

From: [FIPPA s.22\(1\)](#)
Subject: Will North Cowichan support free transit for BC youth and seniors?
Date: Wednesday, May 15, 2024 1:52:24 PM
Attachments: [Seniors_report.pdf](#)
[Youth_memo.pdf](#)

Dear Councillor or Mayor,

My name is Nathan Bird and I am writing to you on behalf of the [Victoria Transit Riders Union](#) (a grassroots organization advocating for fare-free, rapid, and reliable public transit) in light of the resolution recently passed unanimously by Saanich Municipal Council requesting that the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) lobby the provincial government to make public transit fare-free for youth aged 18 and under across BC. Another similar resolution for free transit for BC seniors (aged 65 and older) is scheduled for a vote by Saanich Council on June 10th.

The Victoria Transit Riders Union heartily supports these resolutions (attached) and humbly asks you to consider putting forward similar motions at North Cowichan Municipal Council's meeting at your earliest possible convenience.

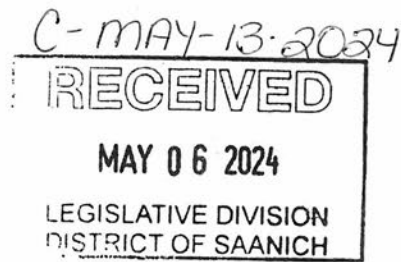
If your council should pass these resolutions it would greatly strengthen the case for free public transit for all youth and seniors going into this September's UBCM conference and, subsequently, increase pressure on the provincial government to grant this request, which we believe is in the best interests of communities and ecosystems across the province and around the world. At a stroke, expanding fare-free ridership to these age groups would increase accessibility and inclusivity in your municipality, and could reduce personal vehicle use, helping you hit your emissions reduction targets and improving road safety and traffic congestion. And these benefits would come at no increased cost to your municipality but would be underwritten by the province.

Furthermore, we believe that these measures would ultimately save BC taxpayers money by reducing costs in areas like healthcare and infrastructure.

In the future we hope to see conversations at the municipal and provincial levels about transit that is both excellent and completely fare-free as these benefits would be even greater if fare-free transit extended to people of all ages.

The Victoria Transit Riders Union thanks you for your time and consideration, and looks forward to the Municipality of North Cowichan joining Saanich in leading the province toward a greener, healthier, and more inclusive future!

Yours,
Nathan



File: 1420-30 TAC

Memo

To: Angila Bains, Director of Legislative and Protective Services/Corporate Officer
From: Colton Whittaker, Transportation Advisory Committee Clerk
Date: April 26, 2024
Subject: Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Resolution Regarding Free Transit for Young People in BC

At the March 28, 2024, Transportation Advisory Committee meeting, the committee discussed UBCM resolutions. This discussion resulted in the following motion:

“That the Transportation Advisory Committee recommend that council request the Union of BC Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to expand the Get On Board program to include all youth up to the age of 18 as follows:

WHEREAS the Get On Board Program allows children aged 12 and under to ride all BC Transit and TransLink transit services free of charge, and this program saves families money while offering youth low-carbon transportation that helps the Province and municipalities reach emissions and transportation mode share targets;

AND WHEREAS encouraging young people to use public transportation early in life can lead to lifelong habits of sustainable transportation use, and this in turn can have long-term benefits for cities in terms of reduced congestion, lower emissions, and increased social inclusion;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM lobby the Provincial Government to expand the Get On Board Program to include all youth up to the age of 18.”

CARRIED

The report and an excerpt of the March 28, 2024 minutes which were approved on April 24, 2024 is attached for information.

Colton Whittaker

Colton Whittaker
Committee Clerk, Transportation Advisory Committee

MARCH UBCM ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT

The committee considered a motion brought forward by Councillor Phelps Bondaroff.

UBCM Resolution #1 – Free Transit for Young People in BC

MOVED by J. Konkell and **Seconded** by A. Beaubien: “That the Transportation Advisory Committee recommend that Council request the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) lobby the Provincial Government to expand the *Get On Board!* program to include all youth up to the age of 18 as follows:

RECOMMENDATION:

WHEREAS the *Get On Board!* Program allows children aged 12 and under to ride all BC Transit and TransLink transit services free of charge, and this program saves families money while offering youth low-carbon transportation that helps the province and municipalities reach emissions and transportation mode share targets;

AND WHEREAS encouraging young people to use public transportation early in life can lead to lifelong habits of sustainable transportation use, and this in turn can have long-term benefits for cities in terms of reduced congestion, lower emissions, and increased social inclusion;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM lobby the Provincial Government expand the Get On Board! Program to include all youth up to the age of 18.”

