



## **Pilot – Free Transit for Grade 7-12 Student Field Trips**

**Date:** May 16, 2024

**To:** TTC Board

**From:** Chief Strategy and Customer Experience Officer (Acting)

### **Summary**

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This report presents the scope of a pilot to provide free transit for Grade 7 to 12 student field trips as requested by the TTC Board on February 22, 2024.

The pilot was developed in cooperation with Toronto's public and separate English and French-speaking school boards and could be in place for the 2024/25 school year, beginning in September 2024 and ending June 2025.

School administrators and teachers will be provided with travel guidelines to ensure trips are taken when and where excess transit capacity is available. Free transit for field trips will be permitted on Mondays and Fridays between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. on routes operating 10 minutes or better, with some restrictions based on group sizes.

Teachers and students will continue to use PRESTO Tickets to access TTC services. PRESTO Tickets will continue to be purchased by schools directly or by the school boards in bulk and provided to students. The TTC will reimburse the school boards for the value of PRESTO Tickets purchased for eligible trips, less the PRESTO commission fees, which the school boards will fund.

The pilot will also include an education module to develop student skills, confidence, etiquette, and fare compliance when riding the TTC. Teachers and students participating in the pilot must review the material before taking the field trip.

The pilot will be evaluated, and the results will be presented to the TTC Board toward the end of the school year when a decision will be made to determine whether to extend the pilot based on the results and any service, financial and operational implications.

### **Recommendations**

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It is recommended that the TTC Board:

1. Approve the pilot for Free Transit for Grade 7-12 Student Field Trips for the 2024-2025 school year;

2. Adjust the TTC's 2024 Operating Budget by reducing 2024 fare revenue budget by \$500,000 and increase ancillary revenue budget by \$500,000, to be funded from the proceeds to be received from the sale of decommissioned Scarborough Rapid Transit fleet to offset the revenue impact anticipated from the implementation of the Free Transit for Grade 7-12 Student Field Trips pilot;
3. Direct staff to include the budget adjustment in the TTC's submission for the next City variance report; and
4. Request TTC staff to report back to the Board at the conclusion of the pilot on the results of the pilot's outcomes, including any service, financial and operational implications.

## **Financial Summary**

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As per the pilot's design, no additional operating costs are expected based on the design of the pilot, and all riders are to be accommodated within existing service levels and hours. However, the pilot could result in foregone revenue of up to \$500,000.

Specifically, in addition to no operating costs, this pilot has no additional administrative costs. The participating school boards will support most of the administration between the schools, the program, and reporting to the TTC. The administration to facilitate reimbursement of funds to the school boards for eligible field trip fares is to take place within existing TTC staffing levels.

The reimbursement to the school boards will be net of the related PRESTO commission expense that the TTC paid to Metrolinx on the usage of the Youth PRESTO Tickets.

The estimated foregone revenue to the TTC of up to \$500,000 is based on the potential that the full volume of current field trips would switch to the free field trip program and be eligible for reimbursement to the school boards. The TTC would also not realize any revenue from an increase in field trip rides on the program days, which may occur as a result of additional field trip excursions taking place due to free transit fares.

In order to assure there is no financial impact to the TTC for this pilot, this report recommends a budget adjustment to the TTC's 2024 Operating Budget to offset any revenue shortfall with proceeds from the sale of decommissioned Scarborough Rapid Transit fleet.

The results of the pilot will identify any financial implications that would need to be addressed should consideration be given to extending the pilot program.

The Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial summary information.

## Equity/Accessibility Matters

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100% of schools in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) will have access to this inaugural Free Transit for Grade 7-12 Student Field Trips Pilot Program, and 98% of these schools are within a 10 min walking distance of a service route.

Providing free transit to Grade 7-12 students for field trips will increase access to educational opportunities for student across the city, including students from diverse socio economic groups.

As part of our measure of success of this pilot, the TTC will monitor usage of students from grade 7- 12 with origination points that are within NIAs.

