

CITY OF HAMILTON

COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT Benefit Eligibility Division

TO: Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: November 25, 2013	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Affordable Transit Pass Pilot Program Extension (CS13050) (City Wide)	
SUBMITTED BY: Vicki Woodcox Acting General Manager Community and Emergency Services Department	PREPARED BY: Erica Brimley (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4815 Bill Atanas (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2941
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the 2014 Affordable Transit Pass (ATP) pilot program be continued to December 31, 2014 at a cost of \$304,350 (net) from the Social Services Initiative Fund (SSIF) #112214,
- (b) That the General Manager of Community and Emergency Services Department, or designate, be authorized to implement spending caps, benefit frequency limits or other controls necessary to ensure costs are contained within the approved budget amounts; and,
- (c) That staff report back in October 2014 with an update and recommendation(s) for the Affordable Transit Program.

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 currently funded from the Social Services Initiative Fund (SSIF #112214) until December 31, 2013 in the amount of \$300,500 (net) annually.

The ATP Program assists employed City of Hamilton residents living on a low income purchase an adult monthly bus pass (\$87) for half of the regular purchase price in the amount of \$43.50. 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 those who need it most with getting to and from work thereby increasing the likelihood that they will maintain their job and not slip into further poverty. The program's target group includes Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients as well as low-income residents.

Changes to the funding formula and capping of Discretionary Benefits has resulted in the loss of provincial cost sharing for OW and ODSP recipients. Staff are requesting funding of \$304,350 (net) annually from the Social Services Initiative Fund to continue the program for 2014. If approved, the ATP program could provide on average 442 passes each month or 5,300 passes annually.

The chart below outlines the number of passes approved versus purchased.

Year	Number Passes Approved	Number of Passes Purchased
2010	6782	5549
2011	6854	5443
2012	7017	5298
2013	6169	4782* projection

Continuation of the ATP funding for an additional year will allow staff the opportunity address the decrease in the number of purchased passes which could be attributed that the program does not have stable funding and only one location for purchase of the pass.

Some areas that will be examined and included in a report being presented to Council in March 2014 include:

- the use of PRESTO cards to make ATP more accessible versus having to purchase passes monthly directly from the HSR; and,
- the Council Motion dated April 10, 2013, directing staff to develop options for a new transit discount program for persons with disabilities. An evaluation of ATP will be incorporated into the above options.

Alternatives for Consideration – see page 5

FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS
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Financial:

The amount of funding required to continue the program from January 1 to December 31, 2014 is \$304,350 (net). Staff recommends that this cost be funded from the Social Services Initiative Fund #112214.

Initially, ATP received provincial cost sharing for OW and ODSP residents however, with the provincial capping of discretionary benefits ATP now will be funded 100% municipally for 2014 with the exception of staffing and administration costs. The loss of provincial cost sharing for 2014 passes will be \$89,575.

Program	2014 Gross Budget	2014 Net Budget
Passes 5,300 annual/approx. 442 month *\$43.50 is the 50% subsidy pass cost	\$230,550	\$230,550
Staffing (1 HSR & 1C&ES) 50% OW admin cost share with the Province	\$143,340	\$ 71,670
Administration Costs 50% OW admin cost share with the Province	\$ 4,260	\$ 2,130
Total	\$ 378,150	\$304,350

Staffing:

The program requires continued staffing support of one FTE Special Supports Case Aide position in the Benefit Eligibility division of the Community and Emergency Services Department and one FTE Ticket Agent position in the Transit Support Services division of the Public Works Department.

