

Despite rising fuel costs, no plans for YRT fare hike

BY SEAN PEARCE
Staff Writer

York Region Transit and Viva might feel the pain at the pumps right along with motorists, but transit riders won't for the foreseeable future.

YRT and Viva are by no means immune to the impacts from the soaring price of diesel fuel, general manager Don Gordon said, adding transit systems the world over are experiencing higher costs due to soaring fuel prices.

"It's a challenge for all transit operators," Mr. Gordon said. "In our case, it depends on various factors and the extent of the impact would be \$3.5 million."

The good news is you won't have to bear the cost of the fuel hike because YRT and Viva fares just increased in January, Mr. Gordon said, adding another fare hike before the end of the year would be highly unlikely.

"We've never had two fare increases in one year in our history and I wouldn't expect that to happen this year."

Unlike other systems such as the TTC, which is considering a fuel surcharge for 2009, York Region Transit doesn't buy fuel in bulk, Mr. Gordon said.

Contractors who staff and maintain buses are responsible for keeping them fueled and the added cost to YRT is occurring because of fuel cost clauses written into those contracts, rather than as a direct result of the price itself.

The long-term effects of higher fuel

prices aren't clear and some of the cost passed along to the region may end up being offset by higher ridership as more motorists start looking at public transit as a viable alternative to driving, Mr. Gordon said.

Ridership in 2008 is about six per

cent, which was budgeted for, Mr. Gordon said, adding there could be an increase in ridership as fuel prices rise, which could offset that \$3.5 million.

In any case, Mr. Gordon said he doubted drastic measures would be required as a result of higher fuel prices.

Plans to expand service will go ahead as schedule and, for now, fares will remain at current rates.

The situation will be monitored during the coming months, he said, adding YRT is "fairly confident" its contingency funding will cover any added costs.

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Police can impound ATVs

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Musselman's Lake area, particularly on the weekends, sometimes unloading large trailers filled with numerous bikes.

Residents of the Ninth Line lake told council the vehicles could often be heard all hours of the day and night and suggested the town look into a ban.

Police started handing out fines to trespassers and the problem decreased.

Police say these vehicles are not allowed on public roads:

- All-terrain vehicles;
- Pocket bikes;
- Electronic and motorized scooters (Go-Peds);
- Personal mobility devices and
- Riding lawnmowers

If you're looking into buying an off-road vehicle, it must also be registered, have a plate and be insured. You also have to wear a helmet and children must be supervised by adults.

If you're caught breaking the rules, you can be slapped with charges for driving an unlicensed and uninsured vehicle. Your machine may also be impounded and you could be looking at fines as high as \$5,000. If your child is riding unsupervised, you may also be charged, according to police.

For more information about vehicles not allowed on public roads and the laws governing off-road vehicles, visit www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/vehicle/emerging

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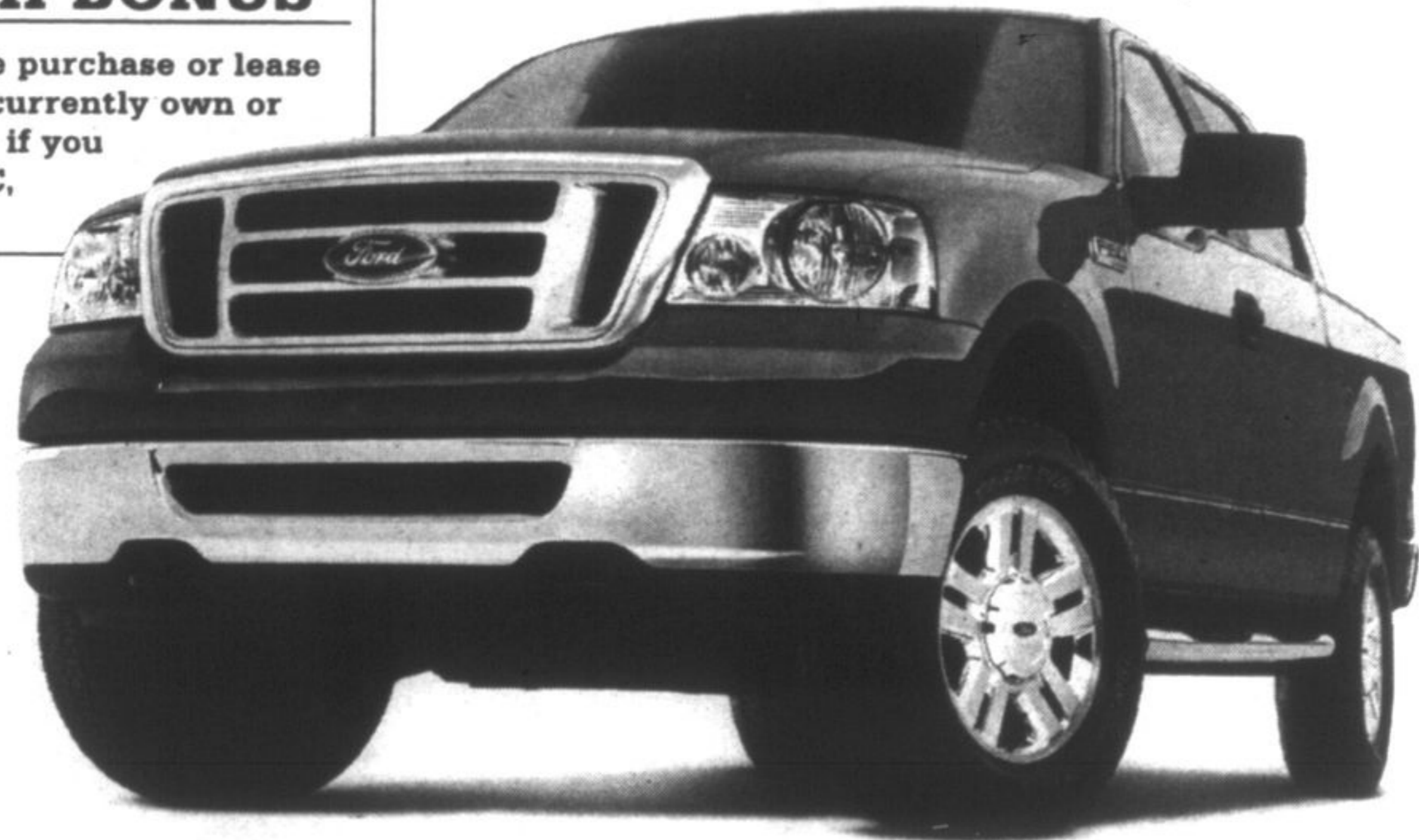
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