## Decision History

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At its September 14, 2023 meeting, the TTC Board adopted a motion directing staff to assess two proposals to take a step toward free transit for middle and high school students for school trips outside peak hours and to distribute a limited quantity of free youth passes to charities.

Notice of Motion: [A Step Towards Free Transit for Middle and High School](#)

Decision: [Notice of Motion - A Step Towards Free Transit for Middle and High School Students – by Commissioner Dianne Saxe, seconded by Commissioner Paul Ainslie](#)

At its February 22, 2024, meeting, the TTC Board received a report outlining opportunities to provide free transit to middle school and secondary school groups making field trips during off-peak hours. At the same meeting, the TTC Board adopted a motion requesting staff to report on the scope of a pilot to provide free transit using spare capacity and develop an education module to share with students.

Staff Report: [A Step Towards Free Transit for Middle and High School Students](#)

Decision: [A Step Towards Free Transit for Middle and High School Students](#)

## Issue Background

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At its February 2024 meeting, the two proposals to take a step toward free transit for middle and secondary school students for school trips outside peak hours and to distribute a limited quantity of free youth passes to charities were not passed due to cost. The TTC Board adopted a motion to scope out a pilot for providing free transit for middle and secondary school student field trips that could be done at no cost to the TTC by leveraging only routes or times of day with excess capacity, rather than adding additional service.

While previous discussions have focused on middle and secondary students, this pilot will apply to all students in Grade 7 to 12, which may include some elementary school students. This is to accommodate youth who may already have reached the age of 13 and can no longer ride the TTC free of charge.

The purpose of this pilot is to develop familiarity and comfort with taking public transit that could continue into adulthood and to increase access to educational opportunities through access to a no-cost transportation option.

A number of conditions have been put in place to enable this pilot. This includes that no additional service will be provided to accommodate field trips. Free fares are to be used only in instances where expected capacity is determined to exist in non-peak hours. For the TTC, peak hours are 6:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. For this pilot, the off-peak hours are broadened to consider 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. to account for most field trip travel times.

**Comments**

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The TTC is partnering with Toronto's public and separate English and French-speaking school boards to pilot free transit to Grade 7-12 students when taking field trips. This pilot is expected to be in place for the 2024/25 school year, beginning in September 2024 and ending in June 2025. The information below outlines the expected details and scope for the pilot as described above. **Table 1** illustrates the number of students per grade at each eligible school board.

**Table 1: Number of Students per Grade per School Board**

	<b>CS Viamond<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Csc MonAvenir<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Toronto Catholic District School Board<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Toronto District School Board<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Total</b>
<b># of Schools</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>531</b>
<b># of Students</b>	<b>1,215</b>	<b>1,272</b>	<b>38,925</b>	<b>104,474</b>	<b>145,886</b>
Grade 7	290	271	6,224	15,155	
Grade 8	240	247	6,421	16,445	
Grade 9	210	200	6,469	17,453	
Grade 10	175	210	6,553	17,857	
Grade 11	150	191	6,776	18,425	
Grade 12	150	153	6,482	18,139	

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<sup>1</sup> French-language Public school board  
<sup>2</sup> French-language Catholic school board  
<sup>3</sup> English Catholic school board  
<sup>4</sup> English Public school board

## **Pilot Objectives and Outcomes**

The objective of the pilot is to instill confidence in taking transit by showing students how to use the system, opening the door to good transit use elsewhere in their lives, and also increase access to educational opportunities outside of the classroom during the pilot.

The pilot's three key objectives are:

1. Access – increase in field trips and increase in youth ridership.
2. Education – number of classes and students reached (topics to include: transit etiquette, fare compliance and transit safety).
3. Practicality – pilot is easy and simple to use and administer.

These objectives will help form an evaluation that will focus on the impacts of the pilot through various lenses including equity. The evaluation will look to measure any specific impacts on schools in neighbourhood improvement areas, specifically as it relates to any increase in field trips due to the access to free fares. It is recognized that free transit fares will not replace the need for charter school buses in a number of instances due to factors outside of cost and the need to travel on the TTC on days other than those outlined below.

