



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

May 1, 2006

Mayor Dave Bronconnier
Calgary City Council
P.O. Box 21, Station M #8069
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2M5

Dear Mayor Bronconnier:

Subject: Update on Universal Low Income Transit Pass Program

On behalf of Vibrant Communities Calgary and the Fair Fares Action Team, we are writing to provide a community update on The City of Calgary's Universal Low Income Transit Pass (ULITP) program.

The ULITP program began on January 2, 2006 as a one-year pilot project with administrative costs and revenue losses funded through the Fiscal Stability Reserve Fund. Thanks to your leadership, Calgary Transit has advised us that close to 7,000 low income Calgarians have registered for the ULITP, and each month approximately 3,000 are purchasing the \$35 passes. This program is having a positive impact on the lives of Calgary's low income citizens:

"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

Fair Fares, an action team of Vibrant Communities Calgary, was formed in late 2000 to address the transportation needs of people living on low incomes. It is a community committee composed of people living on low-incomes, community members, non-profit agencies and representatives from the business community and The City of Calgary.

It is our hope that the Government of Alberta will partner with The City of Calgary before the end of this year in order to ensure continuity for the thousands of people who are currently benefiting from Calgary's ULITP program. To this end, our recent efforts to engage the Government of Alberta include the following activities:

- January 2006, Alderman Joe Ceci and Alderman Gord Lowe joined the Fair Fares Action Team in an effort to help secure provincial funding.
- February 2006, Fair Fares launched a provincial letter-writing campaign asking the Government of Alberta to allocate \$2.25 per capita, province-wide, to urban and rural communities as a conditional grant to provide affordable transportation for all low income Albertans. This annual provincial investment of less than \$8 million would allow municipalities to develop low income transit programs suited to their needs.
- March 2006, Fair Fares presented to Calgary Caucus, where it was recommended that Fair Fares take their request to a provincial Standing Policy Committee.

1227 Kensington Close NW
Calgary, AB T2N 3J6
ramona@vibrantcalgary.com
Phone: (403) 283-2122



- 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 to all Albertans living on low incomes. Media responded positively to Fair Fares' news release about this meeting, resulting in coverage on Global Television, City TV, Shaw TV, The Calgary Sun and CHQR 770 Radio.
- April 2006, Fair Fares continues to work diligently to mobilize provincial support and boasts many supporters including municipal transit authorities from across Alberta, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, Alberta Disabilities Forum, Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta, Inner-City Forum on Social Policy, Public Interest Alberta, United Way of Calgary and Area, social agencies, labour groups, community members and municipal councils from across the province. We now have copies of over 50 letters of support that have been mailed to MLAs from communities such as Cold Lake, Banff, Whitecourt, Peace River, Kitscoty, Grande Prairie and Sylvan Lake.
- May 2006, Fair Fares will begin an awareness campaign to engage Calgarians living on low incomes in our efforts to secure provincial funding.
- June 2006, Fair Fares will present to the Provincial Standing Policy Committee on Education and Employment.

We would also like to share with you some recent recognition that this initiative has received. In January 2006, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy published a report on Fair Fares, recognizing that Calgary's ULITP program was an innovative poverty reduction strategy, and documenting the unique collaborative partnership between the community and the municipal government.

In addition, Fair Fares has been nominated by the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary for a Community Spirit of Collaboration Award. This award highlights the way in which organizations can come together to create approaches to community development and inclusion that none could have accomplished alone. We are honoured by this recognition and thank our many City of Calgary partners for their continued collaboration.

We hope this update has been helpful, and we welcome your feedback on our efforts to secure sustainable funding for Calgary's ULITP program.

We thank City Council for your recognition of the critical role that affordable transportation plays in helping low-income Calgarians live more independent and productive lives, and for your continued leadership and support of Calgary's ULITP program.

Sincerely,

Ramona Johnston
Manager, Vibrant Communities Calgary
on behalf of the Fair Fares Action Team:

Christine Argao, *Calgary Transit*
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, *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*
Tracie Matthiessen, *Alberta Disabilities Forum*
Koji Miyaji, *Calgary Transit*
Bonnie Pacaud, *Community Representative*
Tammy Poirier, *Community Representative*
Lindsay Postill, *Community Representative*
Fred Robertson, *National Anti-Poverty Organization*
Leanne Squair, *City of Calgary*

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