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## City's transportation nearly flunks green test

**Calgary ranks 16th out of 27 cities with 'D' grade**

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**High car ownership rates and low density contributed to Calgary receiving a 'D' on a report card on transportation and the environment.**

Urban sprawl and a long-standing love affair with cars, earned Calgary a near-fail in a nationwide report card on green transportation.

While Victoria has the most environmentally friendly transit in Canada, none of the 27 cities surveyed received an 'A,' according to the study, which will be released today.

Calgary tied with Kitchener, Ont., for 16th place among the 27 census metropolitan areas surveyed, earning a 'D.' Edmonton ranked 19th.

The congestion of cars pumping carbon dioxide into the air — often during commutes to outlying suburbs — is one of the major factors dogging Calgary, said Barry Appleton, whose private Appleton Charitable Foundation funded the study conducted with the University of British Columbia's business school.

"Because of the way Calgary's put together, it doesn't have a great deal of density, and density is one of the key issues that make cities sustainable and a lot easier to engage in policies that help the environment, deal with public health and deal with gridlock," said Appleton.

The report gives Calgary a good grade for its free transit in the core and the high level of transit users.

"We've done lots over the years to improve our ecological footprint. Certainly we've taken great steps," said Calgary Transit spokesman Ron Collins.

The city's buses have run on lowsulphur diesel fuel since 1994. And in 2003, Calgary Transit became the first transit system in North America to fully qualify for the ISO 14001 environmental standard.

But the gold star of the city's green transit effort is the Ride the Wind system, which uses wind-generated electricity to power C-Trains, resulting in a 100 per cent emission-free system.

"We get a lot of positive feedback from our customers who like that we've taken the extra step for the environment," Collins said.

But the city has a long way to go to measure up to places such as Victoria, which had the highest proportion of hybrid taxis and a high number of alternative fuel vehicles in its municipal fleet, according to the survey.

Calgary has the highest level of vehicle ownership per capita and high carbon emissions, according to the survey.

As people become more aware of environmental issues, they're more active in finding alternative ways to get around, whether transit, biking or walking, said Adam Gagnon, a program manager at Alberta-based Climate Change Central.

"An increasing number of Calgarians are realizing that driving into the downtown especially can be quite frustrating. A result of that frustration level, among other things, is causing people to consider alternative ways to get around."

The report provides ideas such as offering special employer mass-transit passes as a way to beef up public transit use.

Toronto and Montreal tied for fifth in the ranking, which examined 17 factors, including public transit ridership, number of vehicles per capita, number of hybrid or alternative-fuel vehicles in public transit and municipal fleets, policies such as anti-idling and trip-reduction programs, new housing density, greenhouse gas emissions, employer-sponsored ecotransit pass programs and hybrid taxis.

"We set a 10-year achievable target as to where every city could be at and none of them were able to make their target at this point, so none of them got an A," said Appleton.

"That which gets measured gets done," said Daniel Muzyka, dean of UBC's Sauder School of Business. "There's really room for improvement across the board.

"They're tough graders," he said about the study's panel of experts that included economists, climatologists, urban designers, architects and transportation planners.

Winnipeg came fourth because it has free transit in the downtown core and affordable transit passes. About 26 per cent of taxis are hybrids — the second highest proportion after Victoria. Winnipeg also boasts relatively low carbon emissions and vehicle ownership.

The 27 cities studied represent two-thirds of Canada's population and 77 per cent of the urban population.