The following was noted during committee discussion:

- Young people are faced with a lack of transportation options.
- Similar programs have been explored in other municipalities throughout the country.
- Enhanced transit accessibility might encourage young individuals to opt out of driving.
- Businesses might find it easier to hire young people.
- Freedom to travel provides a sense of independence.
- There is a large movement in British Columbia in support of free transit.
- The current program allows individuals under the age of 12 to ride public transit for free.
- Fostering a lifetime of using public transit could allow for more volunteer and work opportunities.
- UBCM has passed similar resolutions in the past and has delegates from all over the province.
- Large sums of money are spent on transit enforcement in other jurisdictions.
- There is a racialized element to transit enforcement and a broader equity issue.
- It would be appreciated to hear from transit users in the community.

MOVED by J. Konkell and **Seconded** by A. Beaubien: “That the UBCM motion be amended to remove the exclamation mark.”

The Amendment was CARRIED

The Main Motion, as Amended, was CARRIED

Main Motion, as Amended:

“That the Transportation Advisory Committee recommend that Council request the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) lobby the Provincial Government to expand the Get On Board program to include all youth up to the age of 18 as follows:

RECOMMENDATION:

WHEREAS the Get On Board Program allows children aged 12 and under to ride all BC Transit and TransLink transit services free of charge, and this program saves families money while offering youth low-carbon transportation that helps the Province and municipalities reach emissions and transportation mode share targets;

AND WHEREAS encouraging young people to use public transportation early in life can lead to lifelong habits of sustainable transportation use, and this in turn can have long-term benefits for cities in terms of reduced congestion, lower emissions, and increased social inclusion;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM lobby the Provincial Government to expand the Get On Board Program to include all youth up to the age of 18.”

Background Information - Free Transit for Youth

From: Councillor Teale Phelps Bondaroff

Free Transit for Young People in BC

WHEREAS the *Get On Board!* Program allows children aged 12 and under to ride all BC Transit and TransLink transit services free of charge, and this program saves families money while offering youth low-carbon transportation that helps the province and municipalities reach emissions and transportation mode share targets;

WHEREAS encouraging young people to use public transportation early in life can lead to lifelong habits of sustainable transportation use, and this in turn can have long-term benefits for cities in terms of reduced congestion, lower emissions, and increased social inclusion;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM lobby the Provincial Government expand the *Get On Board!* program to include all youth up to the age of 18.

Backgrounder

The *Get On Board!* program currently allows children aged 12 and under to ride all BC Transit and TransLink transit services free of charge. Under this program children aged 6 to 12 are able to ride conventional and handyDART buses for free, unaccompanied and without requiring a fare product or identification. Children aged 5 and under must be accompanied by someone 12 years or older to ride the bus, and must board and depart at the same stop as their guardian. The proposal is to expand this program to include all young people, up to, and including the age of 18.

Young people, aged 13-18 are currently excluded from this important program in BC. Youth aged 13-18 in the crucial developmental stage of adolescence need basic mobility more than ever to thrive in every aspect of their lives. Our youths are the future of this province and our most valuable resource. We must ensure their right to access school and thrive, while BC brings up new generations who choose sustainable transportation for life.

A universal approach, ensures that no youth is left behind or singled out due to their socioeconomic status. We cannot separate the right of every youth to access their school from their access to the mobility to do so.

Youth mobility is also about the opportunity to participate in important extra-curricular activities and the freedom youth need to grow, whether they are accessing a pool, a

drop-in centre, a job, a shelter, a counsellor's office, or an extended family member's home across town.

For low-income youth whose families may not have access to a vehicle and the means to provide transit passes, youth facing marginalization, and youth living in a household where adult guardian(s) work full time, transit access is a survival lifeline to access shelter, school, jobs, community programs, support services, health care, and food security.

The cost of ensuring at-risk youth can access the essential programs and services funded to support youth outcomes in BC is downloaded onto non-profits that often struggle to 'remove the access barrier' of lack of access to transit. That youth-in-need may miss the lifesaving supports available in BC due to mobility poverty and lack of access to transit is an avoidable travesty solved with free transit up to age 18.

