

Changes to Ride Transit and Leisure Access Pass (LAP) Eligibility Requirements

The LAP and Ride Transit programs have undergone several structural changes to eligibility requirements over the past few years.

Eligibility Qualifiers

At its launch in 2017, Edmontonians initially qualified for the Ride Transit program under one of the following criteria:

- Identification from the Government of Alberta related to the Assured Income for Severely Handicapped (AISH)
- Dependents of an AISH Health Benefit recipient
- Household income is at or below the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) amount, assessed through Notice of Assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency

Several changes were made in 2018 to improve Ride Transit program eligibility. At that time, the household income requirement was increased to 10 percent above the Low Income Cut-Off. Eligible post-secondary students were allowed to purchase monthly passes during the summer months, between May and August, when the U-Pass was unavailable to them. Furthermore, seven new items were added to the Ride Transit income verification eligibility criteria to increase access to the programs :

- CPP-Disability Benefit (Canada Pension Plan)
- Government of Alberta Income Support
- Learner Income Support
- New Permanent Resident
- Refugee Status (including letter of support from the sponsor agreement holder for privately-sponsored refugees)
- Child Under Government Care
- Government Employment Insurance (EI)

As of February 2022, due to the influx of refugees from Ukraine to Canada, the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) was added as a new form for proof of refugee status for both Ride Transit and LAP programs.

Sliding Scale Model

In April 2017, LAP implemented a sliding scale for the Notice of Assessment qualifier. The sliding scale provides three levels of qualification and access based on income:

- Level one: below LICO
- Level two: LICO to LICO+10 per cent
- Level three: LICO+10 per cent to LICO+25 per cent

A sliding scale model for the Ride Transit program was implemented in May 2019 to align with the Leisure Access Program and support applicants that were just above the household income requirement. A second tier was added to the program that introduced a 50 per cent discounted monthly transit pass for Edmonton residents with household incomes between 10 per cent and 25 per cent above LICO.

Membership Lengths

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, several trends impacting Ride Transit applicants and registrants have been observed, including limited access to government agencies and photocopying, as well as feedback from agency advocates assisting their clients. In response, in November 2020, adjustments were made to some eligibility categories to extend the length of membership:

- AISH-qualifying membership lengths were extended from two-years to five-years,
- Below LICO members were extended from a one-year membership to a two-year membership,
- Children under government care underwent a significant membership change, extending from a one-year membership to up to a 17-year membership, aging out at 18 years of age.

In addition to extending the membership lengths, spousal and address information transitioned from a verification process to a declaration by the applicant.