

Annual Seniors Transit Passes

Recommendation:

That the October 18, 2011, Transportation Services report 2011TD2161 be received for information.

Report Summary

This report provides information on alternative approaches to annual senior transit passes, including Disabled Adult Transit Service, (DATS).

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 29, 2010, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a report in the second quarter of 2011 on alternative approaches to annual seniors transit passes (including DATS).

Report

Senior Bus Pass Payment Options

In November 2010, the Canadian Urban Transit Association published fare information on 72 transit systems across Canada including payment options available to seniors. The following benchmark information is based on the data collected from this survey:

- 66 out of 72 transit properties offer a monthly pass payment option for seniors. The average price of a seniors monthly pass is \$44.83. The Edmonton Transit seniors monthly pass price at \$13 is the lowest in Canada.
- Only 11 transit properties offer an annual pass payment option for

seniors. The average price of the seniors annual pass is \$223.69. The Edmonton Transit annual senior pass price at \$118 is the second lowest in Canada.

- Three transit systems in Canada (Calgary, Edmonton, and Strathcona County) provide a low income annual seniors pass. These are priced at \$15, \$54, and \$143.25 respectively.
- Kingston is the only City that offers a low income monthly senior pass. It is priced at \$30.
- Two cities (Saskatoon and Regina) offer a semi-annual senior pass. These are priced at \$120.75 and \$101 respectively.
- Hinton is the only City to sell a quarterly seniors pass at \$50.

Free Transit Senior Programs

Four cities have implemented free transit programs for seniors:

- In Ottawa, seniors can ride regular transit for free on Wednesdays.
- In Strathcona County, seniors can ride for free on regular local routes during the off peak only.
- In Hamilton, seniors 80 years of age or older can apply for a "Golden Age" photo ID bus pass that allows them free access on regular transit service.
- In Fort McMurray (Wood Buffalo), regular transit service for seniors 65 years or older is free.

Para-transit Senior Fares

There are no free para-transit programs for seniors in Canada. Among cities with a population of 400,000 or more, only Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa and Toronto have reduced senior fares for their para-transit service. Para-transit fares in all the other large cities (including Edmonton) are equivalent to

the adult fares for conventional transit service.

Most transit properties do not harmonize conventional and para-transit fares because the service and cost structures are distinctly different between the two types of services.

ETS Senior Ridership and Revenue

In 2010, seniors took approximately 6.2 million rides on regular bus and LRT service and paid \$1.5 million in fares. (*Attachment 1*)

DATS Senior Ridership and Revenue

Total DATS ridership and revenue in 2010 was 925,407 and \$2,033,712 respectively. Sixty-seven percent (8,456) of DATS registrants are seniors and account for 33% of the total revenue and ridership. If the senior monthly and annual passes were accepted on DATS, DATS revenues would decline by over \$600,000. Accepting senior fares on DATS would make it difficult not to accept other concession fares as well. Further analysis would be required to identify the total revenue impact.

Alternative Approaches to Annual Senior Transit Passes

Transit properties that have implemented annual passes for seniors have done so as a way of making transit more affordable for seniors (i.e. the annual passes are priced at a substantial discount compared to regular fares and senior monthly passes). The senior monthly and annual passes in Edmonton are already among the lowest in the country.

As noted from the survey results, there are only a handful of free transit

programs for seniors. In Ottawa, and Hamilton, the free programs are offset by significantly higher monthly senior pass prices (i.e. \$37 and \$87 respectively). In the much smaller communities of Strathcona County and Fort McMurray the proportion of senior transit users and transit users in general is very small and so the financial impact is less significant compared to larger systems.

Reducing senior fares will impact Transit's cost recovery ratio unless the revenue loss can be recouped by raising other fares. If a free program for some seniors like Hamilton's free program for seniors over 80 is contemplated then an alternative may be to increase the cost of the senior monthly pass to offset the expected revenue loss.

An option is to increase seniors' fares to match the national average as defined in the Canadian Urban Transit Association report dated November 2010. Another option is to look at equivalencies with other demographic groups such as post-secondary students' U-Pass. There are other options that can be explored if directed by Committee.

Any changes to senior fares should be considered within the context of other proposed fare changes as identified in the October 18, 2011, Transportation Services report 2011TS6477 - Transit Fare Structure and Three-year Model.

Policy

Edmonton Transit System Fare Policy C451F

Corporate Outcomes

The Edmonton Transit Fare Policy C451F impacts the following strategic goals identified in The Way Ahead:

- Shift Edmonton's Transportation Mode
- Increase transit ridership
- Ensure transit sustainability through appropriate cost recovery ratio

Attachments

1. 2010 Shares, Revenue and Sales
2. Senior Passes in Canada (July 2011)