



City of Prince Albert

RPT 24-115

TITLE: Transit Fare Review

DATE: April 22, 2024

TO: Executive Committee

PUBLIC: X

INCAMERA:

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the following bus pass fares be approved, and come into effect September 1st, 2024;

	Cash	Book of 10	Monthly	Semester
Adult	\$ 3.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 80.00	N/A
Senior (65+)	\$ 3.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 30.00	N/A
Post-Secondary	\$ 3.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 65.00	\$225.00
Youth (14 - 18)	\$ 3.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 55.00	N/A
Child (U14)	\$ 3.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 40.00	N/A
Child (U10)	Free with a Parent/Guardian			
Discounted	\$ 3.00	N/A	\$ 25.00	N/A

2. That the Subsidized High School Bus Pass Letters of Understanding with the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division and Prince Albert Catholic School Division be terminated following the 2023-24 school year;
3. That Administration explore a standard Bus Pass Vendor – Letter of Understanding (LOU) with Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division (SRPSD) and also with the Prince Albert Catholic School Division (PACSD);
4. That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the bus pass vendor – LOU's with SRPSD and also with PACSD and any other necessary documents on behalf of the City, once prepared.

TOPIC & PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to review Prince Albert transit fares in order to provide a recommendation for fare categories and rates for 2024.

BACKGROUND:

The existing Transit Fares came into effect on January 1, 2019. Since this date transit hours of service have been extended to 10:15pm and total transit hours have increased by 23%. This includes the addition of a second bus on the East Flat route that operates during peak hours to meet capacity requirements of the transit system. In addition to this, the hourly contracted rate of providing transit operation and the cost of fuel have each increased since 2019. Transit Operation expenses have increased from \$1,714,000 (2019 Actual) to \$2,449,000 (2024 Budget), this represents a 43% increase in expenses during a period that transit fares have not changed.

For this reason the cost of bus pass fares is in need of review in order to propose logical rates for the service as of 2024. Table 1 below shows the bus fare prices that have been in effect since January 1, 2019.

Table 1: January 2019 – April 2024, Prince Albert Transit Fares

2019-Current	Cash	Book of 10	Monthly
Post-Secondary	\$ 2.50	\$ 22.50	\$ 45.00
Seniors (60+)	\$ 2.25	\$ 22.50	\$ 30.00
Adult (18-59)	\$ 2.50	\$ 22.50	\$ 70.00
Youth (Gr 7-12)	\$ 2.50	\$ 22.50	\$ 55.50
Youth July-Aug	\$ 2.50	\$ 22.50	\$ 25.00
Child	\$ 2.50	\$ 22.50	\$ 35.00
Preschool	Free	N/A	N/A
Social Services	\$2.50	\$ 22.50	\$25

PROPOSED APPROACH AND RATIONALE:

In order to ensure proposed fares are reasonable, a review of Saskatchewan (Moose Jaw, Saskatoon and Regina) transit fares was completed. Consultation was completed with the Transit Department from each City to ensure that all fare categories were represented accurately. An analysis of fares in other Western Canadian Cities was also completed to ensure that recommendations were practical.

Table 2 below shows a comparison of Monthly Transit Fares throughout Saskatchewan along with proposed rates for Prince Albert.

Table 2: Saskatchewan Monthly Transit Pass Prices

Saskatchewan - Monthly Transit Passes					
Type/City	Saskatoon	Regina	Moose Jaw	PA (Current)	PA (Proposed)
Adult	\$ 83.00	\$ 88.00	\$ 80.00	\$ 70.00	\$ 80.00
Senior	\$ 29.00	\$ 30.00	\$ 44.00	\$ 30.00	\$ 30.00
Post-Secondary	*N/A*	\$ 78.00	\$ 65.00	\$ 45.00	\$ 65.00
Youth (Gr 9-12)	\$ 59.00	\$ 64.00	\$ 65.00	\$ 55.50	\$ 55.00
Child (U14)	** 50.00**	Free	\$ 65.00	\$ 35.00	\$ 40.00
Child (U10)	**Free U5**	Free	Free U5	Free U6	Free
* Saskatoon only sells Post-Secondary passes per semester * (\$272.00)					
** Free as of September 1, 2024 **					

The recommendation is that fare alterations be implemented on September 1, 2024 in order to minimize changes during peak periods of transit ridership. This date also allows adequate time to notify the public, transit pass vendors and the Ministry of Social Services of the alterations.

