TTC, and this reflects poorly on all of us. Our assessment of the events in recent weeks is that these matters are not just isolated incidents, but an indication of a culture that has become too accepting of performance that does not always meet expectations.

This conclusion is consistent with the findings of a 2008 culture survey associated with the initiation of the Work Safe - Home Safe safety program. It identified the need to address the attitude toward safety and determine why employees were behaving the way they were. This culture change, while initiated to address safety concerns, was also expected to improve all aspects of our business, e.g. absenteeism, labour relations and customer service.

To date, significant improvement has been achieved in the reduction of lost time injuries.

Attachment 2 shows a 22% reduction in lost time injuries over the last two years, with an estimated 347 fewer employees injured resulting in lost time from work. An 8% reduction has been noted in our unionized employee absence.

However, it is evident from all that has occurred recently that we need to focus on the culture of operating performance. Efforts in this area will improve the job performance of those employees who are not meeting the needs of our customers or the TTC. It includes customer service, but is generally related to issues of compliance, i.e. aspects of their job that can be readily measured. Improving customer service has been acknowledged as a difficult task; which is why we are seeking support.

Failure to adhere to acceptable operating performance will continue to erode the public's confidence in the TTC. There are obvious expectations of our employees, such as not sleeping on the job, that would be considered as common sense, not operating performance. Clearly, some have not demonstrated common sense. All of us at the TTC, including the CGM must accept responsibility for this and demonstrate leadership and accountability.

Efforts have begun to make it clear to all of our employees what our expectations are of their performance. On Tuesday, February 9, three sessions involving approximately 1,000 management and supervisory staff were held by the CGM to discuss the need for management to set clear expectations for their employees and to ensure there was a clear understanding that all employees are to be held accountable for their performance. The need to support our frontline employees, particularly the Operators and Collectors, was stressed. In that regard, it was announced that the majority of the Surface Transportation Supervisors were being assigned to the street to support our Operators and our customers.

### **OTHER STAFF ACTIONS**

The Station Collector Group, which is an area that has received much public attention, has developed and are acting on their Customer Service Improvement Plan, which has short and medium term actions, including a long term station management plan concurrent with the introduction of automatic train control and automatic fare collection. This improvement plan, which was developed in part through union and management employee focus groups, includes:

- A review of appropriate staffing levels;
- Use of external secret shoppers;
- Electronic information about service disruptions to Collector booths from Transit Control to supplement existing information;
- Additional staff, possibly TTC Ambassadors to be positioned at busy stations to answer questions, assist customers, and support Station Collectors during disruptions;
- A review of Collector training, plus a new four hour program to be completed in six months to improve customer service skills;

- A review of Collector recruitment to ensure that good customer service skills are a selection requirement;
- The replacement/improvement of booth microphones;
- Additional fare vending machines.

By reaching out and listening to our customers, and through improved hiring, training, supervision and technology, the TTC can and will improve the TTC experience for customers.

With respect to the Customer Service Advisory Panel, their scope of work will include the following:

- A review of Operator, Collector and other frontline employee initial training, as well as recertification training;
- A review of the commendation/complaint process;
- A review of the selection and hiring criteria for frontline employees;
- The introduction of a customer Charter/Bill of Rights, which would include employee as well as customer expectations;
- A review of current TTC plans to address customer service;
- Conducting public consultations/meetings/focus groups;
- Conducting employee consultations/meetings/focus groups;
- A public report on recommendations;
- Advising on expertise/resources needed to achieve success, e.g. external consultants, organizational changes that could include members of the Commission, members of management, as well as private citizens to address specific areas of interest.

To improve our customers' experience through technology, the following initiatives are underway:

- E-alerts, Twitter and Facebook updates when there is a delay;
- Platform video screens have current information/status of delays;
- All but five stations to have platform video screens by end of 2010,
- Internet Trip Planner is in beta form and live for public feedback;
- Next vehicle and SMS texting features will be phased in and rolled out through 2010.

Future customer service initiatives include the following:

- Electronic screens at subway stations with system status information;
- Better communications with Collector Booths when a delay occurs so employees can ensure customers understand what is happening and not enter the system when it is disrupted, for example;
  - o 24/7 customer service
  - o Emergency transfers
  - o Subway station support during major delays, including better communications and shuttle bus co-ordination.

**JUSTIFICATION**

The TTC is committed to excellence in customer service. Steps have been taken to ensure expectations are clearly understood and that each of us is held accountable for our performance. This action which will establish appropriate standards for acceptable operating performance will set a foundation on which to build a better TTC experience for our customers. Work has begun on some of the initiatives outlined in this report, but much more is required to re-establish the proud reputation of the TTC.

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February 12, 2010  
1-22  
Attachments



## TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER

January 25, 2010

### NOTICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES

#### CUSTOMER SERVICE

Much has been said about the TTC in the last few days, weeks and months. Some of the criticism has been warranted and should be considered as constructive. Yes, some of the criticism has been unfair, but in public service we must be prepared to receive criticism, learn from it, and then decide how best to respond.

