Executive Summary

The Universal Pass program for the Capital region was implemented as a three year pilot program beginning September 2007. The program has now completed its first year, and has been warmly received by all stakeholders, with issues and complaints being almost non-existent. Evaluation of the U-Pass program covers a number of areas, such as transit ridership, student travel patterns, program costs and environmental impact. Reports are produced quarterly and annually, and were previously issued in November 2007 and February 2008.

Sticker distribution on both campuses has also gone smoothly, with almost 90% of eligible students picking up their U-Pass sticker. A large majority of students surveyed indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with transit service, and that U-Pass had significantly increased their transit use. Boarding count data confirm increases in student travel. Students have indicated that the U-Pass has increased their range of choices for work and residency, and that their off-peak and non-campus trips using transit will likely increase.

Based on survey responses, U-Pass has also contributed to a reduced number of vehicles used for student travel and a corresponding reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Preliminary data indicates a shift in parking pass usage patterns at MacEwan and the University, lending further support to the survey results.

Consultant research has concluded that the current revenue share of 80%-10%-10% between Edmonton Transit, St. Albert Transit and Strathcona County Transit should be adjusted in Edmonton’s favour, also pointing out that predicted increases in ridership during off-peak travel times will be primarily borne by Edmonton Transit. Negotiations are currently underway in regard to revenue share, however changes in the formula will likely be incremental.

U-Pass successes have not come without a cost; however, the revenue impacts are in line with those predicted by ETS Business Development and Service Development prior to U-Pass. Given the fare increases already approved by Council to 2013, an increase in the U-Pass fee is anticipated when the pilot program is complete in April 2010, if no additional funding resources are found. U-Pass revenue will increase each year based on the Consumer Price Index as stated in the Agreements, and Edmonton’s share of U-Pass revenue will increase accordingly.

Given the goals and expectations set for the program, U-Pass can be considered a success. The pilot program and further evaluation will continue over the next two years. ETS Business Development will continue to produce regular reports on the U-Pass program, until the expiry of the pilot in 2010. A final comprehensive report and program recommendations will be submitted to Edmonton City Council in advance of 2010 budget discussions to begin in the Fall of 2009.
Background

The Edmonton regional transit Universal Pass program (U-Pass) has now completed its first academic year. This report summarizes the first year of operation for the U-Pass, and updates information from previous quarterly reports released in November 2007 and February 2008.

The transit U-Pass program for the Edmonton Capital Region was initiated with the approval of Edmonton City Council for a three year pilot period, beginning September 2007 and concluding April 2010. Agreements were signed with St. Albert Transit and Strathcona Transit as well as with the University of Alberta administration on July 25, 2007 and the Students Association of Grant MacEwan College on August 28, 2007. The U-Pass was implemented with the onset of the 2007-08 post-secondary academic year.

Program Goals

Edmonton City Council approved the U-Pass pilot program with the objective of collecting real-world data and evaluating the feasibility of a permanent U-Pass program. Based on U-Pass programs in general, additional goals of the pilot program for UofA and MacEwan post-secondary students include:

- Increasing transit ridership and transit mode share.
- Developing a culture of transit use among students.
- Streamlining post-secondary pass sales and distribution.
- Reducing traffic congestion around participating campuses.
- Supporting overall transit service improvements through increased student ridership.
- Supplying an environmentally preferred transportation option for post-secondary students.
- Supporting the general marketability of Edmonton as a city and as a destination for post-secondary education.

As the U-Pass program progressed, steps were taken to track performance in relation to these overall goals and other, related areas. The following areas have been specifically held in view:

- **Pass usage** – how many eligible students acquire their U-Pass sticker, and of those with a Pass, how many use it, at what frequency and for what purposes?
- **Transit ridership** – what is the level of ridership increase for transit as a result of the U-Pass, and what is the increase in off-campus trip usage?
- **Financial implications** – what has the net cost been for transit in implementing the U-Pass program, and the corresponding impact on the tax levy?
- **Customer satisfaction** – has the U-Pass program affected customer satisfaction, and among which groups; is the general public satisfied as well as the students?
- **Campus traffic** – has U-Pass produced a reduction in parking demand on and around the campuses, as well as a measurable impact on campus traffic?
- **Environmental concerns** – for travel to and from campus, has U-Pass produced a mode shift away from single occupancy vehicles, resulting in a positive impact on greenhouse gas emissions?
- **Regional cooperation** – to what extent has the U-Pass program facilitated the strengthening of regional cooperation in general and between regional transit providers in particular?
Some of these areas are required as preparation for the final report to Edmonton City Council; however Business Development is also assessing the overall impact of U-Pass, opportunities available for all stakeholders, and the potential for expansion of the program.