Legal:

There are no legal implications associated with Report CS13050.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

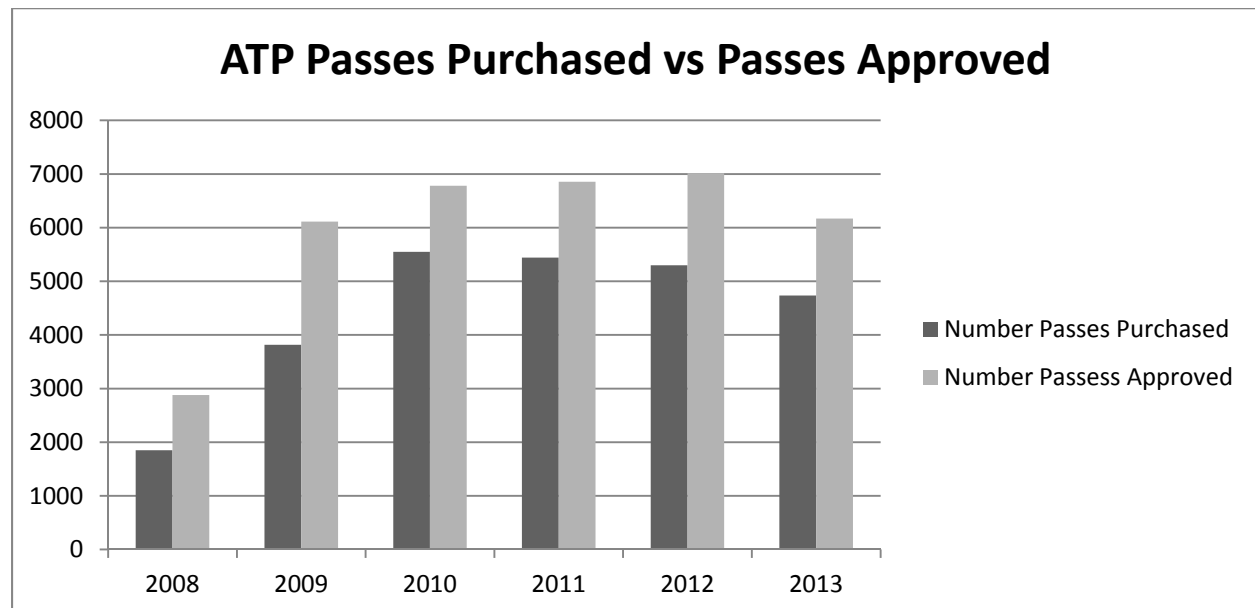
November 28, 2007 – Council approved the ATP program as a pilot project with \$500,000 from the Social Services Initiatives Fund (SSIF) #112214 for low income residents only. The program was approved from April 2008 until March 31, 2009.

November 14, 2008- Council approved report #08-033 to extend ATP from April 1, 2008 to December 31, 2009 along with the funding of \$500,000 from the SSIF.

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 Service complement by one FTE Special Supports Case Aide and one FTE Public Works HSR Ticket agent.

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 annually from the SSIF #112214.



POLICY IMPLICATIONS/LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Not Applicable.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Corporate Services Department, Finance and Administration and Special Projects were consulted on the financial aspects of the recommendations. Their feedback to financial data analysis have 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.

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction ATP Advisory Group have been very supportive to the continuation of the program.

ANALYSIS / RATIONALE 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 those 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.

Since 2010, the numbers of passes approved have exceeded 6,000 passes with approximately 558 passes on average a month. Not all applicants to the program end up purchasing a pass; averages of 438 passes/month are actually purchased.

Depending on uptake of the program and financial capacity, staff may need to make adjustments in the program for 2014 in order to remain within budget. Some measures 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.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Option #1

Council could decide to discontinue the program, ending it as of December 31, 2013. Staff would have to cease future applications into the program and inform current recipients that their eligibility will not be extended beyond December 31, 2013.

Financial:

There would be no net levy impact to the City.

Staffing:

Two temporary FTE positions (1 Special Supports Case Aide and 1 HSR Ticket Agent) would end December 31, 2013. The workload associated with bringing the program to a

close and the increased demand for all Special Supports would have to be absorbed by the remaining case aide complement within the unit.

Legal:

There are no legal implications associated with this alternative.

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 / SCHEDULES

None.