

## DRAFT RESOLUTION

Re: Transit for Teens Campaign to Extend BC's Get on Board Program to Age 18

THAT Council directs staff to investigate the costs and implications of endorsing fare-free transit for youth up to age 18 and report back to Council.

### BACKGROUND:

Councillor Lovegrove indicated his intent to bring forward a resolution to endorse the Transit for Teens campaign for BC's Get on Board program on April 8, 2024.

1. Transit access is key for youth to safely access activities, school, support services, health care, work, and more, especially for lower-income youth whose families may not have a vehicle, and the cost of a monthly transit pass for teens can be extremely challenging for working families already struggling with the high cost of living in Kelowna.
2. Encouraging students to use public transit can increase their independence and participation in employment and civic life, and can also help close the equity gap and reduce poverty. Offering free transit to youth can incentivize public transit usage, which can reduce traffic, lower emissions, and offer a safer transit option to teens while also building lifelong transit users.
3. The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, the Centre for Family Equity (formerly known as the Single Mothers Alliance), the ATU Local 1722, the Okanagan Transit Alliance, and many others have been advocating for free transit through the "All On Board" campaign which calls for free transit for transit riders from age 0-18 in BC.
4. In 2021 the BC government made public transit free for all children 12 and under in every transit system in BC with the introduction of their new "Get on Board" program, "saving families money, increasing access to affordable transportation options and encouraging more people to use public transit."
5. A fare free program for high school students in Kingston led to an increase in annual teen ridership from 28,000 trips to close to 600,000 trips, and also led to an increase in the number of youth bus passes (passes for young people aged 18-24) sold per month from an average of 250 in 2017 to 625 in 2023.
6. The City of Penticton just received federal funding from the Building Safer Communities fund to launch a pilot youth transit program, whereby youth 24 and under have unlimited access to fare free bus services. This program was launched after youth who were consulted shared their challenges with accessing key services, employment, and after school programs. The City of Kelowna has an opportunity to offer the same.

7. The City of Kelowna is committed to the principles of being a collaborative, smarter, responsible, and connected city, and its 2022-2026 Council Priorities explicitly seek to increase access to transit for all ages and abilities, including youth.

Date: April 22, 2024