

# Smart cards may take in tourism destinations

## City looks at more travel options for visitors

BY RICHARD CUTHBERTSON, CALGARY HERALD JUNE 16, 2011



Calgary Transit will take a close look at incorporating local tourism destinations into the electronic pass system it will launch next year, given visitors another travel option when they come to Calgary.

The city branch is in the midst of preparing its smart card, which will replace paper tickets and monthly passes; users will tap the card on readers as they board buses and C-Trains.

Now focus is turning to the growing possibilities of this electronic pass, with a council committee on Wednesday recommending that transit report back before the end of the year on "a comprehensive tourism transit strategy incorporating smart card technology."

One thought is tourists could purchase a smart card pass that would also give them access certain venues, according to Doug Morgan, manager of service design for Calgary Transit.

"It's another market that perhaps we could do a little bit better job of serving to make it easier, more accessible, for people that are unfamiliar with the city," he said. "They wouldn't have to understand the exact change, how we use the system."

Calgary Zoo spokeswoman Laurie Skene said it wasn't aware of this being floated in Calgary, but "certainly we're open to it."

Cities around the world have a variety of passes for tourists. In the United Kingdom, the London Pass and Travel gives users one-day access to all transit in that city, along with free entry to 55 destinations, for roughly \$82 Canadian.

Such travel and tourism cards have worked in other cities, according to Mary Moran, director of marketing and communications with Calgary Economic Development.

"If it's similar to other models that you see around the world, then I would say it's a great way to get not only incremental spending from tourists, but it's also a great way to get greater engagement just by making venues and events more accessible by making transportation easy," she said.

The recommendation, which still needs the go-ahead from council, comes from Ald. Diane ColleyUrquhart.

She and two other aldermen have pushed for the LRT free fare zone to be extended from downtown to the Stampede station.

The aim of enlarging the zone would be to create economic spinoffs by tying conventions and conferences on Stampede grounds with the downtown through free public transit. But Calgary Transit has balked at the proposal and has outlined a series of concerns.

Transit worries an extended free fare zone would create security issues at the Stampede station platform, increase commuter parking in the area, and also strip Calgary Transit of up to \$2 million in revenue a year.

Ald. Druh Farrell said incorporating tourism into the new transit smart card is a far better option than extending the free fare zone to Stampede.

"I just think it opens a whole number of doors in promoting tourism," she said.

"I don't think the free fare zone, they necessarily were aware of the negative impacts on both the city budget, but also unforeseen impacts of parking and crime that we would have to deal with at our expense."

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