

Fair Fares Fact Sheet

MAY 2006

What Is Fair Fares?

FAIR FARES FACTS:

1. Approximately 300,000 people live on low incomes in Alberta
2. Of Albertans with disabilities, 73% have difficulty accessing transportation
3. Of the over 100,000 Calgarians living on low income, 55% use transit regularly (more than 3 times per week)
4. Without affordable transportation, many people become isolated, lonely and forgotten

Fair Fares was born out of the need for access to affordable transportation for all Albertans. 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.

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

Affordable transportation will assist low income Albertans 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 communities of Alberta have to offer.

Affordable Transportation For All Albertans

Public transit is the primary means of transportation for many low-income Albertans, 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 ALBERTANS
LIVING ON LOW INCOMES IS A NECESSITY**

A History of the Fair Fares Action Team

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 monthly transit pass for \$35, half the current full fare.
- Until the end of 2006, Calgary's Low Income Transit Pass program is funded from The City's Fiscal Stability Reserve Fund. A proposal to divert funds from Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) to the Low Income Transit Pass program met with strong community opposition and a negative impact report from FCSS administration. It is not known whether City Council will approve funding for the Low Income Transit Pass program beyond 2006.
- In January 2006, City of Calgary Aldermen Joe Ceci and Gord Lowe joined the Fair Fares Action Team in an effort to secure provincial funding for Calgary's Low Income Transit Pass program.
- 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 of \$2.25 per capita 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 the Honourable Mike Cardinal, 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. 10,000 postcards were distributed throughout Alberta.
- In May 2006, Fair Fares was awarded the 2006 Community Spirit Award of Distinction from the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary. This award recognizes organizations that have come together to create approaches to community development and inclusion that none could have accomplished alone.
- In June 2006, Fair Fares will present to the Provincial Standing Policy Committee on Education and Employment.

Everybody Wins with Affordable Transportation!

The positive impact to the province through poverty reduction and social and economic growth far outweighs the investment in affordable transportation. Affordable transportation across the province would result in:

- savings to health care, education and criminal justice systems
- a significantly reduced barrier to employment that would benefit individuals, small businesses and the economy
- access to volunteer opportunities that make an economic contribution to the community
- participation in the community (access to family, friends, places of worship, recreational activities, etc.) improving quality of life for people living on limited incomes and others in the community
- increased productivity in community and economic development

Q & A on Fair Fares

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

A: Based on Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO), there are approximately 300,000 Albertans living on low income that could potentially benefit directly from affordable transportation.

Q: What will affordable transportation cost and how will it be funded?

A: Fair Fares is asking the Government of Alberta to provide social funding for affordable transportation for all low income Albertans. Fair Fares is proposing that the Government of Alberta allocate \$2.25 per person, province-wide, to urban and rural communities as a conditional grant. This is an annual provincial investment of less than \$8 million.

Q: How will funding be used, particularly in rural communities that do not currently operate or have a need for a public transportation system?

A: Municipalities that currently have a public transportation system would use the grant to fund a low income transit program. Other communities would be free to develop programs suited to their needs such as providing an on-call shuttle service or subsidizing taxi fares.

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 Low Income Transit Pass in Calgary?

A: Contact Calgary Transit at www.calgarytransit.com or 262-1000.

“Basic transportation is a necessity to participate in community life. For people who are destitute, bus passes are essential.”
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, November 2005

EN ROUTE TO AFFORDABLE TRANSPORTATION

Vibrant
COMMUNITIES Calgary



**Fair Fares is an action team of
Vibrant Communities Calgary**

1227 Kensington Close NW
Calgary, Alberta T2N 3J6
E-mail: info@vibrantcalgary.com
Fax: (403) 283-2105

Ramona Johnston

Phone: (403) 283-2122
E-mail: ramona@vibrantcalgary.com

Colleen Huston

Phone: (403) 717-7630
E-mail: actionhall@calgscope.org

Bonnie Pacaud

Phone: (403) 720-0204
E-mail: pacaud@shaw.ca

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 community committee of people living on low-incomes, community members, non-profit agencies, and representatives from business and The City of Calgary. Fair Fares has worked collaboratively towards the development of a Low Income Transit Pass program, funded by The City of Calgary until the end of 2006, and is now working to secure sustainable funding from the Government of Alberta for province-wide affordable transportation.

Fair Fares Action Team Partners

Casey Boodt, *Canadian Outcomes Research Institute*
Joe Ceci, *City of Calgary Alderman*
Scott Clarke, *Vibrant Communities Calgary*
Murray Crosby, *Community Representative*
Joan Farkas, *City of Calgary*
Colleen Huston (Co-Chair), *Disability Action Hall*
Ramona Johnston, *Vibrant Communities Calgary*
Michelle Kristinson, *Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada*
Jessica Leech, *Vibrant Communities Calgary*
Gord Lowe, *City of Calgary Alderman*
Koji Miyaji, *Calgary Transit*
Bonnie Pacaud (Co-Chair), *Community Representative*
Tammy Poirier, *Community Representative*
Lindsay Postill, *Community Representative*
Fred Robertson, *National Anti-Poverty Organization*
Leanne Squair, *City of Calgary*
Christine Argao, *Calgary Transit*

“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 Get The Province On Board!

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- **WRITE** a letter of support and **SEND** it to your **MLA**
- **CALL** your **MLA** to voice your support

MLA contact information at <http://www.electionsalberta.ab.ca/streetkey/>

or call toll free 310-0000

Affordable Transportation For All Albertans



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