

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 pre-pandemic year for which 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:

Is public transit safe? What safety measures has TransLink taken? Public transit in British Columbia is currently subject to the Provincial Health Officer's recent mask mandate. Additionally, TransLink has increased the frequency of cleaning and enhanced ventilation procedures, as outlined [here](#).

Can I get a refund if I'm out of town? Students in the Office Administrator with Technology program or the Technology Support Professional program may be eligible for a fee reversal **if** they live outside of Metro Vancouver and are 100% online. Please email upassadmin@bcit.ca for more information.

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 travel 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 understands the affordability challenges facing our members, which is why we contributed \$130,000 towards [emergency student relief funding](#) in 2020.

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.