

# U-Pass nice for those who use it



JAKE PRINS

I'd like to start off by thanking the 3000 people who didn't go pick up their U-Passes this semester. I bet you're glad to have contributed \$75 each towards a service that you apparently have no use for. And I'm sure you'll be most glad to hear that with the money I saved on bus passes this year, I was able to purchase *Rock Band* and subsequently master "The Electric Version" on every instrument on Hard.

I think that everyone's aware by now that the U-Pass allows us to avoid drinking and driving—personally, I'm thankful for that because there's nothing like a crazy night of packing it in at 11:20pm to catch the last bus back to Sherwood Park. And we can all feel a little less guilty about the damage we're doing to the environment because the U-Pass allows us to save the planet by taking advantage of the whopping four park-and-rides that the city of Edmonton has to offer. Thanks, U-Pass!

But enough about the benefits; I'm sorry to be a negative Nellie here—especially since apparently only 15 per cent of campus has a problem with getting other people to pay for their stuff. However, I noticed a recent claim about the U-Pass' ozone-saving powers that seemed a tad misleading.

Let's imagine that I'm a university student who lives about twelve blocks from

campus. The Students' Union comes to me with a wonderful proposal: "Hey Jake!" they start enthusiastically, "don't you think bus passes cost an exorbitant amount of money?" They'd make sure to use the word "exorbitant," so that I know that they're university students with large vocabularies just like me, showing me that they're on my side. And they'd also make sure that they looked glum about the whole ordeal, because they're students too.

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Then they'd cheer up and tell me that "they've got a deal for me!" All I have to do is vote their U-Pass through and I'll save a hundred—if not hundreds—of dollars per term. Pretty soon, I start to see posters of people smiling while riding busses, and I know that this plan can't possibly go wrong. Hooray!

Now let's say it's 18 January, and it's freezing outside. I'm wearing every piece of clothing I own—as well as some that I don't—and I still risk frostbite if I stay outside for more than five minutes. I'm sure not looking forward to my twelve-block walk home. Then I remember that I've got a U-Pass now, so I can just take the bus home. I hop on instead of being rushed to the hospital

for limb transplants, then I'm delivered to my house—another satisfied client.

Now let's say it's 24 April, and it's the warmest day since last year. I've just finished enjoying a well-deserved soda pop upon completing my last exam. I'm going to go home, relax, and start enjoying the summer. And I guess I could walk, but fuck me if I'm not getting a bit lazy. I guess I'll just hang around ten minutes till my bus comes.

Finally, let's say my name is Gordon Dykstra. I'm ETS's project co-ordinator for the U-Pass, and I also think the U-Pass is fantastic. In fact, I've just "explained" to the "Gateway" that the U-Pass has "resulted in keeping approximately 610 metric tons of carbon dioxide out of the air." But unfortunately, there's kind of a catch, and it's that I'm "assuming those riders would have driven themselves."

I'll be honest: I don't actually know how many other pedestrians are taking advantage of their U-Pass—I'd guess it's a lot more than one, though. And I don't know how many new riders would have driven if they didn't have a U-Pass, but I'd guess it's a lot less than all of them. It doesn't seem all that unreasonable to say it might be around 3000.

So to all you U-Pass supporters who are getting flustered by this article: I'm sure you've all already started hastily typing out a response, and I say bring them on! I'd love nothing more than for you to show me the error of my ways so I can guiltlessly use public transit and fully enjoy the \$250 the U-Pass saves me in a typical year. Just make sure you take a glum tone in your letters—I want to make sure you're on my side.

# So long, and thanks for the overpasses

It was good while it lasted, Edmonton, but it's time for us to go our separate ways



BRIAN GOULD

Edmonton, we need to talk. This relationship just isn't working for me. I could tell you it's not you, it's me, but let's be honest: we both know it's you. Everyone knows it's you. They've seen this coming for months, and you shouldn't be so shocked—it was never going to work.

First of all, I'm tired of hearing about your potholes. Every winter city has them, and really, yours aren't that bad. So lay off already, and while you're at it, stop the constant whining about snow clearing. Honestly, with all of your current problems, these are the two that you're concerned with?

Your bedroom communities are complete disasters. You really should have stopped after your first dozen. It's one thing that you've got some left over from previous planners, but I'm just not ready to plan some more with you, so stop asking. I know it's harsh, but I just can't risk them looking like you.

You've really let yourself go—you're so huge you disgust me. The beltway's definitely not working (talk about a muffin-top). And if you're so dead-set on growing, you could at least make an effort to grow up. What's your problem with density anyway? You claim to want to stop your sprawling, but you keep fighting it tooth-and-nail. A little hypocritical, I have to say. Maybe you just don't want us to ever have anything nice.

Don't get me wrong: you've got some good features, but you keep ignoring them. Your valleys are nice—even though you keep wanting to build roads through them—and you're getting a new LRT extension south, but for some reason you're worried about traffic on Gateway Boulevard. If you'd just rely on your transit a little more, you wouldn't need to keep going under the knife—and to be frank, your roads are so wide it's obscene. Everyone's staring, and it's not in a good way.

**I wasn't going to bring it up, but since you can't let go: I've been thinking about another city.**

Don't even get me started on those new entrance features. I'm all for a little sprucing up, but is a couple of icy daggers the best you can do? I guess you think they're symbolic or something, and you're probably right—though not in the way you're thinking.

We've had a few good fights this year, and now that it's over, I have to say I enjoyed them. It was great to finally tell you off in public after bottling it up for years. Not that you're listening to me—not a chance. Just last month, you rejected rental housing for a mature neighbourhood because it didn't have all the parking you claim to need. You said it was because the neighbours need space for their five cars per household. You oppose a downtown arena because of parking, but have you ever even seen your downtown? Do you even listen

to yourself talk? It's ridiculous!

At first you claimed to care about the environment and society, and then you stomped on my heart. Tory Blue really doesn't look good on you—I miss good old Redmonton. Well, now you don't have to worry about me getting between you and your dirty secret on the side. That's right, I know about you and Fort Mac. The signs of an addiction aren't hard to spot, and I've seen you driving like there's no tomorrow. You're high on gas right now, aren't you?

You just can't admit it's over. I wasn't going to bring it up, but since you can't let go: I've been thinking about another city. A little foggy, a little shaky, but oh, what a sight! It's walkable, it's got real subways, and it even has bicycle boulevards. I can see we're going to be happy together. Though it might not long-term—I'm not ready to settle down yet.

Your university's good, but it's got nothing on this one. You barely have transportation engineering courses, let alone an urban planning department. That actually explains a lot, doesn't it? I wasn't going to go just yet, but it sounds like they really want me to come down and help them out. It'll be nice to be in a city that agrees with me—they're not as rare as you might think.

I'll be back between semesters, but it's mainly because my love lives here for now. I'll check up on how you're doing, and maybe we can still be friends. After all, we've had some good times, and it's not fair to bottle all this up and release it at once. Every city has its problems—if nothing else, at least you'll always be better than Calgary.

So I guess this is it. So long, Edmonton. It was great while it lasted.

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