

Ottawa Transit Bulletin

August 2001

NOTES BEFORE THE NEWS

Welcome to the August issue.

- Next month is light rail, and the route is looking more like a rail transit line.
- Transetiquette: It's time to pry standing people away from the rear bus doors. Those who aren't getting off the bus need to get out of the doorway.
- Puff piece: Ottawa's new status as a smoke-free zone has begun. But don't expect too many significant differences around bus stops and stations since OC Transpo facilities were already declared non-smoking zones. The occasional discarded butt is bound to be encountered during travels.

Thanks again:

To those whose contributions, encouragement and feedback help make this issue of OTB possible.

LIGHT RAIL START IN SEPTEMBER

The start of Light Rail in Ottawa has been pushed back due to various delays. 5th Sept 2001 is the new target date, in time for the start of classes at Carleton.

COUNTDOWN TO LIGHT RAIL - MORE OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

Last OTB, a common objection to LRT was dealt with. Here is this month's objection, and its answer:

Objection #3: "Light rail will take away from bus ridership"

Answer #3: If rail improves overall transit ridership, then what seems to be the problem?

If the rail service is faster and can provide vehicles with more capacity, as the pilot project is set to do, then again what seems to be the problem?

When buses reach their capacity, it is time for another technology to take the ridership away. Taking that next step in building a comprehensive transit system would seem to be no problem at all.

SIGHTINGS AND MYSTERIES

Sighting:

Without warning, buses through Carleton University (routes 4 and 7, perhaps 117 returning in the fall) are being re-routed for many months, due to building construction that has closed off Library Rd. The buses will now loop on Campus Ave, which does have the advantage of

being closer to Carleton's light rail station.

Alert:

Laurier/King Edward intersection will be closed until September. That means bus service such as route 5 must re-route around that construction zone.

Sighting:

The Central Canada Exhibition (SuperEx) is set to happen in mid-August. If last year was any indication, expect some extremely packed situations on routes 1 and 7. There may be no additional bus services for Lansdowne Park during the event.

Mystery:

Some noises from sources indicate that bike racks on buses are expected to become more commonplace over the next year or so. Bike racks would ideally

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be phased in with new buses - new low floor articulated and standard size buses are likely to be seen this fall, with another batch of low floor articulated buses next year.

However, one wonders how much longer the older "high floor" articulated buses will remain in service. These buses have been familiar to users of routes 2, 85, 95, etc. Newer buses, less seating per bus, and the same frequencies could mean more of a crunch on board.

Sightings:

The safety audits mentioned in previous issues of OTB have been useful in assessing transitway station safety. These were an opportunity to identify station shortcomings such as low lighting, inconsistent or confusing signage, unlocked salt boxes, graffiti, dirty elevators. There were also some positive things to be found in the stations: areas where lighting was good, presence of emergency call boxes, availability of information.

Our compliments to Women's Action Centre Against Violence for conducting these sessions and to those who attended.

Sighting:

There is re-routing of buses at Bayshore these days, particularly the route 97. The westbound 97, rather than proceed through the Bayshore lower parking lot, is going around to Acres Road then backtracking to the Bayshore transitway station, apparently due to some construction on the parking lot level. Be prepared to waste a bit more time travelling through there for the next unknown while...

Send your sightings and mysteries to OTB: otra-info@flora.org

TRANSFERS AND DAYPASSES

Transfer machines on OC Transpo buses can generate transfers or day passes as needed.

Regular Transfers will have an expiration time on the top left corner (in 24-hour format, which means 18:00 represents 6pm). Day passes will have the words "DAYPASS" and "PASSEJOUR" in the top left. A regular transfer will also indicate "Front door boarding only" in both official languages.

Other common aspects of these slips are: date, the words "PROOF OF PAYMENT" and "PREUVE DE PAIEMENT", the words "WELCOME / BIENVENUE" on the bottom, and three instances of a two-letter code which changes randomly for each day. There are potentially other variations for such cases as express fares, etc.

Some sample two-letter day codes, as recently observed in late July:

Sun 22nd: IC Mon 23rd: RM Tue 24th: VX Wed 25th: GG Thu 26th: SD
 Fri 27th: BW Sat 28th: RP Sun 29th: CK Mon 30th: ZW Tue 31st: QB

One problem is especially noticeable in summer. The paper used for transfers and day passes is similar to fax paper. This means the paper is heat-sensitive, so that when these documents are kept in too warm a place (like a shirt pocket on a scorching day), the entire slip tends to blacken. It is therefore important to keep these documents away from hot spots.

