

**REPORT TO THE VICTORIA REGIONAL
TRANSIT COMMISSION**

BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program
June 2010



Context

Since 1997, the Victoria Regional Transit Commission has provided free bus tickets to the Community Council to distribute to people with urgent transportation needs. The Community Council, through an innovative partnership with social service nonprofit agencies, developed an efficient and effective process to double the number of tickets distributed at no charge to people living on low income in BC's Capital Region. This program has grown since its inception, and supports the work of up to 67 local agencies as well as enhancing the lives of hundreds of citizens.

In 2010¹, up to 90,000 free transit tickets and 800 free passes per year are available for distribution through the BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program (BCTTAP). Agencies purchase tickets and passes through the Community Council. Tickets purchased by agencies are matched on a 1:1 basis by the Transit Commission up to a maximum allocation of 45,000 free tickets per year and 400 monthly passes.

The Victoria Regional Transit Commission continues to demonstrate innovation and leadership in supporting people living on low income in BC's Capital Region to access BC Transit. This partnership model has been replicated in other communities across the province such as Abbotsford/Mission and Kelowna. It has been reported on at a national level by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy (March 2010).

Observations on Ticket and Monthly Pass Uses

1. Current Monthly Pass Uses

Since 2005, monthly passes have been included in the BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program. The Transit Commission has increased the maximum allocation from 220 passes a year to a current 400 passes. This, when matched with passes purchased by social agencies for distribution to their clients, means that a potential 800 free passes are available to residents in urgent need for transportation. Monthly passes support individuals and families to move beyond using transit for the narrow definition of urgent transportation needs, and encourage greater involvement in family and community life.

Annual Pass Use

	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2005-06</i>
Free passes available from BC Transit	400	220	220	120	120
Free passes requested from agencies	329	198	144	79	32
Total passes distributed	658	396	288	160	65

¹ Victoria Regional Transit Commission meeting, 9 March 2010 – decision to increase number of free tickets and free passes available to BCTTAP effective January 2010.

Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of passes ordered as agencies have realized the advantages of a monthly pass over tickets, particularly for families with young children, and as clients have used passes to participate more fully in community life. In the 2009-2010 cycle, 658 monthly were distributed. This exceeded the 2008-09 amount of 396 passes distributed.

From the agency perspective:

- Passes are very helpful to people job hunting and or beginning jobs, as are community buses. Some people use these during the first two weeks of employment (until they receive their first paycheque). Some people may not accept a job if they do not have the means to cover initial transit costs.
- Clients with young children appreciate day and monthly passes because youth aged 12 and younger can travel at no cost with their parents or a guardian.
- Passes help in the time gap between when people begin social assistance as a Person with Disability and receipt of their yearly transit pass.
- A weekly or multi-day pass option was suggested for people needing a pass for short time periods. Some transit systems have 3, 5 and 7 day passes or visitor passes, and something like this was seen to be very useful to BCTTAP program clients and for visitors to the community as well.
- A monthly pass provides the opportunity to participate more fully in life, which means the pass is used for a large number of activities such as visiting friends and family, attending school events, volunteering and not just the most basic of needs. These activities can help reduce the isolation of poverty.

It takes me two buses to get to school. Having a bus pass has made a really big difference in my attendance.

My place of work is more than 6km away from my shelter – it would have been very difficult to make it without this pass – as I worked for one month with little pay – and have to wait 'til the end of the month for full pay. Thank you.

Laren Society is a non-profit that provides a home and care for men getting out of prison on a conditional release – like day parole. The men receive only \$28 a week. Having a bus pass is an absolute blessing for them as they look for work, attend programs, etc. So much more seems possible when you have transportation.

A young mother stated that getting a bus pass allowed her to keep her child with her. Given her age she was being closely monitored by the Ministry of Children and Families as to her fitness as a mother. She needed to attend various programs for young mothers and various doctors appointments. Missing any of these programs could put the custody of her baby in jeopardy. She was on assistance and not only had to go to these programs but also had to attend the food bank. She sees this simple thing as having kept her family together.

2. Current Ticket Use

In 2009-10, 50 agencies are participating in the BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program, distributing 82,460 tickets in BC's Capital Region.

Information gathered from agencies during that time continues to demonstrate that ticket usage remains relatively consistent over the years. A notable shift in 2009-10 was in the increased use of tickets for employment-related appointments.

Ticket Usage Statistics

Description	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06	2004-05	2003-04
Employment related	32 %	25 %	20%	24%	29%	25%	17%
Health/medical/ Counselling	32 %	37 %	45%	35%	32%	34%	38%
Basic Needs	11 %	15 %	12%	9%	13%	12%	14%
Financial Assistance Worker	7 %	8 %	8%	8%	7%	8%	11%
Children/family	5 %	4 %	4%	6%	4%	4%	6%
Court	2 %	2 %	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%
Other	11 %	10 %	9%	15%	12%	13%	10%

Source: Participating Agencies' Ticket Tracking Data

Agencies report on their transit ticket usage throughout the year and participate in an annual meeting.

From the agency perspective:

- Tickets are very helpful to people in the Person-with-Disabilities application process. There are many appointments to keep during this time and transportation is essential.
- School-based youth and family counsellors in School District No. 61 report that tickets are useful for students not attending school due to lack of transportation.
- Tickets are useful for people apartment-hunting as well as for those living a great distance from their work, services and appointments, often due to the low vacancy rate and the need to live further from the urban centre. People who in the past might have walked to these locations now need transit.
- Tickets are useful to people volunteering in the community. Agencies requested that "Volunteer" have its own category in the reporting sheets to reflect people on income assistance and others developing their employment skills, social networks and contributing to the community.

Appendix 1
BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program
Participating Agencies

Action Committee of People with Disabilities	Our Place
AIDS Vancouver Island	Pacific Centre for Family Services Association
Artemis Place/VSEA	PEERS
Beacon Community Services	Saanich Neighbourhood Place
Blanshard Community Centre	Single Parent Resource Centre
Boys & Girls Club	Saanich Neighbourhood Place - Food Skills for Families
Bread & Roses Collective	Sooke Residents in Need Society
Bridges for Women	Sooke Transition House, Annie's Place
Burnside Gorge Community Centre	St. Vincent de Paul - St. Patricks Conference
Capital Families Association	Surrounded by Cedar
Citizen's Counselling Centre	Threshold Housing Society
Cool Aid	Together Against Poverty Society
Cridge Transition House	Umbrella Society for Addictions and Mental Health
Esquimalt Neighbourhood House	Victoria Disability Resource Centre
Epilepsy and Parkinson Centre	Victoria Native Friendship Centre
Fairfield-Gonzales Community Association	Victoria PWA Society
Fernwood Best Babies	Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre
Inter-Cultural Association	Victoria Women's Transition House
Island Deaf & Hard of Hearing	Victoria Youth Empowerment Society
Island Metis Family & Community Services Society	VIPIRG
James Bay Community Project Youth Clinic	Volunteer Victoria
John Howard Society	White Crow Village - FASD Society
La Société Francophone de Victoria	Worklink
Laren Society/Bill Mudge House	YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria
Mustard Seed Street Church	Young Parents Support Network
Nil/Tu,O Child & Family Services	