

City Watch

Low Income Bus Pass Meeting (October 22, 2019, 10 am – noon)

Venue: Social Planning council of Winnipeg

Chair: Josh Brandon

Notes

- Recap: After the city increased bus fares by 25 cents last year* amidst community's complaints and disapproval, they finally agreed to look into the possibility of low income bus pass. Amongst the community advocates an organizations that took up this issue was Winnipeg Without Poverty and Make Poverty History Manitoba, who came up with recommendations for the city, put forward a sliding scale motion mirroring the Transit system used in Calgary, and also asked for provincial support.
- Short comings of the city's proposed low income bus pass: it only covers adults, geared towards only a monthly pass with no accommodations for single fares, no sliding scale model.
- Questions for City Council
 - Is there provision for handy transit under the proposed low income bus pass plan?
 - Will Winnipeg Transit Plus users be considered?
 - Where do seniors fall?
 - A free transit plus pass is available for all year round users, but not seasonal users. Can this be applied to all users?
 - With any given step in favour of a low income bus pass, there will be increased use of buses, which will in turn result in the need for more transit buses and workers. Are there any plans to increase buses and bus services to balance the expected increase in demand?
 - Will Child benefits be factored into family income in determining eligibility for low income pass?
 - As people do not always have change for bus fares, is there a way a system can be put in place for people who overpay to let their change count towards low income folks that cannot afford the bus fare? Another alternative is the sliding scale model or a pay what you can model, which has worked well in some places.
 - Can the process of applying or proving eligibility for low income bus pass be made as simple and as assessable as possible so as not to discourage people from applying?
- Points to raise at Council for why an adequate low income bus pass is needed:
 - poverty rate – proposed transit fares still pose huge cost to low income families
 - people on EIA have to take money out of their limited food budget to supplement cost of transit and are thus left with very little for food
 - Environmental Perspective: Better transit system and fares will lead to fewer cars on the road and less pollution for the environment
 - Parking space: With the rising population, accounting for both immigration and birth, there will be limited space for the accompanying increase in use of vehicles especially in the downtown area where a lot of business are closely located.
 - Use of more buses and fewer cars will improve traffic on the roads

- We need a much steeper drop in bus fare like a 50% reduction as opposed to the proposed 70% for most low income people to actually be able to afford one and we need it to happen as early as next year.
- Some potential benefits of an adequate transit system for all includes reduced truancy rate in schools as kids will now be able to afford to take the bus to class
- Tips for presenting to council:
 - Bring solutions: example tax revenue from out of town residents that work in Winnipeg and commute daily can be channeled to improving transit, advocate for provincial input in 50-50 funding.
 - It's important to give council credit for progress with proposed low income pass and not just make criticisms only
- Our Ask:
 - Reduced bus pass accessible for all ages
 - Plan to address single fares
 - A low income pass but little or no increase to regular fare for others
 - For city to make it easy to access pick up locations for these passes and tickets example maybe use community organizations that most people can easily access.
 - Free passes for all kids as the cost of taking kids to any given place can be a barrier
 - Expand busy downtown routes
 - Free single fare tickets for organizations like Bear clan
 - Opportunity for community organizations to be able to purchase 50% reduced bus tokens or bus fares on behalf of the low income population they serve.
 - A seniors pass mailed to seniors just like pension after they reach a certain age
- MPHM priorities
 - Faster Implementation
 - Sliding Scale
 - Youth fares
 - Single Fares
 - No increase in regular fare
 - No service reduction
- Major City Initiatives
 - Low income bus pass
 - City poverty reduction strategy
 - 4 year budgeting
 - Transit service review
 - Transportation master plan

Others: Sustainable transportation for our Winnipeg

Action items:

- Oke will make Facebook event page for the council meeting and post pictures of volunteers with signs that urge the province to restore the 50/50 transit funding on social media.
- Everyone to arrive for 9 am to take pictures for social media in support of the 50/50 transit funding and plan to help retweet and share posts to raise awareness.