

# Mobility monitor

## Transportation Data

Monitoring today,  
for tomorrow.

## This issue

## Vehicle ownership and licensed drivers in Calgary

February 2008  
Issue #22

### KEY FINDING

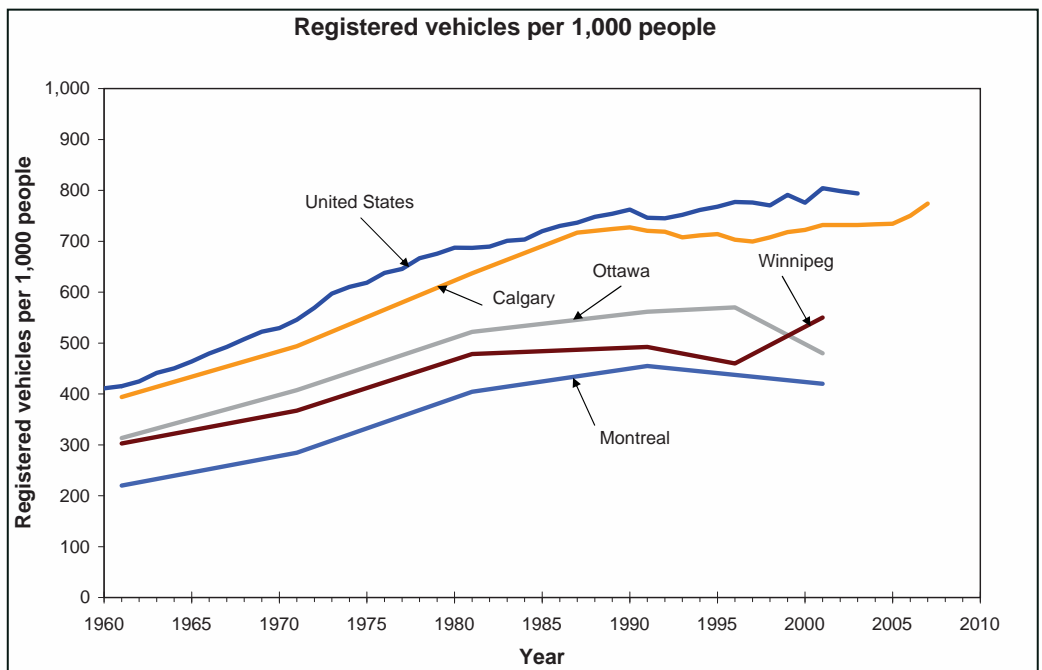
*After a long period of stability, the number of registered vehicles per capita in Calgary grew at a much higher rate in 2006 and 2007.*

The number of registered vehicles grew from 717 per 1,000 people in 1987 to 735 per 1,000 people in 2005. This was an increase of 3 per cent over this period, or about 0.1 per cent per year.

The trend in Calgary, the United States and other Canadian Cities suggests that vehicle ownership may have reached a plateau and there would be little or no growth in the vehicle ownership rate.

The number of registered vehicles grew from 735 per 1,000 people in 2005 to 774 per 1,000 people in 2007. This was an increase of 5 per cent over this period or about 3 per cent per year.

This increase in vehicle ownership was surprising. While a major factor in the growth is a jump in the number of commercial vehicles, the number of private vehicles has been growing as well.



Source: Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation - Office of Traffic Safety and The City of Calgary Civic Census

## KEY FINDING

### *The number of licensed drivers per capita in Calgary has decreased over the last 20 years.*

In 1987 there were 815 licensed drivers per 1,000 people in Calgary. By 2007 this had dropped to 745 licensed drivers per 1,000 people. There were three periods of slight increases in 1994 to 1995, 1998 to 2001 and 2006 to 2007.

