

## Other Fare-Free Transit for Youth Programs

Table 1. Program Overview

Community	Program Name	Start Date	Age Range
Victoria, BC	Youth U-Pass	2019	13-18
Penticton, BC	Free Transit for Youth 24 and Under Pass	2024	13-24
Sunshine Coast, BC	N/A	2024	13-18
Oakville, ON	N/A	2023	13-19
Kingston, ON	High School Transit Student Pass	2012	15-18(<14 free)

Table 2. Cost Implications and Funding

Community	Cost Implications and Funding
Victoria, BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The City of Victoria compensates system partners at a rate of \$11.25 per youth per month, based on population estimates. This rate reflects the cost of a monthly youth/ senior pass spread out over a semester's cost.</li> <li>The program is funded by the City through the collection of Sunday parking fees.<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
Penticton, BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Penticton launched a pilot project in March 2024 to provide free transit access to youth aged 24 and under.</li> <li>The pilot project is funded by a grant from the federal government's Building Safer Communities initiative to the City of Penticton.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>The grant also funds three additional programs in collaboration with non-profit agencies, offering various forms of support to youth.</li> <li>Eligible youth can register for free transit passes. The cost of each pass, valued at \$35, is covered by the city using funds from the grant.</li> </ul>
Sunshine Coast, BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The total estimated minimum potential revenue loss by offering free transit for ages 13 to 18 years was calculated at approximately \$90,000 per year.</li> <li>The Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) retains all fare revenue to offset their share of the operating costs, therefore this loss in revenue would need to be offset by taxation.</li> <li>The SCRD note that there may be future financial impacts to consider including long-term pressures for service enhancement and expansion that may arise with increased ridership.<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
Kingston, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kingston estimates that providing free transit to youth costs about \$250,000 per year.</li> <li>Contributions from the Public and Separate School Boards amount to \$60,000 each annually, supplemented by provincial gas taxes ranging from \$40,000 to \$70,000 based on ridership. There typically remains a deficit of \$60,000 to \$90,000 per year, which is covered through municipal taxes.<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Partners agreed to a reduced rate in return stable revenue provided through the program.

<sup>2</sup> BC Transit, personal communication, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Coast Regional District Staff Report, November 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Lattanzi, *Sunshine Coast Feasibility Study*.

Table 3. Ridership and Service Implications

Community	Ridership and Service Implications
Victoria, BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initially, 2,300 free passes were distributed in 2019.</li> <li>By 2021, when the eligible age range was adjusted to 13 to 18 (as free transit was available to all children in BC aged 12 and under), the number of free passes distributed increased to 2,600, showing a 13% increase in uptake over time.<sup>5</sup></li> <li>Currently, about 45% of Victoria's youth population of 4,422 participates in the U-Pass program with an average usage of 25 rides per month.<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>
Oakville, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oakville introduced a free transit program for youth in May 2023, which led to an 85% increase in youth ridership within the first month.</li> <li>This initiative also led to a 5.4% increase in adult ridership during the same period, indicating that youth free transit programs can affect overall transit usage.<sup>7</sup></li> <li>In response to the increased demand, service was added to accommodate school travel demand before and after school, as well as during lunchtime.<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>
Kingston, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduced in stages starting in 2012, the program provides students with an annual bus pass at no cost to the student.</li> <li>This increase in ridership coincided with phased implementation of free transit for youth and an investment in transit services, including a 50% increase in service hours, a 30% increase in the number of buses, the introduction of high-frequency routes, and improvements to bus stop amenities.<sup>9</sup></li> <li>The program is credited with contributing to the overall 70% increase in ridership since 2012. However, these increases are understood to have occurred largely because of the investments in and improvements to transit service and infrastructure.<sup>10</sup></li> <li>Capacity issues were noted two years into the pilot because of youth travelling during peak morning and afternoon times.</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> Anne Lattanzi, Free Transit for Youth on the Sunshine Coast Feasibility Study, November 2023.

<sup>6</sup> BC Transit, personal communication, 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Lattanzi, *Sunshine Coast Feasibility Study*.

<sup>8</sup> Oakville Transit, personal communication, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Lattanzi, *Sunshine Coast Feasibility Study*.

<sup>10</sup> BC Transit, *Fare-Free transit: A summary of Considerations for BC Transit*, November 2019.

Table 4. Administrative Implications and Pass Details

Community	Administration	Pass Details
Victoria, BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The City of Victoria spends approximately 35 hours per month to administer this program.<sup>11</sup></li> <li>The City validates applications and provide a physical one-year ID pass to all approved youth.<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Umo-compatible card with photo ID.</li> <li>The passes are valid for one year.</li> </ul>
Penticton, BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth aged 13 to 24 can register for free transit passes at five designated locations.<sup>13</sup></li> <li>Vendors are set up with a 'free fare' category in Umo and provide the applicant an activation code after ID validation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Umo mobile app or reloadable card.</li> <li>The passes will be valid until Dec. 31, 2024.</li> </ul>
Oakville, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PRESTO card can be purchased online or in person.</li> <li>After purchasing, the card must be programmed at an authorized PRESTO, available at participating Shoppers Drug Marts and transit customer service outlets.<sup>14</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stand-alone PRESTO card with no photo ID.</li> <li>The cards are programmed once and are valid until the youth ages out.</li> </ul>
Kingston, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passes are distributed through schools.</li> <li>The school board contributes 80 to 120 hours (about 5 days) per year for administration.<sup>15</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A stand-alone card with a chip and no photo ID.</li> <li>The pass is renewed automatically every year until the rider ages out.</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> Lattanzi, *Sunshine Coast Feasibility Study*.

<sup>12</sup> BC Transit, personal correspondence, 2024.

<sup>13</sup> [Penticton first in B.C. to offer free transit for age 24 and under | City of Penticton](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Youth and Seniors \(oakvilletransit.ca\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> Lattanzi, *Sunshine Coast Feasibility Study*.