

Background

In November 2018, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works approved that the options to phase in the Low Income Transit Pass be referred to the 2019 budget process for review. This included developing administrative processes for the program in consultation with community stakeholders, discussions with the Province of Manitoba to determine if there is a willingness to partner administratively and/or financially on a low income transit pass, and a report on the final implementation plan.

In March 2019, Council approved the establishment of a Low Income Transit Pass Program effective April 1, 2020 with discounted fares starting at 30 percent (of the full adult monthly fare) on the date of implementation, 40 percent in 2021, and 50 percent in 2022.

Engagement

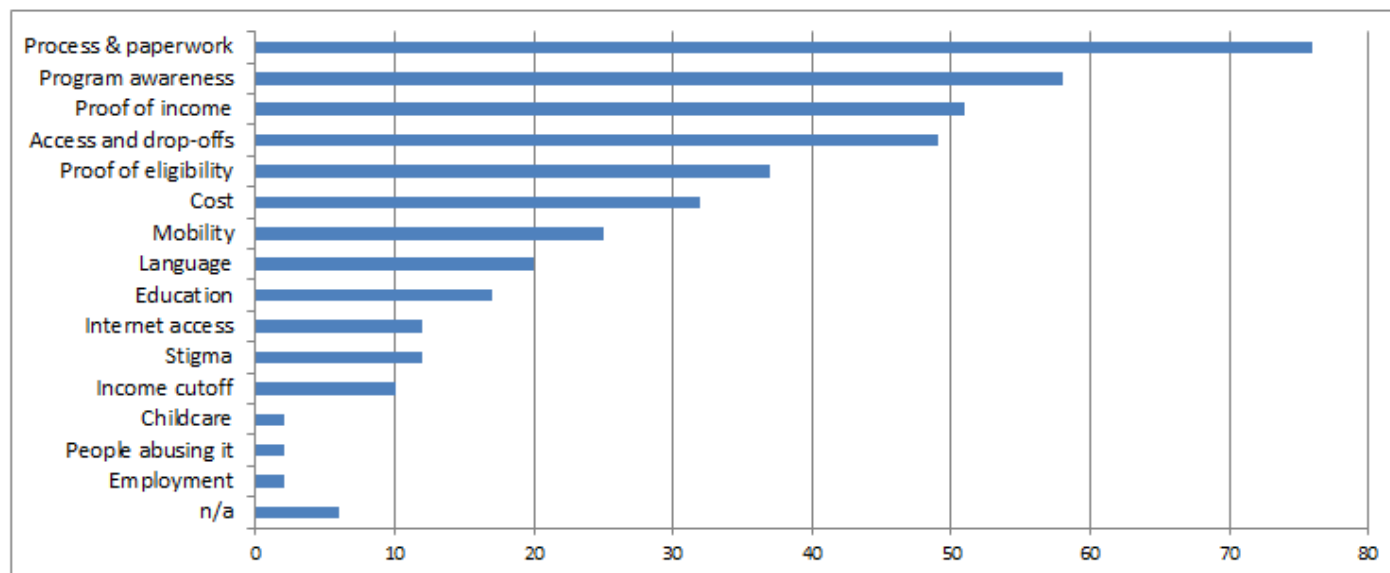
Building on discussions with community stakeholders, a stakeholder survey was promoted through various agencies and community organizations from June 20 to July 10, 2019. Further engagement with pass users will follow the implementation of the program in 2020. Refer to Appendices A and B for the survey questions and responses in English and French. Open-ended responses were grouped into themes to identify the key feedback received. See Appendix C for the open ended response analysis.

Key Findings or What We Heard

Stakeholder survey responses included feedback from over four hundred community members, including representatives from social services, government agencies, health agencies, and advocacy groups. Feedback received included:

- A low income transit pass will be beneficial to many Winnipeggers who face multiple and complex barriers in their activities of daily living
- Navigating application processes is challenging and frustrating; the fewer barriers, the better (see **Figure 1** below for the most prominent potential barriers to accessing the low income transit pass program)
- Community organizations are regularly supporting their clients in accessing services, and want to help more
- Organizations regularly provide transportation support in addition to other services (primarily bus tickets/tokens)
- Factors beyond income measurement should influence program eligibility
- Building awareness of the program is essential for its success
- The costs of the discounted monthly pass will remain barriers to many
- Language and education capacities vary; supports are needed throughout the application process
- Concern over stigma associated with requiring low income supports

