

# Calgary aldermen again seek end to parking fees at LRT lots

BY KIM GUTTORMSON, CALGARY HERALD    OCTOBER 9, 2009 7:17 AM



Commuters roll into the parking lot of the Brentwood LRT Station to hop on the train downtown.

**Photograph by:** Colleen De Neve, Calgary Herald

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CALGARY - Aldermen are renewing calls to get rid of the controversial parking fee at Calgary Transit's park-and-ride lots.

"It's caused more problems than it's worth," Ald. Jim Stevenson said of the \$3 charge, which he will again try to have quashed during November's budget debate.

"We're losing a lot of customers. We've shot ourselves in the foot with this thing."

This week, the Calgary Parking Authority started handing out \$50 tickets to park-and-ride users who had backed into their spots, even if they'd paid the \$3.

With the new ParkPlus System, plates must be visible so the camera cars driving by can determine whether the driver has paid.

"It seems like we're trying to drive people away from transit," Ald. Ric McIver said, adding he would support a move to remove the fee.

Many were shocked and angry after receiving a ticket this week--and so were aldermen.

"It's bloody ridiculous," Ald. Linda Fox-Mellway said. "We should be trying to make it convenient for people."

Calgary Parking Authority general manager Dale Fraser said the rule about which direction to park has been posted on a sign at the lots' entrances, along with all the other conditions for parking.

The information has been posted since the \$3 fee came into effect.

People parked incorrectly last month received warnings on their windshields.

"I'm not at all impressed," said Dave Fryett, who got off the C-Train Wednesday night to discover a ticket on his van, despite having paid the daily charge.

"Their response is there's this little sign somewhere. And that I should have gotten a warning three weeks ago. I was still biking (to work) three weeks ago.

"If they're going to change the policy, they should have bright neon signs."

Ald. Dale Hodges, who sits on the parking authority board, said he spoke to Fraser on Thursday about putting up better notification.

"There should've been some better signage in place so customers can clearly see what the rules were," Hodges said, adding the item never came before the board but will be discussed at a future meeting.

Ald. Andre Chabot said there should have been a better warning for people that the parking authority was going to begin issuing tickets.

Fraser said new signs alerting commuters to the fiscal perils of backing into the stalls will go up today. However, those who have received one of the 449 tickets issued so far this week are still expected to pay them.

He noted they had received complaints from others parking at the lots about those backing in, believing they were trying to avoid paying.

The \$3 fee, approved by council during last year's budget talks, has been controversial ever since, with some aldermen trying to remove it. They were successful in returning free parking to evenings and weekends, but not at reducing or eliminating the daytime cost.

To date, about \$2 million in revenue has come into Calgary Transit coffers, but the fee has been collected for only four full months, while lots were brought online over the three months before that. It was estimated to bring in \$4.5 million a year.

The fee has led to fewer people parking in the lots. Last month, northwest park-and-ride lots were 69 per cent full, those on the south were at 60 per cent and lots in the northeast were 39 per cent full, Calgary Transit says.

