

## Newlands Neighborhood EcoPass FAQs 2010

### **What is an Ecopass?**

An ecopass is a greatly discounted bus pass which provides unlimited RTD transportation throughout the metro Denver area including DIA (a \$5 surcharge is charged for ecopass holders TO DIA) and Eldora for the calendar year. Ecopass cards also entitle you to discounts from many merchants throughout the city. (for a list see [www.goboulder.net](http://www.goboulder.net))

### **What is a Neighborhood Ecopass?**

Neighborhood Ecopasses are available to residents of qualifying neighborhoods. To qualify, a neighborhood must raise the minimum qualifying amount of \$6,664 from **contiguous** blocks i.e. blocks which are next to one another. The neighborhood passes work just like other ecopasses (unlimited rides for the calendar year and merchant discounts) and are prorated so, for example, those bought April 1 cost 75% of the original price and those bought July 1<sup>st</sup> cost 50%. A Newlands EcoPass qualifies you for additional *neighborhood* merchant discounts which are unique to Newlands.

### **How much does a Newlands ecopass cost?**

That depends on your age, how frequently and to where you use the bus, and how often you ride to DIA. See the fare chart. The neighborhood ecopass is MUCH cheaper than the annual passes which currently cost about \$1800 per year.

### **Is there a deadline for buying an ecopass?**

Not exactly. RTD does require that the first contract (the \$6,664 minimum threshold) be paid by November so residents are strongly encouraged to pay by October or earlier (for the following year). Once that initial contract is purchased, however, additional blocks and additional residents on qualified blocks can be added throughout the year. IF, however you want to assure your block qualifies and you get your decal by the year end, you must sign up by the October deadline. Beyond that, it is never too late to sign up.

### **Why do some neighborhoods pay by household and others pay by the person?**

RTD sets the overall amount to be paid but it is up to each neighborhood to decide what to charge and how to divide that up. Some neighborhoods offer first time discounts, for example, and other don't. Some charge by household and others by individual resident. In Newlands, we have found it easier to raise the required funds the second way.

### **I live in Newlands. Do I automatically qualify for an ecopass?**

No. RTD requires a block to qualify in two ways before its residents can get ecopasses. First, it must be contiguous with other participating blocks that jointly raise at least \$6,664, and second it must also qualify individually by raising either

\$75 or \$56.25 (depending in which price zone your block lies) x the number of houses. Blocks are defined as “wraparound” blocks meaning that you are not on the same block as the person across the street, but rather the person whose back yard abuts yours (see map).

### **Why is it called a neighborhood ecopass if it doesn't include all the blocks in the neighborhood?**

“Neighborhood” used in this sense, simply means contiguous blocks which have met the minimum threshold rather than established city neighborhoods. However, “ecopass neighborhoods” can map onto traditional city neighborhoods. For example the Newlands EcoPass neighborhood stretches from Alpine to Iris but also includes some blocks on the east side of Broadway.

### **Who sets these conditions and administers the program?**

The conditions for qualifying neighborhoods and blocks are set by RTD with opportunities for input from neighborhood and alternative transportation advocates. GO Boulder/City of Boulder promotes the neighborhood ecopass program. They answer questions, offer logistical support and help neighborhoods by paying 50% of the required amount for a block's 1<sup>st</sup> year and 25% thereafter. Each neighborhood has a coordinator or co-coordinators who are authorized by RTD to sign forms, collect money, issue decals etc. These coordinators decide the best pricing structure to raise the required overall amount and ensure continuity from year to year.

### **What can I do if my block doesn't qualify?**

Volunteer to become a block leader. A block leader is someone who contacts others on his/her block and explains the benefits of the program. Block leaders work with the coordinator to raise interest and participation.

### **OK but what if not enough people sign up from my block. Is there anything else I can do?**

Yes. RTD requires a block to raise a certain amount of money but they do not care which individual contributes what. This means that a block with low participation can qualify if those who do participate pitch in more than the usual price. In some cases one or two people will “carry” a block. Another option is to wait until the prorated price equals the amount raised and get the passes later in the year. Finally, there is the possibility that the coordinator will “buy” the block by paying the difference out of the reserve. The reserve is funded by those (handful of) blocks which “overqualify” In this way, some blocks subsidize others and reflect the fact that it is a *neighborhood*, rather than simply a block pass.

### **Who decides which blocks get bought out of the reserve and how much to keep in the reserve?**

The neighborhood coordinator(s). There are no rigid rules about this but rather some commonplace guidelines. Generally speaking, a block must raise at least half the qualifying amount to be subsidized the rest of the way from the reserve.

The blocks closest to qualifying are bought first. Also roughly \$3,000 is kept in the reserve through the “slow season” (March-Sept). This “cushion” helps greatly with the initial purchase of blocks by RTD’s October deadline since residents do not usually send their checks in on time. (the October deadline is just for the first \$6,664 contract. Additional blocks can be added at any time throughout the year)

### **What do I do if my ecopass is lost or stolen?**

You need to get a signed authorization form and new decal from the neighborhood coordinator. If you bring these to the downtown Boulder station between noon and 4 on a Monday, you can get a new ID made. RTD charges \$25 to replace a lost pass (\$50 the second time) and \$5 to replace a stolen pass if a police form has been filled out.

### **What if I can’t make it to the photo hours at the downtown station?**

You can also get your ID at 2 Denver locations. First timers also have the option of emailing a digital picture. Call the coordinator for details.

### **How is the Newlands EcoPass different from other neighborhood passes?**

Because it is up to each coordinator to set the most practical pricing structure within RTD’s guidelines, prices vary from neighborhood to neighborhood. Greater participation usually lowers the price and Newlands’ prices are lower than most partly because we are the biggest ecopass neighborhood. Newlands also has the oldest neighborhood ecopass program and therefore most residents are familiar with the renewal process. Updates on which blocks are qualified and which are close to qualifying can be found at the neighborhood webpage at [newlandsgreenlands.com](http://newlandsgreenlands.com). Newlands has a special relationship with some of our local stores – see the sign up form for a list. Finally, because the Newlands roster includes over 1,000 names (more than twice as many as most neighborhoods), the neighborhood association agreed to pay the coordinator a minimal stipend of \$2 per ecopass out of the reserve (contingent on there being enough in the reserve) to compensate for the time spent processing forms, answering questions, working with block leaders etc. This began with the 2007 program.

### **Who do I talk to if I have questions and/or complaints?**

In Newlands, the current coordinator is ml Robles at 303-443-1945 (speaks Spanish). You can also go to the GO Boulder webpage at [www.goboulder.net](http://www.goboulder.net) or call them at 303-441-3266.

### **What can I do to support the Neighborhood ecopass program?**

First off participate! Even if you don’t ride the bus, the merchant discounts can make it a good bargain. Second make sure neighbors know about it (especially those new to the neighborhood) and encourage them to participate. Volunteer to be a block leader. Donate funds above your required cost by filling out the donate line on the form. Contact the coordinator for other ideas.