Public Transit

Public Transit and Active Transportation

Expires: April 30, 2028

1. Facts

A. Public Transit

1. Public transit is a common and sustainable mode of transportation used by University of Alberta students that benefits the quality of life of all members in the community.
2. The U-Pass is to be implemented in the academic years consistent with the referendum conditions.
   a. The U-Pass is a mandatory fee that all students taking a coursevfor credit must pay, with certain exceptions as outlined by the City of Edmonton.[1]
3. Public transit expansion would allow improved access for University of Alberta students to commute within the service area.
   a. According to the 2022 Regional Public Transit, U-Pass Usage, and Getting to Campus Report by the Students Union.
      i. 73% of students identify getting to campus on public transit.
      ii. 51% of respondents use their U-Pass for 5 trips per week.[2]
      iii. At least 8% of students live in areas served outside the current ETS boundaries
   b. Many students who attend the University of Alberta live in the broader Edmonton Capital Region, and would be better serviced by an expanded inter-municipal transit system.
   c. The Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Services Commission worked on a plan which called for a 13 million dollar investment into a Regional Transit system. However, it was not included in the Capital Plan for the 2023-26 cycle.[3] The Commission has since announced that they will be winding down operations.
4. Smartfare technology, used in cities such as Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver, would reduce the possibility for U-pass fraud and reduce the need for a U-Pass replacement fee and make the transit system more efficient.
   a. Smartcards have been implemented in Edmonton since 2022. These ARC cards allow users to put funds in their card via registry, and helps make transit more affordable by capping monthly payments for transit at $73/month for students ages 19-24 and $100/month for students ages 25 and older.
   b. The rates reported are for within the City of Edmonton and vary depending on region
5. Students who are employed by the University are not eligible for employee transit benefits. That leaves student employees who are not enrolled in a class for the spring/summer semester without a more affordable option than the adult bus pass.
   a. As of 2019, the cost for a monthly transit pass is $97, while the cost for a four month transit U-Pass is $148.
   b. Many out-of-city students who attend the University of Alberta during the Fall and Winter remain in Edmonton during the Spring and Summer and face much higher costs to access transit.
6. Students often feel unsafe using public transit.
   a. Riders deserve public transit that is safe, accessible, and frequent.
7. When checked for proof of payment on transit, students who have forgotten their U-Pass may often be penalized financially in ways that add unexpected financial burden.
   a. Indigenous people and People of Colour in Edmonton tend to be disproportionately fined for fare evasion, when compared to non-Indigenous and non-minority riders[4].
   b. People with no fixed address represented 42% of fare evasion fines, disproportionately impacting homeless persons, in turn affecting marginalized communities who face higher rates of homelessness and poverty.[5]

8. While the City of Edmonton offers reduced bus fares with the Ride Transit Program, recently graduated students may find themselves above the established Low Income Cut-Off while still needing financial assistance in paying for passes.
    a. For students in the lowest income bracket, a Ride Transit Program subsidized pass will cost less than a U-Pass.
9. Over the last few years, the idea of Fare-Free Public Transit has become increasingly discussed in Edmonton.
    a. Over the last few years, large cities around the world have turned to fare-free models of Transit.
    b. Calgary's C-Train offers fare-free transit in its downtown core.
    c. In Edmonton, issues relating to large costs in transit, including fines, year-round access, and affordability would be resolved if the city implemented fare-free public transit.
    d. A petition was started by the Free Transit Organization in Edmonton in 2022 to garner support for fare free public
    transit.
    e. Presently, children 12 and under get free transit while accompanied by a fare paying adult

B. Active Transportation

1. Scramble crosswalks enhance walkability, increase pedestrian safety and allow for the prioritization of pedestrians.
2. Edmonton's bicycle lanes have led to an increase in rider safety and a rise in cyclists around the city.
3. Bicycle infrastructure on campus, including bike equipment and security, is not always properly maintained, increasing fear of bike theft on campus. This deters students who would otherwise bike to campus.
    a. There is a Bike Registry through the Edmonton Police Service that has proven effective in reducing the amount of bike thefts throughout the city.
4. City Council has approved $100 million in their 2023-26 Capital Plan towards more bike infrastructure.[6]

