

Background

In 2021, the City of Victoria implemented a free youth bus pass program for residents aged 13 to 18, allowing them to ride the Victoria Regional Transit System for free. This program has been extremely successful and approximately 70% of youths in Victoria use the youth pass system. It is helping to build the next generation of transit users, and thereby support an expanded transit system with improved service for everyone.

At the same time, criticism is often voiced that this program does not exist for youths across other communities in the region. In an age of soaring household costs, free youth bus passes can have a significant positive impact on families.

The success of the Victoria program suggests that extending this program equitably across the region would deliver more value for CRD residents and increase transit ridership. The Victoria Regional Transit Commission has set an ambitious target of 15% ridership by 2050, and that target requires more youths to become habitual transit users. A regional youth bus pass program would align with CRD climate, transportation, accessibility, and equity goals, and would better enable young people to access school, work, and recreation opportunities.

Recommendation

That the CRD Transportation Committee recommends to the CRD Board to direct staff to investigate and report back on the costs, benefits, and implications of creating a region-wide free youth bus pass program under the CRD transportation service in collaboration with BC Transit.

Director Dave Thompson

Director Jeremy Caradonna