### **Eligibility**

For the purposes of this pilot, a field trip is defined as a trip or excursion for the purposes of education, gaining firsthand knowledge and participating in hands-on learning away from the classroom. Examples of exclusions are fares used for the purposes of home-to-school, co-op placement travel, and extracurricular activities, such as bands and teams.

Schools that wish to participate in the pilot must review the transit etiquette and usage materials with the students prior to the date of the excursion.

### **Service Parameters**

The TTC's available excess capacity is Monday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To be eligible, fares must be used within the defined parameters, subject to group size, as outlined in **Table 2**. As noted, groups of five or less can take all TTC services, groups of 6-20 students can take subway, streetcar and bus routes that operate every 10 minutes or better as illustrated in **Attachment 1** and listed in **Attachment 2**. Groups larger than 20 are expected to split into smaller groups for travel on buses and streetcars.

These parameters are indicative of expected September 2024 ridership. However, the TTC will reserve the right to update or amend these parameters, as required. At this time, a planned review will take place in December 2024.

**Table 2: Service Parameters**

Group Size	Route Availability	Time of Travel
5 or less	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All modes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mondays between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.</li> <li>• Fridays between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.</li> </ul>
6-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All subway lines</li> <li>• All streetcar routes</li> <li>• Bus routes operating every 10 minutes or better</li> </ul> <p>Exclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus routes that operate less frequently than every 10 minutes</li> </ul>	
21-50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All subway lines</li> </ul>	
51+	None	None

**PRESTO Ticket Distribution and Administration**

The pilot is based on a reimbursement model. The distribution of fares and administration of the pilot is comprised of three elements.

*Ordering*

There is no change proposed for the pilot to how schools order and access PRESTO Youth Ticket fares. They will continue their status quo purchasing through PRESTO's bulk sales program.

*Reporting*

To be eligible for reimbursement, each school board must submit data and information as requested by the TTC. This information must be submitted on a monthly basis and contained within a single document for each board. Each submission must contain the following per field trip reimbursement request:

- Destination/reason for field trip.
- Participating school(s).
- Class, Grade, and teacher.
- Date of travel.
- Route(s) used (for groups).
- Time of travel (for groups).
- Number of participating students.
- Youth PRESTO Ticket numbers used and purchase price.

### *Reimbursement*

In addition to the outlined reporting requirements, each school board must submit one invoice on a quarterly basis to be paid via cheque request. The TTC will review the invoice and supporting information to determine eligibility for reimbursement and submit cheque requests. Reasonable time restrictions on when tickets will be eligible for reimbursement from time of use will be in place. It is also important to note that legacy tickets and tokens will not be eligible. Used PRESTO tickets numbers will be used to validate trips reported.

The TTC will reserve the right to refuse reimbursement for trips deemed outside of the pilot scope. Additionally to note, Youth PRESTO Tickets will be required for all participating students aged 13 to 19, and supervisors are still required to pay a fare (via any valid TTC fare media).

Note that the reimbursement will be net of the related PRESTO commission expense that the TTC paid to Metrolinx on the usage of the Youth PRESTO Tickets.

### **Implementation**

To implement this pilot, each participating school board is expected to sign an agreement with the terms and conditions that will outline the eligibility, service parameters, and operational responsibilities of each party, including the need for education. This would act as a risk mitigation measure to ensure that tickets are used in accordance with the pilot scope.

Plans for communications, TTC resourcing, and monitoring and evaluation will be required. This will ensure school boards and internal TTC teams are aware of the relevant information, confirm process details and time required of TTC resources to successfully implement the pilot, and provide opportunities to receive and implement feedback and measure its success.

Plans for awareness and education will also be developed to promote the pilot. Electronic notifications, which can be included in school board communications, can be distributed internally and will provide awareness and details of how to access the pilot for teachers. A link to a page on TTC.ca will provide an explainer to teachers on how to use the pilot.

