

EquiPass

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the EquiPass Program?**

EquiPass is a discounted monthly transit pass or single-ride fare that provides a lower-priced transit option for individuals or families who live on low incomes.

2. **What discount does the EquiPass offer me?**

If you choose a monthly plan with unlimited rides, the EquiPass monthly pass costs \$58.25 per month. Should you travel less than 34 rides in a calendar month, then the EquiPass single-ride fare is a better option at a \$1.75 per ride. These are the 2021 prices and are subject to regular fare changes.

3. **Who is eligible for an EquiPass discount?**

The EquiPass discount is available to City of Ottawa residents whose household income falls below the low-income cut-off (LICO) threshold, as set out annually by the Government of Canada.

4. **Who is not eligible for the EquiPass discount?**

Individuals who meet any of the following criteria:

- Household income is above the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) threshold as defined by the government of Canada.
- Those receiving Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits. You are eligible for a Community Pass.
- Those receiving transportation benefits from any other source including Ontario Works or the Province of Ontario.
- Students receiving a U-Pass or School Board monthly pass by the Ottawa School Transportation Authority (OSTA) or Consortium de transport scolaire d'Ottawa (CTSO) do not qualify during the school year. They can apply for an EquiPass during the months they do not receive any of the passes mentioned.
- Those who are 65 years of age or older, as you are eligible for OC Transpo's Seniors Pass*

* Individuals are only entitled to one fare discount. Seniors who meet the income level entry and benefits more from the EquiPass discount over the Senior discount, will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

5. **Will newcomer refugees be eligible for the EquiPass discount?**

Some newcomer refugees will be eligible, depending on the nature of their sponsorship arrangements.

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- Refugees of all ages
- Privately sponsored refugees
- Inland claimants
- Government-assisted refugees under the age of 18 can be eligible for the EquiPass.
- Government-assisted refugees over the age of 18 while receiving financial assistance through the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) are not eligible for the EquiPass as they can purchase an adult monthly pass with the transportation benefit provided through the program. They can apply for the EquiPass discount after a year of their settlement in Canada, when they no longer receive financial assistance through RAP.

6. *What if I have an Access Pass?*

You can apply for an EquiPass discount, but only one discount can be put on your Presto card at a time. You will need to determine which discount best meets your transportation needs. Contact OC Transpo for more information: ocserve@octranspo.com or by phone at **613-560-5000 (TTY 613-741-5280)**.

7. *What is the Low Income Cut-off (LICO) threshold?*

The Low Income Cut-off (LICO) threshold is set annually by the Federal Government of Canada and therefore is subject to change. The LICO is reviewed every year and typically made public in July. This means that your eligibility for the EquiPass discount may change each year. Family size is based on a person's marital status and number of dependents. Annual net family income is based on your and your spouse's (if applicable) 2020 net income (after tax) and has been set at:

Income Eligibility based on 2020 LICO Rates

| Family size | 2020 Annual net family income |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 person | \$22,060 |
| 2 persons | \$26,849 |
| 3 persons | \$33,433 |
| 4 persons | \$41,710 |
| 5 persons | \$47,495 |
| 6 persons | \$52,673 |
| 7 or more persons | \$57,852 |

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8. *How do you know if you qualify?*

Your net income is located on line 236 of the Canada Revenue Agency's Notice of Assessment (NOA) for your 2020 Income Taxes. Both your and your spouse's income must be added together to compare to the above chart. If you have any dependents and receive the Canada Child Benefit, please provide a copy of this statement with your application. The benefit statement is used to confirm the number of dependents in the family.

There are also some exceptions. You could still qualify if:

- You are a refugee newcomer to Canada (copies of landing documents and alternate income documents will be required) and are privately sponsored or an inland claimant or a child under 18 from a family in receipt of the RAP
- You have never filed income taxes before (copies of income documents, such as T4 statements for 2020 or three (3) recent consecutive paystubs will be required)
- You can provide an Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefit stub for the current month
- Other cases that raise additional questions will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

If you qualify for an EquiPass based on one of the exceptions, you will only be eligible for the pass for one year, by which time you must file your income taxes. To re-qualify, the Notice of Assessment is the ONLY document accepted to renew your EquiPass discount.

If you have questions about whether you are eligible or what documentation is required, or if you do not fall into one of the above categories but think you still qualify, please contact OC Transpo by e-mail at equipass@ottawa.ca or by phone at **613-560-5000 (TTY 613-741-5280)**.

