

From: [Harland Bird](#)
To: [Rob Douglas](#); [Council](#); [Debra Toporowski](#)
Cc: victransitridersunion@proton.me
Subject: Please help pass UBCM resolutions for fare-free youth and seniors transit
Date: Friday, August 2, 2024 4:17:44 PM
Attachments: [UBCM_resolutions.pdf](#)

Dear Councillor or Mayor,

This is Nathan Bird writing to you once again on behalf of the [Victoria Transit Riders Union](#), which advocates for investing in public transit to improve service and eliminate fares.

In the last few months we have been pleased to see a UBCM resolution calling on the provincial government to expand existing fare-free transit programs to include all BC youth (18 and under) endorsed by the municipalities of Saanich, Oak Bay, Langford, and Metchosin. We have also been pleased to see a similar UBCM resolution for BC seniors (65 and older) endorsed by Saanich, Oak Bay, and Langford. In addition, we have been pleased to see the Cities of Mission and Kelowna resolve to write a letter directly to the provincial government asking for the adoption of these policies. Most if not all of these votes were unanimous.

We are asking you to support these resolutions at the upcoming UBCM convention in September **regardless of the level of transit service currently available in North Cowichan or between North Cowichan and neighbouring communities.**

In municipalities that are already served by a halfway decent transit system, the benefits of these resolutions are relatively obvious, as they stand to immediately increase the health, safety, accessibility, and inclusivity in these communities. Data from municipalities elsewhere in Canada which have adopted universal youth and senior fare-free programs bare this out. For example, in Kingston, Ontario, where all high school students have received complimentary bus passes since 2012, [ridership in the target demographic has significantly increased](#), as it has [in Montreal](#) where seniors became eligible to receive free passes in 2023. In other words, fare-free transit access allows youth and seniors to maintain more active lifestyles and to engage in more social activities to the benefit of their mental and physical health. As studies have shown, the health costs of social isolation alone are comparable to smoking, and can even [increase seniors' risk of premature death by between 25-30%](#).

But even municipalities without halfway decent transit systems stand to benefit from these UBCM resolutions. For one thing, this is because fewer cars on the road means greater carbon emissions reductions, something that benefits communities and ecosystems across BC and around the world.

Furthermore, adoption of these resolutions would represent a step away from the very fares-based model of transit service that has failed to provide adequate transit service in these communities (not to mention between them). Indeed, the vast majority of the province is currently shamefully under-served. Even in Vancouver and Victoria there are significant service gaps, and large swaths of the interior of the province are transit deserts with no service to speak of. And there is no reason to think that raising transit fares would address this shameful situation: clearly, fare collection is an insufficient incentive to the provision of transit service in BC.

This is why the Victoria Transit Riders Union supports a needs-based model of transit service in BC – in other words, transit entirely funded by taxes and designed to meet

the transportation needs of British Columbians. We are heartily supporting these UBCM resolutions as a first step in this direction, and we hope their passage helps start a public conversation about increasing investment in public transit.

In addition, we believe that expanding fare-free transit programs would ultimately save BC taxpayers money by reducing costs in areas like healthcare and infrastructure – not to mention the vast long-term savings associated with addressing climate change through increased transit use. The wildfires currently ravaging our province underscore this last point.

We hope we can count on your support of these two UBCM resolutions, which stand to benefit all British Columbians (whether they take the bus or not), and we would be happy to discuss any thoughts or questions you might have about them. Please feel free to reply to this email. We would also be very happy to discuss any other ways that we might be able to help fight for improved quality of service in and around your community.

The Victoria Transit Riders Union thanks you for your time and consideration, and looks forward to working with you to create a greener, healthier, more inclusive and accessible province!

Yours,
Nathan

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

UBCM Resolution for Fare-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.

UBCM Resolution for Fare-Free Transit for BC Seniors

WHEREAS transportation costs can serve as significant barrier to mobility for many British Columbian seniors, and this barrier can contribute to social isolation and adversely affect mental and physical well-being;

AND WHEREAS removing barriers to seniors using transit encourages a shift towards more sustainable transportation, helping lower emissions and reducing congestion, while simultaneously increasing affordability, access to essential services, social inclusion, health, and well-being;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM lobby the Provincial Government to make all public transit free for seniors (aged 65 years or older).