

# Calgary council rejects new transit peace officers, LRT lot fee reduction

BY KIM GUTTORMSON, CALGARY HERALD NOVEMBER 23, 2009



Calgary Transit peace officer Jordan Scott rides the train near the Bridgeland station in May of 2009.

**Photograph by:** File, Calgary Herald

CALGARY - Calgary council has decided not to add the cost of 12 new transit peace officers to next year's budget.

Several aldermen, including Diane Colley-Urquhart and John Mar, were intent on finding budget cuts elsewhere in the city's plan to make room for an extra \$1.3 million recommended by the transit safety audit.

The proposal lost eight votes to seven.

Commuters using park and ride lots along bus rapid transit routes will soon park for free, after city council voted to remove the \$3 charge as part of Monday's budget debate.

However, an attempt to reduce the fee at LRT lots to \$1 from \$3 was rejected.

The main difference for support was the price tag. Ald. Bob Hawkesworth's push to eliminate the fee at

the three BRT lots would result in about a \$100,000 loss, which Calgary Transit said could be absorbed within its existing budget.

Reducing the LRT fee was given a price tag of \$4.3 million.

Ald. Jim Stevenson wanted to take that amount from the city's fiscal stability reserve, but his colleagues voted against that because the fund is supposed to only cover one-time expenses.

Using the rainy day fund would mean all taxpayers would be on the hook for the cost for the four per cent of Calgary Transit users who park at the lots, Ald. Linda Fox-Mellway, said. She added that if the money came from the fund this year, it wouldn't solve the funding shortfall next year.

"We'll just look good this year and next year we'll have to do it again. It doesn't solve the problem," she said.

It was amended so the cost would be offset by either further reducing transit hours — already cut by 21,000 hours in the budget — cutting back on security and cleanliness levels at lots and stations or a combination of the two, which lost in a 9-6 vote.

"I feel like they've thrown me a poison pill," Stevenson said of the change in how the cut would be funded. "But I feel passionate we made the wrong decision a year ago (to implement fees.)"

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