9. *Where can I get an application?*

Application forms must be filled out and submitted for processing. You can get an EquiPass application form:

- Online at <https://www.octranspo.com/en/fares/reduced-fares/equipass>
- By mail – Call **613-560-5000** (TTY 613-741-5280) to request a copy.
- In person at various locations across Ottawa:
 - OC Transpo Customer Service Centres (Rideau Centre, 925 Belfast Road),
Please visit our website or call our customer service centre to confirm hours of operations for locations above.
 - City of Ottawa Client Service Centres (City Hall, Orléans, Nepean, Kanata),

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- City of Ottawa Community and Social Support Centres; and
- Community Health and Resource Centres

For a full list of locations, visit <https://www.octranspo.com/en/fares/reduced-fares/equipass>.

10. *Where can I submit my application?*

While you can pick-up an application in many places, drop-off locations are limited to ensure your information is protected. You can return your application at one of the following locations:

- By fax at:
613-746-7648
Attn: EquiPass Applications
- By mail to:
OC Transpo
Attn: EquiPass Applications
925 Belfast Road
Ottawa, ON K1G 0Z4
- OC Transpo Customer Service Centres:
 - Rideau Centre – 3rd Floor
 - 925 Belfast Road
- City of Ottawa Client Service Centres:
 - City Hall / Laurier (110 Laurier Avenue West)
 - Ben Franklin Place / Nepean (101 Centrepointhe Drive)
 - Kanata (580 Terry Fox Road)
 - Orléans (255 Centrum Blvd.)

11. *What do I need to submit with my application?*

The following must be included for all members of the household listed on the application form (***Provide copies only - no documents will be returned***):

Family or Single Applicants:

- Your 2020 or 2021 Notice of Assessment (NOA) from Canada Revenue Agency.
- Parents or guardians with dependents 17 years and under must also provide the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) or Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) statement. This will not be added to your income, but will be used to confirm the number of dependents.

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Applicants who have never filed income tax:

If you have never filed an Income Tax return, please include:

- A copy of your three (3) recent consecutive paystubs for any and all job(s) held in the last 12 months and / or any 2020 or 2021 annual Income Slips (e.g. T4, T4A, or other).

Note: The EquiPass discount in this circumstance is set for one year. To renew your EquiPass after the first year, you must provide a Notice of Assessment (NOA) after filing your income taxes the following year.

Refugees or Newcomers

If you are recent refugee/newcomer to Canada, but have not filed a tax return:

- A copy of your Record of Landing (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) form IMM 1000) and Sponsorship agreements or payments, including Refugee Assistance Program cheque stubs, if applicable
- If currently employed, a copy of your three (3) recent consecutive paystubs for any and all job(s) currently held, and / or any annual Income Slips (e.g. T4, T4A) you may have received to date

Note: The EquiPass discount in this circumstance is set for one year. To renew your EquiPass after the first year, you must provide a Notice of Assessment (NOA) after filing your income taxes the following year.

Applicants not covered above:

If you are unable to provide the documentation above, please contact OC Transpo at equipass@ottawa.ca or 613-560-5000 (TTY 613-741-5280) for more information. Applicants are responsible for making copies of documents needed for this application and any associated costs. Documents will NOT be returned.

12. Who will be reviewing the EquiPass applications?

EquiPass applications will be processed by OC Transpo, in collaboration with Community and Social Services.

13. How long does it take to process my application?

Current processing time is a minimum of 30 business days.

- OC Transpo will ensure that all customers who qualify receive their discount based on the date the application is received. All applications must be received by the last day of the month before eligibility. (eg, If you submit an application in April, and eligibility is granted, your first pass will be for the month of May).

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- If you haven't heard from us within 30 business days of applying for the EquiPass discount, you can check on the status of your application by emailing OC Transpo at: equipass@ottawa.ca, or calling us at **613-560-5000** (TTY 613-741-5280).

14. How do I know if I have been approved?

If you are applying for the Presto discount for the first time, a new Presto card with the EquiPass discount will be sent to you at no charge and you will be required to register the Presto card online within 30 days of receipt at prestocard.ca

If you are renewing your EquiPass discount, please provide the Presto card number registered in your name, and the EquiPass discount will be set up for you remotely.

