

Fair Fares Fact Sheet

NOVEMBER 2007

What Is Fair Fares?

FAIR FARES FACTS:

1. Over 400,000 people live on low incomes in Alberta
2. Of Albertans with disabilities, 73% have difficulty accessing transportation
3. Over 10,000 Calgarians are registered users of the Universal Low Income Transit Pass program
4. Without affordable transportation, many low income people report that they become isolated, lonely and forgotten

Fair Fares was born out of the need for access to affordable transportation for all Calgarians. Many of our low-income citizens cannot fully participate in the social, economic and family life of their communities because they cannot afford the transportation.

A PRINCIPLE BARRIER TO COMMUNITY INCLUSION IS A LACK OF AFFORDABLE TRANSPORTATION

Affordable transportation will assist low income Calgarians to access education, skills training and employment, buy groceries and other essentials, volunteer, attend medical appointments and places of worship, take their children to recreation activities, and enjoy the many opportunities the cities, towns and rural

Affordable Transportation For All Calgarians

Public transit is the primary means of transportation for many low-income Calgarians, enabling them to participate in and contribute to their communities. Affordable transportation is essential for people who are:

- unemployed
- homeless
- working poor
- single parents
- on disability and social assistance programs



**AFFORDABLE TRANSPORTATION FOR CALGARIANS
LIVING ON LOW INCOMES IS A NECESSITY**

A History of the Fair Fares Initiative

Municipal governments are trying to address the needs of low-income Albertans, but do not have the funding. The Government of Alberta must fund municipalities to provide low-cost transportation as part of their responsibility to provide support to low-income Albertans.

- In late 2000, a small group of concerned individuals formed the Community Committee on Discounted Transit Fares to develop a proposal for a subsidized transit pass program for people living on low income in Alberta. The Community Committee initially focused on the transportation needs of people receiving Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH).
- In April 2002, Calgary City Council endorsed the Community Committee's proposal in principle and put forth a resolution to the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) calling for the Government of Alberta to establish a subsidized monthly transit pass for low income Albertans. In September 2002, AUMA passed the resolution.
- In February 2004, the Community Committee presented to Calgary Caucus a proposal to cost share a provincial low-income transit pass with The City of Calgary. Calgary Caucus requested that The City of Calgary take the first step and bring representatives to the table.
- In November 2004, the Community Committee changed its name to Fair Fares and became an Action Team of Vibrant Communities Calgary. Calgary City Council was considering a proposed increase to transit fares, and there was concern about how low income Calgarians would afford the increased fares. Council approved the increase, but agreed to study the feasibility of a low income transit pass program.
- In August 2005, The City of Calgary implemented a Low Income Transit Pass Program for Calgarians with disabilities in receipt of AISH. In January 2006, this program was expanded to all low-income adult Calgarians with incomes less than 75% of the Low Income Cut-Off lines. Qualified applicants can purchase a half-price monthly transit pass.
- In 2006, Fair Fares was awarded the Community Spirit Award of Distinction from the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary, and the Maureen Allen Social Action Award from the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Alberta Division.
- In 2006, Calgary's Universal Low Income Transit Pass (ULITP) program was funded from The City's Fiscal Stability Reserve Fund. A proposal to divert funds from Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) to the ULITP program met with community opposition and a negative impact report from FCSS administration.
- In February 2006, Fair Fares launched a provincial letter-writing campaign, requesting that the Government of Alberta fund affordable transportation throughout the province through conditional grants to municipalities.
- In March 2006, the Fair Fares Action Team presented to Calgary Caucus. Calgary Caucus recommended that Fair Fares take their request to a provincial Standing Policy Committee.
- In April 2006, Fair Fares met with Mike Cardinal, then Minister of Human Resources and Employment, to discuss the Government of Alberta's responsibility for providing affordable transportation for all Albertans living on low incomes.
- In May 2006, Fair Fares launched a province-wide postcard campaign to raise government and public awareness about the need for affordable transportation. Over 15,000 postcards were distributed throughout Alberta.
- In September 2006, Fair Fares presented to the Provincial Standing Policy Committee on Education and Employment.
- Since September 2006, Fair Fares has been following up with the Government of Alberta with a request that a cross-ministerial committee be established to look into affordable transportation issues in partnerships with Alberta's municipal governments.
- The City of Calgary committed to fund the low income transit pass program to through 2008.

