



Report of the Commissioner of Public Works
York Region Transit 2023 System Performance Report

1. Recommendation

The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Clerks of local municipalities.

2. Purpose

This report provides Council with an overview of York Region Transit (YRT) 2023 system performance and includes an update on ridership, revenue, service reliability and accomplishments.

Key Points:

- Ridership increased by 36%, reaching 21.1 million in 2023 compared to 15.5 million in 2022
- YRT maintained a high level of reliability in 2023 throughout changing travel patterns and increasing travel demand
- Key initiatives were delivered, including 123 service improvements, adding two new electric buses, opening of Major Mackenzie West Terminal, launching PRESTO open payment/mobile wallet, and completing several asset management-related programs for fleet and facilities
- Provincial Fare Integration Program (One Fare) developed throughout 2023, launched February 26, 2024, eliminating customers having to pay a double fare between YRT and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) within a transfer window
- The Region is to receive through the Zero Emission Transit Fund (ZETF) a grant of \$76 million and a low-interest loan of up to \$136 million to support the purchase of approximately 180 electric buses and associated infrastructure through March 31, 2026, accelerating transit fleet electrification goals by about 10 years

3. Background

York Region Transit delivers a variety of services to meet the unique needs of communities across the Region

The Region provides a blend of equitable, economical, and innovative transit services to meet the varying needs of all nine local municipalities within its large geographical service area. Private contractors operate a variety of YRT services, moving approximately 80,000 travellers daily:

- Viva bus rapid transit
- Base routes – Operate on major arterial corridors
- Local routes – Operate in neighbourhoods
- High school specials – Provide direct service to high schools
- Express routes – Provide limited-stop, direct service to key destinations
- YRT On-Request – On-demand transit service within a defined geographical area where demand for transit service is low
- Mobility On-Request Paratransit – Door-to-door, shared-ride, accessible public transit service for people with disabilities

The Region owns more than 440 conventional and 90 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) buses, operating out of three operations, maintenance, and storage facilities, and 30 Region-owned vehicles are contracted out for On-Request services. The Region also owns on-street infrastructure, including 87 curbside vivastations and 7 bus terminals, and operates and maintains 76 Rapidway vivastations.

4. Analysis

Transit ridership continued to increase in 2023 reaching 21.1 million compared to 15.5 million in 2022

In 2023, ridership reached 21.1 million, a 36% increase compared to 2022. The increase is a result of increased travel on Viva and base routes throughout the week, to and from schools and on weekends for leisure travel. These routes provide connections to the TTC subway, industrial areas, and key destinations along major travel corridors.

YRT's system wide ridership varies in distribution throughout the week, with weekday daily boardings highest Tuesday to Thursday, due to hybrid work practices; while weekday boardings increased 36% compared to 2022, Saturday and Sunday boardings increased 30% and 43%, respectively. Continued investment in service levels on weekends/holidays will be important to address growing demand on these days.

A comparison of monthly system-wide ridership for 2022 and 2023 is shown in Appendix A.

Ridership increased on York Region Transit On-Request and Mobility On-Request services

YRT On-Request, the new customer friendly brand name for Mobility On-Request Conventional, is a cost-effective and flexible service delivery model designed to provide service to travellers in low-demand areas and connect these areas with higher-order transit services. Mobility On-Request (MOR) is a specialized transit service providing door-to-door, shared ride service for people with disabilities and is available across the Region. YRT On-Request ridership increased 40% to 106,419 and MOR ridership increased 47% to 333,978. One new YRT On-Request service was implemented in 2023, while two others were expanded.

Service hours increased 6.7% in 2023 and service adjustments were made as travel patterns changed and ridership increased