15. How do I load an EquiPass discount that was sent to me remotely?

You must query or use your Presto card within 30 days of being notified that the discount is being loaded. You can query your card at various locations, including an OC Transpo Ticket Machine, at a Shoppers Drug Mart / Loblaws / Real Canadian Superstore, at an OC Transpo Customer Service Centre or select City of Ottawa Client Service Centres, or you can tap your card to pay a fare on any OC Transpo bus or O-Train.

16. What if my application was not approved?

If your application was not approved, you will be mailed a letter with a reason why. Possible reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Application incomplete, or not signed by all family members 18 and older.
- Missing required documents.
- Not eligible based on your income.
- You already receive transportation benefits from another government source.
- You qualify for the Community, Access or *Senior's Pass.

17. What happens to my financial documents once my application is processed?

All copies of personal financial documents are destroyed once the application process is complete. Paper applications forms will be retained and stored in a secure manner. If an application is incomplete, personal financial documents will be retained for up to 2 months in a secure location, in case the applicant provides follow up information.

18. Can I pay the EquiPass single ride fare of \$1.75 by paying cash on the bus?

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No. The EquiPass discount must be set on a Presto card. To benefit from the EquiPass single ride fare of \$1.75, you must load money on your e-purse.

19. Does my Presto card need to be registered?

Yes. The EquiPass is a discounted transit pass or single-ride fare, therefore it is not transferable. Only the person who was approved can use it. OC Transpo will verify that it is registered to your name and your current address.

20. How can I load my Presto card with a monthly pass or money once the discount is on the card?

After your EquiPass discount is set on your Presto card for the first time, to avoid lineups and wait times in following months, we encourage you to load your Presto card online if possible. You can also set up an AutoRenew contract, which means your monthly pass will load automatically around the 20th of each month. If you are using the single-ride option, you can set up an AutoLoad contract that will load funds to your e-purse in the amount you choose. For more information on AutoRenew and AutoLoad contracts, please visit prestocard.ca. Please note that AutoRenew and AutoLoad contracts will automatically cancel if the EquiPass discount expires. If you cannot load your monthly pass or e-purse online, you can do so at the following locations:

- At one of our Ticket Machines
- Shoppers Drug Mart / Loblaws / Real Canadian Superstore.
- OC Transpo Customer Service Centres (Rideau Centre, 925 Belfast Road),
Please visit our website or call our customer service centre to confirm hours of operations for locations above.
- Select City of Ottawa Client Service Centres (including City Hall, Ben Franklin and Kanata / Terry Fox).

21. How often do I have to reapply?

For most people, the EquiPass discount will be set on your Presto card for a period between 21 and 27 months. It will depend on when you receive it.

If you qualify under one of the exemptions listed in question 8, your EquiPass discount will expire after 1 year as you will be required to file your Income Taxes and re-apply. The Notice of Assessment is the **ONLY** document accepted to renew your EquiPass discount.

22. Will you be reminding me when my EquiPass discount expires?

No. You are responsible for checking the expiry date and re-applying.

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23. How do I know if the EquiPass discount has expired?

The EquiPass monthly pass option will no longer be available for purchase on your card and your e-purse will revert to charging an adult fare of \$3.65 per ride. You can also check on a Ticket Machine, online at prestocard.ca or ask at an OC Transpo Customer Service Centre.

24. The application form says that you will be collecting information on our application. What information are you collecting?

We will be tracking cards issued to prevent fraudulent use of the discount. Please note that if a duplicate card is found, all Presto cards except one will be cancelled. Duplicate purchases may make you ineligible for the EquiPass discount.

In addition, non-personal information will be collected for program statistics and to support the general program reporting.

Lastly, we will update personal information for the programs involved, such as address or income with other involved programs including the EquiPass, Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Programs.

25. What if I lose my Presto card with an EquiPass discount on it? Or what if the card gets damaged or becomes defective?

The process is the same as replacing any registered Presto card.

If your card is lost / damaged / defective, ensure that you “hotlist” (i.e. block) the card immediately, by going into your online account at prestocard.ca, calling Presto or by visiting an OC Transpo Customer Service Centre (ID will be verified). If you aren’t sure if your card is damaged or defective, take it to one of our OC Transpo Customer Service Centres, and they will verify it. Once the card has been hotlisted, you will need to obtain a new, unregistered Presto card at

- One of our Ticket Machines
- Shoppers Drug Mart / Loblaws / Real Canadian Superstore.
- OC Transpo Customer Service Centres (Rideau Centre, 925 Belfast Road),
Please visit our website or call our customer service centre to confirm hours of operations for locations above.
- Select City of Ottawa Client Service Centres (including City Hall, Ben Franklin and Kanata / Terry Fox).

