



TARA STIEGLITZ

EXTINGUISHING EXHAUST The University wants to reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles in the area.

U of A tackles transit troubles

The Administration's Travel Demand Management plan aims to address many of problems created by the influx of commuters coming to campus

JENNIFER HUYGEN
News Writer

As students and staff gear up to go back to class, University administrators are bracing themselves for the increased travel demands that affect campus.

The Travel Demand Management (TDM) plan, initiated by the Department of Facilities and Operations, was introduced to the University community in late 2002 to ease these concerns at the University of Alberta's Main and South Campuses.

The plan provides incentives such as reduced public transit costs, as well as disincentives such as increased parking costs, to discourage the use of the personal transportation as the primary means of commuting to the U of A. According to TDM's executive summary, released in January 2007, over 80 per cent of the vehicles travelling to and from campus are single-occupant vehicles.

According to Don Hickey, University Vice-President (Facilities and Operations), "The key is that we are seriously looking at how we expand and address the issue of sustainability."

The executive summary also stated that the project's main goals include the need to increase vehicle occupancy, spread out the demand for travel, conserve energy, and reduce pollution. It looks at several options to address these factors, including

parking, transit, pedestrian and bicycle options, and land use.

The implementation of the student U-Pass this September achieves one of the TDM's short-term initiatives—namely, to promote the use of public transit. As laid out in last March's referendum, the University has subsidized the price of the U-Pass by \$15 per student per term.

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According to Students' Union President Michael Janz, the U-Pass is not only cost-effective, but also environmentally sound.

"The U-Pass, by our calculations, is going to be saving students millions of dollars, and we feel very positively about it," Janz said. "It's going to be building future generations of bus riders and train riders who will live more sustainable lives."

Hickey also noted that the student U-Pass is just the beginning for the TDM.

According to Hickey, the University is "seriously looking at working with

the City to see what we can do about a subsidized pass for staff and faculty as well."

In addition to the U-Pass, the Board of Governors increased parking rates across campus last April. The five-per-cent increase marks the first in a series of increases over the next three years intended to discourage parking on campus and reduce the need to build more parking infrastructure.

Janz, however, believes that the public will react negatively to this change when fall term begins.

"I think students and faculty will be upset with the increase in the charge of parking, but it's reflective of the demand Edmonton is facing," Janz said. "Hopefully it will encourage more people on this campus to consider taking [public] transit instead."

According to Janz, it's the right time for the University to be seriously studying transportation demands.

"The University needs the TDM program because they really are realizing how booming campus is."

There are currently 8432 parking stalls on campus operated by the University's Department of Ancillary Services, with monthly rates ranging from \$50 to \$110. The projected student growth figure of 45 000 students by 2030 threatens to put a strain on parking services, where the demand ratio is currently one stall for every five students.

New Alberta government needed to address PSE funding issues—Tougas

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But Amrhein added that calls to streamline the efficiency between the federal and provincial government in a wide-range of grants, scholarships, loans, and research funding are nothing new.

However, Advanced Education and Technology Minister Doug Horner pointed to a draft policy framework setting out roles and mandates from public institutions currently underway,

which he said will provide the funding model for postsecondary education. He said the affordability framework aims to find a way to keep quality and efficiency high.

"We want to have a transferable, transparent system; we want to have Campus Alberta," Horner said.

"So I guess I'm not putting a whole lot of credence to the report."

For his part, Tougas stressed that more must be done to ensure future

PSE policies incorporate need-based aid along with popular universal programs.

"In a province as wealthy as ours, there is no reason not to look at a number of different options used together to help students," he wrote. "Quite honestly, what Alberta needs is a new government that is genuinely committed to funding an affordable postsecondary experience for the neediest students."

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