Primary Barriers to Access



Category	What We Heard	How It Was Considered and Response*
Access	<p>It is very important that applicants are able drop off their applications at multiple accessible locations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community organizations (222/264) • Libraries (206/264) • Transit service centres (196/264) • Recreation facilities (182/264) <p>Numbers above indicate proportion of respondents who rated each location as 'very important' or 'extremely important.' Further suggestions for drop-off locations are summarized in Appendix C.</p>	<p>The City will meet with internal and external stakeholders to explore the process and requirements necessary to facilitate application drop-offs at locations other than Transit service centres. Applications will also be accepted via mail, email, and fax.</p>
Access	<p>Ninety-eight percent (260 of 270) of respondents said that it is 'very important' (62 of 270) or 'extremely important' (198 of 270) that the monthly passes be available for purchase and loading at various agents that sell other Transit products (e.g. 7-Eleven, Shoppers Drug Mart).</p>	<p>After applicants have received their peggo card, the monthly passes can then be purchased at any agent that sells other Transit products.</p>
Access	<p>The application process and paperwork should be as easy to navigate as possible. Complexity creates additional barriers to participation. Suggestions for simplifying the process included pre-qualification through existing programs; providing language/translation support; providing computer access and support; and working with community agencies who can advocate those who might lack appropriate documentation</p>	<p>Winnipeg Transit is working towards a unified application/qualification process with the Community Services Department, through which applicants who qualify for their low income programs would be eligible for Transit's as well. Additionally, current clients of Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) will also qualify without being required to prove their income.</p>
Access	<p>Building awareness of the program will be a challenge, and should be a priority.</p>	<p>The City will promote the program and will work with community agencies and stakeholders to promote the low income pass.</p>
Access	<p>Language and education barriers are a challenge. Support for translation and interpretation should be considered. Materials and process should be as simple and clear as possible, and translated into multiple languages. The City should work with relevant community agencies to address these challenges.</p>	<p>The City will work with community partners to define translation needs. Application forms and program information will be simplified as much as possible.</p>
Access	<p>Online applications and payment options could help provide additional options or convenience to applicants, but access to the internet and/or credit cards will be significant barriers for many.</p>	<p>At minimum, application forms will be available online for download.</p>
Access/ Eligibility	<p>Of those who responded on behalf of an organization, there was interest in serving as a drop-off location and/or providing support to applicants, though this would depend upon management approval, the details of support required, and the needs of their existing clients.</p>	<p>The City will work with key stakeholder agencies to determine requirements and process for serving as a drop-off location.</p>

Low Income Transit Pass

Stakeholder Engagement Summary

September 2019

Category	What We Heard	How It Was Considered and Response*
Eligibility	In addition to the challenge of navigating the application process itself, providing proof of income or eligibility will present specific barriers to many applicants. Challenges noted included lack of applicable proof of identity, income or residence, especially for newcomers, refugees or homeless Winnipeggers who may not have filed taxes or be able to obtain proof of income.	The City will explore opportunities for pre-qualification through existing programs or potential third party verification through community partners during implementation. Additionally, accepted forms of documentation will include consideration for the unique situations faced by refugees.
Eligibility	As a baseline measure of eligibility, there was a preference for current Low Income Cut-off (LICO) (preferred by 145 of 298) over Market Basket Measure (MBM) (preferred by 94 of 298). Respondent feedback included suggestions of applying the measure after housing costs, using a sliding scale, or combining both measures, so that eligibility under either would qualify a resident for the pass.	LICO will be used as a baseline measure of eligibility upon implementation. User and stakeholder feedback gathered during implementation will help clarify whether or not modifications to this threshold are necessary.
Eligibility	In addition to eligibility criteria based on income, other factors such as health conditions, qualification through other social programs (e.g. EIA), family situation, housing costs, debt and expenses, and third party advocacy should also influence eligibility.	Current EIA clients will qualify without needing to provide additional proof of income. The City will work with community partners to explore additional options for qualification through existing programs and/or community partners.
Fare	Other fare options are needed. The up-front cost of a monthly pass is a barrier, and other low income fare products should be considered (e.g. bus tickets, daily or weekly passes).	Initial product will be for adult monthly fares only. Other options will be explored as capacity and funding becomes available.
Fare	Cost will be a barrier to participants, even at the eventual 50% discount.	As approved by Council, the discount provided will be 30% in year 1, 40% in year 2 and 50% in year 3. User interviews will be conducted during implementation to understand how well the pass serves community needs.

Next Steps

A summary of stakeholder feedback will be included with a report to Council in fall 2019 on the low income pass program's recommended implementation for its consideration. The next stage of the public engagement plan includes a 'check-in' with stakeholders prior to program implementation to provide an update on the roll-out plan and the mechanics of how the program will run, and allow for questions and concerns to be addressed before program go-live.

Once the low income transit pass is introduced, the City will be consulting with those who are using the pass to gather their feedback and improve implementation over time. Focus groups and interviews will be held to better understand the user experience and learn how the program could be improved.

To learn more about the Low Income Transit Pass, please visit winnipeg.ca/lowincometransitpass



Appendices can be found on the [‘Documents’ tab](#) of the project webpage.

Appendix A – Survey Responses (English)

Appendix B – Survey Responses (French)

Appendix C – Open-ended Response Analysis

Appendix A – Survey Responses (English)

Appendix B – Survey Responses (French)

Appendix C – Open-ended Response Analysis