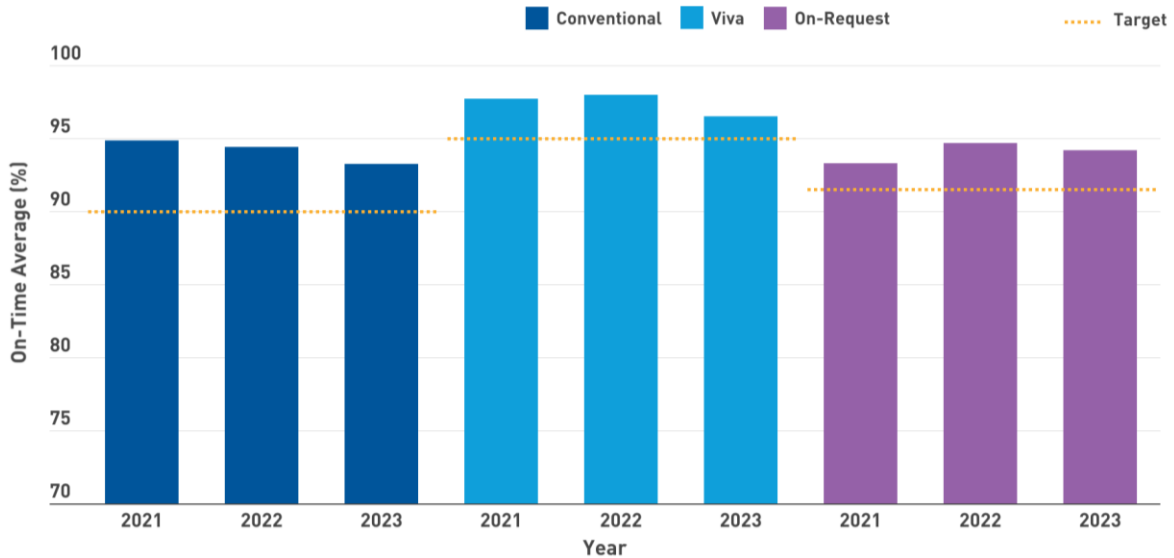
Service hours increased from 1.2 million in 2022 to 1.3 million in 2023, representing a 6.7% increase, as shown in Appendix B.

The 2021-2025 YRT Business Plan and annual Transit Initiatives continued to guide service expansion supporting ridership growth. Service increased on several major corridors, such as those identified as part of York Region's Frequent Transit Network, Express Bus Network and Viva system, and connections were improved to GO trains, TTC subway lines and the Viva system.

York Region Transit continued to meet on-time performance targets in 2023

On-time performance is a measure of the quality of service operated by YRT. Operating schedules are compared to real-time operating data and adjusted six times per year. Service is monitored in real-time through the Centralized Control Centre. This allows for immediate service adjustments to address delays and reduce traveller wait times. In 2023, staff continued to adjust schedules in response to changing travel patterns and increasing travel demand. On-time performance reached 93% for conventional service, 97% for Viva and 94% for On-Request, meeting targets, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
On-Time Performance 2021-2023



Key initiatives delivered in 2023 focused on traveller experience and the environment

In 2023, York Region Transit prioritized traveller experience and environmental sustainability through key initiatives, such as infrastructure expansions, fleet electrification, and service enhancements, all aimed at improving public transportation services while minimizing environmental impact as outlined below:

Assets

- Opened Major Mackenzie West Terminal in the City of Vaughan
- Continued construction for the expansion of the Region’s LEED gold certified operations, maintenance and storage facility located at 55 Orlando Avenue, scheduled to be complete in 2024
- Commenced design for expansion of the maintenance and storage facility located at 8300 Keele Street
- Started rehabilitation of Richmond Hill Centre Terminal pedestrian bridge
- Refurbished 57 buses through asset management programs
- Provided oversight in the manufacturing process and put into service 26 replacement buses
- Replaced 32 concrete bus stop pads, installed 31 new pads, and installed 15 new shelters throughout the Region
- Completed contract award and order for 75 battery electric buses

- Added two new electric buses into service in support of the Transit Bus Fleet Electrification Plan that will see all YRT buses converted to zero-emission technology by 2047
- Piloted two electric sedans shared on YRT On-Request and Mobility On-Request services

Service and Operations

- Continued work to advance the Yonge North Subway Extension into York Region and associated transit-oriented communities
- Implemented 123 services improvements to expand services, grow ridership and respond to changing travel patterns
- Transitioned to a new transit operations and maintenance contract for the newly integrated Southeast-BRT Transit Division

Customer Experience

- Awarded two distinct recognitions for YRT's Tourism campaign: Hermes Creative Award and MarCom Gold Award
- Provided travel training to 195 customers through the myRide Travel Training program
- Administered PRESTO cards to approximately 1,600 Transit Assistance Program participants and 2,400 Transit Discount Program participants
- Partnered with Crime Stoppers and York Regional Police to place Crime Stoppers decals at over 2,500 transit shelters and terminals across the YRT system

Technology

- Completed pilot of passenger information screens using solar-powered technology
- Modernized the interactive voice response system for paratransit services to improve customer automated phone interaction experience
- Installed Collision Avoidance and Pedestrian Warning System on two more buses for a total of 14
- Launched a new YRT On-Request platform and app to improve trip booking experience and vehicle monitoring

York Region Transit fares are integrated with Toronto Transit Commission

The Provincial Fare Integration Program (One Fare) approved by Council [November 2023](#) and launched on February 26, 2024, eliminates double fare between YRT and the TTC within a transfer window. Fare integration with the TTC is a result of years of advocacy by Council and staff as well as collaboration with the Province, Metrolinx and partner transit agencies.

