



Memo to Council

From the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik

Date: September 9, 2020

Subject: Request to pull NEB4 AllonBoard Campaign from UBCM Voting Block

In 2019 Port Moody submitted a motion to UBCM asking the province to support the #AllonBoard Campaign (**Attachment 1**) for including an equity lens on all BC transit services, low or free transit for low-income residents, free ridership for under residents under 18, and while that is being done, restorative justice instead of fines for those who low income and will not be able to pay. This year we did not resubmit that motion, but Port Moody has continued to show our dedication to equity in many ways, from housing, to food policy, to climate justice. This year our neighbours in New Westminster have resubmitted the motion. Since the book of resolutions was released, this recommendation was set in the “Not Endorse” block (NEB4 AllonBoard Campaign).

The reasoning is as follows:

The Resolutions Committee advises that the UBCM membership considered, but did not endorse, resolution 2019- B113, which asked the Province to eliminate or reduce fine levying for those under 18 years of age, and investigate restorative justice and community service options for settling fare infraction tickets by low-income individuals. The request found in 2019-B113 is very similar to the requests made in the first and third enactment clauses of this resolution. The Committee also advises that UBCM members have not previously considered a resolution calling on the provincial government to establish a sliding scale monthly transit pass system based on income. This is the request made in the second enactment clause of this resolution. However, the Committee notes that the membership endorsed resolution 2019-B114, which asked the Province to provide free or further subsidized transit passes to all British Columbians receiving income assistance or disability assistance. In response to resolution 2019-B114, the provincial government clarified that people receiving disability assistance may choose either a transit pass (paid in full by the Province), or a transportation supplement of \$52 per month. Lowincome seniors not otherwise receiving provincial assistance may pay a \$45 annual fee for a transit pass, but do not have the option to choose a \$52 transportation supplement. The Province also referenced the employment-related transportation supports that it provides to people receiving income assistance or disability assistance. These supports may include a confirmed job supplement; or transportation supports to help attend job interviews, participate in WorkBC Employment Services, or start a new job. The Province further observed that under the Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Program, administered by UBCM for the provincial government, a local government could apply for funding of a pilot project offering low-income transit passes.

Though it is a repeated motion, our circumstances have wildly changed. We know those who are most likely to take transit are those who have been hit hardest in the pandemic, low income, marginalized workers and families who are having more trouble making ends meet; we know car travel is not an option for many people. We know transit is critical for accessing resources, such as food, health, and social supports (<https://theconversation.com/giving-up-public-transit-during-the-coronavirus-is-a-luxury-many-canadians-cant-afford-138875>).

The loss of public transit would exacerbate the existing crisis facing many Canadians during the pandemic. The damage of lost transit access for carless and vulnerable households will likely spill over into other domains, such as employment and health care. It's critical that policy-makers do not leave these residents stranded.

Port Moody has until the September 18, 2020 to write the UBCM executive and request that this be pulled from the block for debate. It should be argued that this is being brought back because our world has changed significantly and made those who were already vulnerable considerably more so.

Suggested Recommendation:

Whereas the conditions under which this resolution came forward have drastically changed due to a pandemic which is impacting the most marginalized members of our community;

Whereas access to jobs, health care, and mental health supports are critical to stemming a wave of homelessness which may come due to evictions;

Whereas; Transit access is a matter of equity and poverty reduction;

Whereas the pandemic has given us an opportunity as a province to bounce forward in rebuilding a society that focus on wellbeing and climate justice;

Whereas not all communities have the resources to apply for pilot program and limited funding is available;

Whereas under the current financial assistance model those social assistance and/or disability supports live considerably below the poverty line, meaning that many struggling families and individuals get no supports;

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many holes in the social safety net which need to be fixed for resilience to unforeseen systemic shocks;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Port Moody request the UBCM Executive remove from the not endorse block resolution NEB4 AllonBoard Campaign;

AND THAT The City of Port Moody request the UBCM Executive that resolution NEB4 AllonBoard Campaign be added to the debate;

AND THAT a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the UBCM Executives.

Attachment:

1. Report dated November 23, 2018 from Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Support for the #AllonBoard Campaign



City of Port Moody

Report/Recommendation to Council

Date: November 23, 2018

File No. 01-0230-40/Vol 01

Submitted by: Councillor Amy Lubik

Subject: Support for the #AllonBoard Campaign

Purpose / Introduction

To seek Council support for the #AllonBoard Campaign to support equitable access to transit services for youth and low-income residents.

