

July 6, 2016



Dear Mayor Nenshi and Members of the City Council

Re: Sliding Scale Fee Implementation

On behalf of Poverty Talks! we would like to confirm our group's support for Administration's recommendation to implement a sliding scale subsidy for Calgary Transit's Low Income Monthly Pass program, using 100% of LICO as the subsidy threshold. We also urge Council to deepen the subsidy rate for Calgarians with incomes below 50% of LICO to 95% of the regular monthly transit fare. Taking such action ensures Calgarians living on extremely low incomes can access public transportation and therefore the opportunities to rebuild their lives. We also encourage City Administration to continue seeking funding opportunities to expand the sliding scale to 130% of LICO. Affordable public transit serves a critical role and supports Calgarians climbing out of poverty to achieve their employment goals and to fully participate in recreation and community life.

Poverty Talks! heard loud and clear that implementing the sliding scale would require additional funding support from other levels of government. Since the beginning of 2016, Poverty Talks! has advocated to the provincial government to provide funds for the operation of subsidized low-income public transit fares in Calgary. We are extremely pleased that the provincial government will now contribute \$4.5 million annually over the next three years towards Calgary's subsidized low-income transit fares.

As individuals who experience poverty on a daily basis, we discussed our experiences and the importance of reducing transit fares for low-income Calgarians:

When I lived in Mary Dover House, women had to beg for a bus ticket just to get to work, I had to go begging for a ticket from the shelter just to see my sister. A lot of my house-mates went from Agency to Agency just to get a ticket. There was so much desperation for a ticket! Ladies were piecing together nickels and dimes wherever they could get them, just to put enough together for a single \$3.15 ticket. A lot of the Ladies did not know, including myself that the low income monthly transit pass existed. Even then, there was not enough dollars to afford one. The human cost involved in getting a ticket (cost to dignity, self-image, and self-worth) was much greater than its price.

Hilary

As a parent of teenagers, it can be hard to get kids to school when you have to choose between all the other expenses and purchasing transit passes. While some schools

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provide transit tickets for kids who don't have the fare, we should never expect anyone, let alone children, to line up and beg for transit tickets just to get to school. A sliding scale would support families and help keep their teenagers in school. After all, education is one of the best ways to combat poverty.

Sue

Low-income Calgarians like members of Poverty Talks! need access to affordable public transit. We hope you approve Administration's recommendations, deepen the subsidy for those experiencing extreme poverty and seek funding opportunities to expand the sliding scale to 130% of LICO. We want to thank you for your leadership on this issue and your increasing commitment for a fair and affordable transit system for all Calgarians.

Sincerely,

TracyRay Lewis, Hilary Chapple, Sue Gwynn

Cc: Poverty Talks Steering Committee members- Jackie Carrier, Rhonda Poluck, Brad Robertson, Fred Robertson, Nigel Kirk and Mini Simi.