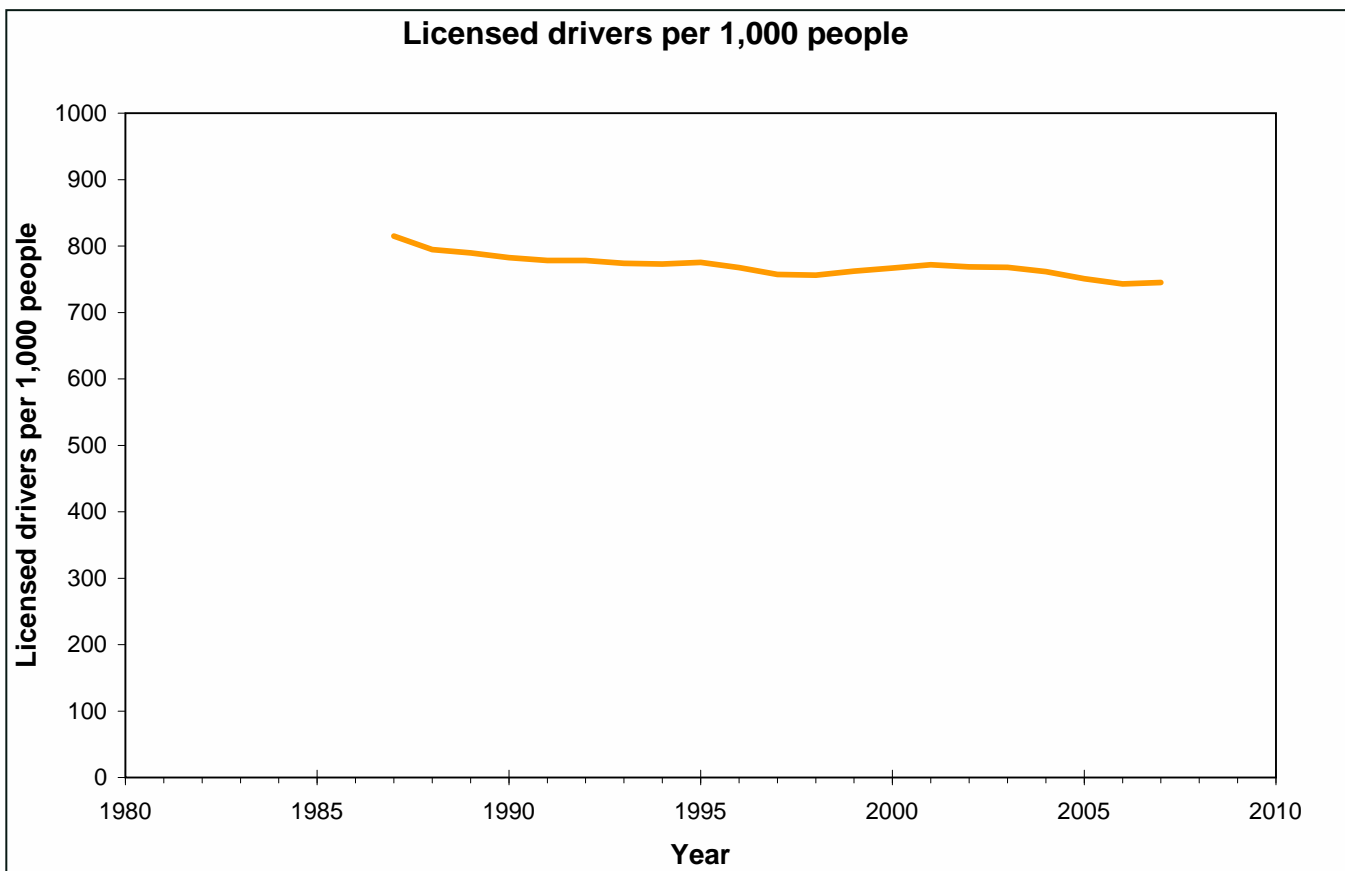
The downward trend in licensed drivers per capita was not expected. During this period, the proportion of the population under legal driving age has also gone down, so an increase in licensed drivers was expected. The reasons why more people are choosing not to have a driver's license remain unclear.

This downward trend suggests that a greater proportion of the population are relying on non-auto travel alternatives, such as carpooling, cycling, walking and transit to meet their transportation needs. In 1995 annual transit trips per capita were 75.2 and in 2006 had risen to 89.5.