Recommended Resolutions

THAT letters to The Mayors' Council of TransLink, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Social Development regarding endorsement of the #AllonBoard Campaign be sent by the Mayor on behalf of the City of Port Moody as recommended in the report dated November 23, 2018 from Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Support for the #AllonBoard Campaign;

AND THAT the following resolution regarding Support for the #AllonBoard Campaign be endorsed by the City of Port Moody and forwarded for consideration at the 2018 LMLGA convention and subsequent UBCM convention:

WHEREAS the City of Port Moody has recognized and has demonstrated over the past years its commitment to the health of its residents, and lack of transportation is one of the most common reasons for missing medical appointments and is a significant barrier to social inclusion;

AND WHEREAS Port Moody and other municipalities donate to charities which then, out of necessity, pay for transit passes and sometimes fines for low-income individuals, including minors;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the #AllonBoard Campaign be endorsed and the TransLink Mayors' Council, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction be asked to work with the provincial government and local governments to develop a plan that will provide free public transit for minors (ages 0-18), free transit for people living below the poverty line (as identified by market basket measure, in line with the BC poverty measures), and reduced-price transit based on a sliding scale for all low-income people regardless of their demographic profile;

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AND THAT a separate letter be sent by the Mayor on behalf of the City of Port Moody to the TransLink Mayors' Council asking them to 1) require TransLink to adopt a poverty reduction/equity mandate, as the Mayors' Council sets the mandate for TransLink, and 2) to ask TransLink to suspend fines for fare evasion for minors while equitable pricing options are investigated and allow low-income adults with current fines to pay their debt with community service and/or culturally appropriate restorative justice;

AND THAT the Single Mothers' Alliance report on evidence and testimonies in support of the #AllonBoard Campaign be included in the submission to the LMLGA once available.

Background

In the summer of 2018, a coalition of community advocacy groups, supported by the Single Mothers' Alliance, and the Poverty Reduction Coalition launched a campaign called #AllonBoard. This was an initiative started by single mothers and people who worked with children in care who realized that lack of transportation was a significant barrier for low-income individuals to get to school, and work, and take part in society in general. The initiative calls for free or discounted fares for people living in poverty and free transit for minors under 18 years of age. A co-benefit of this policy may be to raise a generation who is used to public transit, which would help to lower our society's greenhouse gas emissions.

The current fining system for minors and low-income individuals who cannot pay their fare perpetuates the cycle of poverty. Youth in and leaving care currently face harassment from collection agencies and move into adulthood saddled with poor credit scores for the crime of being poor. This punitive policy of ticketing those least able to pay is leading to more barriers including access to basic banking services, obtaining a driver's licence and obtaining a BC services card. In other words, this practice is perpetuating the circumstances that trap people in the crisis zone of poverty. These issues were brought up by youth with lived experience to the Board of TransLink in early October 2018.

We are aware that there are budgetary, mandate, and legislative challenges related to implementing fare reductions and other measures we recommend. However, the province of BC is currently working on a Poverty Reduction Strategy which these measures would greatly benefit. Inequality in our society is currently growing and this initiative is a potential tool to allow youth and low-income residents more access to jobs, education, services, and social connections, all of which contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty and generally increase well-being.

Discussion

The latest figures from Statistics Canada (2015) once again show that too many BC children—153,300 or 1 in 5—are growing up in poverty. For the past sixteen years (2000-2015) an astounding half of all children in lone-parent families in BC, most of them female-led, have lived in poverty. Lone parents with a disability and children under 25 have an astronomical poverty rate of 53%. Other findings include:

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- nearly half (45%) of recent immigrant children were poor;
- one in three (31%) Indigenous children were poor (not counting children living on First Nations reserves);
- more than one in three (39%) children living with other relatives were poor; and
- one in four 'visible minority' (or racialized) children were poor.

The statistics on the depth of poverty show poor children in BC, including those living with parents working full-time or part-time, are being raised on median annual incomes more than \$10,000 below the poverty lines for their respective family sizes. This means that every day, one in five households with children are making hard decisions, which some days could be a choice between food or rent or affording public transportation to reach doctor's appointments, public services, school, and job interviews.

"We need a fair transit fare structure to ensure no low-income adult, parent, child, or youth misses a doctor's appointment, a day at school, or a visit to the community centre because public transportation is unaffordable and out of reach of those who need it the most."

