

Disability Action Hall

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CITY OF CALGARY
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IN COUNCIL CHAMBER

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ITEM: Submission distributed
C2014-0863
CITY CLERK'S DEPARTMENT

November 24th, 2014

Dear City Council:

RE: City Budget to increase dollars to Calgary Transit to freeze the low-income transit pass.

Members of the Disability Action Hall commend City Council earlier this year when the sliding scale concept was presented. We are here to speak in support of providing additional dollars to Calgary Transit to freeze the low-income transit pass for the following reasons:

To begin by quoting Councillor Stevenson, "I can still not understand why someone living on \$1500 a month should be treated different if they are 55 or 65." For your knowledge and reference, in October 2014 for the Citizens who have been approved by transit and want to ride more than four times a week, nearly 10,000 people did not buy a pass in October.

As a reminder during this discussion in Council in July 2014, Councillors decided to freeze the seniors pass. The budget report before you have no change in prices to the seniors passes. To quote Councillor Farrell "People across the life spectrum struggle equally to make ends meet" We ask to freeze the low-income transit pass just as you have for the seniors who pay \$ 1.25 a month.

As you may also know, the budget before you does not reflect an alignment of all discounted transit fares nor does the budget that aligns with the fairness principles of the Fair Calgary Policy. Councillor Diane Colley-Urquhart said "The City should practice "reverse discrimination" Many people, especially members of the Disability Action Hall are permanently disabled and typically can do very little to improve their financial situation.

We also ask to freeze the low-income transit pass until the sliding scale review, report and recommendations come before Council September 2015.

We also understand through our recent conversations with Calgary Transit, the data to help set this sliding scale may not be available until after the 2014 Notice of Assessment is completed and when people start to renew the passes; currently the challenge is while eligibility of income is checked, the income is not recorded on the single entry form at this time. We ask council not to raise the transit pass price without a full understanding of implications of even modest raise at this time.

We ask to please hit the pause button for low-income transit fares. Given we do not have much data other than nearly 10,000 people who apply for the LITP in October did not buy one. It is in the best interest to freeze the pass until we know more data and to prevent unforeseen hardship, social isolation as typically the highest amount of sales for passes occur during cold climate months.

The community has told us that even at \$ 44 a month. They cannot afford to buy it. Raising the low-income transit pass to another unaffordable rate counters the City's commitment to policies of accessible and inclusive communities. By freezing the pass we are excited that another 10,000 people will contribute revenue to Calgary Transit and the community.

Thank you for your time and consideration to freeze the low-income transit pass until the sliding scale report is completed.

Colleen Huston

On behalf of the Disability Action Hall

Markusoff, July 28th, "Council Grapples with Seniors Pass" Calgary Herald

<http://www2.canada.com/calgaryherald/iphone/news/latest/story.html?id=10069497>, Accessed Friday, November 21st, 2014.

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