## Sources of Information

This information on registered vehicles and licensed drivers was provided by Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation Office of Traffic Safety. The information is for March of the year. Total vehicles means motorized vehicles, and does not include trailers and off-road vehicles. It does include commercial vehicles and trucks. The population information comes from The City of Calgary Civic Census. The Civic Census is done annually in April.

Data for other Canadian Cities was obtained from the Transportation Association of Canada and from the book "An international sourcebook of Automobile dependence in Cities 1960 - 1990" by Jeffrey R. Kenworthy and Felix B. Laube. The data for the United States was obtained from Wikipedia.com.



Source: Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation - Office of Traffic Safety and The City of Calgary Civic Census

## KEY FINDING

**Since 2006 there have been more registered vehicles in Calgary than licensed drivers.**

From 2005 to 2006 the number of registered vehicles per 1,000 licensed drivers grew from 979 to 1,009. This was a growth rate over 3 per cent per year. The growth continued in 2007 with an increase from 1,009 to 1,038. This was a growth rate slightly less than 3 per cent.

At first glance it does not seem reasonable to have more vehicles than drivers. Over 14 per cent of the vehicles are commercial vehicles; many people may have a personal vehicle and a vehicle they use for their work. Someone may drive their car to a depot, where they switch to a truck that they then use for work.

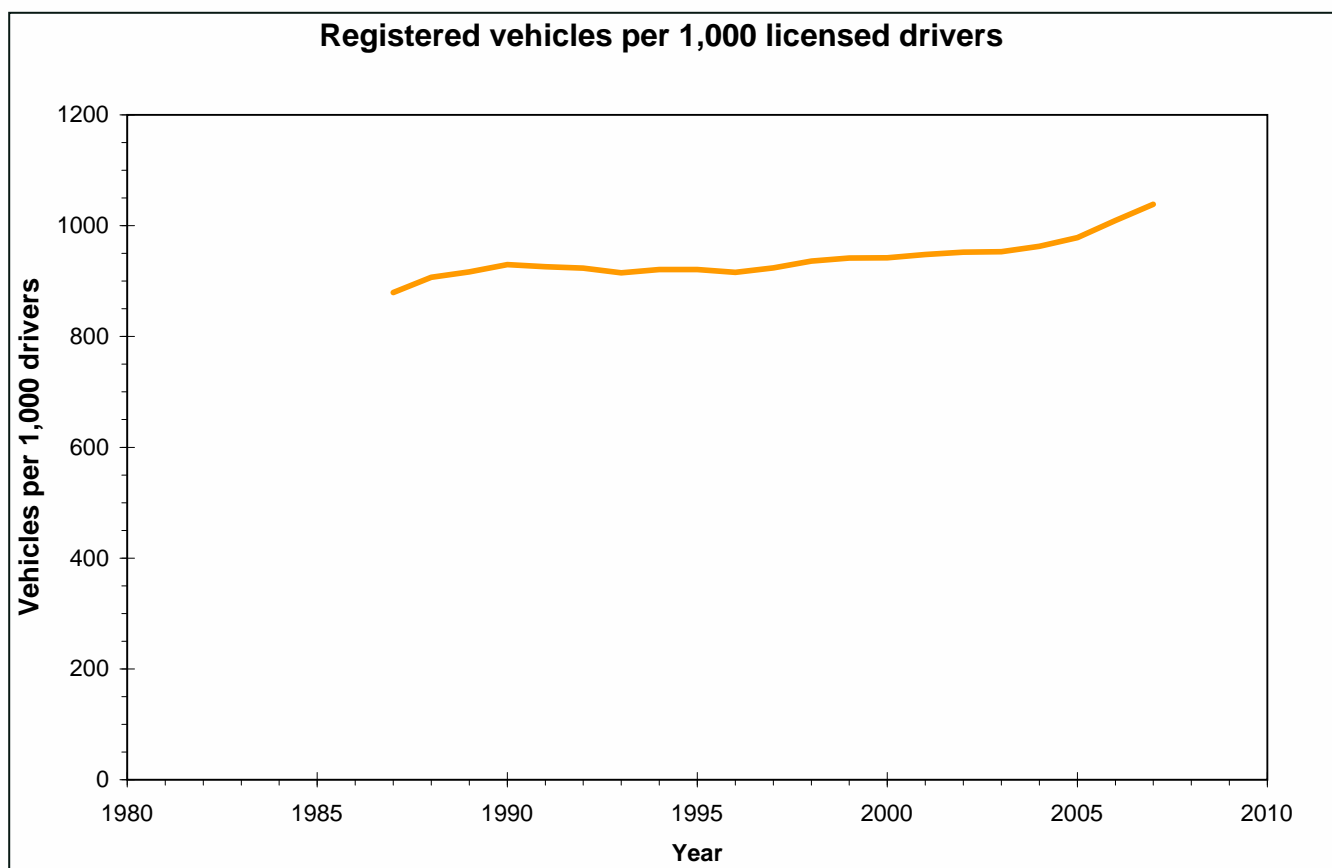
It may also be that, as they become more affluent, people are more willing to maintain other specialty vehicles that are used less frequently. Many people will have a travel van that they use for traveling, but not for day to day use.

