

Transit Fares in the GTHA Today – An Overview

The current transit fares in the GTHA are determined by fare structures, concessions and products established independently by each of the agencies that provide transit services, as well as their policies for transfers between their services.

Together, these arrangements produce an environment that functions well for much transit travel, but discourages travellers from using transit for certain types of trips. As transit travel in the region grows and more trips are made using more than one transit system, the deficiencies in the current arrangements will increasingly deter multi-agency transit travel.

Transit Fares

Transit fares in the GTHA are set by the agencies that provide transit services, which can be grouped into:

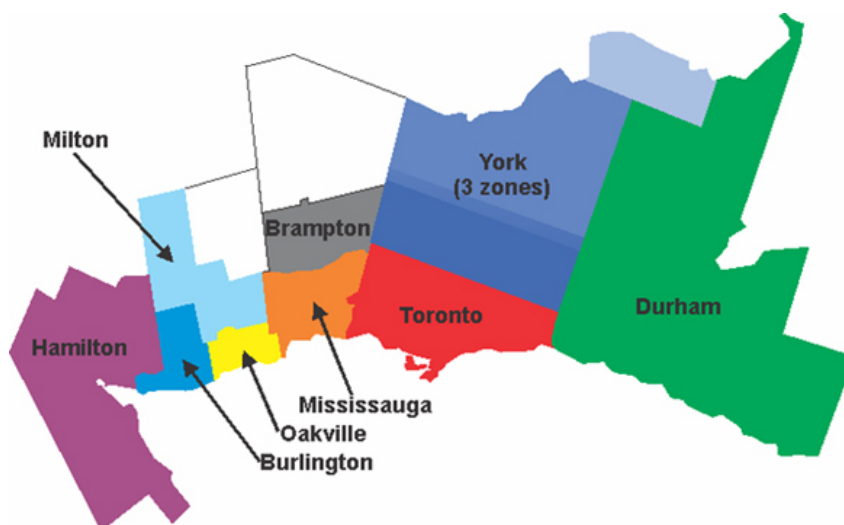
- Municipal transit agencies (9)
- GO Transit
- UP Express

Municipal Transit Agencies

The fares for each GTHA municipal transit agency are set by each agency’s respective governing body—either the municipal council of the jurisdiction responsible for the service or a specialized board with some linkage to the municipal government.

These municipal fares (See **Table 1**) cover local bus services, as well as streetcars, subways, and BRT in Toronto, Mississauga and York Region where such services exist.

Some municipalities (Toronto, York Region) provide designated express bus services with premium fares.



Intra-municipal fares generally have a flat structure, with the exception of York Region (which has 3 zones plus a buffer zone). Approaches to cross-boundary fares vary.

Considered as a region, this functions as a zone system with each municipality serving as one zone (or multiple zones in York Region).

TABLE 1: GTHA MUNICIPAL FARE OVERVIEW

	CASH SINGLE RIDE					PRESTO SINGLE RIDE*					MONTHLY PASS					CO-FARE with GO
	Infant 0-5	Child 6-12	Student 13-19	Adult 20-64	Senior 65+	Infant 0-5	Child 6-12	Student 13-19	Adult 20-64	Senior 65+	Infant 0-5	Child 6-12	Student 13-19	Adult 20-64	Senior 65+	
Brampton	\$0.00	\$3.75	\$3.75	\$3.75	\$3.75	N/A	\$2.50	\$2.50	\$2.80	\$1.50	N/A	\$105.00	\$105.00	\$118.00	\$50.00	\$0.75
Burlington	\$0.00	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50	N/A	\$1.85	\$2.70	\$2.70	\$1.85	N/A	N/A	\$71.00	\$97.00	\$59.25	\$0.70
Durham	\$0.00	\$2.25	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$2.25	N/A	\$2.00	\$2.70	\$3.00	\$2.00	N/A	\$63.50	\$91.00	\$112.00	\$45.00	\$0.75
Hamilton	\$0.00	\$2.75	\$2.75	\$2.75	\$2.75	N/A	\$1.80	\$1.80	\$2.15	\$1.80	N/A	\$79.20	\$79.20	\$94.60	\$23.50	\$0.55
Milton	\$0.00	\$3.25	\$3.25	\$3.25	\$3.25	N/A	\$1.90**	\$1.90**	\$2.60**	\$1.90**	N/A	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$70.00	\$50.00	\$0.65
Mississauga	\$0.00	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$1.00	N/A	\$1.65	\$2.25	\$2.90	\$1.90	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$125.00	\$57.00	\$0.80
Oakville	\$0.00	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50	N/A	\$2.20	\$2.20	\$2.80	\$1.80	N/A	\$70.00	\$70.00	\$110.00	\$50.00	\$0.75
Toronto	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2.00	\$3.00	\$2.00	N/A	\$0.00	\$1.95	\$2.80	\$1.95	N/A	N/A	\$112.00	\$141.50	\$112.00	N/A
York (1-zone)	\$0.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$4.00	N/A	\$2.10	\$2.60	\$3.40	\$2.10	N/A	\$57.00	\$102.00	\$136.00	\$102.00	\$0.75
York (2-zone)	\$0.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	N/A	\$3.10	\$3.60	\$4.40	\$3.60	N/A	\$87.00	\$147.00	\$181.00	\$147.00	N/A

