



Free Fare Zone review

Infrastructure and Planning Committee IP2026-0286

2026 May 7



Previous Council direction

Notice of Motion EC2026-0106 – 2026 February 24.

Council directed Administration to undertake a comprehensive review of the Free Fare Zone and report back to Council by Q2 2026.

1. Prepare a detailed report and analysis
2. Engage with the public, City partners, and interested parties
3. Engage transit users
4. Measure the financial impacts
5. Present viable alternatives to the existing Free Fare Zone
6. Assess potential enhancements or value-added elements



Recommendations

That the Infrastructure and Planning Committee recommend that Council:

1. Direct Administration to remove the Free Fare Zone on 2026 August 01.
2. As part of the 2027-2030 budget deliberations, consider reinvesting the additional revenue from removing the Free Fare Zone to advance improvements in transit safety, support for events, and support for vulnerable populations.
3. Direct Administration to utilize the 2026 revenue from removing the Free Fare Zone to fund the associated signage and infrastructure changes and look for one-time investments to improve transit safety, support for events, and support for vulnerable populations.
4. Direct that Attachment 4 remain confidential pursuant to Section 23 (Disclosure harmful to law enforcement) of the Access to Information Act.

The Free Fare Zone review considered four themes



Safety & community



Ridership & equity



Operations



Financial

Safety is the primary concern of transit riders and is a barrier to using transit

- Crime, safety and policing is the second most dominant issue for Calgarians, and has gone up since last year.
- Downtown stations are consistently described as the least safe part of the transit system.
- Ridership gains from service expansion, pricing or messaging are limited unless safety issues downtown are addressed first.

Sources: 2026 Spring Research Results and 2025 Calgary Transit Usage and Behaviours Focus Groups



Key benefits of removing the Free Fare Zone



- Reduction in disorderly behaviour on trains and platforms
- Improved perceptions of safety
- Frees up train capacity during peak times
- Improved fairness across the system
- Increased fare revenue of up to \$5 million annually

Key challenges of removing the Free Fare Zone



- Strong support for the Free Fare Zone from downtown residents, business owners and non-profit organizations
- Doesn't address root causes of disorder, which is likely to displace to nearby areas
- Impact on downtown events and conference attendees
- Impact on some low-income riders and Calgarians experiencing vulnerabilities



Alternative option of reduced fare zone

Recommended

Free Fare Zone (status quo)	Fare Paid Zone (regular \$4.00 adult fare)	Fare Paid Zone (reduced \$2.00 fare)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers continue to pay no fare for trips within the Free Fare Zone. • No new fare revenue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented by August 1, 2026 • Customers pay standard fare for trips across the transit system. • \$5 million in new fare revenue per year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented by January 1, 2027 • Customers pay reduced fare for trips within the downtown zone (current Free Fare Zone). • \$2.5 million in new fare revenue per year.



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