### Growth in commercial vehicles

A factor in the growth of registered vehicles is the commercial vehicle category.

Between 2004 and 2007 the number of registered commercial vehicles grew by 30 per cent from 85,185 to 110,500. Commercial vehicles represented 23 per cent of the growth in vehicle registration. In 2007, 14 per cent of vehicle registrations were for commercial vehicles. During the same period total registered vehicles grew by 15 per cent and the population grew by 9 per cent.

Before 2005 commercial vehicles represented between 12 and 13 per cent of total vehicles. By 2007 this percentage had grown to over 14 per cent.



Source: Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation - Office of Traffic Safety

## Implications

While vehicle ownership and the number of licensed drivers have an important impact on transportation in Calgary, The City has little or no influence on these factors.

Between 1987 and 2005 vehicle ownership per capita was relatively stable and grew very slowly. The large increases in the vehicle ownership rates in 2006 and 2007 could not be anticipated based on the previous trend.

The decline in the rate of licensed drivers per capita in the city is also unexpected, since the proportion of the population that is eligible for driver's licenses has been going up. The increase in the number of people without driver's licenses suggests that a higher proportion of the population must have their travel needs accommodated by carpooling, walking, cycling and transit.

This trend can be seen as both an indicator of The City's success in encouraging alternatives to driving alone, and as a challenge to serve a segment of the population that does not have the automobile as a travel choice.

The number of vehicles per licensed driver has been increasing and there are now more vehicles than drivers. This suggests that the lack of access to a vehicle is no longer a major barrier to automobile use in the city.

This trend is a challenge to The City's efforts to encourage travel alternatives, like carpooling, walking, cycling and transit. Attracting people who have automobiles to consider alternatives to driving alone will require more effort.

## Recommendations

Continue to monitor vehicle ownership and the number of licensed drivers.

Continue to emphasize providing alternatives to the driving alone travel option.

## The Mobility Monitor

The Mobility Monitor is part of the Ongoing Monitoring and Implementation Program (OMIP) for the Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP). The purpose of the Mobility Monitor is to report on strategic trends and events that affect the implementation of the CTP, and to recommend future actions. The Mobility Monitor is produced by the Transportation Data division of Transportation Planning.

## How accurate and reliable are these data?

How concerned should you be by the potential for error in the data presented in The Mobility Monitor? The information on registered vehicles and licensed drivers is derived from Motor Vehicle records. This source is considered to be highly reliable. The population comes from the Calgary Civic Census, which is also considered highly reliable. However, since the vehicle information is for March, while the population is for April, a slight discrepancy will result.

Even so, a change from one year to the next may be due to some random event, such as the weather, accidents or illness. This is why it is wise to look at trends, since changes that are consistent over a long period of time are more likely to be real, and not the result of random events.

It must be kept in mind that no one source of information can claim to be infallible. Consideration and appropriate weighting of other sources of information is to be encouraged before making decisions.