– Viveca Ellis, Co-Founder of Single Mothers' Alliance BC, campaign

According to the 2015 Metro Vancouver Housing and Transport Cost Burden Report, "Renter households making less than \$50,000 shoulder a housing and transportation cost burden (67%) that is grossly disproportionate to their financial capacity. Renter households earning between \$50,000 and \$75,000 are in a relatively better financial situation with a cost burden of 40 percent," indicating that low-income families have significant difficulty affording other life necessities after housing and transportation are paid for. This can negatively affect their health through a multitude of factors, including the stress of worrying about making ends meet and the inability to afford healthy food, which is generally more expensive than food that is lacking in nutrition.

A review of nine low-fare programs across Canada (there are many occurring in the US and Europe, as well), found positive results for such programs including:

- Financial assets – reduced cost of transit resulted in more money to provide for other basic needs (e.g. food and rent);
- Physical assets – increased mobility enabled users to get to work, apply for jobs, and access the services they need more consistently (e.g. training/education and medical appointments);
- Social assets – users were able to make more trips for a greater variety of reasons and in a more flexible way; passes were used most often for getting to and from work, grocery shopping/running errands, and personal appointments, but could also be used to go out to events and community meetings more often; and
- Quality of Life assets – feeling more independent, improvements in family budget, maintaining connection to family and friends, greater sense of contribution to community, increased social inclusion, and reduced stress.

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Additionally, studies from London, UK, Taiwan, and Australia have demonstrated that expanding public transit services, both access to and expansion of routes, particularly into low-income areas, may have a wide array of benefits, including decreasing commuting times, therefore allowing more time for interaction with friends and family, as well as increasing opportunities for employment and education. Studies in Thailand, the Netherlands and Brussels of subsidized or free transit policies show that they have the potential to fight social exclusion of low-income people from social activities. These results correspond with other studies in the Netherlands and Brussels, where subsidized or free access to public transportation for students increased transportation usage in those groups. Programs in the UK that expanded transportation services in deprived areas saw an increase in bus travel and uptake, which increased attendance at healthcare visits. Lack of transportation is a large barrier to healthcare visits in Canada and may cost the healthcare system money in wait-times, as well as increased hospital services.

In addition to the research that supports the #AllonBoard campaign, an important co-benefit is that it could provide mental health benefits for youth by decreasing stigma and shame and increase feelings of belonging in society, which is something outlined in the *Tri-Cities Rights of Children's Rights Charter*. It also moves us towards being the kind of community and society that we strive to be. In October 2018, children living in or aging out of care presented to the TransLink Board asking them to bring in a sliding scale for youth and low-income people so that they can take transit without incurring fines. They relayed their experiences below (link in Additional Information):

Cheylene Moon told the Board about how, as a teen, she would walk for an hour each way to get to school because she was too scared to ask her foster parents for bus fare.

"One time, I made it halfway to my house and it was raining and I was cold and hungry," said Moon. "I had to find an undercover area to spend the night."

Speaking after the meeting, 25-year-old Breezy Hartley—a former foster child—said that something needed to change.

"The system depends on having parents that care about you," said Hartley. "[Being able to take the bus] would give them unconditional love. Like hey, no matter what, your basic needs are being met because we care about you."

"Before I went to foster care, if I upset my mom... then I wouldn't get a ticket home."

In conclusion, endorsing the #AllonBoard campaign may have many benefits to our community, including increasing feelings of belonging and decreasing poverty, as well as increasing access to employment, education, and healthcare.

Other Options

THAT the report dated November 23, 2018 from Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Support for the #AllonBoard Campaign be received for information.

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Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Communications / Civic Engagement

There are no communications or civic engagement initiatives required by the recommendations in this report.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

The recommendations in this report align with the Council Strategic Plan vision of being socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable by addressing:

- the health and wellness needs of residents;
- future community facility needs;
- issues related to taxation levels and value for municipal tax dollars;
- social issues;
- community dedication to reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- courage to lead and embrace new ideas; and
- community dedication to children's rights as outlined in the *Tri-Cities Children's Rights Charter*.

Attachments:

1. Affordable Transit Pass Programs for Low Income Individuals – Beveridge.
2. Evaluating Public Transportation Health Benefits – Litman.
3. Entitlement to concessionary public transport and wellbeing – A qualitative study of young people and older citizens in London, UK – Jones.

Additional References:

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<http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/PlanningPublications/HousingAndTransportCostBurdenReport2015.pdf>

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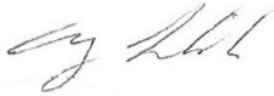
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