* At this time, ticket and/or token fares continue to be available on most municipal transit agencies at equivalent per-ride prices to PRESTO. Availability may be limited to certain passenger categories.

** Ticket fare

Municipal transit agencies take the following approaches to concessions and fare products:

- Cash fares are the same for all passenger categories, with the exception of Durham, MiWay and TTC, which provide concessions for cash fares.
- Adult fares on PRESTO are discounted 10-20% from cash fares; for concession fares (Children 6-12, Students 13-19, Adults 20-64, and Seniors 65 and over), the discounts typically range from 30 to 60%. Children under 5 travel free in all municipalities, and children 6-12 travel free in Toronto. Recent agreement between the agencies has resulted in agreement, still being implemented, on consistent ages for these concession passenger categories.
- Monthly passes are available for adults (all agencies) and concessions (most agencies), providing unlimited travel for the month of purchase. Frequent travellers also benefit in some municipalities from a loyalty program on their PRESTO travel, which offer an increased discounts as more rides are taken each month.
- Post-secondary students may make use of per-ride concession fares using PRESTO in Mississauga, and concession monthly passes in Toronto. Several post-secondary institutions elsewhere in the GTHA have a “U-Pass” providing unlimited travel on the local transit agency for a term or semester; these are administered as a mandatory ancillary fee collected by the institution in parallel to tuition fees.
- There are a number of other passes (by time, or traveller type) offered by municipalities that are not shown in this overview.

GO Transit

GO Transit fares are set by the Metrolinx Board of Directors. They are structured in zones, which may contain one or more rail stations or segments of bus routes. Fares are set based on the distance travelled between the zones with provision for trips that require a transfer between GO services.

The minimum cash fare is \$5.30 for adults, high-school and post-secondary students; and \$2.65 for children and seniors, increasing with distance travelled. PRESTO provides a discount from the cash fare of at least 7.5% for adults, 17.5% for high-school and post-secondary students, and 3% for children and seniors. A loyalty program provides discounts that increase as more trips are made each month.

UP Express

UP Express fares are set by the Metrolinx Board of Directors. They structured in zones, with a zone for each of the stops served.

The cash fare is \$27.50 for 3 stops, \$22.00 for 2 stops, and \$16.50 for 1 stop. Fares are discounted approximately 30% when paying with PRESTO. Fare discounts are available for seniors and students (15%) and for children (50%).

Inter-agency Transfers and Cross-boundary Travel

When customers must pay a second fare to transfer to a second transit agency, the total fare may be high enough to discourage use of transit for these trips. In order to reduce the cost of trips that require transfers between two agencies, several agreements are in place:

- All municipal transit agencies except TTC have a co-fare agreement with GO Transit providing a discount of about 75% on the local transit fare when transferring to or from GO using a PRESTO card.
- All municipal transit agencies except TTC and Milton Transit have agreed to accept another agency's transfers for up to 120 minutes without any additional fare.
- Some municipal transit agencies accept other agencies period passes at designated transfer locations.
- All trips requiring transfers between TTC and other transit systems (GO Transit or municipal transit agencies) are not covered by any transfer agreement and require payment of a full fare for each agency.

The transfer agreements applicable to transfers between GTHA transit agencies are shown in **Table 2**.

Bus routes operating into neighbouring communities are treated in several ways:

- Routes operated by the TTC north of Steeles Avenue on behalf of York Region or west of Pearson Airport on behalf of Mississauga, require payment of a second fare with provides a transfer good on the York Region or Mississauga transit services.
- The numerous services operated by other municipal transit jurisdictions into neighbouring communities do not require a second fare on crossing the boundary; a full fare is required if continuing the journey on TTC.

