

# Transit fares up; not senior/child pass

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It's official: most of you will be paying more to ride York Region Transit/Viva come the new year.

At Thursday's meeting of regional council, the fare increase passed in a 16-3 vote with Vaughan regional councillor Deb Schulte, Markham regional councillor Joe Li and Markham deputy mayor Jack Heath voting against it.

However, Ms Schulte was successful in convincing her colleagues to pass an amendment to the increase that will freeze the price of a senior/child pass at \$55.

Her second proposal, to leave the cost of a student pass at \$90, wasn't as successful.

The price of a student pass will rise 10 per cent to \$99.

"I'm not happy with these increases," she said, adding the impact of the added costs on senior citizens and parents trying to shuttle their children to and from school had her especially concerned.

Mr. Heath also voiced his opposition to the fare increases, arguing it rang in at eight times the inflation rate, on average. He criticized the proposal as putting too much of a burden on transit users and urged council and staff to explore other means of funding the service, while indicating he could get behind a fare hike if it were attached to the cash fares alone.

It may be that council's goal is to recoup 50 per cent of its transit costs from riders, but the region already has the highest fares prices in over a dozen categories, Mr. Heath added.

"When we say we want to take cars off the

road and when we say we want people to take transit, there has to be some enticement in there for them," he said.

"I challenge you to convince someone transit is cheaper than driving a car."

Newmarket regional Councillor John Taylor agreed the decision to increase fares is never easy, but stressed the cost of providing the service is going up meaning more money will have to come from somewhere.

He also pointed out YRT/Viva's service area, at more than 1,700 sq. km., is three times the size of the TTC, and that York operates the GTA's second largest bus fleet. "If we don't recoup it at the farebox, we'll have to recoup it from the taxpayers," said Mr. Taylor.

Regional chairperson Bill Fisch stressed the importance of maintaining the established cost-recovery target while acknowledging it may take another decade to achieve it. "Let's not reduce the target just because we haven't reach it yet," he said. "We're on the right track."

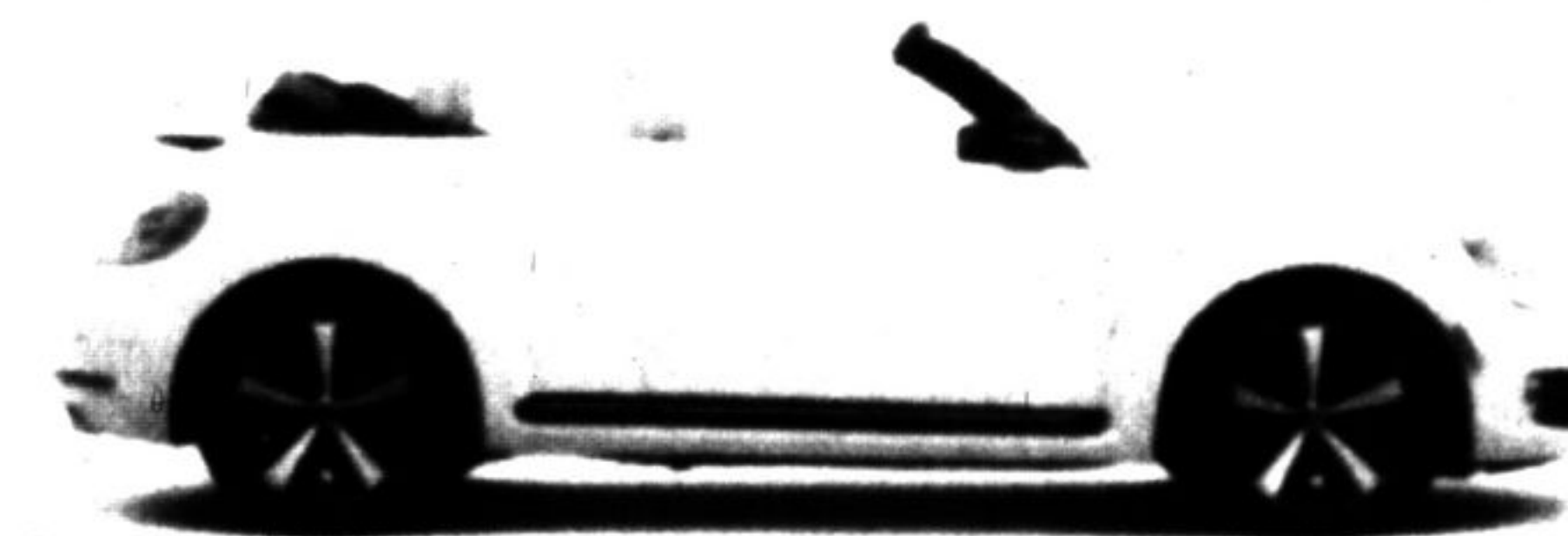
As of Jan. 1, the cost of an adult cash fare will rise 25 cents to \$4 for a one-zone trek, \$5 for two zones and \$4.50 for an express trip.

Already the most expensive in the GTA, the cash fare increases put YRT/Viva well ahead of other transit systems surrounding the region with the average fare coming in at \$3.21.

Ticket prices will be hiked as well with adult tickets slated to hit \$3.30, student tickets scheduled to jump 20 cents to \$2.50 and senior/child tickets poised to rise 15 cents to \$2. An express ticket will cost you \$3.50 next year.

Adult, student and express passes will cost \$132, \$99 and \$152, respectively.

# Über Neue- markt\*



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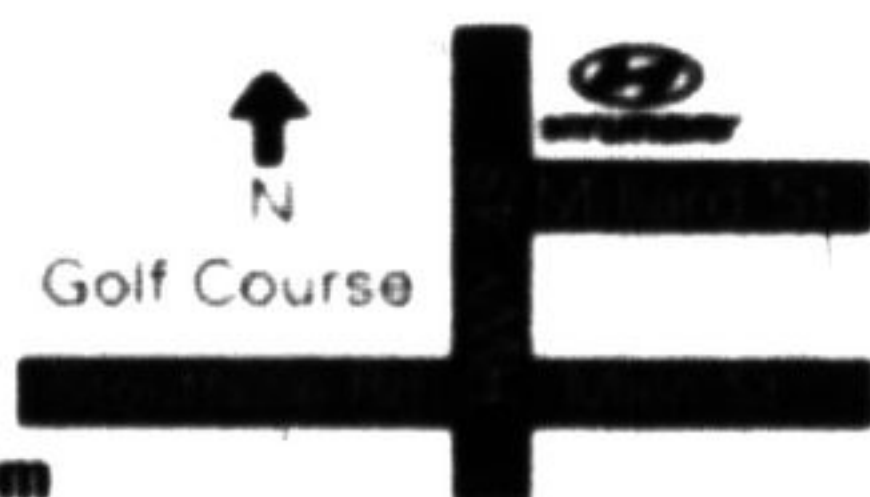
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