

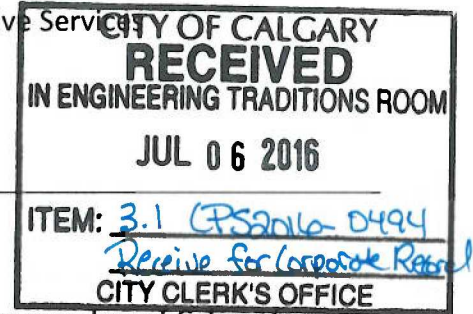
Report from Lived Experience on Affordable Public Transit

Author: Hilary L. Chapple

To: Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services

Date: July 6th, 2016

Regarding: Sliding Scale Report



Members of the Committee:

I am honoured to be here to speak about my experience as a former member of Calgary's homeless community.

I am an active member of the Client Action Committee with the Calgary Homeless Foundation and also Poverty Talks! a steering committee of Vibrant Communities Calgary; the steward of the Enough 4 All Poverty Reduction Strategy.

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 me, 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.

With homelessness comes TRAUMA: Numbness, alienation, frustration, stigma, anger, self-loathing, no or low self-esteem, loneliness, resentment, helplessness, isolation, grief, anxiousness and hopelessness.

Finding ways to survive and to heal from Trauma is possible but it is a long process. Healing from trauma can take many forms. I, along with some of the people I met in the homeless community used the following strategies:

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- Being part of the larger Community
- Going for Coffee and visiting
- Hanging out at the Library to read or use the free computers
- Doing your own grocery shopping if your income is enough to afford it
- Finding meaningful work
- Talking to friends and family

- Find your faith and spirituality by going to Church or sharing conversation with others in the Faith Community
- Going to Medical Appointments or taking your children to school

Most of these strategies require the use of public transit. Many of my friends do not have enough income for Transit. A \$44.00 per month low income bus pass does not seem a lot, but when your income is \$627.00 per month (for a single individual) and you are charged \$323.00 per month for core shelter, there is not enough disposable income to go around.

I remember considering canceling attendance at my first Poverty Talks meeting because I didn't have enough money for a transit ticket. Luckily, Poverty Talks covers transit costs for its members and I was able to attend. I imagine that if I had to pay for transit to attend Poverty Talks meetings I would not be here today, advocating for affordable transit for all Calgarians!

Although I support the recommendations being brought forward by Administration, I strongly believe that those who survive on an extremely low incomes need a deeper discount on transit fares. A 95% subsidy rate for those below 50% of LICO would roughly equate to a \$5 a month low-income transit pass. Having the ability to use transit builds dignity and self-worth. It helps people access the services they need to deal with their trauma and find opportunities to climb out of poverty. A \$5.00 a monthly transit pass is like a lifeline for many of the people I know and care about.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Hilary L. Chapple.

Advocate with the Homeless and people living in Poverty in Calgary