Everybody Wins with Affordable Transportation!

Calgary Transit and Vibrant Communities Calgary recently commissioned a survey of Low Income Transit Passholders to identify how the pass might be helping to improve their socioeconomic situation. 401 passholders were surveyed, yielding the followings key results:

- 59% reported that they were able to keep a job because of the Low Income Transit Pass, and 49% found employment (or better employment) when they had the pass;
- 55% reported that they take more training/educational classes when they have the Low Income Transit Pass;
- 48% reported that they volunteer more often when they have the Low Income Transit Pass;
- 45% reported that they used Calgary Transit to go to social/recreational/cultural activities before having the pass. After purchasing the pass, 63% reported that they use Calgary Transit to travel to social/recreational/cultural activities.
- Respondents stated that not being able to obtain the Pass would negatively impact their lives in terms of worsening their personal finances (48%) or decreasing their mobility (33%).

In brief, almost all respondents stated that the Pass was useful (99%) and their lives were better when they had the Pass (97%). The survey clearly suggests that affordable transportation increases volunteerism, social engagement, learning, and increased participation in the labour force.

Q & A on Affordable Transportation

Q: How many low income Albertans would benefit from affordable transportation?

A: Based on Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO), there are over 400,000 Albertans living on low income that could potentially benefit directly from affordable transportation.

Q: How will affordable Transportation be funded?

A: Fair Fares is asking the Government of Alberta to provide social funding for affordable transportation for all low income Albertans.

Q: Do any other Canadian cities have Low Income Transit programs?

A: Yes. A number of Low Income Transit programs exist across Canada, including Vancouver, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Regina, Brandon, and Ottawa. Many are limited to seniors, people with disabilities and other social assistance recipients. A number of these programs are funded in whole or part by provincial governments.

Q: How can I get a Universal Low Income Transit Pass in Calgary?

A: Contact Calgary Transit at www.calgarytransit.com or 262-1000 or visit www.vibrantcalgary.com/fairfares

“Basic transportation is a necessity to participate in community life. For people who are destitute, bus passes are essential.”
- Canadian Centre for Policy



Vibrant
COMMUNITIES Calgary

**Fair Fares is an initiative of
Vibrant Communities Calgary**

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Vibrant Communities Calgary exists to ignite community action to create and implement bold solutions that reduce and prevent poverty through collaboration and education.

Fair Fares is a committee of people living on low-incomes, concerned citizens, non-profit agencies, and representatives from business and The City of Calgary. Fair Fares has worked collaboratively towards the development of the Universal Low Income Transit Pass program, funded by The City of Calgary until the end of 2007. We are now working to secure sustainable funding from the Government of Alberta for province-wide affordable transportation.

Fair Fares Action Team Partners

Bonnie Pacaud, *Community Representative*

Colleen Huston, *Disability Action Hall*

Denise Lau, *Community Representative*

Jamal Ali, *Community Representative*

Joan Farkas, *City of Calgary*

Fred Robertson, *Community Representative*

Karen Cameron, *Calgary Transit*

Karen Hirl, *Calgary Transit*

Katie Gerke, *Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada*

Murray Crosby, *Community Representative*

Michelle Kristinson, *Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada*

Tammy Poirier, *Community Representative*

Terry Wilson, *City of Calgary*

“A Low Income Transit Pass allows me to leave my home and access the city for my employment, doctor appointments, community activity, personal needs, groceries, other shopping, visits with my children and personal contact with my relatives. To be independent on transportation keeps my moral up to achieve things by handling them myself and keeps me sane. Thanks.”

- *Calgarian living on low income*

Help Secure Sustainable Funding for Affordable Transportation

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- **WRITE** a letter of support and **SEND** it to your MLA or City Councilor
- **Phone** your MLA or City Councilor to voice your support

Find MLA contact information at www.electionsalberta.ab.ca/streetkey or call toll free 310-0000

Find Calgary Council contact information at www.calgary.ca or (403) 268-2430

Affordable Transportation For All Albertans