Isolated incidents are not representative of the overall service we provide to our customers. I know that – and so do you. There are many good things we are doing today and planning for in the future, including new subway cars, new low floor streetcars, an automatic fare collection system, a subway extension, implementing the Transit City Light Rail Plan and providing new forms of customer information to improve the TTC experience. There is more service on the street today than at any time in the TTC's history.

Public transit is vital to a city the size of Toronto and our customers expect good service. All the surveys and feedback we get from customers tell us that service is what's most important. How we deliver on that service, however, is an individual responsibility.

We can all do better. What do our customers expect from us? Do we want them to wonder what their next trip on the TTC might be like, or do we want them to look forward to a reliable, safe and courteous trip? Each of us needs to think about how we are doing our jobs and how we interact with our customers. None of us is perfect, nor are our customers. But as public servants, we have a unique and important responsibility to meet, if not exceed, customer expectations.

Issuing notices telling employees to not sleep on the job would be ridiculous. Nor do I see a need to issue a common-sense list of "Do's and Don'ts." The TTC is on the frontline of public service. We need to demonstrate – **today** – that the TTC does care about its customers and that meeting their expectations is critical to our continued success.

In the coming weeks you'll hear more about the TTC's review of customer relations. I am proud of the TTC and the women and men who work here, and I speak for all of us, as well as the members of the Commission, when I say I also want our customers to be proud of the TTC.

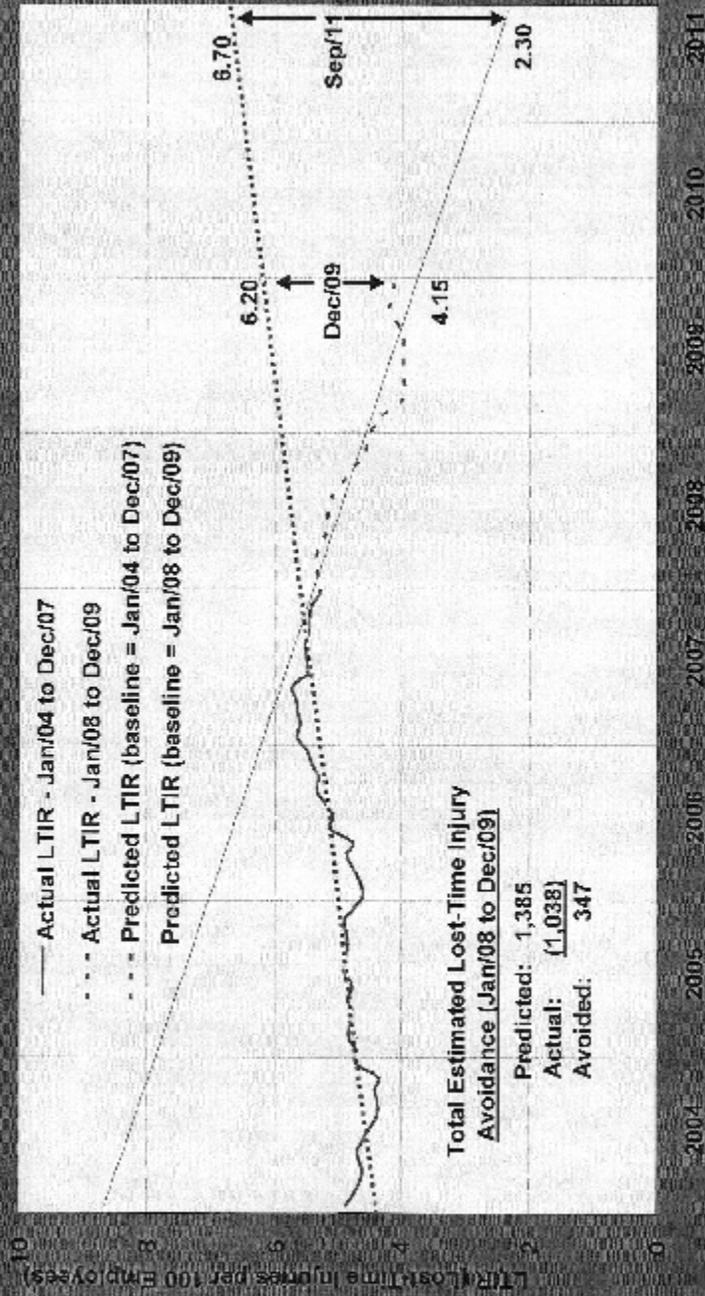
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "G. Webster".

Gary Webster  
Posting Period to April 1, 2010



Attachment 2

**Work Safe - Home Safe Program  
Lost - Time Injury Avoidance**



2010 Transit CEO Seminar

February 1, 2010

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