

Calgarians Celebrate Affordable Public Transportation (January 2006)

Beginning January 2, 2006, The City of Calgary became the first municipality in Alberta to implement a Low Income Transit Pass Program, allowing thousands of Calgarians to participate in the economic, social and family life of their community.

For the first time ever, Calgarians living on low incomes are now able to purchase monthly transit passes for \$35, instead of the full adult fare of \$70.

According to Ramona Johnston, Manager of Vibrant Communities Calgary, this program is critical because affordable public transportation increases self-sufficiency and improves lives by facilitating access to employment and training opportunities, volunteer work, medical appointments, recreational activities and community services.

Says Ramona, "Individuals who are able to work because they have access to affordable transportation give back to the community through increased purchases of goods and services, payment of income tax, and reduced dependence on social services."

Affordable transportation also benefits employers by increasing the labour pool and reducing turnover.

Calgary's Low Income Transit Pass Program began for AISH recipients on August 1, 2005, and within the first three months over 2,000 people living on AISH purchased \$35 passes. It is expected that thousands more will use the program now that it has been expanded to other people living on low incomes.

Vibrant Communities Calgary's Fair Fares Action Team played a critical role in building positive relationships with key municipal policy makers and mobilizing community support for the Low Income Transit Pass Program. They will continue to work over the coming year to engage the Provincial government in discussions about providing sustainable funding for the program.