Monthly Transit Passes

Adult Passes (19-64) - Increasing the Adult Monthly Bus Pass to \$80.00 represents a 14% increase since January 2019. It is noteworthy that the proposed \$80.00 fare would still be the lowest Adult Monthly Bus Pass in Saskatchewan.

Any Adults who qualify for the Ministry of Social Services Discounted Bus Pass Program will still receive monthly transit passes for a rate of \$25.00.

Senior (65+) - The only change to this category is to raise the eligible age from 60+ to 65+ as this aligns with the City of Saskatoon and Regina. Monthly fares are proposed to remain at \$30.00.

Post-Secondary

Increasing the Post-Secondary Monthly Bus Pass to \$65.00 represents a 44% increase from 2019. It is noteworthy that the proposed fare would still be the lowest Post-Secondary Monthly Bus Pass in Saskatchewan. This section also introduces a \$225.00 semester pass (\$56.25 monthly) which allows students to conveniently purchase one pass as opposed to four over their semester.

In October 2022, the City sold 85 bus passes to Saskatchewan Polytechnic. In February 2024, the City sold 396 bus passes (366 % increase). The demand for the service has increased to the point where the transit system did not have enough capacity to shuttle the students at peak hours of the day. In September of 2023 the City added a 7th bus (East Flat #2) in order to provide the capacity required to get the students to and from school. This increase to the

monthly fare cost will assist in recouping expenses for the additional bus service while maintaining the lowest post-secondary monthly pass price in the province.

Youth (14-18 or Gr 9 -12)

As of March 2024, the City of Prince Albert sells over 420 monthly bus passes to high school students. The recommendation for this category is to reduce monthly transit fares from \$55.50 to \$55.00. Selling Youth (Gr 9-12) monthly passes for \$55.00 is the lowest cost for this age group in the province.

A breakdown of monthly youth transit rates throughout Saskatchewan are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Saskatchewan Youth Monthly Transit Fares

Saskatchewan - Monthly Transit Passes					
Type/City	Saskatoon	Regina	Moose Jaw	PA (Current)	PA (Proposed)
Youth (Gr 9-12)	\$ 59.00	\$ 64.00	\$ 65.00	\$ 55.50	\$ 55.00

In 2018, a motion was made to execute a LOU that set out to subsidize high school bus passes for the SRPSD and the PACSD. More information regarding this report is shown in Attachment 1 – RPT 18-614. These LOU's formalized the following fare structure and subsidies.

- a) Adult Monthly Pass - \$70.00
- b) Youth Monthly Pass - \$55.50
- c) Youth Monthly Pass (Price Sold to PACSD & SRPSD) - \$37.50
- d) Youth Monthly Pass (Price Sold to High School Students) - \$20.00

The City currently provides a \$14.50 subsidy (from \$70 Adult → \$55.50 Youth). Additionally, in the LOU's with the School Divisions (Shown in Attachment 1) the City provides a second subsidy of \$18 (from \$55.50 → \$37.50). This is a total subsidy of \$32.50 provided by the City. Selling these passes for \$37.50 to the school divisions is no longer practical as the second lowest youth (Grade 9-12) transit pass in the province is \$59.00 (Saskatoon).

The recommendation is that Youth monthly transit fares be reduced from \$55.50 to \$55.00 and that the existing LOU's with the school divisions be terminated on June 30, 2024 (end of the 2023/24 school year). Following this Administration would explore the possibility of entering into a standard bus pass vendor – LOU with each school division. A standard bus pass vendor LOU in Prince Albert provides organizations with 10% of all bus pass sales. This would mean that each school division would pay \$49.50 per pass and continue to sell the passes as status quo to their students.

The school divisions will be able to determine the subsidy that they wish to provide to their students and would no longer be included in a formal LOU.

It is important to note that any families that fall under Ministry of Social Services (SES, SIS, SAID or SEI) programs are eligible to receive monthly transit passes for \$25.00 from City Hall.

Child (Under 14)

The proposed rate for Children under 14 is \$40.00. This is an increase from the existing rate of \$35.00. It should be noted that grade 7 and 8 students will now be eligible for \$40 passes as opposed to \$55.50 under the existing fare structure.

Child (U10)

Free Transit will be provided to children under 10 who are accompanied by another fare paying passenger. This is an increase from the existing age of under 6 for free transit.