**Transit Service Delivery**

*Implementing U-Pass Service*

The ETS Service Development Section made a significant number of preliminary service changes anticipating increased student travel demand created by the U-Pass. As is common each fall, a number of additional service modifications were also made in the first few months of the school year to maintain effective service delivery.

Preliminary changes involved increasing service levels for routes serving the UofA and MacEwan. Planning also included adding 437 service hours, 3 new routes and an additional 19 buses on the road. From the 200 hours of contingency service reserved to address emergent issues, 193 were used for U-Pass related service. For the Winter Term beginning January 2008, the only service adjustment required was the addition of one Route 4 trip, with the result that all service requirements are presently being met.

*Service Delivery Costs*

This additional U-Pass service was implemented without any additional funding. In the absence of a U-Pass program, the service hours and their associated expenses would have been used to supply new areas, or provide additional service to areas currently served. However U-Pass service increases, including the three new routes specifically designed to serve the UofA campus, provide benefits to all transit customers. With adjustments to accommodate U-Pass travel demand increases now complete, transit service increases will be applied to various service needs including service to U-Pass campuses as needed.

For the 2007-08 year ETS service costs are $70.00 per service hour per vehicle. Post-secondary service is in effect for 40 weeks, the approximate length of a post-secondary academic year. The 437 hours per week of additional service resulted in a cost of $30,590 per week, or $1,223,600 for the academic year. The 193 hours additional service hours cost $13,510 per week, or $540,400 for the 2007-08 academic year, with the total cost of service adjustments for U-Pass being $1.76 million.

*Costs for DATS Service*

The U-Pass is accepted as valid fare media for Edmonton Transit DATS service; the U-Pass is not accepted on the accessible transportation provided by St. Albert or Strathcona. From September 2007 to the end of April 2008, ETS provided 632 DATS trips where U-Pass was used as fare media. Using the DATS average fare amount as a baseline, DATS trips taken using U-Pass as fare media resulted in lost revenue for DATS of $1,580.00.

*Student Ridership*

When projecting U-Pass costs and the potential need for increased service, ETS estimated a 30% increase in student ridership and predicted 18% growth in overall ridership to and from U-Pass campuses as a result. Comparing boarding count data from October 2007 revealed that ETS routes serving U-Pass campuses showed a greater increase in boardings than the ETS system for all days surveyed.
Additional U-Pass research was also commissioned by the transit partners. While initiated primarily to determine revenue share, this research also yielded ridership data. Only students who had picked up their U-Pass sticker were surveyed. For trips to campus, students estimated their 2006-07 transit use to be 6.1 trips per week. After U-Pass, they estimated 9.1 trips to campus, a 49% increase. For their total number of weekly trips using transit, students estimated their travel prior to U-Pass at 9.1 trips per week, with a post U-Pass estimation of 12.3 trips per week, a 35% increase.

**U-Pass Service and Transit Security**

From September 1, 2007 to May 13, 2008, ETS Transit Security issued a total of 31 bylaw tags to students failing to produce a valid U-Pass while utilizing transit service. Ten bylaw tickets and two warnings were issued in March, with an additional six bylaw tickets issued in April for the use of Fall 2007 U-Pass stickers. Given the time lag of over two months between pass expiry and the time these tickets were issued, concerns were raised regarding the extent of communication regarding U-Pass expiry. Additional effort was made to communicate the April 30 expiry date, however an additional 15 bylaw tickets were issued in the first two weeks of May. No other security incidents specifically attributable to U-Pass holders, such as property disturbances or behaviour problems, have been reported.

**Program Revenues and Student Enrolment**

**Initial Estimates**

Partnering transit properties had initially calculated a “tax-levy neutral” cost for U-Pass of $120 per student per term, a figure which included the operating cost of extra service to accommodate greater student ridership – capital cost increases were not included. Based on discussions with student groups in 2005, the Transportation and Public Works committee recommended a student referendum be held at a $90 rate for U-Pass. In the fall of 2006, the final value of the U-Pass was set by the respective City Councils; all three municipalities agreed to a price of $90 per student for the U-Pass, to increase annually based on the “All-Items” Consumer Price Index for Alberta, a price which was ultimately approved by students through referenda held in March 2007.

Based on student surveys conducted in 2001, 2002 and 2005 to determine the percentage of students at each institution using transit, the transit partners calculated gross 2007 transit revenue from post-secondary students at MacEwan and the University to be $8.99 million, with Edmonton’s portion contributing $7.35 million. Using figures obtained from the participating institutions, student enrolment was then used to determine revenue projections for U-Pass.

Initial calculations used a total enrolment figure of 40,000 students per term, 31,000 UofA undergraduate students and 9,000 MacEwan full-time students. The addition of 7,000 UofA graduate students brought this total to 47,000 per term, or 94,000 students per academic year. Annual revenue at $90 per student per term was projected to be $8.46 million, of which Edmonton would receive 80% in the first year, or $6.76 million, significantly less than was currently being received from these students using transit.
**Student Enrollment and Revenue**

The actual U-Pass assessment for Fall Term 2007 at the University of Alberta was 33,650 students including both graduate and undergraduate students, a reduction of 4,350 students. For the Winter Term, assessed students numbered 31,749, a 5.8% reduction over the previous term, the total difference being 6,251 students. For Grant MacEwan College, Fall Term enrolment was 9179 students, with total Winter Term enrolment at 9050, a slight increase over original projections.

Several factors account for these enrolment differences. Actual enrolment for undergraduate students for the 2007-08 year was 3,782 students lower than projected. Of the remaining undergraduate students, an additional 4,200 were designated as “off-campus” (2100 per term) and were exempt from the U-Pass fee. For graduate students, total actual enrolment was also lower than projected by approximately 1600 students, with additional 1000 graduate students designated as “off-campus”. Finally, the reduction in University enrollment for Winter Term was not included in the original projections. As a result, total number of assessed students including MacEwan College was 83,628, a reduction of over 10,000 students or 10% of projected enrolment over the academic year.

**Actual versus Projected Revenues**

Prior to U-Pass, student ridership was high at both the University and MacEwan College. In reports to Council in the Fall of 2006, Edmonton Transit estimated an annual revenue shortfall of $1.5 million resulting from the U-Pass program. This did not include the cost of additional service, estimated at 0.86 million. Capacity problems were anticipated as a result of the U-Pass without funding for additional service.

Based on the actual student assessment, total U-Pass revenue for 2007-08 is approximately $7.51 million, a reduction of 0.95 million from the projected revenue figure of $8.46 million. The ETS portion of total U-Pass revenue is approximately $6.0 million, a reduction of 0.76 million from originally projected revenues of $6.76 million, and a reduction of $1.35 million from revenue Edmonton Transit previously received from post-secondary students (as noted above). Replacement passes purchased due to loss or theft increase these revenue numbers slightly, to match the actual amounts paid to Edmonton Transit and the regional transit partners.

While revenue reductions resulting from U-Pass were slightly lower than anticipated, service requirements were greater – however these service improvements benefit all transit users. Based on actual enrolment figures, the revenue difference between the $90 and the $120 U-Pass rate is $2.50 million, with the ETS portion (at 80%) being $2.0 million. Taking into account the consultant’s recommendation (below) to increase revenue share to 89.4% for Edmonton, the ETS share of revenue at $120.00 would have been $8.95 million, an increase of $2.95 million from actual revenues and recovering 95% of ETS “costs” for U-Pass.

**2008-2009 U-Pass Revenue Increases**

For September 2008 the U-Pass fare for each institution will increase according to the Alberta “All-items” Consumer Price Index (CPI) published by Statistics Canada, an increase which is scheduled to occur each fall, based on the CPI from the previous year. The increase for 2007 over 2006 will be mean a 5.0%
increase to the U-Pass fare for the following school year. Again using enrollment figures for 2007-08, this 5.0% increase will produce additional U-Pass revenue for Edmonton Transit of approximately $130,000.00 per school term. A shift in the U-Pass regional revenue share in Edmonton’s favour will result in an additional increase.

**Program Cost and U-Pass Rates**

The basic premise of a U-Pass program is that spreading the cost of student transit travel over a broader group of students can be used to reduce transit costs for individual students resulting in ridership increases for transit and a number of accompanying positive effects. Similar to a “group rate”, those users who take transit infrequently or not at all subsidize those students who ride transit more often. For example, slightly more than 10% of students who were assessed the U-Pass fee did not acquire their U-Pass sticker, and so were unable to ride transit without an additional payment. This translates into approximately $300,000 of U-Pass revenue received with no additional service costs incurred.

To determine the relationship between revenue and ridership, ETS Business Development has conducted research in order to determine a “pass multiplier” figure, the average number of trips by a pass-user in a month. For the post-secondary student pass, this multiplier has been calculated to be 54 trips/month. While post-secondary pass users make their purchase intending to use their pass, U-Pass purchasers cover a far broader range – from “zero” to the potential for multiple trips on three separate transit systems. The pass multiplier for U-Pass reflects this range, and has been calculated at an average of 25 trips per month. This number is expected to increase slightly, as familiarity with the U-Pass increases overall usage and off-peak travel by students. If the average fare for ETS of $1.19 were applied to the U-Pass multiplier, the result would be a student per-term cost of $119.00, a 32% increase over the current rate.

Of note in relation to U-Pass costs are planned increases to the post-secondary pass rate. These increases have already been approved by City Council in the Edmonton Transit Fare Structure. When the U-Pass was first implemented in September 2007, the Post-secondary pass rate was $54.00 per month. When the U-Pass pilot program expires in April 2010, the post-secondary pass rate in September will be $74.25 per month, a 37% increase in cost. Should CPI increases continue at 5% per year, the U-Pass rate will be $104.19 for a four month term beginning September 2010 – a 15% increase. It is reasonable to conclude from these figures that in order to meet the goals of the U-Pass program while providing some relationship between the U-Pass and other fares the U-Pass rate will need to increase, perhaps as much as 20% above potential CPI increases.

**Regional Revenue Share**

Edmonton Transit initially agreed to share U-Pass revenue with the regional transit providers St. Albert Transit and Strathcona County Transit using an 80%-10%-10% split for the first year, with the agreement that research would be undertaken to confirm an equitable revenue share between partners. Research conducted by UMA|Aecom and jointly funded by all three regional partners, indicates that revenue share from U-Pass should be adjusted in Edmonton’s favour. The final UMA report recommends that Edmonton receive 89.4% of U-Pass revenue, with St. Albert and Strathcona receiving 6.0% and 4.6% respectively. Renegotiation of the regional revenue sharing formula are currently underway based on this recommendation, and it is expected that the proportions will shift to 84%-8%-8% for 2008-09 and then to the consultant’s recommendation for the final year of U-Pass. Based on 2007-08 enrollment numbers, the 4% annual increase in revenues to ETS based on this change would total approximately $300,000. When the revenue share recommendations are fully implemented, the potential revenue increase for Edmonton Transit would be approximately $734,000. Also noted by the consultant was the likelihood that future off-peak ridership increases will be largely borne by ETS, in particular with the opening of South Campus LRT service.
**Fare Media**

**Media Selection**
After considering a number of alternatives, the fare media selected for U-Pass was a fraud-resistant holographic foil sticker applied to the student photo identity card issued by the University and MacEwan. This is similar to the fare media used in U-Pass programs in Calgary, Saskatoon and Toronto (Mississauga) and other cities. Combining the U-Pass fare with the student photo ID card provided additional security features for transit, as well as the benefit of a single card for multiple student services for each institution. It was agreed that the institutions would be responsible for the cost of distribution, while the transit partners would be responsible for the cost of production. Sticker production was proportionally cost-shared among transit partners and coordinated by Edmonton Transit.

**Media Distribution**
Edmonton Transit arranged to have stickers delivered on time and in the quantities requested by the institutions. Initially, stickers were shipped to the institutions as they were received, in large rolls of 2500 stickers. However, this required the issuing card offices to repackage the stickers into a smaller, more manageable format for staff. For the second, Winter Term distribution, stickers were broken down by City of Edmonton Materials Management into strips of 10, bundled by 100’s and in envelopes of 1000 stickers. This resulted in a much simpler distribution process for the card offices, and feedback from the University and MacEwan College indicated that second term distribution went even more smoothly than the first.