Prior to a field trip, teachers will be able to access the education component and training materials that will be available. Each class must view the materials prior to their trip. TTC Customer Communications staff will engage entities, such as Get on the Bus, the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) and the American Public Transit Association (APTA) for best practices in travel training on multi-modal systems for high school students. Stakeholder input will be sought from staff to ensure the final product is relevant to the Toronto experience. Existing print and video materials will be leveraged and supplemented/augmented with messaging specific to the pilot.

### **Data Collection and Reporting**

Qualitative and quantitative data will be required to evaluate the pilot and consider a permanent rollout. Appropriate data and information will be considered based on the objective being measured. Data may include, but is not limited to, Youth PRESTO Ticket usage for field trips, surveys, and school board data.

### **Next Steps**

In preparation for the pilot launch, the TTC will continue to work internally, including engagement with TTC Legal staff in drafting agreements with each School Board that will outline the terms and conditions of the pilot program. Collaboration with the school boards on detailed pilot planning will take place and subject-matter experts in travel training will be engaged to support the development of messaging that resonates with the student market.

### **Contact**

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### **Signature**

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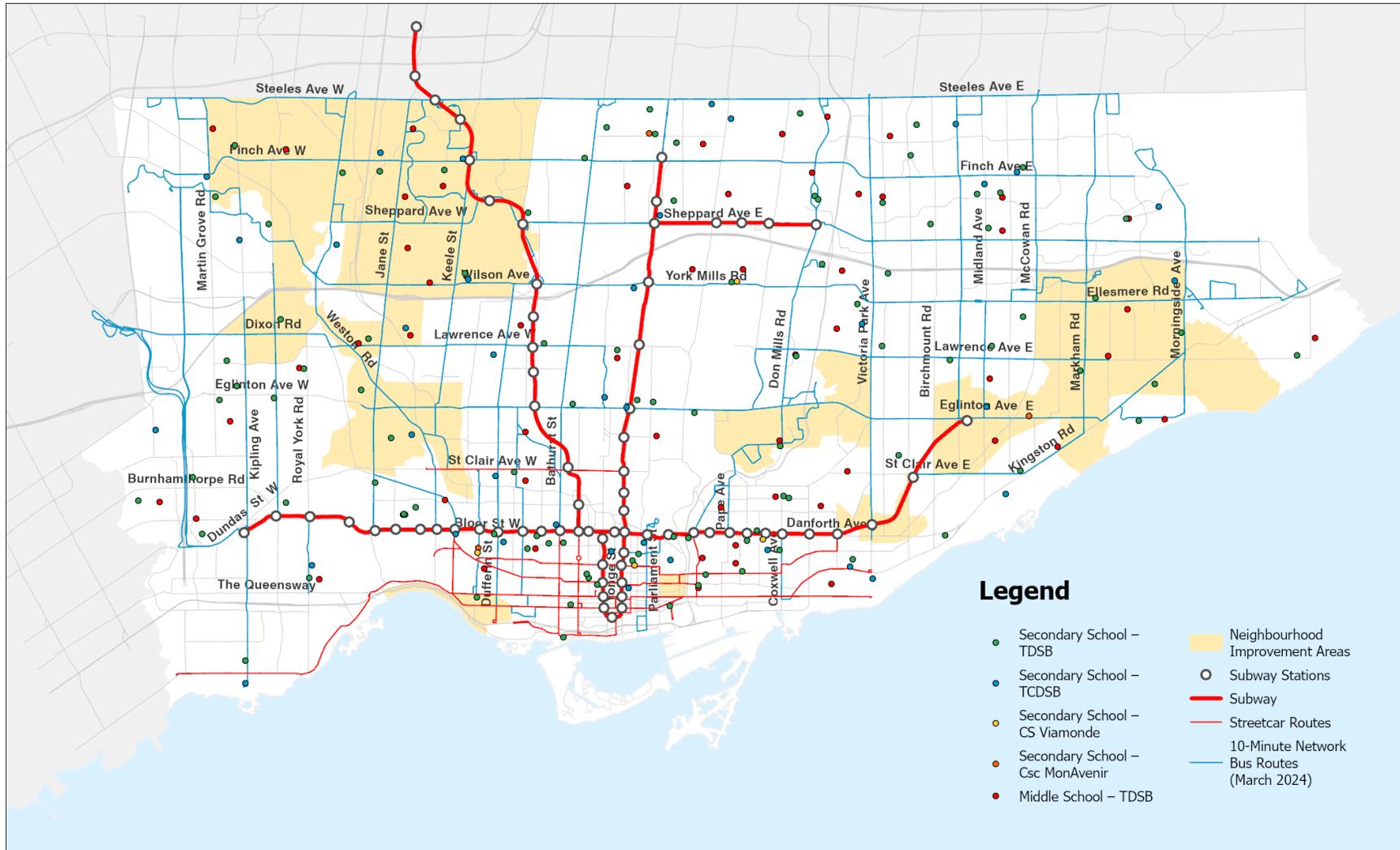
Wendy Reuter  
Chief Strategy and Customer Experience Officer (Acting)