Staff will monitor the Provincial Fare Integration Program (One Fare) closely with Metrolinx and make any necessary adjustments. Integrated fares with the TTC will provide opportunities for increased service integration, which staff will continue to explore.

In 2023, PRESTO contactless payment was launched on YRT vehicles in partnership with PRESTO and other local transit agencies, enabling transit fare payments with a credit card, debit card or mobile wallet on Android devices. Payment with mobile wallet on Apple (iOS) devices is expected to launch later this year.

5. Financial Considerations

Transit fare revenue increased to \$72 million in 2023 due to ridership growth

In 2023, fare revenue totaled \$72 million compared to \$53 million in 2022. In 2023, revenue-to-cost ratio recovered to 36%, up from 29% in 2022, primarily due to ridership growth. Other key factors impacting the revenue-to-cost ratio recovery in 2023 included service resumption costs, higher inflation and fuel prices, and the fare increase freeze in place since 2020. The approved 2024 operating budget included a 3% annual transit fare increase, beginning July 2024.

Staff continue to review fares, fare structure and funding opportunities to optimize delivery of the right mix of sustainable transit services.

York Region is to receive \$76 million federal grant and up to \$136 million loan from Canada Infrastructure Bank to accelerate fleet electrification goals

[December 2020](#), Council approved the Transit Bus Fleet Electrification Plan. August 10, 2021, the federal government launched the \$2.75 billion ZETF to help communities invest in zero-emission public transit and school transportation options, including zero-emission buses and infrastructure. In response to a July 2022 Capital Project application, at the end of 2022, the Region was approved through the ZETF, for a \$76 million grant from Infrastructure Canada (INFC) and a low-interest loan up to \$136 million from Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB), to support the purchase of approximately 180 electric buses and associated infrastructure.

The Region reached financial closure with CIB on the low-interest loan in March 2023. Staff are finalizing terms and conditions with INFC on the contribution agreement and working towards an executed agreement in Q2 2024. A request for an extension of the availability period has been submitted to INFC to address manufacturing supply chain issues that have affected delivery timelines. YRT will begin to receive new electric buses through this funding program in Q2 2025.

6. Local Impact

123 service improvements were implemented in 2023 to expand services, grow ridership and respond to changing travel patterns

Well-planned transit services help shape and connect communities. The Region's continuing investment in public transit provides travellers with a safe, effective, and reliable transportation choice and supports provincial housing targets, specifically in Official Plan Major Transit Station Areas.

YRT staff met with stakeholders, and all nine local Councils to discuss proposed 2024 service changes and upcoming projects. Public engagement occurred virtually, on-bus and on-street. YRT staff received over 1,000 comments and completed surveys on the planned service changes. A total of 23 improvements have been identified as part of the 2024 Transit Initiatives to improve frequency, provide more direct travel options, and expand secondary school travel options.

Staff continue to install amenities to enhance customer experience, and ensure all assets stay in good state of repair, including replacement buses, expansion buses, bus stop upgrades (e.g., bike racks, waste units, benches) and solar variable messaging signs.

7. Conclusion

In 2023, York Region Transit delivered key initiatives including the addition of two new electric buses, the opening of Major Mackenzie West Terminal, launching PRESTO open payment/mobile wallet, and completion of several asset management-related programs. YRT maintained a high level of service reliability through changing travel patterns and increasing travel demand.

In 2023, transit ridership continued to increase to 21.1 million, with growth concentrated on weekends and on routes providing connections to the TTC subway, industrial areas, and key destinations along major travel corridors.

York Region Transit will continue working with GTHA transit agencies and the federal and provincial governments to provide safe and reliable transit service and advance fare and service integration opportunities.

For more information on this report, please contact Richard Montoya, (A) Director, Transit Operations at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75928. Accessible formats or communication support are available upon request.



