
SUBJECT: CITY OF VICTORIA YOUTH BUS PASS PROGRAM

PURPOSE

This report, providing considerations to the City of Victoria's request for a permanent youth bus pass program, is provided to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (the "Commission") for **APPROVAL**.

BACKGROUND

At the November 5, 2019 meeting, the Commission approved a pilot youth bus pass program from December 2019 to August 2020 for youth residing in the City of Victoria, paid for by the municipality at the rate of \$11.25 per youth for 7,200 youth. The pilot program had an uptake rate of approximately 2,200 youth per month during the first few months, however participation rates dropped considerably over the summer months due to COVID-19 pandemic-related changes in travel behaviours. Upon the conclusion of the pilot, the City of Victoria entered into a bulk purchase agreement whereby it only pays for the bus passes that are distributed to youth at a rate of \$40.50 per pass. The City of Victoria's youth bus pass program has continued under this model to date.

DISCUSSION

The City of Victoria has now requested that a permanent youth bus program be implemented to serve the youth constituents residing within the municipality. This program is intended to follow the structure established through the high school U-Pass programs introduced in the Victoria Regional Transit System ("VRTS") in 2017. The primary difference with the City of Victoria's program is that the municipality will purchase passes on the behalf of its residents instead of the discounted fee ultimately being passed on to the end user as with the high school programs.

The program is to be entirely administered by the City of Victoria, with hard-plastic, photo-ID annual bus pass distributed to eligible youth residents on a calendar-year basis. To determine the number of eligible youth for which the City of Victoria will be invoiced, the City of Victoria will request a population estimate report from BC Stats for the three Community Health Service Areas within the municipality. This report will be requested for January 1, April 1 and September 1 of each year after which BC Transit will invoice the City of Victoria for the subsequent four-month period at the established population number. BC Transit recommends that this program be approved for use by the City of Victoria in perpetuity, while recognizing that the City of Victoria's budget would require approval annually and that changes to its budget may affect the feasibility of offering this program.

In its motion, the City of Victoria has requested that the program be established for all of its youth residents aged 11 to 18 at the U-Pass rate of \$11.25. The City of Victoria outlined that through its pilot program it observed that 90% of all participants were aged 11 to 18, with the additional 10% distributed to children aged 10 and under. For the permanent program, the City of Victoria is requesting that the U-Pass rate of \$11.25 be extended for use on an as-distributed basis for any pass that is issued to a child aged 10 and under. Historically, for as-needed bulk purchase programs, a discount of 10% is applied resulting in a per pass rate of \$40.50 for each pass purchased, whereas the U-Pass rate is only available in scenarios where all eligible persons within a larger population are assessed the fee.

The City of Victoria is also requesting that a clause be included in the youth bus pass agreement that allows for a reduction in the rate should there be an event that results in a significant decrease in transit ridership. This request comes as a result of the City of Victoria's experience with uptake of the pilot program following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent decrease in overall and program-specific transit ridership. As the City-paid program model and this specific clause are not typical for this type of agreement, this request is being put to the Commission for approval. Should such a clause be determined as warranted, BC Transit would suggest a two-tiered approach in which both of the following conditions would need to be met in order for the fee to be reduced:

1. A 50% drop in overall transit ridership in a given month when compared to the average transit ridership of the three months immediately prior as measured by Automated Passenger Counter boarding data.
2. A 50% drop in program-specific transit ridership in a given month when compared to the average program-specific transit ridership of the three months immediately prior as measured by farebox pass swipe data.

Should both of the conditions be satisfied, a fee reduction clause would be triggered and would result in the fee assessed to the City of Victoria being reduced by 50% and in place until ridership returns to above the defined levels. Any fee reduction amounts would be credited to the City of Victoria on future invoices.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Victoria Regional Transit Commission:

1. **APPROVE** the introduction of a youth bus pass program for residents of the City of Victoria at the rate of \$11.25 per eligible youth aged 11 to 18 per month to be paid for by the City of Victoria
2. **APPROVE** the use of the \$40.50 bulk purchase discount rate per distributed pass per month for children aged 10 and under to be paid for by the City of Victoria
3. **APPROVE** the use of a fee reduction clause within the agreement with the City of Victoria for the youth U-Pass program as outlined in this report.

Respectfully,

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