



Committee of the Whole Report For the Special Meeting of November 1, 2021

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** October 29, 2021
From: Susanne Thompson, Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer
Subject: Report Back on Fare-Free Public Transit Expansion

During the October 25, 2021 Special Budget Committee of the Whole meeting, the following motion was passed:

"That Council refer this item to staff to report back by Nov 1 Special COTW with the number of current LIFE pass recipients and estimated costs of extending the fare free program to those recipients."

The City's Leisure Involvement for Everyone (LIFE) program provides access to recreation programs and services for individuals and families with low income.

BC Transit currently offers monthly passes to seniors for \$45 and to adults for \$85. There is also a bus pass program in place for low income seniors and people with disabilities.

U-Pass programs, such as the City's Youth Bus Pass program, require payment to BC Transit for all eligible participants. To determine eligibility under the Youth Bus Pass program, the City uses statistics provided by BC Stats. Staff are not aware of statistics readily available for low income individuals and therefore it is unlikely a U-Pass program could be easily established. An available option would be to provide monthly Transit passes under a bulk purchase arrangement which provides for a 10% discount - \$40.50 per month for seniors and \$76.50 per month for adults.

Financial and Human Resource Implications

Currently, the City has issued LIFE passes to 1091 adults and 289 seniors. Should all choose to participate in a free monthly bus pass program, the estimated cost for the passes would be approximately \$1,142,000, but this would fluctuate depending on uptake.

Adults 1,091 x \$76.50 x 12 = 1,001,540
Seniors 289 x \$40.50 x 12 = 140,455

Note: BC Transit defines seniors as 65 years and older, whereas the LIFE program definition is 60 years and older.

This estimate does not include potential costs for the administration of the program, including systems and staffing to track and distribute the monthly passes. Should Council wish to advance this initiative, further scoping and review of options would be required.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanne Thompson
Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager