Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is an EquiPass?

EquiPass is a new affordable monthly transit pass that provides a lower-priced transit option for individuals or families who live on low incomes.

2. How much does an EquiPass cost?

EquiPass is priced at \$57 per month for 2017, a 50 per cent discount from the adult monthly pass.

3. Who is eligibile for an EquiPass?

EquiPass 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 EquiPass?

Individuals who meet any of the following criteria:

- Those who have an income that is above the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) threshold as defined by the government of Canada.
- Customers who receive Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits. You are eligible for a Community Pass.
- Customers who receive transportation benefits from any other source including Ontario Works or the Province of Ontario.
- Students who receive a U-Pass or a School Board issued by the Ottawa School Transportation Authority (OSTA) or Consortium de transport scolaire d'Ottawa (CTSO) pass do not qualify during the school year. You can apply for an EquiPass during months that you 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)

5. Will newcomer refugees be eligible for the EquiPass?

- Some newcomer refugees will be eligible, depending on the nature of their sponsorship arrangements.
- Government-assisted refugees over the age of 18 who are currently receiving financial assistance through the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) will not be eligible for the EquiPass as they are able to purchase an adult monthly pass with the transportation benefit provided through the program.
- There are currently approximately 140 people that fall within this category.
- These individuals could become eligible for the EquiPass after a year of their settlement in Ottawa, when they no longer receive financial assistance through RAP.

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 Privately-sponsored refugees of all ages and government-assisted refugees under the age of 18 will be eligible for the EquiPass.

6. What if I have an Access Pass?

You can apply for an EquiPass if you like, but only one discounted pass can be put on your Presto card at a time so you'll have to determine which pass best meets your transportation need. Contact OC Transpo for more information: ocinfo@octranspo.com or by phone at 613-741-4390 (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 each July. This means that your eligibility for the EquiPass will change each year. The LICO is based on a person's marital status and number of dependents. As of March 2017, the LICO threshold is based on your 2015 net income (after tax) -- including the Canada Child Benefits (if applicable) and has been set at:

Family size	Annual net family income
1 person	\$20,386
2 persons	\$24,811
3 persons	\$30,895
4 persons	\$38,544
5 persons	\$43,890
6 persons	\$48,675
7 or more persons	\$53,460

8. How do you know if you qualify?

Your income is based on the Canada Revenue Agency Notice of Assessment (NOA) for your 2015 or 2016 Income Taxes. Both you and your spouse's income (if applicable) on line 236 of this document 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 income will not be included in our calculations; we just need to confirm the number of dependents in the family.

There are also some exceptions. You could qualify if:

 You are a refugee newcomer to Canada (copies of designated documents will be required);

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- You are 18 or 19 or have never filed income taxes before (copies of all of their income statements for 2016 will be required);
- You have never filed Income Taxes but can provide an Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefit stub for the current month; and,
- Other cases that raise additional questions will be assessed on a case-bycase basis.

If you qualify for an EquiPass based on one of the exceptions, you will only be eligible for the pass until April of the following year, by which time you must file your income taxes and have received a Notice of Assessment to re-apply and requalify.

If you have questions about whether you are eligible or what documentation is required, or if you do not fall into one of those categories but think you still qualify, please contact OC Transpo by e-mail at **ocinfo@octranspo.com** or by phone at **613-741-4390 (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 octranspo.com
- By mail Call **613-741-4390** (TTY 613-741-5280) to request a copy.
- In person at various locations across Ottawa:
 - OC Transpo Customer Service Centres (Lincoln Fields,
 - Rideau Centre, St-Laurent, Place d'Orléans, 925 Belfast Road),
 - City of Ottawa Client Service Centres (City Hall, Orléans, Nepean, Kanata and Walter Baker Sports Centre),
 - City of Ottawa Libraries.
 - City of Ottawa Community and Social Support Centres; and
 - Community Health and Resource Centres

For a full list of locations, visit octranspo.com.

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 must drop-off (return) your application in a sealed envelope addressed to "EquiPass Applications" to one of the following locations:

- OC Transpo Customer Service Centres:
 - Rideau Centre 3rd Floor
 - Lincoln Fields Station
 - Place d'Orléans Station
 - St-Laurent Station
 - 925 Belfast Road

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- City of Ottawa Client Service Centres:
 - City Hall / Laurier (110 Laurier Avenue West)
 - Ben Franklin Place / Nepean (101 Centrepointe Drive)
 - Kanata (580 Terry Fox Road)
 - Orléans (255 Centrum Blvd.)
 - Walter Baker Sports Centre (100 Malvern Drive)
 - Metcalfe (8243 Victoria Street)
 - West Carleton (5670 Carp Road)
 - North Gower (2155 Roger Stevens Drive)
- By mail to:

OC Transpo

Attn: EquiPass Applications

925 Belfast Road

Ottawa, ON K1G 0Z4

You'll receive a letter advising you of the status of your application within approximately 15 business days of submitting your application.

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

The following <u>must</u> be included with the completed application and must be included for <u>all</u> members of the household listed on the application required to review your application and make a decision about your eligibility for EquiPass.

Family or Single Applicants:

A photocopy of your Notice of Assessment (NOA) from Canada Revenue Agency from the most recent taxation year. (*Provide copies - no documents will be returned*).

- From January to April: a 2015 or 2016 NOA are accepted
- From May to December: the NOA from the previous taxation year is required

Parents or guardians with dependents 17 years and under must also provide a copy of 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.

Applicants who have never filed income tax:

If you are aged 18 or 19 or have never filed an Income Tax return, please include:

 A copy of your last 3 pay stubs for any and all job(s) held in the last 12 months and / or any annual Income Slips (e.g. T4, T4A, or other) you may have received to date.

Note: The EquiPass discount in this circumstance is set for one year. To be considered for an EquiPass after the first year, you will be

required to re-apply and 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 you are not receiving transportation benefits from the Government of Canada's Refugee Assistance Program (RAP)although parents can apply for their children under 18)
 - If currently employed, a copy of your last 3 pay stub(s) 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 be considered for an EquiPass after the first year, you will be required to re-apply and 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 ocinfo@octranspo.com or 613-741-4390 (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?

There may be extended approval times at the launch of the program, depending on the number of applications received.

- 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 <u>before</u> eligibility. (eg, If you submit an application in April, and eligibility is granted, your first pass will be for the month of May).
- If you haven't heard within 15 business days of applying for the EquiPass, you can check on the status of your application by emailing OC Transpo at: **ocinfo@octranspo.com**, or calling us at **613-741-4390** (TTY 613-741-5280).

14. How do I know if I have been approved or not?

A letter will be mailed to <u>each</u> applicant to advise you of a decision. This letter **must** be provided with other photo identification when going to get your EquiPass discount loaded onto your Presto card.

If your application is rejected, you will be given a reason why. Possible reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Application incomplete, or not signed by all family members 18 and older.
- Missing appropriate documents.
- Not eligible based on your income.
- You already receive transportation benefits from another source.
- You qualify for Community, Access or Seniors Pass, and should not be purchasing EquiPass
- You receive a U-Pass or School Board pass, and should re-apply during months that you don't receive this pass.

15. What if I haven't yet received my letter? Can I check on the status?

This is a new program, so exact processing times are hard to estimate. Please wait at least 10 business days for in-person applications, and 15 business days for those mailed to us before contacting OC Transpo regarding the status of your application. To check on the status, you can e-mail ocinfo@octranspo.com, or call us at 613-741-4390 (TTY 613-741-5280). If e-mailing, please ensure we have the first and last name of the primary (main) applicant. Please allow 24 to 48 hours for a response. Your patience is appreciated.

16. How do I get my EquiPass once I receive my letter?

Bring your approval letter to any OC Transpo Customer Service Centre. You will be asked for identification (ID) to confirm your identity. If you do not have ID, please contact OC Transpo at: 613-741-4390 (TTY 613-741-5280) to discuss your situation and available options. A Customer Service Representative will then set the EquiPass discount on a registered Presto card. If you don't already have a Presto card, you'll need to buy one for \$6. The EquiPass is **not transferable** and can only be used by the approved customer.

Once you have the discount set on your card, you can then buy your EquiPass using any of the following methods:

- Online at prestocard.ca, or by phone at 1-877-378-6123 (TTY 7-1-1).
- In person at an OC Transpo Customer Service Centre, or select City of Ottawa Client Service Centre.
- For Para Transpo customers, using ParaPay:

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You can also set up an AutoRenew contract so that your EquiPass will load automatically each month. More information on AutoRenew is available on prestocard.ca. Keep in mind that your AutoRenew contract will cancel automatically when your EquiPass discount expires.

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

All copies of personal financial documents are to be destroyed / shredded once the application process is completed. Paper applications will be retained and stored in a secure manner.

