



Community Council

*A bus ticket means:*

*An opportunity to find employment,*

*Access to services - especially health  
services,*

*A link to the outside world,*

*An opportunity to participate,*

*Independence,*

*Active participation in programs and  
parenting groups.*

## **BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program**

**Report to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission  
March 2005**

## Summary

*“Agencies that receive funding from the United Way describe a trend they are seeing that is beyond the mission/focus of their organizations. People cannot access their services, such as counselling sessions, attending skills training courses, acquiring food, accepting work and volunteering, because they cannot afford the cost of the bus ticket. Transportation has become a major barrier for them.”*

*Chris Poirier-Skelton, United Way of Greater Victoria*

Since 1997, the Victoria Regional Transit Commission and the Community Council have developed an efficient and effective process for service-providing agencies in BC's Capital Region to distribute bus tickets at no charge to people living on low income.

Currently up to 40,000 free transit tickets per year are distributed to people living on low income through the BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program. Agencies purchase transit tickets through the Community Council. Purchased tickets are matched on a 1:1 basis with free tickets from the Transit Commission, with a maximum allocation of 20,000 free tickets per year. Participating agencies report on how transit ticket usage throughout the year and participate in an annual meeting.

The program is expanding. During the 2004-05 fiscal year:

- Participating agencies purchased approximately 21,200 transit tickets through the Community Council bringing total sales to close to \$30,000.
- Ticket sales surpassed the allocation of 20,000 free tickets available through the BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program.
- This meant that not all tickets purchased were matched on a 1:1 basis with free tickets.

## Recommendations to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission:

1. Allocate an additional 5,000 free tickets through the BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program, bringing the total number of free tickets to 25,000 per year. This would allow up to 50,000 tickets to be distributed at no charge through participating agencies in the Capital Region in 2005-06.
2. Include monthly passes in the BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program. Several agencies identified a monthly pass as a huge resource for a family. Six of the agencies participating in the program would purchase monthly passes if they were available the BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program.

*“Women at the women’s shelter only get 4 transit tickets per month. A monthly pass would allow women to move beyond just getting to the food bank, or to a job interview. It would provide the opportunity to search for housing, to visit service-providing agencies, to travel to visit family and friends, and to participate more fully in community life.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> BC Transit Ticket Assistance Annual Meeting of Participating Agencies, December 14, 2004

## **BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program, 2003-04**

*“Many agencies reported requests for service from clients whose needs were actually much more dire than the programs were set up to accommodate. Examples included clients with serious mental health issues or with active addictions seeking help from neighbourhood and community services.”<sup>2</sup>*

During the period April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.

- 32 agencies participated in the BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program
- 36,710 bus tickets were distributed free of charge to individuals and families living on low income with urgent transportation needs. Table 1 lists how tickets were used as reported by participating agencies.

Data from the 2004-05 fiscal year of the BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program will be finalized in September 2005.

### **Agencies Participating in the Program during 2003-04**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Action Committee of People with Disabilities | Open Door                                 |
| AIDS Vancouver Island                        | Peninsula Community Services              |
| Blanshard Community Centre                   | St. Saviour’s Anglican Church – Rainbow   |
| Burnside Gorge Community Centre              | Kitchens                                  |
| Capital City Volunteers                      | Sooke Family Resource Society             |
| Capital Mental Health Association            | Sooke Residents in Need Society           |
| Citizens’ Counselling Centre                 | Sooke Women’s Transition House Society    |
| Victoria Cool Aid Society – Community        | St. Vincent de Paul Society               |
| Health Centre                                | Surrounded by Cedar                       |
| Esquimalt Neighbourhood House Society        | Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson’s Society |
| Fernwood Community Centre                    | Victoria Human Exchange Society           |
| Hill House                                   | Victoria Native Friendship Centre         |
| Inter-Cultural Association                   | Victoria Women’s Transition House Society |
| Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing Society      | Victoria Youth Empowerment Society        |
| John Howard Society                          | Volunteer Victoria                        |
| Laren House Society                          | Worklink Employment Society               |
| Mustard Seed Street Church                   | YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria – Youth       |
|  | Outreach                                  |

