

Honour system on YRT needs overhaul: reader

On Sunday, August 10, 2014, a little after 11 p.m., a young man named David tried to purchase a \$5 ticket for a Viva bus in York Region.

The only machine available would accept only coins or credit cards and he had a debit card and paper money. Since he was unfamiliar with Viva Transit, he approached the bus driver and asked him if he could give him the \$5. The driver said he couldn't accept the money, but when David explained his predicament, the driver waved him onto the bus.

At Centre Street in Thornhill, the bus stopped and the inspectors boarded and asked to see passengers' tickets. Four people, including David, were without tickets. David explained what had happened and asked the inspector to check with the driver, which he did. The inspector then left the bus and told all four passengers to exit, at which point he issued tickets for \$155 to each.

When questioned, the inspector denied speaking to the driver. David told him he had seen him do so at which point the inspector replied, "No matter, the driver has no say." The four passengers were left at the side of the road to wait for the next bus, which arrived just before midnight. I later discovered that there is a machine which will accept bills and debit cards located in the nearby transit building, which closes at 10 p.m.

Common sense would tell you that the solution is simple: either keep the transit building open later, or put a second type of machine next to the one already in place at Finch Station.

The honour system operating in Toronto and York allows passengers to buy a ticket and enter a train or a bus without showing it to an operator. Occasionally this can lead to abuses by a few. Now we have inspectors who can board at any time and ask for proof of purchase.

When it comes to enforcement and security, I believe the enforcement segment is given too much prominence. In the GTA Transit System, inspectors may wear bullet proof vests and carry clubs. Our police officers are highly trained to handle confrontations and dangerous situations, but not inspectors.

It is possible that a new visitor, a new Canadian, or an absent-minded senior could be traumatized by heavy-handed actions on the part of transit inspectors. Where Viva is concerned, a new machine in place would be a starting point. On some transit systems in the U.S. and Europe, if, for whatever reason, you don't have a ticket, you can buy a slightly increased fare on board; no intimidation, no humiliation.

Finally, I believe that changes could be made in the honour system we now have in place. Greater speed should never trump safety and human rights.

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