If an application is incomplete, personal financial documents will be retained for 2 months in a secure location, in case the applicant provides follow up information. At the end of 2 months, financial documents will be destroyed / shredded.

18. Do I have to put the EquiPass on a Presto card?

Yes, there is no paper version of the EquiPass. It must be loaded on a Presto card.

19. Does my Presto card need to be registered?

Yes. The EquiPass is a discounted transit pass and is therefore not transferable. It must only be used by the person that was approved. We will be verifying that it is registered to your name, and your current address.

If your Prestocard is not registered at the time you come in, or if you need to change the address on the registration, you will be asked to fill out a green Presto registration form, and it will be sent directly to Presto by our Customer Service Representatives.

20. How can I load my EquiPass once the discount has been put on the card? After you've had an EquiPass discount loaded 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 pass will load automatically around the 20th of each month. For more information on AutoRenew contracts, please visit prestocard.ca. Please note that AutoRenew contracts will automatically cancel if the EquiPass discount expires. If you're not able to load your pass online, you can also do so in person at the following locations:

- OC Transpo Customer Service Centres (Rideau Centre, Lincoln Fields, Place d'Orleans and St-Laurent);
- Select City of Ottawa Client Service Centres (including City Hall, Ben Franklin and Kanata / Terry Fox), or
- At one of our new Ticket Machines at select O-Train stations starting in Summer / Fall 2017.

21. How long is my EquiPass discount good for? 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 6, your EquiPass will expire after 1 year as you will be required to file your Income Taxes and re-apply. Your EquiPass expiry date will be included in the letter you receive from OC Transpo. You can also check your expiry date online at prestocard.ca or in person at an OC Transpo Customer Service Centre.

22. Will you be reminding me when my EquiPass discount expires? No. You are responsible for checking the expiry date and re-applying.

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

The EquiPass option will no longer be available for purchase on your card.

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 and ensuring that duplicate cards are not issued to anyone. This is 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.

In addition, information will be used to collect program statistics and to support the general program reporting.

Lastly, we'll use information from your application to update personal information for the programs involved, such as address or income, including the EquiPass, Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Programs.

25. What if I lose my Presto card with an EquiPass 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, either 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'll try it on our card readers to verify.

Once the card has been hotlisted, you will need to obtain a new, unregistered Presto card at an OC Transpo Customer Service Centre. **DO NOT** register the new card, and **DO NOT** load a monthly pass on the new card. To obtain the card:

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- For lost cards, you will need to purchase the new card at a cost of \$6 plus a minimum \$10 e-Purse load.
- For damaged cards, you will be provided with a free card, but may need to pay for the minimum \$10 e-Purse load.
- For defective cards, the card will be verified to ensure that there is no damage (including small cracks or wear), and if determined defective by the Customer Service Representative, you will be provided with a free card and the equivalent of two day passes for travel.

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

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

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 pass, you may still qualify during the summer months if you are not attending school. Please apply for those months.

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. The U-Pass is less expensive than the EquiPass. You can apply for the EquiPass 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 haven't had to submit Income Taxes before. 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 last 3 pay stubs 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 613-741-4390 (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?

We will accept the previous year's NOA until March of the next year. For example, if you apply in December 2017, we will still accept your 2016 NOA. But if you apply in April 2018, you will need your 2017 NOA.

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

 Contact Canada Revenue Agency to get a copy. For more information, see http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdls/tpcs/ncm-tx/ssmnt-eng.html.
- 32. If my EquiPass is not transferable, what happens if I'm stopped by a Transit Fare Enforcement Officer (TFEO)? What do I need as proof?

 If fare inspection occurs, just provide your fare proof, in this case a Presto card. In order to confirm your eligibility, you may be required to provide proof of your identification if you are travelling on a non-transferable discounted fare.

33. Can I ride STO using my EquiPass?

Yes. You can travel on STO with your EquiPass as it is subject to the same rules and regulations as any other OC Transpo monthly pass. However, you must be a resident of Ottawa to be eligible for the EquiPass – residents of Quebec must hold an STO monthly pass. And if you are travelling from Gatineau to Ontario in the morning before 9:00 am, you must present an Ontario Residency card, available at STO offices.

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

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

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

Each applicant will receive a letter by mail informing them if they are eligible for the EquiPass or not. 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 are asked to contact OC Transpo in writing by mail at OC Transpo, Attn: EquiPass Applications, 925 Belfast Road, Ottawa, ON K1G 0Z4, or by email at ocinfo@octranspo.com