

Our File/N/Réf.  
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DATE: 10 March 1999

TO/DEST: Co-ordinator  
Transit Services Committee

FROM/EXP: General Manager

SUBJECT/OBJET: **CHRISTMAS / NEW YEAR'S 1998/99 SERVICE**

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### **DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Transit Services Committee receive this report for information.**

### **BACKGROUND**

At the Transit Commission meeting of 13 January 1999, Commissioner M. McGoldrick-Larsen requested that a report be provided to the Transit Services Committee on the subject of the transit service provided in the period around Christmas and New Year's 1998/99.

This report responds to that request. It discusses the planned service, the reliability of the service provided and includes some considerations for the same period in 1999/2000.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **The Planned Service**

The type of service needed around the Christmas period depends to a large extent on the day of the week on which Christmas Day and New Year's Day fall.

The schools are closed for a two week period, so there is no need for school service, and during these two weeks many people take holidays which reduces demand for peak period transit. It is also a time when OC Transpo staff like to take holidays, if possible, and so scheduling a slightly reduced service at a time of reduced demand allows more operators to have leave.

Looking at the fact that Christmas Day fell on a Friday in 1998, we had originally planned a slightly reduced service (6,300 hours compared to 6,570 hours) for 21-24 December, and a more reduced service (5,500 hours) for 29-30 December. However, in order to minimize passenger disruption, we scheduled the same service, at the 6,300 hours level, for the seven days.

The planned service included minor reductions on both regular and peak period only routes. The four percent reduction was, in fact, less than reductions in previous years.

Service on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve always poses a dilemma since many people leave their offices early on those days. This was handled by adding extra service from noon onwards.

On Christmas and New Year's Days the service was scheduled at a relatively low level, as has been the case for several years. A reduced Sunday service, operating for twelve hours was planned.

### Service Operated

There were considerable problems in operating the planned service in the week of 21 December. Over the period from 21 December to 24 December, there were 666 cancelled trips which could not be covered with extra service. This represents 2.5% of scheduled trips and is a factor of five higher than is experienced in normal circumstances. The worst day was Tuesday, 22 December, when very poor weather conditions resulted in 223 cancelled trips as well as many rescheduled trips.

The service on Christmas Eve operated fairly well, although it was noted by operations staff that five additional extra buses, on top of the twenty assigned, would have been helpful.

On New Year's Eve, an operator shortage led to some of the last trips on express routes not being covered but ridership was very light.

On Christmas Day and New Year's Day, service operated very close to the schedule.

### Public Information

A comprehensive program was put in place to inform the public about the changes:

- X 85,000 take-ones were distributed on buses
- X Flyers describing service types and hours of service at Customer Service Centres handed out at Centres
- X Christmas week schedules available on the web site, 560 and Telidon
- X Newspaper ads in the Sun, Citizen and Le Droit on 19 and 20 December
- X Special holiday service message on the bus stop schedules at 1,200 bus stops
- X Press releases 15 and 21 December

### Customer Reaction

We received 27 contacts from customers opposed to the service reductions for the week of 21 to 24 December. Many of the complaints, though focussed on the service reduction, likely resulted from delays in the service delivery described above, since in previous years reduced schedules have met with little comment.

The service on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve which appeared to take no account of the reality that many, many people leave work at noon on that day, drew some comment. Although extra service met the demand, it would have been better to have moved the peak period earlier so that the majority of customers could use their express routes. In addition, we heard from several people that Christmas Day and New Year's Day service ends too early.

### SUMMARY

While changing schedules at any time can be inconvenient for customers, some reductions in the Christmas and New Year period make sense from an efficiency and staff management point of view.

Severe disruptions to service in the week before Christmas led to a number of complaints which, based on experience from previous years, would not have been expected had the scheduled service been performing better.

We will be bringing ideas for service in the 1999/2000 Christmas and New Year to the Transit Services Committee shortly, including improvements in schedules to better meet the needs of customers.

*Approved by  
M.J.E. Sheflin, P.Eng.*