At the University, the task of sticker distribution was shared by the ONEcard Office and by the Student Union-operated information service, InfoLink, with InfoLink providing first-time distribution to all returning students and ONEcard providing distribution to new students as well as replacement stickers for lost and stolen cards. U-Pass sticker distribution has increased the workload on the UofA ONEcard office during the busy registration period.

While the sticker distribution process at the University was led primarily by administration, at MacEwan College it was handled entirely by the Students’ Association, using registration information supplied by the College. A number of distribution tables were setup alongside registration locations at MacEwan City Centre Campus. Ongoing replacements for lost and stolen cards and passes are also dealt with by the Students’ Association.

**Student Sticker Uptake**
Taking into account both semesters and both institutions, a total of 83,452 students were assessed. Of these, 73,555 students picked up their U-Pass sticker, an 88% uptake by eligible students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
<th>Acquired</th>
<th>Uptake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UofA – Fall Term</td>
<td>33,650</td>
<td>30,855</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UofA – Winter Term</td>
<td>31,749</td>
<td>28,057</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacEwan – Fall Term</td>
<td>9,001</td>
<td>7,624</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacEwan – Winter Term</td>
<td>9,052</td>
<td>7,019</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>83,452</td>
<td>73,555</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were no reports of fraudulent Fare Media submitted by ETS Transit Security over the course of the 2007-08 academic year.
Communications

External U-Pass Communications
ETS communications staff has worked closely with communications staff from the U-Pass partners to ensure communication is clear, consistent and pervasive. Each institution maintains a separate U-Pass web page, and these pages are linked to each other. The ETS U-Pass page is specifically focused on transit information and trip planning assistance to and from campus, with links to institutional sites for student information. Each institution also links to the ETS site, as well as providing FAQ information developed in consultation with all parties. ETS provides common content to enable consistency between the FAQ’s on all sites, as well as developing branding for all U-Pass related information.

Students have quickly gained a broad knowledge and appreciation for the U-Pass, as evidenced by letters to local newspapers, a site such as “I Love U-Pass” which began on Facebook in September, and the U-Pass entering popular student culture with phrases such as “Let’s ‘U-Pass it’ over to Whyte Ave.” As a result, the second media campaign was focused solely on specific information needed by students for the Winter term. Advertisements in the MacEwan Intercamp campus newspaper and the UofA Gateway student newspaper were used, informing students of valid pass/sticker dates along with times and locations for picking up their Winter Term fare media. Edmonton Transit outreach staff was present once again at both MacEwan and the UofA for the beginning of the Winter Term to provide transit information to students.

Internal U-Pass Communications
Employee ETS communication focused on four areas: a) general information; b) valid pass / valid date; c) pass-up reporting and d) security and pass-confiscation. Ongoing changes included updating Winter Term fare media displays, an increased emphasis on the procedure for dealing with fraudulent fare media, and the revision of pass-up forms and posters based on feedback from operators and Service Development.

Communications for 2008 Expiry
In order to inform students of the expiry of U-Pass at the end of April, a number of communications media were used. ETS updated its U-Pass page as well as the U-Pass FAQ page with expiry information, and included locations where summer post-secondary passes could be purchased by University and MacEwan students. Each institution also updated their own web pages with this information. At the University of Alberta, email notifications were sent to student by the Students’ Union and the Graduate Students Association to all members. In addition, all students housed in residence were sent separate email notifications, as were all medical residency students, many of whom remain on campus for the summer. Large backlit posters were placed in displays at University, Corona and Bay (Enterprise Square) LRT stations, and the Students’ Union displayed large numbers of smaller posters at various outdoor locations across campus. The MacEwan Students Association was also supplied with posters to display as they deemed necessary.

Planning is currently underway for communications associated with the Fall Term 2008 U-Pass program.

Vehicle Use and Other Impacts

Parking Impacts
University parking data indicated an increased demand for short term and day parking, and a decrease in purchases of longer term parking permits. This has occurred in conjunction with introduction of the U-Pass program, although other factors may also have contributed to this shift. At MacEwan College, total monthly parking passes sold across all MacEwan parking lots dropped by more than 8% for September 2007 over 2006, a further indication of the environmental impact of U-Pass.
Environmental Impacts
In surveys conducted by UMA in September 2007, student reporting indicates that over 665,000 new transit trips will result from U-Pass during the course of 2007-08 school year. Were these taken by car, more than 610,000 kg (610 metric tonnes) of CO2 would enter the atmosphere. This is equals the emissions produced by approximately 120 cars over a full year, or 180 cars over an academic year.