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<sup>2</sup> Thin Ice: New-Era Conditions for Our Community, Community Reconstruction Report #3, Summary, June 2004

## Bus Ticket Use Reflects Transportation Needs

*“The Ministry directed a client to get a volunteer job – and no means to get there. This (receiving a bus ticket) is the first nice thing that has happened in months.”<sup>3</sup>*

**Table 1. Ticket Use from 1999 to 2004.<sup>4</sup>**

| Reasons                                     | 2003-04       |     | 2002-03       |            | 2001-02       |     | 2000-01       |     | 1999-00       |     |
|---|---------------|-----|---------------|------------|---------------|-----|---------------|-----|---------------|-----|
| Employment related                          | 4,507         | 17% | 5,198         | 21%        | 7,900         | 33% | 4,026         | 26% | 3,065         | 26% |
| <i>Seek employment</i>                      | 3,020         | 12% | 3,104         | 13%        | 4,400         | 18% | 1,820         | 12% | 989           | 8%  |
| <i>School/training</i>                      | 10            | 0%  | 738           | 3%         | 849           | 4%  | 799           | 5%  | 827           | 7%  |
| <i>Travel to work</i>                       | 1,477         | 6%  | 1,356         | 6%         | 2,651         | 11% | 1,407         | 9%  | 1,249         | 10% |
| Health/medical/counselling                  | 9,972         | 38% | 5,290         | 22%        | 5,447         | 23% | 3,954         | 26% | 2,593         | 22% |
| <i>Attend medical appointment</i>           | 4,298         | 16% | 3,034         | 12%        | 3,543         | 15% | 2,749         | 18% | 1,825         | 15% |
| <i>Counselling sessions, group meetings</i> | 5,674         | 22% | 2,256         | 9%         | 1,904         | 8%  | 1,205         | 8%  | 768           | 6%  |
| Basic Needs                                 | 3,731         | 14% | 5,286         | <b>22%</b> | 3,920         | 16% | 2,603         | 17% | 1,986         | 17% |
| <i>Pick up clothing/furniture</i>           | 468           | 2%  | 817           | 3%         | 714           | 3%  | 494           | 3%  | 401           | 3%  |
| <i>Get to/from food bank</i>                | 1,601         | 6%  | 1,472         | 6%         | 1,202         | 5%  | 824           | 5%  | 672           | 6%  |
| <i>Seek housing</i>                         | 1,662         | 6%  | 2,997         | 12%        | 2,004         | 8%  | 1,285         | 8%  | 913           | 8%  |
| Children/family                             | 1,678         | 6%  | 1,979         | 8%         | 1,561         | 7%  | 1,077         | 7%  | 1,223         | 10% |
| <i>Family matters</i>                       | 452           | 2%  | 305           | 1%         | 84            | 0%  | 353           | 2%  | 647           | 5%  |
| <i>Attend to children</i>                   | 1,226         | 5%  | 1,674         | 7%         | 1,477         | 6%  | 724           | 5%  | 576           | 5%  |
| Attend court                                | 705           | 3%  | 870           | 4%         | 928           | 4%  | 487           | 3%  | 481           | 4%  |
| See Financial Assistance Worker             | 2,988         | 11% | 3,232         | 13%        | 2,496         | 10% | 2,002         | 13% | 2,020         | 17% |
| Other                                       | 2,679         | 10% | 2,484         | 10%        | 1,687         | 7%  | 1,097         | 7%  | 581           | 5%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>26,260</b> |     | <b>24,339</b> |            | <b>23,939</b> |     | <b>15,246</b> |     | <b>11,949</b> |     |

<sup>3</sup> BC Transit Ticket Assistance Annual Meeting of Participating Agencies, December 14, 2004

<sup>4</sup> 2003-2004 numbers are based on a sample (26,260 or 72%) of the 36,710 tickets distributed in 2003-2004.

This program is highly valued by agencies and agency staff work hard to meet the administrative needs of the program. For some, the priority of completing the information sheet is lower than meeting the needs of their clients, especially in an increasing climate of need in our community. Specific challenges have arisen where program funding is cut and staff are let go before they can complete the ticket use information sheet. We are confident that the report on ticket use accurately reflects the overall trend in use of tickets.