

Jurisdictional Scan on Transit Fare Fines

Transit agencies around the world have adopted different approaches to activities such as fare evasion. The question posed to Administration was to address “equitable fine payment options” and “options for use of fine revenues” through a review of other jurisdictions.

Administration has reviewed transit fare fine programs in Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto for equitability of fine payment options. Programs run in jurisdictions outside of Alberta are subject to different legal implications and frameworks. The variations in how fare fines are administered have different underlying legal rules and vary in flexibility in how fines are resolved for offenders.

Equitable Fine Payment Options

Given the unique and varied circumstances of different transit users, equitable payment options means that the payment options are not a “one-size-fits-all” but rather offer a resolution that is proportionate to the individual’s circumstance.

When conducting the review of “equitable payment options”, Administration identified the following payment options that are present in other Canadian jurisdictions:

- Early Payment Options
- Community Service
- Fine Escalation

In general, the trend in jurisdictions that have revised their payment structure for transit fines (primarily fare evasion fines) has been to expand the options available to fine recipients, and offer means to reduce the amount of their ticket. There is also a broader philosophical change within some jurisdictions away from punitive measures that may inhibit future transit use, towards programs that encourage continued transit use by offenders but through legitimate means and making sure individuals have access to programs that encourage legal use of public transit.

Early Payment Options

Calgary offers an early payment option to provide incentives for offenders to pay early and reduce the amount they pay. Calgary introduced an early payment option that lowers the \$250 ticket to \$150 if paid within 15 days of the offense,

and \$200 if paid within 16-45 days after the offense. After the 45 days, the ticket is \$250.

Community Service

The Government of Alberta runs the Alberta Fine Option Program that enables offenders to work off fines rather than making cash payments or going to jail. It is available to offenders who are 18 years or older. A similar program is available through City of Calgary Social Services to young offenders under the age of 18 years. In order to be eligible for the Fine Option Program you must be able to work in Canada.

Fine Escalation

Numerous municipalities including Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto include an escalation schedule for repeat offenders. This can allow for a lower fine for first time offenders while still providing a deterrent for repeat offenders.

Vancouver's public transit system is operated by TransLink. Fare evasion fines are \$173 dollars but escalate by \$40 dollars if unpaid after 180 days and an additional \$60 dollars after 365 days.¹

¹ Translink.ca, 2020. [Fare Infractions](#)