Looked at from a different angle, Edmonton vehicle occupancy is approximately 1.2 persons per vehicle. Based on this, every full bus removes 41 cars from the road, and the three bus routes implemented specifically to serve the University remove approximately 120 cars from Edmonton streets and the University campus, each school day, without taking into consideration other ridership increases.

U-Pass Research
Research on the impact of the U-Pass program was conducted in October and November of 2007 and the results detailed in the February 2008 U-Pass Quarterly report. One of the key objectives for the initial research was to validate ridership between the regional transit partners and negotiate an equitable share of U-Pass revenue between the partners. Valuable data regarding the U-Pass program in general was also produced, and a number of the findings are highlighted here (see box).

Based on the UMA survey research and their familiarity with other U-Pass programs, the final report predicts off-peak ridership as the major growth area resulting from U-Pass after initial implementation. Because students arriving from St. Albert and Strathcona will already be in Edmonton during off-peak travel times, it is believed the majority of these off-peak trips will use Edmonton Transit.

Future Research
Survey research will be repeated during the 2008-09 academic year, providing an opportunity to compare year-over-year student ridership trends. Other impacts of the U-Pass, for example on parking and student ridership and travel mode choices, will continue to be monitored by the Business Development section as part of the U-Pass pilot program evaluation.

Advisory Committee and Stakeholder Feedback
With the initiation of U-Pass, an Advisory Committee was struck to allow feedback on the U-Pass program and coordinate any adjustments necessary during the pilot. Detailed feedback from committee members forms an addendum to this report; however, some comments are noted here.

From the UofA Students’ Union: “For the most part, the actual U-Pass program, now in full bloom, has been met overwhelmingly positively.”

From the UofA Graduate Students’ Association: “It can safely be said that overall the U-Pass has been a great experience for UofA Graduate Students…”

2007 Student Survey Responses
- One third of students at both the UofA and MacEwan feel they are using transit more often with the availability of U-Pass.
- University of Alberta and Grant MacEwan College students report increased transit by 29% and 49% respectively.
- Over 30% of students indicate that they intend to use transit more often for off-peak travel due to U-Pass (mid-day, evenings and weekend travel).
- 90% of students indicated they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with transit service, with 63% indicating they were very satisfied.
- 75% of students felt their U-Pass increased options for location of residence and work flexibility.
**U-Pass Complaints**

Edmonton Transit tracks customer complaints using their CACTIS system. A search of the CACTIS database for U-Pass related concerns yielded a total of 34 issues specifically mentioning U-Pass, over the course of the academic year. The majority of these complaints occurred within the first two months, with only a portion related to transit service or the U-Pass itself. Several calls involved the failure of other regional municipalities to accept the U-Pass on their chartered service into Edmonton. While there were initial complaints regarding service levels during the adjustment period in September and October, complaints of overloaded buses possibly occurring as a result of U-Pass are now essentially nil. It may be concluded that service levels to U of A and MacEwan are adequate and all ridership increases related to U-Pass have been accommodated. Given that complaints regarding transit service at the institutions are also minimal, customer satisfaction appears to be relatively high.

**Ongoing Activities and Future Considerations**

Looking toward the future, information from other U-Pass programs may provide some insights. At the University of British Columbia (UBC) renewal of their U-Pass program has been repeatedly approved, with student referendum results of 69%, 90% and 97% in favour at each of the three year renewal points, the latest occurring in 2007. At the Vancouver UBC campus, class times were adjusted 30 minutes earlier resulting in a 12% reduction in service requirements at the peak, effectively saving 9 buses for other service needs. Some consideration is being given to this approach in Edmonton.

