

Clean Air Day – Free Rides on Transit**Report Purpose**

To seek Council's approval to join our regional partners in St. Albert, Leduc, Fort Saskatchewan and Spruce Grove in providing free rides on transit on Clean Air Day, June 8, 2016, to promote the environmental benefits of using public transit as a means of commuting instead of individual cars within the Capital Region.

Recommendation

THAT Administration's participation with regional partners in promoting Clean Air Day by providing free rides on all Strathcona County Transit buses on June 8, 2016, be approved.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: n/a

Governance: n/a

Social: Providing free rides on transit will encourage people to use public transit, including walking to/from your bus stop, promoting a healthy and active community.

Culture: n/a

Environment: County residents will be encouraged to participate in Clean Air Day and show their commitment by participating in activities that contribute to cleaner air, healthier communities and a better quality of life for all.

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: n/a

Interdepartmental: n/a

Summary

Environment and Climate Change Canada has declared May 31 – June 6, 2016 as Canadian Environment Week. This is an annual event that began in 1971 as a result of a bill introduced and passed by Parliament to designate one week each year that is designated to the environment. There are a number of events being planned across the country on or around these dates including Clean Air Day on Wednesday June 8th. Clean Air Day raises the awareness and encourages action on clean air and climate change issues. Canadians are encouraged to show their commitment by participating in activities that contribute to cleaner air, healthier communities and a better quality of life for all.

Transit has been participating in Clean Air Day in various ways for many years. In 2007, Strathcona County Transit (SCT) did provide free transportation on all SCT buses. In other years, we participated in customer appreciation activities, customer giveaways and general education campaigns about transit and its benefit to the environment, as well as different ways we can contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases.

For 2016, we would like to join with other Capital Region partners in once again providing free transit rides. This will be the first time the region will participate in a free ride campaign to promote Clean Air Day. The free rides will be offered to passengers from the participating systems in the Capital Region on June 8, whether they are travelling on local or inter-municipal routes. By joining with our regional partners, we will be demonstrating our commitment to reducing greenhouse gases, our continued commitment to our community and our commitment to regional transit.

Strathcona County's participation in this regional event will result in a loss of about \$1,500 in revenues. When compared to the \$10,000 investment planned for a regional communication and advertising plan, this is a good investment for marketing the benefits of public transit in the County.

It is also important to note that the City of Edmonton will not be providing free rides on Edmonton Transit. Their decision is based on the amount of lost revenue their system would incur. They are participating in the promotion of Clean Air Day by providing funding for the advertising campaign.

Communication Plan

This is the first time a regional approach has been done to promote Clean Air Day. To facilitate the regional approach, the Capital Region Municipal Sustainability group will be overseeing a regional communication plan. This group has representation from Strathcona County, Edmonton, St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, Spruce Grove, Parkland County, Stony Plain, Drayton Valley, Beaumont, Wetaskiwin, and the Alberta Capital Airshed. This group has a budget of approximately \$10,000 that was funded proportionately by all partners. Strathcona County's share of the \$10,000, is \$1,000 (from our Transit marketing budget).

These resources will be used to promote Clean Air Day mainly through radio advertising. This will be supplemented with the local advertising of each transit property. Strathcona County will promote this event locally on our website, the digital screens within the County, social media (Facebook, Twitter), and advertising in the Sherwood Park News. This will result in significant exposure for transit within the region, increasing our visibility and potential for increasing ridership.

Enclosure

1 None