

U-PASS BC: HOW DOES IT WORK AT BCIT?



ADVOCACY

For close to a decade now, hundreds of thousands of students at BCIT and other local schools have been able to benefit from access to the U-Pass BC program, a subsidized transit pass which provides unlimited access to bus, SeaBus, and SkyTrain throughout the Lower Mainland.

Like all student society fees, the mandatory U-Pass BC fee is collected only at post-secondary institutions where it has been approved by students in a democratic referendum. This took place most recently in fall 2019, with almost 90% of eligible votes cast in favour of extending participation to April 2025.

Students have supported the program for a variety of reasons, especially the goal of providing students with access to affordable transit throughout the region. This also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion, while taking some of the pressure off of the available supply of parking on campus.

The BCITSA understands that not every eligible student chooses to use their U-Pass BC. Generally, however, the program remains incredibly well-subscribed: in 2019, the last year for which full data is available, over 80% of eligible students in the Lower Mainland took advantage of the U-Pass BC program, representing almost 2 million journeys by BCIT students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of daily life, including school and transit. Below, please find answers to some of your most common questions about the U-Pass BC program:

Why am I paying for U-Pass when all my classes are online? Although most courses have moved online, countless students still need the program for their essential travel needs. It would not have been possible to exempt online students without removing U-Pass from thousands who depend on it.

Can I get a refund if I'm out of town? Yes, a student may have the fee reversed if they are **both** completely online **and** living outside of Metro Vancouver. More details are found [here](#), and applications are at bcitsa.ca/resources. If your program is blended, please email upass@bcitsa.ca for assistance.

Are there any other exemptions? The U-Pass BC program terms and conditions provide a limited set of exemption categories, including disability or medical circumstances. BCIT administers these, [here](#).

Why do I have to pay for a service I don't use? For too many, the cost of public transit would be prohibitive without their U-Pass. The low price is only possible with BC's \$86 million contribution and the collective efforts of everyone paying into the system. The BCITSA recognizes that affordability challenges affect many of our members, so we recently donated \$130,000 towards [emergency student relief funding](#).

When will the program include students in Part-Time Studies? This has been a persistent challenge but we are committed to working with TransLink and BCIT to implement expanded program access.

For any questions about the program, please email upass@bcitsa.ca and we'd be happy to help.