

City of Mississauga
Corporate Report



<p>Date: January 30, 2025</p> <p>To: Chair and Members of General Committee</p>	<p>Originator's files:</p>
<p>From: Sam Rogers, MBA, Commissioner of Transportation and Works</p>	<p>Meeting date: March 5, 2025</p>

Subject

MiWay Bus Destination Signage

Recommendation

That only route information be displayed on MiWay bus signs as outlined in the report in the Corporate Report entitled "MiWay Bus Destination Signage" dated January 27, 2025 from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works.

Executive Summary

- In June 2022, Council approved seven dates of significance to be observed by the City of Mississauga. As part of this report, these seven dates were to be the only ones displayed on the destination bus signage at the top of MiWay buses.
- Due to technical issues and some confusion, this has not been the practice. At present, MiWay operators are able to choose from a list of 13 messages. This is not a complete list of significant dates observed in Mississauga. Aside from the seven approved by Council, there is no criteria for the selection of the remaining six messages.
- Displaying route information only reduces confusion for transit riders, especially at bus stops serviced by multiple routes. Route-only information is also a best practice from an accessibility perspective. The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), the largest transit service in Canada, currently displays only route information on its transit vehicles.
- There is no guarantee a message will be displayed if it is not chosen by a driver.
- From an operational perspective, loading the messages and selecting them requires extra time from operators and maintenance workers and diverts resources from other transit activities.
- At its meeting in June 2023 and again at its meeting on December 3, 2024, the Transit Advisory Committee recommended that only route information be displayed on the MiWay bus destination signage, and that all other messages be removed. The committee requested that a report be brought to Council with this recommendation for consideration.

- Through its Community Recognition Program, the City of Mississauga provides the community with many opportunities to recognize dates of community importance. In 2024, the City coordinated 148 clock tower lightings, 14 tower dimmings, 29 flag raisings, and 7 half-mastings - all of which are recognized on City communication channels. The current use of bus destination signage to display a limited number of messages is only a small part of the community recognition in which the City engages annually.

Background

In June 2022, Council approved a report that set out the seven dates of significance that will be observed by the City of Mississauga. As part of this report, a recommendation was made to only display these observances on the overhead bus destination signs on MiWay buses. However, due to technical issues, this practice has not been followed as closely as was recommended in the June 2022 report. Drivers are still able to select from a list of other celebrations to display on the bus while operating the vehicle.

At its meeting on December 3, 2024, the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) members again raised the issue of bus signage and requested a report back to Council. This was a follow up to the committee's recommendation in June 2023 that a report be brought to General Committee with respect to messages on MiWay bus destination signage. The Transit Advisory Committee included in its comments its recommendations that only route information be displayed on MiWay's bus destination signs.

This report seeks Council endorsement of the TAC recommendation to only display route information on MiWay's bus destination signage.

Present Status

City-Recognized Events and Dates

At present, the City formally recognizes the following Council-approved dates through events and promotional campaigns:

- New Year Celebration (New Year's Levee)
- Black History Month
- International Women's Day
- National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People
- Pride
- National Indigenous History Month
- National Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Canada Day
- Emancipation Day

- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Remembrance Day

Additionally, the City recognizes hundreds of causes every year through the Community Recognition Program that includes flag raisings and clock tower lightings. In 2024, there were 25 flag raisings, 7 half-mastings, 148 clock tower lightings, and 14 dimmings. These recognitions ranged from charitable events, to community celebrations, to religious celebrations and observances. This program provides the community and the City with an opportunity to recognize many events, causes, and celebrations. As part of this program, the City recognizes these events on its communications channels, further amplifying the message.

At the same time, the City of Mississauga's many divisions recognize a host of cultural and religious celebrations through events in facilities, library displays, and other observances. The Council-approved list of official dates and observances is only a small fraction of the many other significant dates observed by and at the City.

