

BRIEFING

Community Services Briefing to
Combined Meeting of Council
2019 November 18

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Fair Entry and Municipal Building Third Floor Customer Service Approach

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

At the October 7, 2019 Strategic Council Meeting, Councillor Chahal raised a question during question period concerning long line-ups at Fair Entry on the third floor service area of the Municipal Building. It is important to note that the third floor service area includes Fair Entry, Cashiers and Tax Advisory Services on the north and the building services counter on the south. As such, this briefing is being provided to advise on actions undertaken by Administration to improve the customer experience on the third floor in its entirety, with a focus on Fair Entry and Cashiers where customers are most impacted by wait times.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Fair Entry provides a single application process for City of Calgary subsidy programs, to improve customer service and accessibility. Under the single application process the number of persons applying to Fair Entry has grown from 50,000 in 2015 to almost 100,000 low-income Calgarians in 2018. Administration continues to examine and implement solutions to make the customer service experience positive.

Existing mitigation strategies

To address some of the associated challenges with high volume, several strategies are currently in place. These include:

- **Delivering Multiple Methods to Access** – Fair Entry and Calgary Transit promote the variety of methods available to purchase transit passes or to apply to Fair Entry. For Fair Entry specifically, options to apply include mail, 311, fax or drop off at 19 locations around the city in addition to in-person counters at Village Square Leisure Centre and the Municipal Building. Even with these options, most applicants (73%) apply in person. Over the last year, Fair Entry online applications have increased by 20 per cent and online Low-income Transit Pass (LITP) sales have increased by 7 per cent. While these increases are encouraging, face-to-face interactions for application processing and pass purchasing remains overwhelmingly the most popular method of service delivery among customers.
- **Modifying Staffing for Peak Periods** – Fair Entry and Cashiers staff schedules are adjusted to align with high volume periods. As well, additional face-to-face support in the waiting area during peak summer months has been added to help address the needs of in-person applicants and pass purchasers before they reach the counters.
- **Improving Line Management** – In 2019, a take-a-number system was implemented for Fair Entry applicants to eliminate the need to physically stand in line. A Fair Entry waiting room has been added as a first step to improve the physical design of the space for the customer experience.
- **Increasing Customer awareness** – Customers are informed of non-peak service times. Low-Income Transit Passes are available for sale beginning the 15th of every month.

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Staff provide information to customers that there are more reasonable wait times to receive service closer to the 15th of the month versus the end of the month.

- **Introducing Temporary Pop-Up sites** – Fair Entry and Calgary Transit have partnered with the Calgary Public Library during summer months to offer temporary ‘pop-up’ sites to divert customers from the Municipal Building line-ups.

Future Mitigating Strategies

- **Application Process Review** – The Fair Entry paper application is currently being reviewed. Incorporating feedback from customers, front-line staff and program partners is expected to help reduce the amount of time customers spend at the front counter.
- **Space Improvements** – Administration is currently working on an initiative for the Municipal Building third floor to enhance service delivery to citizens by improving client comfort, ease of access, privacy for confidential/sensitive matters, way-finding and navigation of services. This approach will improve the customer experience and supports business operations through space design.
- **Pre-screening** – Fair Entry is piloting a permanent pre-screening function whereby a program administrator will be located in the customer area to conduct a pre-screen of each application to ensure applicants have all the necessary documentation before they reach the counter for processing. This action will alleviate occurrences where applicants wait unnecessarily because they don’t have their paperwork in order, which benefits all applicants overall with reduced wait times.
- **Transit Mobile Ticketing** – Calgary Transit is implementing Phase 1 of its mobile ticketing application in Q2 of 2020. The exact timing of adding the subsidized fare products to the mobile ticketing application is in the process of being determined. Once implemented this will reduce the line-ups for pass sales in all physical sale locations. In addition, Calgary Transit is undertaking a Counter Portfolio Review examining future locations for service counters to improve user access.

Customer Feedback

Recent engagement on the customer experience of Fair Entry clients highlighted that customers feel they are being served as quickly and effectively as possible. This is consistent with earlier engagement completed which highlighted that customers were satisfied with the overall Fair Entry application process.

Since the inception of the program low-income Calgarians are accessing services that are making a significant improvement in their quality of life, and their experience is treated with utmost respect and dignity. Continuous improvement to the customer service experience is important and ongoing.

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A