TABLE 2: GTHA INTER-AGENCY TRANSFER OVERVIEW

	Brampton	Burlington	Durham	Hamilton	Milton	Mississauga	Oakville	Toronto	York	GO
Brampton	Free	(Free)	N/A	(Free)	N/A	Free	(Free)	Extra fare	Free	Co-fare
Burlington	(Free)	Free	N/A	Free	N/A	(Free)	Free	N/A	(Free)	Co-fare
Durham	N/A	N/A	Free	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Extra fare	(Free)	Co-fare ¹
Hamilton	(Free)	Free	N/A	Free	N/A	(Free)	(Free)	N/A	(Free)	Co-fare
Milton	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Free	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Co-fare
Mississauga	Free	(Free)	N/A	(Free)	N/A	Free	Free	Extra fare ²	(Free)	Co-fare
Oakville	(Free)	Free	N/A	(Free)	N/A	Free	Free	N/A	(Free)	Co-fare
Toronto	Extra fare	N/A	Extra fare	N/A	N/A	Extra fare ²	N/A	Free	Extra fare ²	Extra fare ³
York	Free	(Free)	(Free)	(Free)	N/A	(Free)	(Free)	Extra fare ²	Free	Co-fare
GO	Co-fare	Co-fare	Co-fare ¹	Co-fare	Co-fare	Co-fare	Co-fare	Extra fare ³	Co-fare	Free

LEGEND

Free	Free transfer, within agency
Free	Free transfer, agencies with connecting services
(Free)	Free transfer, agencies without connecting services <i>(potential single-fare trips require use of additional agency or agencies in between)</i>
Co-fare	Co-fare for transfer with GO Transit, discount applied to local fare
Extra fare	No agreement, customer pays both fares
N/A	No agreement, no connecting services

Notes

- 1 – GO Transit bus routes 71, 81 and 90 may be used as if DRT services for fare policy purposes
- 2 – Once across zone boundary, TTC routes operated under contract for Mississauga or York Region function as MiWay or YRT services, respectively, for fare policy purposes
- 3 – Some exceptions apply (e.g., free transfer between TTC and GO at Rouge Hill GO for travel between Rouge Hill and UTSC). A composite trip with two TTC legs before and after a GO Transit leg is treated as a single TTC trip plus a single GO Transit trip.

Limitations of the Current Fare Environment

The current fare environment is rooted in successful practices in individual agencies, but does not provide a “seamless” customer experience for transit travel across the GTHA. The current fares for certain types of travel deter people from using transit for those trips. More generally, the inconsistency in policies and rules is confusing and potentially embarrassing for customers using multiple systems.

Concerns about the structure of fares include:

- Customers transferring between TTC and neighbouring transit systems must pay both fares in full. The total cost discourages these trips, particularly for travel a short distance across the border. The markets affected include the increasing amount of reverse commuting from Toronto to employment centres in neighbouring municipalities
- Customers transferring between TTC and GO Transit must pay both fares in full. This deters integrated trips using TTC to access GO Transit or to reach the ultimate destination.
- The minimum cost of GO Transit for trips within a municipality is significantly higher than municipal transit fare for the same trip. Even though GO may offer significant time savings for a long trip within a municipality (between Oshawa and Pickering, or between Agincourt and Union, for example) the higher cost of GO has prevented it from playing as significant a role in intra-municipal travel. Improved positioning of fares between municipal transit and Regional Express Rail will be required for the GO and municipal networks to function as an integrated service.
- The network of cross boundary services is growing with the expansion of the rapid transit network (Toronto-York Spadina Subway Expansion; Hurontario-Main LRT in Mississauga and Brampton) and cross-boundary bus services operated by municipal agencies. There is currently no consistent solution for fare treatment on these services, and special arrangements are negotiated and implemented through PRESTO for each one. A consistent approach will be required that supports the evolution of the transit network into a well-integrated and complete service for the GTHA.

Other aspects of the fare system, such as concessions and fare products, make the customer experience confusing and unwelcoming. Inconsistent eligibility for concessions may result in a customer being eligible for a discount in one jurisdiction, but not another. The amount of discount associated with the concession also varies by agency. Agency issued transit passes are very convenient for customers travelling solely within that jurisdiction, but encourage “captivity” to that agency’s services, and create customer service complications when customers wish to use the pass to travel outside their home community.

Work with the transit agencies to address these policy inconsistencies has been underway and made much progress in increasing consistency of concession types. These discussions will continue to increase harmonisation of concessions and fare products.