

## Common Public Transit Myths in Edmonton

### Myth # 1: “No matter how much public money is invested in transit, people in Edmonton will continue to drive their cars.”

- Evidence from throughout North America and Europe has demonstrated that if a *high quality* transit system is available with frequent, direct and time-competitive service, people will use transit instead of private vehicles.
- In Calgary, for example, investment in high-speed transit (LRT) extensions to growing areas of the city has attracted over 40,000 former private vehicle commuters.<sup>1</sup>
- Per capita use of public transit in Calgary is over 30% higher than in Edmonton.<sup>1</sup> LRT ridership is five times higher in Calgary.

**Making *high quality* public transit an investment priority in Edmonton will pay similar ridership dividends.**

#### Rapid Transit Comparison (2002)<sup>1,2</sup>

	Edmonton (LRT)	Calgary (C-Train)
Year of Opening:	1978	1981
Length of System (kms):	12	29
Number of cars:	37	100
Number of legs:	1	3
Number of Stations:	10	33
Extensions to open by 2006:	1	3
Ridership increase: (Last 5 years)	Few %	73%
Avg. Wkday Ridership:	38,000	188,000
Total Transit Ridership: (Annually-Rail & Bus)	43 mil.	73 mil.

### Myth #2: “Transit is too expensive to take regularly.”

- Some people continue to view public transit as an expensive option compared with the private vehicle on a per-trip basis. *Citizens for Better Transit* argues that these beliefs stem from misunderstandings of the true costs of motor vehicle use.
- According to the Canadian Automobile Association, the owner of just an *inexpensive* new compact car pays over \$8,000.00 per year or over \$21.00 per day to purchase/lease, operate, maintain, license and insure that vehicle.<sup>3</sup> This figure does not even consider the indirect costs such as auto-related pollution, health care, accidents and injuries, roadway construction and maintenance. Consider that using transit costs an individual less than \$1.90 per day with a monthly adult pass.

Edmonton LRT (2002):



Single leg system

Calgary C-Train (2002):



3 leg system

### Myth #3: “I don’t have time to take the bus.”

- Long waits for buses, poor transfer connections and winding, indirect routes are not inherent characteristics of public transit. Rather they are the product of *underfunding*. Without adequate investment, transit simply cannot provide the kind of service needed to meet the wide range of commuter needs and expectations.
- High speed transit service together with more frequent and direct local service could provide faster transportation for thousands travelling into the Downtown, University and other parts of the city, particularly in rush hour. An LRT trip today from Clareview to University Station takes only 19-20 minutes, compared to about 30-35 minutes by car.<sup>4</sup>
- Many people would gain productive time if there were greater investment in quality public transit.

#### Sample Travel Times:<sup>4</sup>

Clareview to University- Car:	30-35 minutes
Clareview to University- LRT:	<b>19 minutes</b>
Heritage to Downtown- Car:	25 minutes
Heritage to Downtown- (with SLRT Extension)	<b>18 minutes</b>

### Myth #4: “Only poor people take the bus!”

- Those who do not own a motor vehicle are indeed frequent users of public transportation, but transit riders actually come from all ages and income groups. Thousands of business people ride transit to work each day for convenience, to save money on parking, or to avoid the stress of rush hour traffic.
- Students, seniors and the disabled use transit because it allows them to travel where they are going in a comfortable and affordable manner.

**Public transit is for everyone!**

**Myth #5: “Public transit in Canada is heavily subsidized while private vehicle use is not.”**

- According to a 1996 report for the City of Edmonton, private motor vehicle use is subsidized by more than \$700 million every year in our city.<sup>5</sup> The operating costs of public transit, by comparison, amount only to about \$100 million, 44% of which are recovered from farebox revenues.<sup>4</sup> Roadways recover less than 5% of their costs.<sup>4</sup> The argument that private vehicle owners “pay their own way” is unsupported.

<b>Annual Subsidies to Private Motor Vehicle Use in Edmonton (1994)</b>	
<b>Cost item</b>	<b>\$ Subsidy in Millions</b>
Road construction	17
Road maintenance	31
Road land value*	78
Protection Services	13
Air Pollution*	26
Parking	375
Commercial delays*	35
Accident costs	143
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$718 Million</b>

\* These figures are based on conservative estimates. Many estimates show the cost of air pollution, for example, to be *several times* higher than represented here.  
(Source: City of Edmonton, 1996. *The True Costs of Transporting People.*)

Transportation is about your mobility; your community; your street; your family, friends, children and grandchildren; your ability to do business; your quality of life. It’s even about your health costs and the air you breathe.

**Better public transit has the ability to improve many of these things, but to become a reality it needs your voice. Let it be heard!**

**How can YOU help to ensure that better transit becomes a reality in Edmonton?**

- Inform yourself about key issues and the benefits of improved public transit.
- Speak up – talk to friends, neighbors, colleagues.
- Write a letter to the editor.
- Call a local radio talk show.
- Contact the Citizens’ Action Centre at 496-8200 or [cacentre@edmonton.ca](mailto:cacentre@edmonton.ca).
- Join an organization that advocates for improvements to public transit.
- Become involved with the *Citizens for Better Transit*.

To find out more, visit our Web site at [www.bettertransit.ab.ca](http://www.bettertransit.ab.ca)

The Society of *Citizens for Better Transit* is dedicated to promoting public transit as an effective transportation alternative for Edmontonians. The Society seeks to inform both the public and elected officials about the social, environmental and economic benefits of investing in quality public transportation. The Society calls on everyone to make public transit an investment priority.

Citizens for Better Transit  
P.O. Box 47163  
62 Edmonton Centre RPO  
Edmonton, AB. T5J 4N1



**E-mail:** [info@bettertransit.ab.ca](mailto:info@bettertransit.ab.ca)

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**Sources/Credits:** <sup>1</sup>Calgary Transit; <sup>2</sup>J.A. Kernahan, prof. emeritus of the University of Alberta; <sup>3</sup>Canadian Automobile Association, *Driving Costs*, 2001; <sup>4</sup>ETS/Transportation and Streets data; <sup>5</sup>City of Edmonton, *The True Costs of Transporting People*, 1996.

**Public Transit  
Myths  
Fact vs. Fiction**



**Citizens for Better  
Transit  
Edmonton**