



CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Benefit Eligibility Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	September 22, 2014
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Affordable Transit Pass Pilot Program Extension (CES14040) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Erica Brimley (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4815 Bonnie Elder (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2182
SUBMITTED BY:	Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community and Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the Affordable Transit Pass (ATP) pilot program be continued from January 1 to May 31, 2015 at a cost of \$126,685 (net) to be funded from the Tax Stabilization Reserve;
- (b) That the General Manager of Community and Emergency Services Department or her designate, be authorized to implement spending caps, benefit frequency limits or other controls necessary to ensure costs are contained within the approved budget amount as outlined in Recommendation (a); and,
- (c) That the outstanding business item identified as "Affordable Transit Program" be removed from the outstanding business list.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Affordable Transit Pass (ATP) program began as a pilot program in the Community and Emergency Services Department in March 2008 and is funded from the Social Services Initiative Fund (SSIF #112214) until December 31, 2014. The budget for the ATP program for 2014 is \$304,350 (net).

The ATP program assists employed City of Hamilton residents living on a low-income, including Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients, with the purchase of an adult monthly bus pass. Recipients can purchase a half price subsidized pass for \$43.50.

Staff is requesting funding from January 1 to May 31, 2015 in the amount of \$ 126,685 (net) to be funded from the Tax Stabilization Reserve. This temporary funding will allow the program to continue until the 2015 budget is approved.

In Report CS13050, dated November 25, 2013, staff stated that they would explore the use of PRESTO cards to make the ATP program more accessible. Staff were also asked to complete an evaluation of the program.

Based on discussions with staff from the HSR, effective November 1, 2014, ATP participants will participate in the PRESTO system. HSR will provide 450 free PRESTO cards (eliminating the \$6.00 card administration fee) as a one-time promotion to help convert the ATP program to PRESTO. After the 450 cards have been distributed, recipients will be responsible to pay the \$6.00 administration card fee.

- 1) Eligible ATP recipients will be required to register in person and load the first month pass at HSR located at 36 Hunter Street East, Hamilton. In subsequent months recipients may choose to load their pass on-line or they may purchase it in person at any location offering PRESTO. Currently three locations may be utilized; HSR Customer Service Office, Hamilton City Hall or Dundas Municipal Service Centre.
- 2) Further to Council's direction to evaluate the ATP program, a survey of existing ATP riders was conducted from June 20 to 27, 2014 (attached as Appendix A to Report CES14040). The findings indicate the following: the important role this program has made in the residents ability to maintain employment and their support for the program; 40% would renew their pass on-line if available; 83% of respondents take more than seven trips per week on the HSR and 100% stated that they would prefer a pass over purchasing tickets.

Approval of the extension of ATP from January 1, 2015 to May 31, 2015 would assist recipients with the cost of transportation removing a potential barrier to obtaining and maintaining employment and preventing them from slipping further into poverty. Should Council not approve the extension, the ATP would end as of December 31, 2014. Staff would inform current recipients that their eligibility will not be extended beyond December 31, 2014.

Staff will report back to Emergency and Community Services Committee in February 2015 to request that ATP becomes a sustainable permanent program.

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial:

ATP program is currently funded from the Social Services Initiative Fund (SSIF #112214) until December 31, 2014. The budget for the ATP program for 2014 is \$304,350 (net). The balance of SSIF #112214 as of August 31, 2014 is \$391,080 (net)

however the funds are already committed for the remainder of the year which includes ATP.

The amount of funding required to continue the program from January 1 to May 31, 2015 is \$126,685 (net). Staff recommends that this cost be funded from the Tax Stabilization Reserve.

Program	2015 Gross Budget	2015 Net Budget
Passes 5,300 annual/approx. 442 month x 5 months *\$43.50 is the 50% subsidy pass cost	\$ 96,135	\$ 96,135
Staffing (1 HSR & 1C&ES) 50% OW admin cost share with the Province	\$ 59,320	\$ 29,660
Administration Costs 50% OW admin cost share with the Province	\$ 1,780	\$ 890
Total	\$ 157,235	\$ 126,685

Staffing:

The program requires continued staffing support of one FTE Special Supports Case Aide position in the Benefit Eligibility Division of the Community & Emergency Services Department and one FTE Ticket Agent position in the Transit Support Services Division of the Public Works Department. The program will be monitored and should there be a significant number of clients who begin to purchase on-line or in other locations, staffing requirements will be re-evaluated.

