

Background

1. What is the purpose of the GreenTRIP program?

The Green Transit Incentives Program (GreenTRIP) will provide one-time capital funding that will support new and expanded public transit throughout Alberta. The program will help provide Albertans with a wider range of sustainable public transit alternatives for local, regional and intermunicipal travel, making public transit more accessible. This will help reduce the number of vehicles on Alberta roads as well as greenhouse gas emissions.

2. How was the GreenTRIP program developed?

The Alberta government first announced GreenTRIP in July 2008. Government has used the time since to consult with stakeholders such as the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties; Alberta Urban Municipalities Association; Calgary Regional Partnership; Capital Region Board; Central Alberta Economic Partnership; City of Calgary; City of Edmonton; and the Strategic Transportation Advisory Council (a committee made up of public and private sector transportation representatives who advise Alberta Transportation on transportation issues affecting Alberta's economy). Government also reviewed the transit plans developed by the Capital Region Board and the Calgary Regional Partnership.

The consultations and reviews helped government develop the program details to best serve both the needs of the stakeholders and advance government priorities in meeting Alberta's future public transit needs.

3. What is the definition of "public transit" with respect to GreenTRIP?

For the purposes of GreenTRIP, public transit is defined as a transportation service available to the public in an urban and surrounding area, using vehicles designed for use by multiple individuals, with fares, schedules, and routes that are planned and available in advance.

4. Are municipalities responsible for their own transit services?

Yes. Transit is a municipal responsibility and that does not change. It is up to municipalities to identify their transportation priorities, develop transit policies and plans, and operate and maintain their own transit services.

Funding details

5. How will GreenTRIP funding be divided among municipalities?

The total GreenTRIP fund budget is \$2 billion. For municipalities that make up the Capital region area, the initial reserve will be \$800 million (40 per cent). The initial reserve for municipalities that make up the Calgary region area will also be \$800 million (40 per cent). This allocation is appropriate to meet the public transit needs of Alberta's two largest urban areas, which include many surrounding communities. Other municipalities outside the Edmonton and Calgary regions will have access to an initial reserve of \$400 million (20 per cent) of the total \$2-billion in GreenTRIP funding, and this same pool of funding can also be used for provincial priority projects.

6. How will the funding be paid out?

GreenTRIP is a multi-year program, with funding to be "paid on progress." This means the money will be distributed as a project progresses rather than being provided up front.

7. What are the funding guidelines for projects?

Project submissions will be assessed on a competitive basis, in part to the extent they advance Alberta government priorities as well as local or regional transportation priorities. Each submission must include a solid business case that demonstrates appropriate cost-sharing and a clear commitment to sustain the operations of the project once it is in place. Applicants must contribute a minimum of one-third of the capital cost of their project.

8. Project submissions must demonstrate that a project can help advance government priorities. What are these priorities?

The Alberta government's priorities include:

- implementing the 20-year Strategic Capital Plan;
- investing in priority projects that contribute to a safe and world-class transportation system that supports regional and provincial economic development and provides Alberta with some of the most advanced infrastructure in North America;
- supporting the province's return to prosperity and creating a strong foundation for continued economic strength;
- implementing the provincial Land-use Framework, which supports regional planning for key infrastructure, such as transit; and
- advancing the province's climate change strategy by getting cars off roads to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

9. Which government department will be handling the funding for GreenTRIP?

Alberta Transportation will be managing the program and providing the funding.

Eligibility

10. Which groups are eligible to apply for GreenTRIP funding?

The program is available to owner/operators of public transit services, which may include municipalities, regional entities, non-profit organizations, Métis settlements and the private sector. (Ineligible applicants include individuals, federal government departments or agencies and First Nations, which are under federal jurisdiction.)

11. Is the private sector eligible to establish public transit services and apply for GreenTRIP funding?

Yes. The private sector is eligible to propose projects that establish public transit services that are financially sustainable without provincial operating subsidies. Private companies can also play a role if they partner with a municipality or region to advance a particular project.

12. Do private sector applicants require regional and/or municipal endorsement to ensure their project submissions align with transit plans or priorities?

Yes. Private sector project submissions must be endorsed by municipal or regional transit authorities to be considered for GreenTRIP funding.

13. What kinds of public transit projects would qualify for funding?

Some examples of eligible capital projects include:

- construction of light rail transit (LRT) and inter-city commuter rail systems;
- planning for and acquisition of transit or commuter rail corridors;
- park and ride facilities (as a component of a larger transit project submission);
- construction of bus terminals;
- purchase of public transit vehicles (e.g., LRT vehicles, hybrid buses, accessible buses, etc.); and
- installation of transit intelligent transportation system components.

14. Is it necessary for a municipality to have an existing public transit service to qualify for funding?

No. The GreenTRIP program is open to municipalities and eligible applicants that want to develop public transit. However, the business case must show that operating dollars are in place and that the service is sustainable. The applicant must contribute a minimum of one-third of the capital cost of the project.

