



A Division of METROLINX

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Summer 2012 Barrie Line Weekend Train Service Pilot

Situation

Overview

As a pilot, this summer GO Transit is running trains along the Barrie line on weekends, in addition to the regular weekday peak service. The trial weekend service will operate between June 23 and September 3.

On Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, this service will include:

- Two southbound trips from Allandale Waterfront GO Station to Union Station
- Two northbound trips from Union to Allandale Waterfront
- Four southbound trips from East Gwillimbury GO Station to Union
- Four northbound trips from Union to East Gwillimbury

For the East Gwillimbury trips, GO Buses will complete the journey making all stops between East Gwillimbury and Barrie Bus Terminal. As track capacity is limited on the Barrie line, only a limited number of trips can go as far as Allandale Waterfront. The GO Bus service between the Barrie Bus Terminal and East Gwillimbury will accommodate passengers travelling to/from Bradford, Barrie South and Allandale Waterfront GO Stations, as well as the intermittent stops along the 65 GO Bus route.

On our weekend Lakeshore train service, summer weekends provide an opportunity to significantly increase “off-peak” ridership due to the number of events in downtown Toronto. The Barrie line pilot moves GO further in the direction of serving a larger, non-commuter market, and supports the economy, regional tourism and the communities along the rail corridor.

It is estimated that 250-300 passengers will take each train. The net operating costs for this summer weekend service will be approximately \$250,000, which will be absorbed by Metrolinx’s existing budget.

This seasonal pilot is a step toward long-term regular weekend service for the line, and it tests the viability of Barrie two-way all-day service. It will also help gauge the feasibility of offering similar service on other corridors in the summer months.

History/background

The Barrie line was extended north in January 2012 with the completion of Allandale Waterfront GO Station. The station was a welcomed addition to the community, serving 150 passengers daily and increasing.

For the first time, GO ran train service along the Barrie line on Sunday, November 22, 2011 for the Toronto Santa Claus parade. The service was considered a success as the ridership exceeded targets with approximately 750 passengers.

In September 2011, GO added a fifth train on the Barrie line for the weekday morning and afternoon commutes. The added trips were very successful; ridership increased by 8% between spring and fall 2011, and as of fall 2011, the average capacity across all morning trips was 93%, and 82% for the afternoon.

Strategy

It is recommended that the Ministry make an official announcement on May 7. Immediately following the announcement, general information will be available on gotransit.com.

Note: The launch of this service and the Niagara-on-the-Lake shuttle are on the same day, and the extra Milton train service will begin two days later on June 25. There is opportunity for one combined announcement on or around May 7.

On June 4, detailed service change communications will roll out to give customers enough time to trip plan and/or take full advantage of the new service; schedule information will be made available on the Schedule Changes page on gotransit.com and promoted from the homepage, and direct customer communications will be delivered the following day.

There is an opportunity on launch day, June 23, for the Ministry to participate in the inaugural train trip or to distribute a news release. Follow-up customer communications will remind customers of the new weekend service.

Key messages

- This summer, GO is running a pilot weekend train service along the Barrie line.
- Barrie line weekend train service will run Saturdays, Sundays and holidays between June 23 and September 3.
- This is a pilot only. We will evaluate the results of this pilot to inform us of any future service changes.

Service details

- Two southbound train trips departing Allandale Waterfront GO Station at 10:20 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. will make all stops to Union Station
- Two northbound train trips departing Union Station at 5:25 p.m. and 12:10 a.m. will make all stops to Allandale Waterfront GO Station.
- Four southbound train trips departing East Gwillimbury GO Station at 1:20 p.m., 4:12, 8:03 and 10:55 will make all stops to Union Station
- Four northbound train trips departing Union Station at 12:10 p.m., 3:01, 6:50 and 9:41 will make all stops to East Gwillimbury GO Station.
- GO Buses departing the Barrie Bus Terminal at 11:46 a.m., 2:39 p.m., 6:29 and 9:24 will make all stops to East Gwillimbury GO Station and connect there with the weekend GO Trains making all stops to Union Station.
- GO Buses to Barrie Bus Terminal will depart East Gwillimbury at 1:19 p.m., 4:10, 7:59 and 10:50 and connect the weekend GO Trains arriving from Union Station.

Audiences & stakeholders >> approach & tactics

See Audiences & Stakeholders chart

Media relations strategy

Media coverage is a significant way to generate unbiased promotion of the new service.

A mass distribution of GO's news release through Canada NewsWire (CNW) will ensure that the announcement of new service is provided to all media outlets throughout Southern Ontario at the same time.

Media relations will follow up the CNW mass distribution of the news release by sending it to a targeted email group of media outlets, including Simcoe County, York Region, travel industry, assignment desks, transit/traffic media.

Media activity/tactic	Responsible	Phase 1*	Phase 2*	Phase 3*
Ontario news release	MTO	May 7	n/a	June 23
GO news release	Caroline Busbridge	n/a	June 4	n/a

Marketing plan

Overview

Based on the Barrie weekend train schedule, the primary market for this service is residents along the Barrie train line looking for weekend travel options to Toronto; the secondary market is made up of those interested in travelling north toward Barrie.

Local radio and newspaper advertising will be used to promote the launch and to increase awareness prior to long weekends; a prime opportunity for those residents looking for easy weekend travel options.

GO customers will be targeted through communications channels and backlit posters at GO stations along the Barrie line, including Union Station.

The media spend totals \$99,921.08, including agency fees.

The media buy will be complimented by promotional efforts from the City of Barrie. The City's marketing team has offered contra ad space in Barrie Examiner, radio spots on KOOL FM and ROCK 95, TV spots on CTV Barrie, as well as postings on their website and social media.

Evaluation

Quantitative and qualitative measures to determine whether communication objectives were achieved:

- Increased amount of positive coverage and media impressions
- Ridership targets met
- Promotional partnership objectives met

Written by: Caroline Busbridge

Approved by:

Date: April 20, 2012

**dates are subject to change*