As of 2022, The City of Regina has offered free public transit for youth aged 13 and younger. In December of 2023, the City of Saskatoon committed to also provide free transportation for this age group as of September 1, 2024. Some other City's throughout Canada provide this same service as it promotes the use of public transportation to the younger generation. In addition to this, it provides adults a break as they do not need to worry about additional fares when travelling with their younger children. After consulting with each Saskatoon and Regina, this initiative is not currently recommended in Prince Albert as the City does not have a clear way to distinguish Youth riders (Grade 9-12) from Child riders. Further investigation of this initiative will be completed when additional information is available, including the advantages and disadvantages of the program in Saskatoon and Regina.

Increasing the age of free transit to the under 10 age group shows the City's commitment to reduce costs of transportation for families and young riders.

Cash Fares

It is recommended that Cash Fares be set to a \$3.00 flat rate. This allows for the sale of one standard ticket book and simplifies bus drivers confirming incoming coin revenue. Increasing the single fare rate also promotes the purchase of a monthly bus pass. The fare of \$3.00 aligns with the fare rates set in other cities throughout Saskatchewan. Table 4 below shows the cost of single ride fares throughout Saskatchewan.

Table 4: Saskatchewan Single Ride Transit Fares

Saskatchewan - Single Ride Fares					
Type/City	Saskatoon	Regina	Moose Jaw	PA (Current)	PA (Proposed)
Adult	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 3.00
Senior	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 3.00
Post-Secondary	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 3.00
Youth	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 3.00
Ticket Books of 10 to be increased from \$22.50 to \$25.00 for all categories					

CONSULTATIONS:

The City of Moose Jaw, Saskatoon and Regina were consulted to discuss transit fares in their respective municipalities. This assisted in determining reasonable fares and categories for Prince Albert.

Administration has reviewed ridership, the number of bus passes sold, revenue generation and considered public feedback. Comparisons were made to other similar transit systems and using the Canadian Urban Transit Association publications and the websites of each transit system.

Administration met in-person with representatives from the Prince Albert Catholic School Division and Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division in order to discuss the recommendation of this report. Each division has been provided the opportunity to include consultation for this report and to Executive Committee to ensure that their perspective is considered.

COMMUNICATION AND/OR ANNOUNCEMENT PLAN:

The Department of Public Works will work with the Department of Communications to update the City Transit page, brochures, maps, and posters to ensure the new fares are reflected on all PA Transit material. A social media post will be made to further advise the public of the new transit fares.

The Department of Public Works will inform the PACSD and the SRPSD of the intent to terminate the subsidized bus pass LOU following the 2023-24 School Year (June 30, 2024). The Department of Public Works will inform all transit vendors of the new bus fares beginning September 1st, 2024.

The Ministry of Social Services requires 90 days' notice for any increase to bus pass fares as this affects the Subsidized Bus Pass Program. Notice will be provided by the Department of Public Works prior to May 31st in order to meet this deadline.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The proposed fare alterations are anticipated to increase transit revenue by \$40,000 in 2024, and by \$110,000 annually beginning in 2025. This additional revenue is spread amongst all categories including coin revenue.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS:

The subsidy between the Prince Albert Catholic School Division has been in place since 2008. The subsidy between the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division has been in place since 2016. This reflected a time when the school divisions still provided high school bus service.

With over 420 students purchasing high school monthly bus passes this no longer reflects the same partnership. The City of Prince Albert has added a 7th bus in order to facilitate student (High School and Post-Secondary) ridership in 2023.

The increase of Transit Fares to \$3.00 per rider allows Access Transportation to increase their fares to \$3.00. This provides the opportunity for increased revenue associated with paratransit services.

There are no Privacy or Policy Implications or Options to the Recommendation for this report.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report follows the long-term strategic priority to strive to meet the needs of all transit users. The proposed fare prices allow the City to continue to operate transit services at a reasonable cost to revenue ratio.

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN:

Reviewing and altering transit fares will enhance the functionality of the City's Public Transit System as it allows for additional revenues to be applied to provide transit services within the City. Section 7.4 Public Transit supports transportation services commensurate to demand to and from major areas of employment, education, health care and shopping provided by the City's Public Transit System.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Public Notice pursuant to the Public Notice Bylaw No. 24 of 2015 is not required.

PRESENTATION: PowerPoint Presentation by Capital Projects Manager, Evan Hastings.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Attachment 1 - RPT 18-614

Written by: Evan Hastings, Capital Projects Manager

Approved by: Director of Public Works & City Manager