2. Resolutions

A. Public Transit

1. The Students' Union advocates that the regional municipalities and transit services carefully monitor service demand arising from U-pass implementation, consider input from stakeholders and commit all resources necessary to maintain reliable, safe and timely service.
2. The Students' Union will advocate for universal Fare-Free Public Transit in Edmonton and the Capital Region.
    a. The Students' Union will oppose any increases to fare costs in Edmonton and the Capital Region if there
    is no evidence that the increased cost will provide a greater benefit for better transit safety, infrastructure, and improving frequency of service.
    b. The Students' Union will work to centralize Fare-Free Public Transit as a main piece of advocacy from the Edmonton Students Alliance.
    c. While the Students' Union supports Fare-Free Public Transit as the ultimate solution for public transport in Edmonton, it will still advocate for more fair costs and standards in the interim.
3. The Students' Union negotiates a new, long-term U-Pass contract to be implemented upon the expiry of the current contract.
4. The Students' Union advocates for the integration of Smartfare technology into the ONECard system.
5. The Students' Union advocates that the regional municipalities and transit services expand their current service systems, prioritizing the implementation of Smartfare technology, to better meet the needs of the University of Alberta students.
    a. The Students' Union advocates for an expanded public transit system that includes, but is not limited to, more frequent routes, expanded routes, and optimized routes that reach all parts of Edmonton, including suburban and rural areas.
    b. The Students' Union supports the creation of express transit lines between main commuter hubs and campus, to be operated during peak transit hours.

6. The Students' Union will advocate for and work with the University and relevant stakeholders to ensure that students employed by the University, but not currently enrolled in classes, be provided with a more affordable alternative than the adult bus pass.
7. The Students' Union will advocate for lower costs for transit passes in the Spring and Summer for students who cannot access a U-Pass.
    a. The Students' Union will advocate for the expansion of the U-Pass to students enrolled in Spring and Summer experiential learning opportunities either on- or off-campus.
8. The Students' Union will advocate for decreased fines for fare evasion.
9. The Students Union will advocate for improved anti-bias training for public transit employees and peace officers, in addition to other stakeholders in transit and security such as police officers and social workers.
10. The Students' Union will advocate for the City of Edmonton to address the discrepancy between the cost of U-Pass and the lowest tier of the Ride Transit subsidized transit pass.
    a. The Students' Union will advocate for the expansion of the Ride Transit Program to a higher Low Income Cut-Off.
    b. The Students Union will address the discrepancy in the costs between Undergraduate students age 19-24 and
    Undergraduate students age 25 or older
11. The Students Union will advocate for better cell reception in underground transit stations and tunnels as a method to ensure students commuting to and from campus are safe.

B. Active Transportation

1. The Students' Union will advocate for the installation of Scramble Crosswalks where 87 Avenue intersects with 114 Street and 112 Street.
2. The Students' Union will advocate for the installation of bicycle lanes throughout campus.
3. The Students' Union will advocate for the increased maintenance, lighting, and security of bicycle lock spaces.
    a. The Students' Union will call for the communication of stronger bicycle security from the University administration.
    b. The Students Union will advocate for the expansion of the Bike Registry program to prevent thefts of bikes on campus.

3. References

1. https://www.edmonton.ca/ets/universal-transit-pass-upass
2. https://www.su.ualberta.ca/media/uploads/1143/Regional%20Public%20Transit,%20U-Pass%20Usage,%20and%20Getting%20to%20Campus.pdf
3. https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/edmonton-wont-pay-for-regional-transit-council-decides-in-budget-debate
4. ↑ https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/indigenous-people-racial-minorities-over-ticketed-on-edmonton-transit-data-shows
5. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/city-council-fire-evasion-1.5963110
6. https://globalnews.ca/news/9338993/edmonton-city-council-100-million-bike-lanes/

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