Remember that a transfer is good for at least 90 minutes and can be used for stop-overs. There is no restriction on the number and routing of trips as long as the transfer time has not expired.

FARES: DARE TO COMPARE

How transit fares in Canada compare (including OC Transpo and STO fares).

These fares were compared as of July 2001, based on respective transit operators' information, based on their normal service areas. Some variability is due to the particular implementations of zone or express fares in some areas (notably

Vancouver, Ottawa, Hull). Order leads by the most expensive fares.

Adult Cash Fare

Hull, QC	\$2.60-\$4.70 (depending on regular, express, interzone)
Ottawa, ON	\$2.25-\$3.50 (regular-express)
Toronto, ON	\$2.25
Hamilton, ON	\$2.00
Montreal, QC	\$2.00
Vancouver, BC	\$1.75-\$3.50 (depending on zone, time)
Calgary, AB	\$1.75
Halifax, NS	\$1.65
Winnipeg, MB	\$1.65
St John's, NF	\$1.50

Adult Ticket fares

Hull, QC	\$2.10-\$4.20 (depending on regular, express, interzone)
Toronto, ON	\$1.80 (5 for \$9.00)
Ottawa, ON	\$1.70-\$2.55 (depending on regular or express)
Vancouver, BC	\$1.60-\$3.25 (10 tickets, depending on zone and time)
Winnipeg, MB	\$1.60 (10 for \$16.00)
Halifax, NS	\$1.50 (20 for \$30.00)
Hamilton, ON	\$1.50 (5 for \$7.50)
Calgary, AB	\$1.45-\$1.55 (10 for \$14.50 or 5 for \$7.75)
Montreal, QC	\$1.42 (6 for \$8.50)
St John's, NF	\$1.35 (10 for \$13.50)

Adult Monthly Pass

Toronto, ON	\$93.50 (annual discount program available)
Vancouver, BC	\$63.00-\$120.00 (depending on zone)
Winnipeg, MB	\$61.60
Ottawa, ON	\$59.50-\$73.50 (regular-express)
Hull, QC	\$59.00-\$101.00 (depending on regular, express, interzone)
Hamilton, ON	\$58.00
Halifax, NS	\$57.00
St John's, NF	\$55.00
Calgary, AB	\$52.50
Montreal, QC	\$48.50

Student/Senior Cash Fare

Hull, QC	\$2.60-\$4.70 (no concession discount on cash fare)
Ottawa, ON	\$2.25-\$3.50 (regular-express, no concession discount)
Hamilton, ON	\$2.00
Toronto, ON	\$1.50
St John's, NF	\$1.50 (senior)
Winnipeg	\$1.35-\$1.65 (senior-student-paratransit)
Vancouver, BC	\$1.25-\$2.50 (depending on zone and time)
Halifax, NS	\$1.15
Calgary, AB	\$1.10 (youth)
Montreal, QC	\$1.00

Student/Senior Ticket fares

Ottawa, ON	\$1.70-\$2.55 (no concession discount)
Hull, QC	\$1.60-\$3.20 (depending on regular, express, interzone)
Vancouver, BC	\$1.25 (10 for \$12.50, all zones)
Toronto, ON	\$1.20 (10 for \$12.00)
Hamilton, ON	\$1.15 student (5 for \$5.75); \$1.50 senior (5 for \$7.50)
Halifax, NS	\$1.10 (20 for \$22.00)
Winnipeg, MB	\$1.00 senior (10 for \$10); \$1.60 student/para (10 for \$16)
Calgary, AB	\$0.90 youth (10 for \$9.00)
St John's, NF	\$0.85 senior (10 for \$8.50)
Montreal, QC	\$0.71 (6 for \$4.25)

Student/Senior Monthly Passes

Toronto, ON	\$80.00 (discount program available)
Ottawa, ON	\$48.75-\$57.75 student (reg-expr); \$25 senior (all)
Hull, QC	\$43.00-\$77.00 student (depending on range); \$2700 senior (all)
Hamilton, ON	\$43.00 child/student; \$58.00 senior
Vancouver, BC	\$40.00 (all zones)
Winnipeg, MB	\$38.50 senior; \$49.30 post secondary; \$61.60 student/para
Halifax, NS	\$38.00 (senior/child)
Calgary, AB	\$35.00 senior; \$36.00 youth; \$47.00 post secondary
St John's, NF	\$30.00
Montreal, QC	\$22.50

Day Passes

Toronto, ON	\$7.50
Montreal, QC	\$7.00 (Tourist Card; \$14.00 / 3 days)
Vancouver, BC	\$7.00 adult; \$5.00 student/senior
Ottawa, ON	\$5.00
Calgary, AB	\$5.00 adult; \$3.00 youth

Other notes:

Child fares were not compared due to extreme variability in qualifying ages and policies among transit systems.

