
SUBJECT: POST SECONDARY STUDENT TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PURPOSE

This report provides details of a proposed Post Secondary Student Transit Advisory Committee through a motion arising from the February 23, 2021 Victoria Regional Transit Commission Meeting. The motion directed staff to bring options for an Educational Advisory Committee to a future meeting. The proposed format for a new committee is provided to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (the “Commission”) for **APPROVAL**.

BACKGROUND

In 1999, students at Camosun College and the University of Victoria approved their participation in the U-Pass program by referendum. The U-Pass agreements were then developed with BC Transit and the program officially began in 2001. The U-Pass agreements were developed with the following primary objectives: provide a lower cost sustainable transportation option for students; general reduction of automobile use to relieve traffic congestion and pollution; easing traffic congestion and automobile parking demands at the post-secondary institutions and surrounding area; support provincial and regional environmental objectives; and to increase transit ridership. Subsequently, Royal Roads completed the same steps to offer the program to their students in 2011.

In February of 2015, the Commission passed a resolution to engage BC Transit to undertake a review of the Commission representation to look at including post-secondary students and expanded membership for Westshore communities based on population. It was determined legislative change would be required by the Province of British Columbia in accordance with the BC Transit Act to include non-elected officials as voting members. The VRTC expanded membership to include an additional member to represent the Westshore and amended the Charter to include a non-voting student member rotating between the University of Victoria and Camosun College

On February 23, 2021, a motion was brought on behalf of post-secondary students that the Commission Chair write a letter to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure requesting the student seat on the Victoria Regional Transit Commission be made into a voting seat. A motion was approved directing staff to bring forward options for an educational advisory committee with the purpose of providing insights on the needs and experience of post-secondary students.

DISCUSSION

An existing committee structure already exists with the VRTC. The Commission established the Accessible Transit Advisory Committee (ATAC) in 2002 with the purpose to provide feedback to the Commission on the transit experience for those with accessibility challenges. This advisory committee has been running successfully for many years, and has been fundamental in providing insights that support decision-making.

As part of this analysis, how other urban transit systems solicit post-secondary student input was explored. The City of Toronto Board oversees the matters of policy, planning, and operation of the Toronto Transit System. The board consists of six elected officials and four

citizens. The appointment of the Board is at the direction of council in the City of Toronto, and funding is provided by the municipality. Similar to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission they have an advisory committee for accessible transit. There is currently no student advisory committee.

The City of Ottawa is governed by a Transit Commission consisting of eight elected officials and four citizen members appointed by City Council. They have joint and sub committees and appointments are made by council. Transit is a component of the transportation committee and the citizen members are non-voting. The Commission recommends transit service levels, fares, and budget to council for approval and funding is provided by the City of Ottawa.

The Metro Vancouver area transit is governed by the Mayor's Council and members include representatives of the area municipalities. Translink is the transportation authority, and funding is provided through municipal and provincial taxation, motor fuel tax, hydro levy, fares, and advertising. There is currently no student advisory committee and post-secondary students are engaged through regular stakeholder engagement including surveys, online engagement, and on site engagement.

After reviewing the governance and committee structures for these transit agencies, the Commission could endorse the creation of a Post-Secondary Student Transit Advisory Committee in similar fashion to a committee of council, and operate as the ATAC committee currently operates. Comprised of representatives from each of the post-secondary institutions with UPass programs, members would meet a minimum of twice a year to provide insights regarding post-secondary student experiences on transit, and areas for continued improvements to best meet the needs of this demographic.

In addition, the Student non-voting representative is able to bring forward items from the advisory committee in the student update portion of the VRTC meeting agendas. The VRTC Charter established non-voting membership be rotated between University of Victoria and Camosun College annually. Royal Roads University has been an UPass post-secondary institution since 2011 and represents the Westshore post-secondary community. As such, it is recommended the Commission consider amending the VRTC Charter to include Royal Roads University as part of the non-voting student rotation on the Commission.

A Draft Terms of Reference is attached for consideration, and to support collaborative discussions with the student representatives on the development of a final terms of reference.

The key benefits of a student led advisory committee are to ensure post-secondary students that represent a large portion of ridership and revenue can advise on ways to improve transit for students and therefore improve the customer experience and increase ridership. The challenges in having a post-secondary student advisory committee are the increased pressure on time of staff to prepare for meetings, minute meetings, and facilitate coordination and orientation with the students.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will work with student representatives to further develop a terms of reference for the Post-Secondary Student Transit Advisory Committee and schedule meetings to align with the Victoria Regional Transit Commission meetings to receive minutes.

The development of a Post-Secondary Student Transit Advisory Committee involves the following phases:

1. Develop a terms of reference for advisory committee to define purpose, mandate and scope in collaboration with post-secondary student representatives
2. Committee Chair will be the non-voting VRTC member
3. Establish meeting schedule to align with VRTC meeting schedule
4. BC Transit staff to provide meeting minutes and staff representation
5. Representative of the member agencies are outlined in the table below

Agency/Group	Title	Representative	Role
UVSS	Director Campaigns and Community Relations		Member
CCSS	External Executive Camosun College Student Society		Member
RRUSA	Coordinator Student Engagement		Member
Stakeholder Groups	TBD		As needed
BC Transit	Senior Manager Government Relations		Non-Voting Member
BC Transit	Senior Transportation Planner		As needed
BC Transit	Executive Assistant		Administrative Support

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Commission **APPROVE** the non voting student rotation be amended to include Royal Roads University, and;

It is recommended that the Commission **APPROVE** the Student Transit Advisory Committee comprised of post secondary representation to advise the Commission on their priorities based on their contribution to UPASS revenue.

Respectfully,

Lisa Trotter
Senior Manager Government Relations

Attachment: DRAFT Terms of Reference