

**ONTARIO CENTRE FOR MUNICIPAL BEST PRACTICES**

393 University Ave., Suite 1701 Toronto, Ontario M5G1E6

**Best Practice Summary Report**

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**Urban Transit – Alternative Service Delivery – Trans-Cab**

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**Practice Identification:**      **Alternative Service Delivery -Trans-Cab Service**

**Case Study Municipality:**    **City of Hamilton – Hamilton Street Railway (HSR)**

**Key Word:**    **Operations, alternative service**

**Benefits Resulting from Adoption of the Practice:**

- **Reduced cost to serve difficult area**
- **Increased ridership/customer convenience**

**Description of the Practice in the Case-study Municipality**

Hamilton Street Railway (HSR), serving the Hamilton population of approximately 490,000 people, had 190 active buses in 2001, and operated about 11 million kilometres of service, carrying approximately 21 million passengers.

The Trans-Cab service was initiated in 1998 as a two-year experiment to provide service to the only urbanized area within HSR's service area that did not have service, known as the Winona-Lakefront area. This area is separated from the rest of the HSR service area by the Queen Elizabeth Way, the major east-west highway connecting Hamilton, Niagara and Toronto.

Staff worked in conjunction with the (then) City of Stoney Creek to develop a contracted shared-ride taxi-service. The service was tendered for a two-year trial period, beginning on September 8, 1998. The service remains in effect today.

It uses regular taxi dispatching, vehicles and drivers to provide service to one or more passengers who want to make use of regular HSR services. Trans-Cabs connect with four HSR routes at three different transfer points.

Inbound customers must call for a Trans-Cab one-hour before their desired trip time to arrange a trip. On boarding the cab, they inform the driver of their trans-cab destination and pay a regular HSR fare. The driver gives the passenger a special transfer marked with the fare paid, and records the trip on a log sheet. At the TransCab stop, HSR service is frequent enough that no special communication

with the bus is required. The passenger boards the bus, deposits the transfer and continues the trip. The driver's log sheet and the deposited transfers are the crosschecks of the trip occurring from both the cab operator and HSR. HSR then pays the cab operator the difference between the negotiated rate and the fare paid on a monthly basis.

Outbound passengers board a connecting HSR bus, pay the appropriate fare advise the HSR bus operator that they wish to use the Trans-Cab service from the applicable Trans-Cab transfer point that is closest to their final destination.

The HSR operator then contacts HSR control centre, who orders a cab from the cab dispatcher. The cab operator dispatches a cab to meet the bus at the appropriate stop location. The passenger receives a transfer to present to the cab driver. The HSR operations log and the transfers received by the cab operator forms the record of trips and HSR pays the cab operator the negotiated flat rate. There is no additional cost to the passenger for the Trans-Cab service.

## **Evaluation of the Practice**

### **Efficiency**

The two-year experiment was largely regarded as a success. Higher than expected ridership led to higher total costs. Costs for a single-bus 60-minute frequency service would be approximately \$30,000 per month, compared to the average \$7,000 monthly cost for the Trans-Cab service.

Selected results from the pilot project are shown in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1

Selected Pilot Program results

Month	Monthly Trips	Monthly Cost	Daily trips	Cost Per trip
September 1998	1134	5630	57	4.96
October	2263	11178	87	4.94
February, 1999	1483	7318	65	4.93
March	2258	11040	84	4.89
Total	7613	37,577	73	4.94

### **Effectiveness**

Ridership on the service was higher than expected, indicating an effective service that is popular with residents. Since the end of the pilot, monthly trips have continued to grow slowly, attracting more ridership from the area.

HSR has used the Trans-Cab service to provide a cost-effective service in a hard-to-serve neighbourhood with low ridership demand. This type of service can be very effective in low demand neighbourhoods since operating costs vary directly with demand.

### **Replication of the Practice**

Implementation of a Trans-Cab service requires confidence in a taxi contractor capable of providing high quality dependable service.

Transfer points to the conventional transit system should ideally occur at a point that provides access to as many transit routes as possible to maximize accessibility, but not at a point that represents a popular destination. If the transfer point is a destination, patrons would be able to take advantage of a subsidized taxi ride to reach that destination without transferring to the transit system.

This service requires transit dispatch capabilities during all periods of operation. If dispatch support is not available during all transit hours of service, the Trans-Cab service must be limited to the hours when dispatch is available. Transit agencies might consider providing bus operators with cell phones to replace dispatch functions during late evening or early morning hours, particularly when demand is very low.

#### **Similar Applications:**

Welland Transit: uses Trans-Cab to serve remote Dane City area in the south end of the transit service area. Charges transfer fare

Peterborough Transit: uses Trans-Cab to serve three small communities isolated from the urban area. Charges transfer fare.

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