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Park and ride fees drive people to park in residential areas

By SHAWN LOGAN, Sun Media

Frugal C-Train users are flocking to other stations in Calgary's south side to avoid the launch of a \$3 per day parking fee, says a city alderman.

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart told council Monday her office has been deluged by phone calls and e-mails from irate transit users since the city last week began phasing in the controversial pay to park plan at three terminus stations that will officially begin charging on March 16.

But already worried about having to shell out for the pending fee at the Somerset-Bridlewood station, Colley-Urquhart said some commuters are moving up the line and flooding into the Shawnessy and Fish Creek-Lacombe lots or into outlying residential areas in an effort to duck the looming \$3 charge.

"One of the concerns all along is either people would start parking in residential parking neighbourhoods or logically, they're going to those lots where they're not charging them yet," she said.

"When you implement something like this, lay out the plan, implement it uniformly throughout the city so as to avoid the confusion and the frustration people have with the parking."

Calgary Transit is aiming to have all 33 park and ride lots outfitted with Park Plus machines by May, requiring all who park their vehicles to take the train to pay for the privilege.

The expected \$6-million that will be generated annually from the fee will be used to improve maintenance and security at the lots.

Transit spokesman Ron Collins said the department decided to start rolling out the pay parking machines as soon as they came on stream and will begin ramping them up starting at the farthest ends of the three LRT lines and moving in towards the downtown core.

"As the machines become available they're going to be installed in all the other parking lots," he said, noting planners expected some commuters would look to cheaper horizons for as long as possible.

"We know that people would probably do that in the early days but the other machines will be going up at the earliest opportunity."



John Hubbell, the city's general manager of transportation, said imposing a new fee at the same time for 14,000 park and ride stalls would have been difficult and his department is trying to "initiate cash flow as soon as possible."

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