

Victoria Regional Transit Commission

Chair and Members

February 22, 2021

#08

SUBJECT: Refugee Transit Pass Program

PURPOSE

This report recommends the continuation of the Refugee Pass Program and is provided to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (the “Commission”) for **APPROVAL**.

BACKGROUND

At the December 8, 2015 meeting, the Commission approved a motion to support the transition of refugees into the Greater Victoria Area by providing temporary free transit for a one-year period. The program is administered by BC Transit and the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA). This program has been provided a temporary extension by the Commission that has allowed the Refugee Pass Program to run uninterrupted until March 1, 2022. Approval of the report will allow for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be provided that will continue the program through to December 31, 2022.

DISCUSSION

In 2016, the Federal Government announced a decision to accept eighty-four per cent more humanitarian refugees than 2015 because of the global Syrian refugee crisis. The influx of refugees overwhelmed many local settlement service groups. The Commission approved a motion to support local settlement service groups and the influx of incoming refugees with the creation of a temporary free transit program. The program extended all refugees arriving in the Capital Region between December 2015 and December 2016, one year of free transit passes, and was renewed for subsequent one-year terms in December 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

The program has been successfully administered by BC Transit and the ICA. On a monthly basis, a pre-determined quantity of monthly passes are delivered to the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) for final distribution to the incoming refugees. All tasks within these processes have been captured within routine and normal processes for both parties and have not been an administrative burden to either organization. Since 2016, BC Transit has distributed 8,300 adult monthly passes and 4,600 youth/senior monthly passes to a total of 12,900 monthly passes with a combined total retail value of \$917,500.

Table 1: Annualized Monthly Pass Quantities and Value of the Refugee Program

Year	Adult Passes	Discount Passes	Total Passes	Total Value
2017	1,580	920	2,500	\$175,700
2018	1,680	960	2,640	\$186,000
2019	1,590	880	2,470	\$174,750
2020	1,800	960	2,760	\$196,200
2021	1,650	880	2,530	\$184,850
Total	8,300	4,600	12,900	\$917,500

*Retail value of all monthly passes distributed to Intercultural Association

Given the on-going need for the program and the low associated administrative burden, it is recommended that the program be extended through to the end of the year to continue to support new refugees arriving into the community.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Victoria Regional Transit Commission **APPROVE** continuation of this program for one additional year to December 31, 2022.

Respectfully,

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