



The Honourable Rob Fleming, MLA
Ministry of Transportation and
Infrastructure
Province of British Columbia
E-mail:
Minister.Transportation@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable George Heyman, MLA
Minister of the Environment and Climate
Change Strategy & Minister Responsible
for TransLink
Province of British Columbia
E-mail: ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable David Eby, MLA
Premier of British Columbia
Office of the Premier
Province of British Columbia
E-mail: premier@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Sheila Malcolmson, MLA
Minister of Social Development
and Poverty Reduction
Province of British Columbia
E-mail: SDPR.minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Rachna Singh, MLA
Minister of Education and Child Care
Province of British Columbia
E-mail: EDUC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Dan Coulter, MLA
Minister of State for Infrastructure
and Transit
Ministry of Transportation
E-mail: dan.coulter.MLA@leg.bc.ca

The Honourable Mitzi Dean, MLA
Minister of Children and Family Development
Province of British Columbia
E-mail: MCF.Minister@gov.bc.ca

CC: **Doug Caul**, Deputy Minister, Policy and Coordinator, Office of the Premier, **Kathryn Krishna**, Deputy Minister, Transportation and Infrastructure: DeputyMinister.Transportation@gov.bc.ca, **Allison Bond**, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Children and Family Development: mcf.deputyminister@gov.bc.ca, **David Galbraith**, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction: sdprdm@gov.bc.ca, **Christina Zacharuk**, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Child Care: dm.education@gov.bc.ca, **Heather Wood**, Deputy Minister of Finance and Secretary to the Treasury Board, Ministry of Finance: heather.wood@gov.bc.ca

CC: Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth:
ChildrenandYouthCommittee@leg.bc.ca

CC: Kevin Falcon, MLA. E-mail: kevin.falcon.mla@leg.bc.ca

CC: Sonia Furstenau, MLA. E-mail: sonia.furstenau.MLA@leg.bc.ca

January 6th, 2023

Via Email

RE: Extending free transit to include youth 13-18 in all transit systems in BC

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce our campaign and policy recommendation: **Transit for Teens**. We would like to start by expressing our deep gratitude to the province for making transit free for all youth 0-12 in BC as of September 2021. This bold and impactful policy innovation has had an immediate and long-term impact on many of the low-income lone-mother-led families represented by the Single Mothers' Alliance, and

all families in BC with children under twelve. We hear often from both low-income families and those of greater means about the value and impact of free transit for their children. Children and families can get everywhere they need to go through a universally accessible policy that levels the playing field for families in this province and upholds children's right to access school and their communities. *Bravo.*

We are writing today to appeal to you to build on this innovative policy solution and extend free transit to include youth 13-18 in every transit system in BC. Youth are currently excluded from this important program in BC. They do not deserve to be. Youth aged 13-18 in the crucial developmental stage of adolescence need basic mobility more than ever to thrive in every aspect of their lives. Our youths are the future of this province and our most valuable resource. We must ensure their right to access school and thrive while BC brings up new generations who choose sustainable transportation for life.

We advocate for the province to build on the success of the universal approach already in place and raise the eligibility age to eighteen. A universal approach ensures that no youth is left behind or singled out due to their socioeconomic status. We cannot separate the right of every youth to access their school from their access to the mobility to do so. Youth mobility is also about the opportunity to participate in important extra-curricular activities and the freedom youth need to grow, whether they are accessing a pool, a drop-in centre, a shelter, a counsellor's office, or their grandparent's home across town.

For low-income youth whose families may not have access to a vehicle and the means to provide transit passes, and youth facing marginalization, transit access is a survival lifeline to access shelter, school, support services, health care, and food security. The cost of ensuring at-risk youth can access the essential programs and services funded to support youth outcomes in BC is downloaded onto non-profits that often struggle to 'remove the access barrier' of lack of access to transit. That youth-in-need may miss the lifesaving supports available in BC due to mobility poverty and lack of access to transit is an avoidable travesty solved with free transit up to age 18.

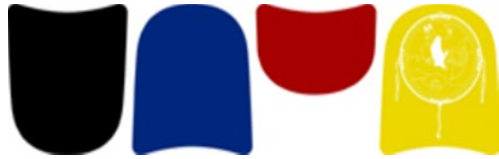
Our research related to a City of Vancouver free transit pilot project in 2021-2022 captured the impact of unlimited, free transit on low-income youth from their parents' perspectives (report attached). We heard that youth took more initiative to organize their lives; parents witnessed increased uptake of after-school activities, mental health support services, and increased social inclusion. They reported an increase in overall mental health and well-being among their youth since they were no longer left behind or had to experience shame when asking for free rides. We can no longer afford to leave our most valuable resource behind, our youth, and we must build *a new culture of green transportation rooted in generations to come*. Thank you for considering the extension of free transit up to the age of eighteen so all youth have the freedom to thrive in BC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Viveca Ellis".

Executive Director
Single Mothers' Alliance

Supporting Letter Signatories



Urban Native Youth Association