Legal:

There are no legal implications associated with Report CES14040.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

November 28, 2007 – Council approved the ATP program as a pilot project with \$500,000 from the Social Services Initiatives Fund (SSIF) #112214 for low-income residents only. The program was approved from April 2008 until March 31, 2009.

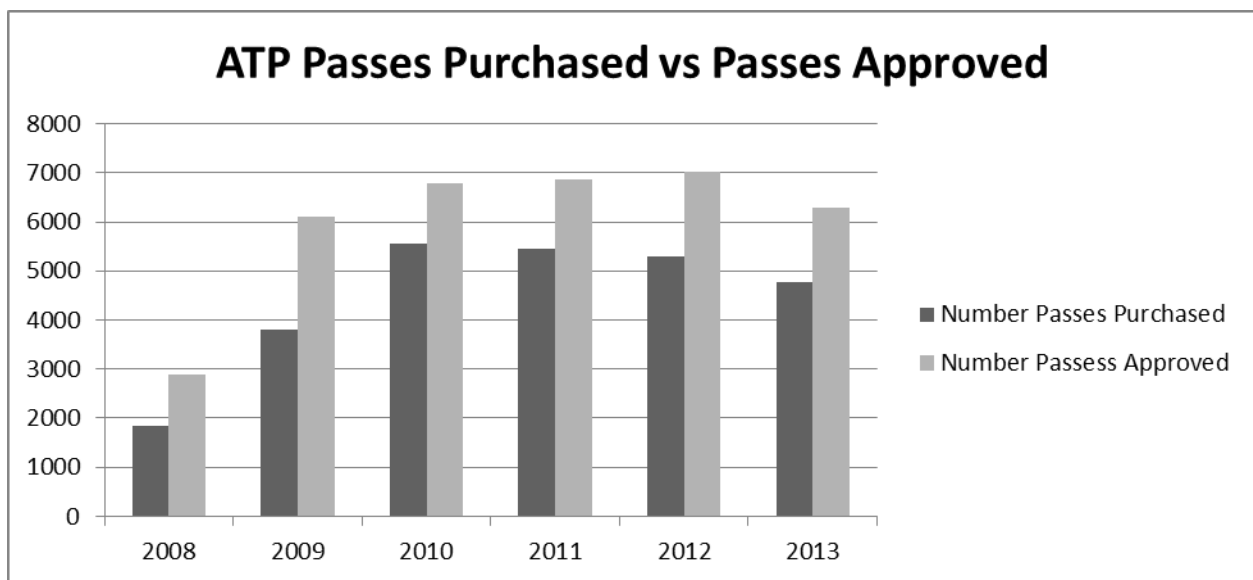
November 14, 2008 – Council approved (Report ECS08051) to extend ATP from April 1, 2008 to December 31, 2009 along with the funding of \$500,000 from the Social Services Initiatives Fund (SSIF) #112214.

April 29, 2009 – Council approved the expansion of the ATP program (Report ECS08051(b)/PW09038) to include: those in receipt of OW and ODSP with employment earnings effective June 1, 2009 and increase Community & Emergency Services complement by one FTE Special Supports Case Aide position in Community & Emergency Services Department and one FTE Public Works HSR Ticket agent position in Public Works Department.

November 11, 2009 – Council approved an extension of the timeline for the ATP until April 30, 2011 and additional funding of \$200,000 from the OW Stabilization Reserve Fund #110044.

December 7, 2011 – Council approved an extension of the ATP January 1, 2012 until December 31, 2013 with funding in the amount of \$300,050 from the Social Services Initiative Fund (SSIF) #112214.

November 25, 2013 – Council approved an extension of the ATP from January 1, 2014 until December 31, 2014 with funding in the amount of \$ 304,350 (net) from the Social Services Initiative Fund (SSIF) #112214.