Winnipeg and Montreal also have weekly passes available.

Hamilton and St John's also feature student semester passes (4 months) at special rates. The availability depends on

which post secondary institution the student belongs to.

Hamilton Senior Annual Pass is available at \$165.00 per year.

Calgary recipients of Guaranteed Income Supplement are eligible for a \$15.00/month pass.

LETTER

Palm versions of bus schedules [follow-up of July 2001 OTB]

If you go to www.ottawaxchange.com there are instructions on how to get the bus schedules on a palm pilot.

Lorne Pearl

HOW MUCH DO BUS OPERATORS MAKE?

This factoid from a City of Ottawa website job posting:

Bus Operators Salary: \$16.91 to \$19.89 per hour (as of March 2001)

Reference: http://city.ottawa.on.ca/inside_govt/mar31_1_en.shtml

WEB DISCUSSION BOARDS

Some useful websites to note - a few of these are geared more towards the technical and "transit fan" topics:

Canadian Public Transportation Discussion Board

<http://cptdb.cjb.net/>

(redirects to <http://users6.cgiforme.com/cptdb/cfmboard.html>)

transitfansontario

<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/transitfansontario>

Canadian Bus Photo Gallery

<http://members.nbc.com/busgal/>

Auto-Free Ottawa

<http://www.flora.org/afo/>

Citizens for Safe Cycling

<http://www.cfsc.ottawa.on.ca>

Transport 2000 Canada

<http://www.transport2000.ca>

And don't forget [otra-discuss](#), the Ottawa transit discussion e-list.

Check previous issues of OTB for details, or e-mail otra-info@flora.org for information.

OTB, OTRA, CONTACTS

Ottawa Transit Bulletin (OTB) is a monthly electronic publication produced by the Ottawa Transit Riders Association (OTRA). It is primarily available in e-mail format. Distribution of this bulletin to those interested in Ottawa Transit is encouraged, but please 1) leave its contents unaltered, and 2) don't "spam" with it.

Publication will normally be around the first day of each month (may vary slightly due to holidays, editing and other circumstances). There may be special occasional bulletins beyond the base monthly frequency if news and special circumstances warrant.

OTRA is an independent transit users group dedicated to supporting customers of transit services, and improving the quality of transit service. Neither OTRA nor OTB are directly associated with OC Transpo, or any other passenger transportation carrier.

Initial membership in OTRA is free - help OTRA to help transit riders by joining today!

For more information on OTB and OTRA:

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ADDENDUM TO THE AUGUST ISSUE

Letter

Thanks for the extra effort required to get the comparative info on fares.

You mentioned that Toronto has an annual-pass option, but didn't mention Ottawa's Ecopass, which is a permanent pass available from selected employers (not the feds yet) and from Vrtucar. The new rate for this for the regular (vs. "ecopass-plus" for express route access) is \$50.58 a month, a savings of almost \$9/month.

Part of the savings is due to the employers and Vrtucar not charging any admin. fees (or conversely, OC Transpo not paying any admin fees), and part due to some wily thinking: many pass users pass on the pass for months when they are vacationing, usually 1-2 months a year. During that month, many simply avoid OCT driving a car, using a bike, or getting rides with a friend), denying OCT even ticket revenue. And, I suspect OCT knows that much of such lost business never returns.

This phenomenon is partly related to the favouritism OCT shows to heavy, regular users, such that they get "sticker shock" when they pass on the pass. [Note the \$1/month increase in the monthly pass, vs. \$.10/two-ticket (one ride) increase. The user of tickets is facing a 6.3% increase; the pass-holder a 1.7% increase. At least cash fares, which are even more of a punishment for the occasional and non-planning user, but which are set to reduce the problems of OCT and customers handling coins, didn't increase (this time).]

So the savings are not as great as it at first appears (although there is a hassle-saving factor, in not having to find the cash and going to an OCT office each month).

Also, being 57, I am curious at to the age at which I qualify for the senior's rates (and pass)?

Chris Bradshaw - sometime OCT user & Co-owner, Vrtucar

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