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| Subject: Affordable Transportation | Policy Number: EXT-9 | Last reviewed: 2023 Jan. 23 |
| Approved by: Council | Managed by: Advocacy & Policy Committee | Next review: 2025 Jan. 30 |

Policy Rationale:

The availability of affordable, reliable, and sustainable transportation options is essential for post-secondary students. Some students are fortunate to live in on-campus housing, reducing some of their travel needs, while others study primarily online. However, most students at BCIT commute to campus and deserve a variety of affordable transportation options for their needs.

Expansion of the U-Pass BC program is one way of promoting affordable transportation. Across Metro Vancouver, BCIT has consistently had the lowest percentage of enrolled students eligible for the program (37% of BCIT students compared to 87% at other schools).¹ Not only do students use public transit to commute to school but many also rely on it for work and leisure; extending the program to part-time students would allow them to benefit too. In 2019, prior to the pandemic, the 7,493 BCIT students eligible for the program took 3.34 million trips.²

The availability of reliable transit services and the U-Pass helps more students choose to take public transit. This also reduces congestion on the roads and lessens the pressure on parking, improving the experience for those who commute by car. This is also good for the climate: BCIT students' use of the U-Pass since 2011 led to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions of over 58,000 tonnes of CO2 equivalent.³ Were the program expanded to more students in Flexible Learning, internal analysis shows that further substantial reductions in GHG could be expected.

While the U-Pass BC program provides benefits to the vast majority of those pay for it, a mandatory universal program does not work for each and every single person. There are limited exemption and opt-out categories available within the program, but these could be expanded. Greater flexibility in this regard would increase the value of the program for affected students.

With this in mind, it must also be acknowledged that many BCIT students still choose to drive to campus for a variety of valid reasons. Due to this, institutional policies relating to student parking will affect many and deserve adequate scrutiny. Recently, for example, almost 2,000 people signed a petition opposing upcoming increases in parking rates at BCIT campuses.⁴

External Policy Position:

1. The Student Association supports:
 - A. The continued participation of BCIT in the U-Pass BC program, as the best way of providing access to affordable and reliable public transit for students;

¹ Internal calculations based on the U-Pass BC annual reports.

² "Annual Report on the U-Pass BC Program." *TransLink*: published annually since 2012.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ "Stop the 68% increase of student parking fees at BCIT." *Change.org*: January 2023 ([link](#)).

- B. Further regional expansion of public transit in the Lower Mainland, especially through the implementation of dedicated bus lanes and rapid transit along the Willingdon corridor;
 - C. Ongoing improvements to the availability of transit at Specialty Campuses so that it's realistic for any BCIT student to access their studies via public transit if they so choose;
 - D. The preservation of adequate levels of affordable on-campus parking for students, staff, and faculty, preferably at rates below what is charged to the general public;
 - E. Increased availability of car-share options (which are nearly universal in Vancouver, New Westminster, and the North Shore) to service BCIT campuses as well as adjacent neighbourhoods and transit stations;
 - F. Improvements to parking options for students through more convenient locations on campus, including parking for the full suite of car-share services; and
 - G. Greater access across BCIT campuses to affordable and secure bike storage services.
2. The Student Association does not support:
- A. Any reductions in the financial subsidy currently provided to TransLink by the Province of British Columbia for the delivery of the U-Pass BC program;
 - B. Cuts to transit service levels at BCIT campuses other than during scheduled breaks; and
 - C. Any significant or sudden increases to the cost of on-campus parking or public transit, given the ongoing affordability challenges faced by post-secondary students.
3. The Student Association subscribes to the following principles:
- A. The U-Pass BC program, used by thousands of BCIT students every day, provides value for the vast majority of students covered by the program and should continue past 2025;
 - B. The program would provide greater value if it covered more students in BCIT's Flexible Learning courses, who are not excluded from U-Pass access at any other school;
 - C. If TransLink is unable to support expanded access for part-time BCIT students due to financial challenges, then the provincial subsidy should increase accordingly;
 - D. There should be as few barriers as possible to U-Pass access for students in unique full-time programs, such as Business Fundamentals and the International Student Entry Program;
 - E. The program would provide greater value if it offered more flexibility such as SFU's exemption process for students with unreasonably long commutes;⁵ and
 - F. The program would provide greater value, without undermining its universal nature, if institutions were permitted to exempt more than 1% of students on a discretionary basis.

⁵ "U-Pass BC Exemption Request." Simon Fraser University ([link](#)).