ATP Survey

An ATP survey was conducted from June 20 to June 27, 2014. A total of 63 surveys were completed (50 in person and 13 self-administered).

Key Highlights of the Survey:¹

- 83% (52)ⁱ of ATP survey respondents took more than 7 trips per week on the HSR;
- 100% of all respondents indicated an “intent” to purchase an ATP pass each month for all of the 6 months they were eligible to do so;
- Respondents identified “I can’t always afford it” as the main reason why they might not purchase an ATP pass in a given month although eligible to do so;
- 60% (38) of ATP survey respondents expressed a preference for picking up their ATP pass in person while 40% (25) indicated a willingness to renew on-line. It is

¹ Full survey details can be found in Appendix A. Since respondents did not always answer each question, missing cases were excluded from the percentage calculations.

anticipated that the move to Presto may shift attitudes towards on-line renewal once initiated;

- 100% of respondents expressed a preference towards purchasing a bus pass as opposed to a ticket option;
- 65% (39) of respondents were female;
- 71% (42) of respondents were over the age of 36 years; and,
- 53% (32) were employed full time and 45% (27) part time.

ATP survey respondents were also asked to comment on whether or not the program should continue. It is worth noting that comments provided indicate a clear support for the program and identify the important role this program has played in their ability to maintain employment.

PRESTO Implementation

Effective November 1, 2014, staff will be moving the ATP program to the PRESTO system allowing recipients greater flexibility to purchase passes on-line and at alternate locations. Depending on the uptake of the PRESTO program staff may see increases to the monthly number of passes purchased each month therefore may need to implement controls to ensure costs remain within the approved budget from January 1, 2015 until May 31, 2015. These controls may include:

- Introducing a minimum number of hours worked in order to qualify for ATP;
- Establishing a wait list; and/or;
- Imposing a cap on the number of times a recipient can access the program.

At this time only the number of passes sold are tracked however staff are working to provide the unique number of residents along with the number of passes sold each month in the February 2015 report.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Not Applicable.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Corporate Services Department, Finance and Administration and Revenue Generation were consulted on the financial aspects of the recommendations. Their feedback on the financial data analysis has been incorporated into the report where required.

Public Works Department, Transit Division, Transit Fare Administration and ATS Section support the continuation the ATP and their feedback and suggestion were incorporated in this report.

Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction ATP Advisory Group agreed with the commendation to continue the program.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONAL FOR RECOMMENDATION

The ATP program provides access to an affordable monthly transit pass for employed low-income residents of the City of Hamilton, including those in receipt of OW and ODSP who have earnings from employment. It is recognized that the cost of transportation can be a barrier to obtaining and maintaining employment. The goal of the ATP program is to assist individuals who need it most with the cost of getting to and from work thereby increasing the likelihood that they will maintain their job and not slip further into poverty.

Therefore staff are recommending an extension of the program and the funding until May 31, 2015 and will report back to E&CS Committee in February 2015 to request that ATP becomes a sustainable permanent program

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2012 – 2015 STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority #1

A Prosperous & Healthy Community

WE enhance our image, economy and well-being by demonstrating that Hamilton is a great place to live, work, play and learn.

Strategic Objective

- 1.5 Support the development and implementation of neighbourhood and City wide strategies that will improve the health and well-being of residents.
- 1.6 Enhance Overall Sustainability (financial, economic, social and environmental).

Strategic Priority #2

Valued & Sustainable Services

WE deliver high quality services that meet citizen needs and expectations, in a cost effective and responsible manner.

Strategic Objective

- 2.1 Implement processes to improve services, leverage technology and validate cost effectiveness and efficiencies across the Corporation.
- 2.3 Enhance customer service satisfaction.

Strategic Priority #3

Leadership & Governance

WE work together to ensure we are a government that is respectful towards each other and that the community has confidence and trust in.

Strategic Objective

- 3.1 Engage in a range of inter-governmental relations (IGR) work that will advance partnerships and projects that benefit the City of Hamilton.
- 3.4 Enhance opportunities for administrative and operational efficiencies.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES14044: Affordable Transit Pass Survey – June 2014