DO NOT register the new card, and **DO NOT** load a monthly pass on the new card.

Once you have your new card, you transfer your data to the new Presto card immediately. This generally takes between 12 to 24 hours. For lost or damaged cards, you are responsible for the cost of travel during that period.

26. I’m a student, only 17 years old. Do I qualify for an EquiPass discount?

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If you are not receiving a subsidized pass from the local School Boards, or are not receiving a U-Pass, yes, you qualify for an EquiPass if your family income falls under the LICO threshold. If you have a U-Pass or School Board monthly pass, you may still qualify during the summer months if you are not attending school. Please apply for those months only.

27. I have a U-Pass, but I'd prefer to get an EquiPass. Can I get a refund for and opt out of my U-Pass?

No. You cannot opt out of your U-Pass in favour of the EquiPass Program. The U-Pass is less expensive than the EquiPass discount. You can apply for the EquiPass discount for months when you don't have a U-Pass, e.g. in the summer months, if not going to school full time.

28. I'm 18 or 19 years old, and I have never filed taxes because I just started working this year. I don't have a Notice of Assessment. Do I qualify?

It is possible that some people have just entered the workforce, and never had to submit Income Taxes. In this case, please ensure we get all of your Income Tax slips for the previous year – including, but not limited to, T4 and T4A statements, if you were working. If you were not working the previous year, please provide your three (3) recent consecutive paystubs for each job that you currently hold. We will review, and advise you if more information is required. This will only apply for 18 and 19 year olds.

29. I am 20 years old or older, but have never filed my Income Taxes before. Can I apply?

Yes, you can apply. Please contact OC Transpo at 613-560-5000 (TTY 613-741-5280) to discuss your situation and eligibility. Note that your application may take additional time to process without a Notice of Assessment (NOA).

30. It's December, and I don't have this year's tax information yet. What do I use to apply?

As of January 2022, we are using the 2020 LICO chart to compare to your annual income from your NOA. We will be accepting the 2020 or 2021 NOA for 2022.

31. I don't have my copy of the NOA anymore. How do I get a one?

Contact Canada Revenue Agency to get a copy. For more information, see <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/tpcs/ncm-tx/ssmnt-eng.html>.

32. If my EquiPass discount is not transferable, what happens if a Transit Fare Enforcement Officer (TFEO) stops me? What do I need as proof?

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If fare inspection occurs, provide your Presto card. In order to confirm your eligibility, you may be required to provide photo identification.

33. Can I ride STO using my EquiPass discount?

Yes. You can travel on STO with your EquiPass monthly pass as it is subject to the same rules and regulations as any OC Transpo monthly pass. However, if you start your travels on an STO bus, the single-ride option (e-purse) is not available. Please note, if you started your travels on an OC Transpo bus and are transferring to an STO bus, your transfer is valid. You must be a resident of the City of Ottawa to be eligible for the EquiPass – residents of Quebec must hold an STO monthly pass. In addition, if you are travelling from Gatineau to Ontario before 9:00 am with an OC Transpo Presto card with a monthly pass, you must present an Ontario Residency card, available at STO offices.

34. Am I eligible if I live in Quebec?

No. You must obtain and use an STO fare card. Learn more about their discounted low-income program called Equity Community Choice Mobility (ECHO) at the following link: <http://www.sto.ca/index.php?id=echo&L=en> .

35. Can a visitor staying in the city for more than a month get an EquiPass discount if they meet the income level?

No. The EquiPass discount is only available to residents of the City of Ottawa.

36. If individuals are denied and do not agree with the outcome, what are their next steps?

Applicants will receive a letter by mail informing them if they are eligible for the EquiPass Program. If an application is denied, the letter will tell the applicant the reason(s) for their ineligibility. If applicants have questions about this decision, they can contact OC Transpo by mail at OC Transpo, Attn: EquiPass Applications, 925 Belfast Road, Ottawa, ON K1G 0Z4, or by email at equipass@ottawa.ca