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Council may look at more transit cops

By **SHAWN LOGAN, CALGARY SUN**

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Transit safety cash slashed from the city's budget may be getting a second chance.

Council agreed Monday to take another look at about \$1.3 million in suspended transit funding, primarily for new peace officers to patrol the system, when it hammers out its 2010 budget next month.

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, who made the pitch for the extra cash that would be spend on 12 transit cops and provide for expanded surveillance cameras, said while progress has been made on making buses and LRTs safer, the city shouldn't sit back.

"It should no only be top of mind when there's a disasterous event that occurs," she said.

"We haven't entirely taken the system back as it relates to safety."

The city launched a \$250,000 safety study in 2008 after the brutal slaying of working mom Arcelie Laoagan who was stalked and attacked by Christopher Watcheston after she left the Franklin LRT station.

But the city, hoping to keep taxes down, funded only half of the 24 new transit officers recommended in its three-year budget, bringing the current allotment to 65.

Colley-Urquhart said while Calgary's transit system is more secure than it was prior to the safety audit, there's still more work that can be done to make riders more comfortable.

Ald. Gord Lowe said council has made a decision and shouldn't get into the habit of getting cold feet when it's time to finalize the annual property tax levy.

"I don't believe the other transit safety officers or the other items have fallen off — I expect they're reappear in the 2011 budget," he said.

"Rather than revisiting that and a whole bunch of other decisions we made in November, let's just leave it alone."

Despite some opposition, Colley-Urquhart's call for a report during the April 14 budget finalization passed 10-4.

She noted the city is expected to have an extra \$7 million after the province takes its share of property taxes that could be used to fund more transit security.

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