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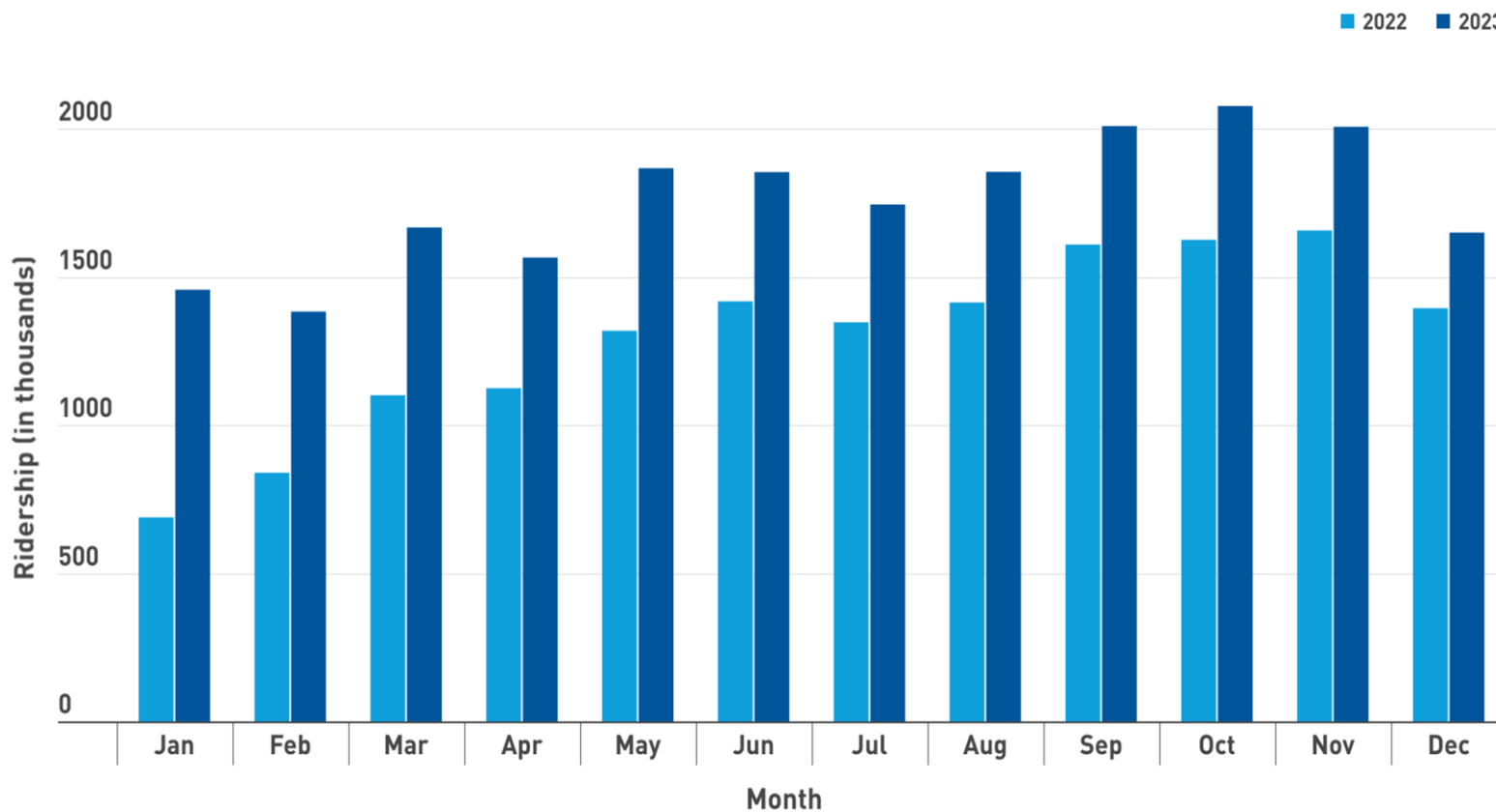
March 26, 2024

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Appendix A – York Region Transit System Ridership Comparison 2022 to 2023

Appendix B – York Region Transit Service Hours Comparison 2022 to 2023

York Region Transit 2023 System Performance Report
YRT System Ridership Comparison 2022 to 2023



York Region Transit 2023 System Performance Report YRT Service Hours Comparison 2022 to 2023