In the Lower Mainland of B.C. U-Pass expansion to other, smaller colleges has proven somewhat more problematic. Community or technical colleges often have smaller campuses, less transit service and continual enrolment in certain programs (e.g. trades). These factors complicate the introduction of a U-Pass program. Continual enrolment students do not value U-Pass as highly, because they are typically on campus for a brief period, usually less than a full semester. This reduces the student support required to assess all students the U-Pass fee. Because they are often suburban, parking pressures for these campuses are often lower as well, which reduces one direct benefit of U-Pass. Because of these differences, the “revenue neutral” price for U-Pass is often higher than for the larger University or Downtown campuses, particularly if service increases are also involved. This price difference tends to appear unfair to students at other institutions when surveyed on their level of support for a U-Pass program.

These issues all apply to Edmonton in regard to the NAIT campuses in particular, and differential pricing for smaller institutions may need consideration if the U-Pass becomes a permanent program. The goals for the U-Pass including financial support to students, increasing transit ridership, etc will be evaluated as part of the net program benefit.

**Summer U-Pass**

Reports from the University of Alberta indicate a combined 2008 graduate and undergraduate enrolment for the Spring Term of 7,900 students, and 8,100 for the Summer Term. In addition, there are approximately 3200 graduate students working on their theses during the Spring and Summer terms who are not registered in courses. Given capacity available during the summer season, implementing a summer U-Pass for these students may provide an additional revenue stream for Edmonton Transit, with little additional cost that needs to be investigated. The Graduate Students’ Association at the University has already expressed support for this extension of the U-Pass.
Ongoing Program Work
Edmonton Transit’s Business Development Office continues to oversee the following aspects of the U-Pass program:

- Fulfillment of commitments within the U-Pass Agreements, including quarterly meetings of the U-Pass Advisory Committee and accompanying quarterly reports.
- Reconciliation of U-Pass finances and processing of payments.
- U-Pass fare media production for the remaining two years of the program.
- Engaging research as required for the ongoing evaluation process.
- Developing relationships with potential academic partners, should the U-Pass meet Council approval for continuation and possible expansion.

SUMMARY

The U-Pass is being received positively by users and stakeholders. Student awareness is high and uptake of U-Pass stickers is approaching ninety-percent, with the word “U-Pass” now becoming a verb among students.

Service Development continues to make minor service adjustments as required. Off peak transit use by students is expected to increase steadily over time, while some latent service demand may exist due to high capacity loads.

The U-Pass experience has been very positive overall and a success for all stakeholders. The U-Pass is on track to reach the goals established with the introduction of the program.

Patricia Waisman – Project Lead
Director of Business Development
Edmonton Transit

Gordon M. Dykstra – Project Manager
Fare Programs Supervisor
Edmonton Transit Business Development
June 3, 2008
U-Pass Advisory Committee

Year One – Stakeholder Feedback Summary

Introduction
The transit Universal Pass (U-Pass) program for the Edmonton Capital Region was initiated with the approval of City Councils from Edmonton, St. Albert and Strathcona County for a three year pilot period, beginning September 2007 and concluding April 2010. Agreements included student at the University of Alberta and Grant MacEwan College. As part of the ongoing assessment of the program an Advisory Committee was assembled, including representatives from each of the stakeholders in the U-Pass program, and chaired by ETS. The program has now completed its first academic year. This report summarizes feedback from the U-Pass partners on their experience with the program over the first year.

St. Albert Transit – Ian Sankey, Manager of Planning and Customer Service
Strathcona County Transit – Dawn Hemming, Coordinator, Finance & Business Planning

Early indications are that the U-Pass program introduced at the University of Alberta and MacEwan in Fall 2007 has been a success. StAT and Strathcona have both seen increased ridership but the extra capacity provided has allowed us to avoid any major issues of overcrowding or standees. We continue to monitor passenger loads and have made several service adjustments to better serve customers traveling to U of A and MacEwan. Ridership to both institutions appeared to grow steadily throughout the first year with increased awareness of U-Pass and the opportunities that it brings.

Students at both institutions appear to have responded very positively to both the U-Pass information provided and transit services available to them, as well as the process for picking up their U-Pass stickers on the campuses. STAT drivers have given very positive feedback and have not reported any major issues.

Communication efforts have been well coordinated between all stakeholders. Our Customer Service team has reported very few telephone calls or e-mails, with the majority of U-Pass related queries simply relating to returning student ID cards that had been left on the buses. The only other inquiries received by StAT have been from non-participants, primarily but not exclusively from NAIT students.

Edmonton Transit – Gordon Dykstra, Fare Programs Supervisor

The U-Pass is being received positively by users and stakeholders. Student awareness is high and uptake of U-Pass stickers by eligible students was high at 88.1%. ETS communications staff worked closely with communications staff from our U-Pass partners to ensure communication was clear, consistent and pervasive.
Students have quickly gained a broad knowledge and appreciation for the U-Pass, as evidenced by letters to local newspapers, a site such as “I Love U-Pass” which began on Facebook in September, and the U-Pass entering popular student culture with phrases such as “Let’s ‘U-Pass it’ over to Whyte Ave.”

ETS Service Development has made service adjustments as required. Some latent service demand may exist due to the high capacity loads resulting from high student participation in the U-Pass program. Customer complaints regarding service to the campuses have been almost non-existent; with fewer than 40 complaints mentioning U-Pass have been received over the entire academic year.

The majority of complaints occurred within the first two months of the program, and only small a portion related to transit service or the U-Pass itself. One repeated concern was the lack of acceptance of the U-Pass for transit service by other regional municipalities.

The U-Pass experience has been positive and a success for all stakeholders, and the U-Pass program appears on track to reach the goals established for the program.

**UofA Students’ Union – Chris Henderson, Student Advocacy Director**

The U-Pass implementation in the fall term was a time of anxiousness and uncertainty. From the perspective of the Students’ Union, two major issues were at stake.

1. Communication and execution around sticker distribution.

2. Ridership increases and transit issues resulting from an increase number of students in possession of bus passes.

Happily, any problems with these issues seem to have been avoided. A solid communications strategy and excellent logistical work on the part of Information services allowed for a smooth sticker distribution for the Fall and then Winter terms. We are pleased with the amount of reflection that went into the process, allowing the Winter sticker distribution to proceed even more smoothly than the Fall session.

Ridership problems have not been an issue brought to the attention of the Students’ Union. For the most part, the actual U-Pass program, now in full bloom, has been met overwhelmingly positively. Students are getting to their classes and, perhaps more importantly, their exams on time with the use of their U-Pass. ETS had done an excellent job of responding to the needs of students on routes where demand seems to have increased.

There have been, of course, a number of minor issues, such as students who would like to opt out for on reason or another, or students’ who don’t want the U-Pass in general, but these few complaints of that sort are more or less expected when a mandatory program is implemented on a student body of over 30,000.

All-in-all, the Students’ Union is very pleased with the partnership and cooperation we enjoy with ETS, Strathcona County Transit, St. Albert Transit, the GSA and the University of Alberta, as apparently, is our student membership.
UofA Graduate Students’ Association – Matthew Robertson, VP Communications
It can safely be said that overall the U-Pass has been a great experience for UofA Graduate Students, and the GSA office has received very few complaints regarding the U-Pass. One concern graduate students have brought forward is that the U-Pass is unavailable to them during the summer months. Unlike their undergraduate counterparts, many graduate students remain very active on campus over the summer. Other than this concern, the response has been consistently positive.

Sticker Distribution at the University – John Younk, ONEcard Office Manager
Sticker production was the responsibility of Edmonton Transit’s fare media team, with the task of sticker distribution shared by the ONEcard Office and by the Student Union-operated information service, InfoLink. Infolink provided first-time distribution to all returning students, while the ONEcard office provided distribution to new students as well as replacement stickers for lost and stolen cards.

U-Pass sticker distribution has certainly increased the workload on the ONEcard office. Some funding has been provided by central administration to the ONEcard budget to cover the direct costs associated with this service making the net result to this office cost neutral. Marrying the U-Pass fare to the ONEcard has allowed the University to continue to provide the benefit of having a single card for all services, reducing administrative costs and enhancing service to our students.

My experience with Edmonton Transit has been very positive. We have been contacted by Dalhousie University regarding the sticker distribution program and it appears that their transit authority may be doing much the same thing that we have done with Edmonton Transit.

Thanks go to the U-Pass team for their efforts in making fare distribution go as smoothly as it did. We look forward to our continued relationship with our transit partners.

Summary
Capital Region City Councils approved the U-Pass pilot program with the objective of collecting real-world data and evaluating the feasibility of a permanent U-Pass program. The program has a number of goals, measures of which are being tracked by ETS Business Development. With the conclusion of the program’s first year, it appears that stakeholders are satisfied with the U-Pass program.

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