MiWay Bus Destination Signage

MiWay transit operators are currently able to select which messages to display on the destination bus signage, along with the route information. Due to AODA requirements and space limitations, these messages are limited in length. The current list of messages available for operators to choose from include:

- Happy New Year
- Happy Orthodox Christmas
- Black History Month
- International Women's Day
- Pride Month
- Indigenous History Month
- National Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Happy Canada Day
- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Remembrance Day (Lest We Forget)
- Happy Hanukkah
- Merry Christmas
- Happy Kwanza

This list includes the official events listed in the June 2022 Council-approved report, as well as a number of others that have been added over time. This list is not inclusive of all holidays and celebrations marked in the community. Moreover, there is currently no criteria for adding new messages to the bus signage message inventory. The bus destination signage reflects only a small number of the causes recognized by the City overall through the Community Recognition Program, official dates and events and Flag Policy.

As outlined in a memo to the Transit Advisory Committee in June 2023 (Appendix 1), from an operational perspective, destination signage messages are loaded into the sign program for each bus on an individual basis. It is then up to each Transit Operator (more than 900 total staff) to decide if they would like to display another optional message, or not, along with the required route information. If they choose not to select a message, the destination sign displays only the route information (e.g. Route 1 – Dundas East). However, if they do input a message code into the sign system, the bus destination sign will alternate between displaying the route information and the non-service-related message (e.g. Happy Canada Day).

At present, due to the variation in technology on buses, not all buses are connected to a central platform for centralized control and oversight of messages. As well, under the current model, the operator chooses the additional message to display, meaning that on Canada Day for instance, not all buses will display the message “Happy Canada Day.” Drivers have discretion over the message, but not route information. This creates a lack of coherence and consistency in message delivery.

Benchmarking Other Transit Agencies

A benchmarking exercise of other large transit systems in Canada found little consistency in how and which non-service-related messages are displayed on buses. For example, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) does not allow any message other than route information based on feedback from its Advisory Council on Accessible Transit. 21% of MiWay passengers connect daily with the TTC. Furthermore, while Brampton City Council approves the dates and events for Brampton Transit to recognize each year on its bus destination signs, Milton Transit has no formal process for determining or approving messages. Appendix 1 contains the full benchmarking with other transit systems.

Comments

Including additional messages on MiWay bus signage, beyond route information, has implications for customers and operators.

Customer Experience

From the customer perspective, displaying non-service-related messages increases the amount of information the destination sign must scroll through and therefore the time it can take a customer to determine the route/service provided by a particular bus. This adds friction to the overall customer experience. Many bus stops throughout Mississauga are served by more than one route, and a delay of even a few seconds can interfere with loading times when multiple customers have to pause to check and confirm if a bus destination sign is displaying the route they want before they board.

MiWay recently changed the colour of the messages on the bus destination signage from orange to white, to provide greater contrast of the message and make it easier for riders to read. This was done in an effort to address accessibility and improve the customer experience.

Pressure on Operators

Expanding the list of available, optional destination sign messages places pressure on both Transit Operations and Maintenance staff. The logistics of reviewing and loading new messages onto each bus is time-consuming. Not all buses are available at the same time and in the same place due to the transit system's operational and maintenance schedules. The complexity of loading messages manually into the sign program also requires shifting resources away from other maintenance priorities and negatively affects service delivery to customers at times due to the logistics involved in coordinating access to the buses.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts resulting from the recommendations in this report.

Conclusion

Staff recommend that only route information be displayed on MiWay bus destination signage. Doing so will reduce operational pressures and reduce confusion and friction for riders. Adopting this approach will also align MiWay with the TTC and other transit agencies who only display route information. The City of Mississauga provides many other opportunities for the community to recognize significant events and dates.

Attachments

Appendix 1: Report to Transit Advisory Committee, June 2023



Sam Rogers, MBA, Commissioner of Transportation and Works

Prepared by: Rob Trewarth, MA, Director of Strategic Communications and Initiatives