### **Attachments**

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Attachment 1: Transit Service Map for Groups of 6-20 Students  
Attachment 2: Bus Routes for Groups of 6-20 Students

# Attachment 1: Transit Service Map for Groups of 6-20 Students



### Legend

- Secondary School – TDSB
- Secondary School – TCDSB
- Secondary School – CS Viamonde
- Secondary School – Csc MonAvenir
- Middle School – TDSB
- Neighbourhood Improvement Areas
- Subway Stations
- Subway
- Streetcar Routes
- 10-Minute Network Bus Routes (March 2024)

**\*Program is available to all grade 7 to 12 students that attend one of the four school boards**  
**\*\*Elementary schools not shown on map**

## Attachment 2: Bus Routes for Groups of 6-20 Students

Bus Route	Operating Between
7 Bathurst	
22 Coxwell	
24 Victoria Park	Victoria Park Station - Steeles Avenue
25 Don Mills	
29 Dufferin	
32 Eglinton West	Eglinton Station - Jane Street
34 Eglinton East	Eglinton Station - Kennedy Station
35 Jane	
36 Finch West	Finch Station - Humberwood
37 Islington	Islington Station - Bergamot Avenue
38 Highland Creek	Kennedy Station - UTSC
39 Finch East	Finch Station - Neilson Road
40 Junction-Dundas West	Dundas West Station - Jane Street
41 Keele	
43 Kennedy	Kennedy Station - Steeles Avenue
44 Kipling South	
45 Kipling/945 Kipling Express	Kipling Station - Belfield Rd
47 Lansdowne	Queen Street – St. Clair Avenue West
52 Lawrence West	Eglinton Station - Airport Rd
53 Steeles East	Finch Station - Morningside Avenue
54 Lawrence East	Eglinton Station - Scarborough Golf Club Road
63 Ossington	
75 Sherbourne	
76 Royal York South	Royal York Station - The Queensway

<b>Bus Route</b>	<b>Operating Between</b>
81 Thorncliffe Park	
84 Sheppard West	Sheppard-Yonge Station - Weston Road
85 Sheppard East	Don Mills Station - Meadowvale Road
86 Scarborough	Kennedy Station - Lawrence Avenue East
89 Weston	
90 Vaughan	
94 Wellesley	Castle Frank Station - Wellesley Station
95 York Mills/995 York Mills Express	York Mills Station - Port Union Road
96 Wilson	York Mills Station - Humber College
100 Flemingdon Park	
102 Markham Rd	Warden Station - Steeles Avenue
108 Driftwood	
116 Morningside	
129 McCowan North	Kennedy Station - Steeles Avenue
165 Weston Rd North	
900 Airport Express	
903 Kennedy Station-Scarborough Express	
905 Eglinton East Express	Kennedy Station - Conlins via UTSC Exp
927 Highway 27 Express	Kipling Station - Steeles Express
929 Dufferin Express	
939 Finch Express	Finch Station to Kennedy Station
960 Steeles West Express	Finch Station-Hwy 27 via Pioneer Village Station Express