

Penticton first in B.C. to offer free transit for age 24 and under

(Penticton, BC – March 14, 2024) – As part of the City of Penticton's Focus on Safety, a pilot project is being launched today that will provide free access to BC Transit for youth aged 24 and under.

"This is a project that has been developed by our Social Development department in conjunction with our partners and youth in the community who have identified the lack of mobility as a challenge for youth," says Julie Czeck, the City's director of safety and partnerships. "This pilot project will help break down barriers for youth to access services, to socialize and be a more active part of the community."

BC Transit has launched Umo in Penticton, which allows transit users to pay through a mobile app or reloadable card. Youth between 13 and 24 will be able to receive free transit by registering at one of five locations (12 and under ride for free). The passes will be valid until Dec. 31, 2024.

When informed of the pilot project, one youth – who wished to remain anonymous – said they were grateful for the pilot project and the safety and mobility it will provide them. "I have a hard time accessing services without a transit pass so being able to use the bus for free means the world to me. Instead of having to work on the weekends to pay for my bus pass, I can now use the bus to access services, visit family or even go to the local pool with friends."

The five places where youth can register and receive free transit are:

- The Ooknakane Friendship Centre
- Foundry Penticton
- Penticton Public Library
- Penticton Community Centre
- Penticton City Hall

"This is another important step towards building a safer community by reaching out, hearing what the needs are and finding ways to meet them," Czeck. "We're excited to offer this pilot program with our partners and hope it can make a difference in the lives of youth."

The Umo pass will be restricted to Penticton routes for free youth transit.

The funding for the pilot project is coming from a three-year grant the federal government's Building Safer Communities, provided to the City of Penticton. Those funds were also used to launch three programs developed in partnership with non-profit agencies: Kwu Xast Program (land-based supports) by Ooknakane Friendship Centre; the YMCA Alternative Suspension (school-based supports) and Youth Crime Prevention Peer (peer-based supports) and Youth Community Safety

Officer (community-based supports) operated in conjunction Foundry Penticton and City of Penticton – Bylaw Services.

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