15. Is there an eligibility date for a project to be considered for GreenTRIP funding?

Yes. Projects will be considered for funding if they have been tendered or construction has started after July 8, 2008.

16. When does a project have to be started to qualify for GreenTRIP funding and when does it need to be finished?

Timelines must be identified in the applicant's project submission. A project has to be started soon after it is approved for GreenTRIP funding and finished as soon as is practical.

17. Is a handi-bus service that transports persons with disabilities or those with limited mobility eligible for GreenTRIP funding?

Yes. This type of service is eligible provided the project is financially sustainable without provincial operating subsidies.

18. Does transportation service for private sector employees qualify for funding?

No. Private employee transportation service is not considered public transit.

19. Does park n' ride qualify for funding?

Yes. However, park n' ride will be considered for GreenTRIP funding only if it is a component of a larger transit project submission.

20. Are busways eligible?

Yes. Dedicated bus-only facilities may be eligible for funding, such as bus-only roads to bus or LRT stations, terminals or park 'n ride lots.

21. Is funding available to applicants for developing their business case for a project submission?

No. Developing a business case is part of the total project cost and is considered part of the applicant's share.

22. Why are high-occupancy vehicle lanes not eligible for funding?

They are not public transit. There are other funding mechanisms (grants) in place for building roads.

Application details

23. What is the timeline for sending in submissions for GreenTRIP?

There will be two rounds of applications. The first round will be accepted up to January 31, 2011. (It is anticipated that project approvals for the first round will be announced in spring 2011). Based on stakeholder feedback, a second round of applications will be held because some stakeholders indicated they may need additional time to prepare their plans and business cases. The second round will be called later in 2011.

24. What is the process involved to send in a project submission for GreenTRIP?

Applicants must complete a GreenTRIP submission form. This includes providing a comprehensive business case and detailed information about how the project will achieve GreenTRIP's goals. Applicants can send in submissions for projects immediately. The submission form and guidelines are posted on the Alberta Transportation website at <http://www.transportation.alberta.ca>.

25. Who can the public contact to ask questions about applying for the GreenTRIP program ?

Alberta Transportation staff are available to answer questions, ph. 780-415-2148. To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

Environmental aspects

26. How does GreenTRIP fit with Alberta's climate change strategy?

GreenTRIP is a good example of how the province is investing in green initiatives that will help contribute to Alberta's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The emphasis of GreenTRIP will be to support regional transportation initiatives that make public transit more accessible to Albertans, reduce the number of vehicles on Alberta's roads and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Alberta government will continue to take advantage of opportunities to foster Alberta's growth in a responsible, environmentally-conscious way.

27. How is transit (GreenTRIP) considered to be "green?"

U.S. and Canadian transit associations and government agencies indicate that shifting from the use of an average single-occupancy vehicle to public transportation can have immediate environmental benefits through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Statistics from the U.S. show that LRT and bus services produce far less GHG emissions per passenger mile than an average single-occupancy vehicle.

Transport Canada data shows a transit rider creates 65 per cent fewer GHG emissions than an auto user for the same trip.

28. If a project receives GreenTRIP funding, will the recipients be responsible for ongoing reporting of results, e.g., increased transit usage or environmental or societal benefits?

Yes. The province expects municipalities to take pride in and share the successes of the public transit projects in their communities that GreenTRIP supports. To help achieve the goals of Alberta's climate change strategy, GreenTRIP will fund projects that help reduce the number of vehicles on roads, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A number of municipalities are already measuring and reporting on their GHG reductions and other environmental benefits. Work led by Alberta Environment in partnership with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties is underway to build capacity in this area as part of developing municipal climate change action plans.

29. Is there a formula or process for calculating GHG reductions?

Yes. Guidelines are being developed and will be located on the Alberta Transportation website at <http://www.transportation.alberta.ca>. Each applicant must indicate in their business case how their project will help reduce GHG emissions.

30. Which provincial government departments are engaged in developing the reporting of results process for the GreenTRIP program?

Transportation, Environment, Energy and Municipal Affairs are the departments involved in developing the reporting process for GreenTRIP. These departments are involved because GreenTRIP supports the Climate Change Strategy (Environment) and the Provincial Energy Strategy (Energy), and needs to align with the Grant Accountability Framework (Municipal Affairs).

General

31. Does GreenTRIP require compliance with transport regulations?

Yes. Projects must comply with existing transportation regulations.

32. How big must a municipality be to establish a public transit service?

Establishing a public transit service is not a matter of size. Municipalities have the responsibility to determine the role of transit in meeting their transportation needs and decide if a public transit service is financially sustainable in their community without provincial operating subsidies.

33. How will GreenTRIP address public transit users with special needs?

Public transit project submissions for GreenTRIP funding are required to be accessible to transit users with special needs.

34. Do transit vehicles funded by GreenTRIP have to be used exclusively in Alberta?

Yes. GreenTRIP is intended to meet Albertans' needs.

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