The City of Vancouver ran a free transit pilot project in 2021-2022, and this pilot project captured the impact of unlimited, free transit on low-income youth from their parents' perspectives. Youth took more initiative to organize their lives; parents witnessed increased uptake of after-school activities, mental health support services, and increased social inclusion. There was an overall increase in mental health and well-being among youth since they were no longer left behind or had to experience shame when asking for free rides. We can no longer afford to leave our most valuable resource behind, our youth, and we must build a new culture of green transportation rooted in generations to come.

The benefits of this program are wide-ranging, and include:

Increased accessibility: Young people, especially those from low-income families, may face barriers to accessing public transportation due to cost. Making transit free removes this barrier and ensures that young people can access education, employment, social activities, and other essential services more easily.

Fosters environmental sustainability: Encouraging the use of public transportation among young people can contribute to sustainability efforts by reducing the carbon footprint associated with individual car travel. It promotes environmentally friendly modes of transportation and helps instill sustainable habits in young people from a young age.

Equity and social inclusion: Providing free transit for young people promotes equity by ensuring that all young people, regardless of socioeconomic status, have equal access to transportation options. It helps create more inclusive communities where everyone can participate fully in social, educational, and economic activities.

Long-term benefits: Encouraging young people to use public transportation early in life can lead to lifelong habits of sustainable transportation use. This can have long-term

benefits for cities in terms of reduced congestion, lower emissions, and increased social inclusion.

Promotes independence: Free transit allows young people to travel independently, which can be empowering and important for their personal development. It enables them to participate in extracurricular activities, hold a job, visit friends and family, and explore their community without relying on others for transportation.

Reduces traffic congestion: Encouraging young people to use public transportation can help reduce the number of cars on the road, easing traffic congestion and potentially lowering emissions and improving air quality.

Supports education: Access to free transit can help ensure that young people have the ability to attend school regularly, arrive to school on time, and participate in extracurricular activities, regardless of their family's financial situation. This can contribute to improved educational outcomes and opportunities for young people.

Overall, making transit free for young people can contribute to creating more equitable, sustainable, and accessible transportation systems and communities.

Previous Relevant UBCM Resolutions

Expanding the Fare-Free Transit Program

Year: 2022

Number: NR58

Sponsor(s): Central Saanich

Whereas the BC Governments fare-free transit program for youth aged 12 and under grade 6 saves families money while offering youth low-carbon transportation that helps the province and municipalities reach carbon neutrality targets;

And whereas expanding eligibility to those aged 13 and under grade 7 would reduce the current disparity between the have fare-free and those who have not within middle schools:

Therefore be it resolved that the UBCM endorse a request that the Province of BC expands the fare-free transit program for youth aged 13 and under grade 7.

Convention Decision: Endorsed

Partnerships for Fare-Free Public Transit

Year: 2020

Number: NR26

Sponsor(s): Victoria

Whereas equitable access to mobility is fundamental to full and meaningful participation in local communities, including access to education, employment, services, recreation, culture and community life, and noting that emissions from transportation generate a majority of community-based emissions in many communities, meaning that changes in transportation options have the potential to have a substantial impact in reducing greenhouse gas emissions;

And whereas forward-looking jurisdictions around the world from Kingston, Ontario to Kansas City, Missouri, to Luxembourg and Estonia are eliminating user-fee barriers to public transit ridership, with residents paying for transit services through the tax system rather than at the fare box:

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM call on the provincial government to work with local governments to introduce fare-free public transit services where communities support the elimination of user-fee barriers to public transit ridership.

Convention Decision: Not Considered - Automatic Referral to Executive

Executive Decision: Not Endorsed

Identical resolutions:

- NEB2 (2022) – Not endorsed
- NR17 (2021) – Not endorsed

Prioritizing Provincial Funding for Large Transit Expansions

Year: 2022

Number: NR57

Sponsor(s): Nanaimo RD

Whereas transit systems across BC would benefit from expanded service hours to better serve residents and enable them to travel efficiently;

And whereas to remain in line with regional and provincial strategic goals for sustainable transportation, larger expansions of transit systems are necessary as they move regions and municipalities towards common goals and improve transit for a greater portion of the population:

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM urge the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and BC Transit to prioritize large transit expansions when determining allocation of transit funding, in line with regional and provincial strategic goals for sustainable transportation.

Convention Decision: Endorsed as Amended