
SUBJECT: Transit Youth Loyalty Pilot Program
TO: Committee of the Whole
FROM: Community Services
Transit

Report Number: CSS-11-2025

Wards Affected: All

Date to Committee: July 7, 2025

Date to Council: July 15, 2025

Recommendation

Authorize the Director of Transit to implement the Youth Loyalty Pilot Program to cap paid transit rides for Youth at 20 paid rides per month between September 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026; and

Authorize the Director of Transit to prepare, for consideration, amendment to Rates and Fees By-law 70-2024 reflecting changes approved through report CSS-11-2025, in the form satisfactory to the Commissioner, Legal and Legislative Services / City Solicitor, or delegate; and

Authorize the Chief Financial Officer to offset the estimated \$46,000 cost of the pilot from the Provincial Gas Tax Reserve Fund.

Executive Summary

Purpose of report:

- The purpose of this report is to seek approval to implement a Youth Loyalty Pilot Program for Burlington Transit youth (aged 13 to 19 years) riders from September 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.
- To obtain approval to amend the Rates and Fees by-law to address the Youth Loyalty Pilot Program.

Key findings:

- Youth Loyalty Pilot Program will start September 1, 2025.
- Limiting the paid rides for youth riders at 20 paid rides for a total monthly cost of \$38 per youth rider.
- Pilot project will run until June 30, 2026.
- Work with finance to evaluate options for longer-term financial sustainability should the program be made permanent.

Implications:

- Financial:
 - The total revenue impact is estimated at \$46,000.
 - The estimated fare loss associated for capping youth fares, at \$38 per month, is approximately \$32,000 per year.
 - The anticipated fare loss related to the SPLIT reimbursement, from the Region of Halton, is approximately \$14,000 per year
- Legal:
 - The rates and fees bylaw to be updated to reflect the changes to the youth program outlined in this report.
- Communications:
 - A communications and marketing plan to promote the Youth Loyalty Program will be launched in Summer 2025, ahead of the program's start date.

Recommendation Report

Background

On December 10, 2024, as a follow up to [TR-02-2024](#), Council was informed, via [memo](#), on the plan to cap monthly transit fares for youth riders from 40 paid rides to 20 paid rides. In this approach, youth fares would be capped after 20 paid rides, therefore reducing the cost of transit from \$76 per month to \$38 per month. The memo outlined the proposed approach, including associated impacts, and an initial implementation plan targeting Q2 2025.

The recommended implementation date is updated to September 1, 2025, following the youth summer 2025 (July and August) pilot project. This timing allows for a more seamless integration of youth fare strategies and further supports the goal of encouraging increased youth ridership overall.

Analysis

Transit fare capping, or loyalty programs, are proven tools to encourage transit ridership while supporting fiscal responsibility. These programs also support equity among those who rely on transit, as it lowers the cost per month. Loyalty programs rely on the presence of a fare card system, such as PRESTO, which enables accurate tracking of monthly usage by age-based concession(s). This functionality helps mitigate the risk of fare evasion, ensures accurate fare capping, and supports cross-boundary travel, including free transfers to GO Transit, Hamilton and Oakville Transit, when paying a fare on Burlington Transit. It is anticipated that more youth will use transit to go to and from school, which may cause capacity challenges on some routes, particularly towards the end of the month, when fares are capped. Youth ridership makes up approximately 25 to 30% of afternoon rush hour boardings from 2pm to 3pm.

The benefits of a transit loyalty program include:

- Encouraging positive transit travel behaviour among youth and encourage lifelong transit usage.
- Youth may choose transit as a more attractive option if overall costs are reduced and lead to more frequent travel once they exceed paid rides.
- When youth riders choose transit, it is better for the environment.
- Supports youth independence, employment, extracurricular activities and social connections.
- Taking transit to and from school, may lead to fewer cars travelling within school zones.
- This initiative supports the City's strategic goals to increase the modal split and ensures equity and inclusivity in our delivery of transit service.

The pilot program complements existing free transit for youth on evenings and weekends and will benefit riders who use transit frequently.

Potential risks for this program include:

- Sustainable long-term funding to support the program in the future.
 - Capacity challenges on school routes, especially near the end of the month when youth riders exceed their 20 paid rides.
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Recommendation Details

It is recommended to pilot this program starting on September 1, 2025, and continuing to June 30, 2026. The total estimated cost of the pilot is \$46,000 and would be funded through the Provincial Gas Tax Reserve Fund.

This pilot project allows staff to monitor program usage, ridership and assess the full financial impact. Should the program be considered for permanent implementation, a sustainable, long-term funding source is required. Transit staff will report back on the results of the pilot in the summer of 2026.

Key Dates & Milestones

The following key dates outline Burlington Transit's Youth Fare Program:

- September 1, 2025 – Start of Youth Tap 20 Loyalty Program Pilot
 - June 30, 2026 – End of Youth Tap 20 Loyalty Program Pilot
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Implications

Financial:

In 2024, youth ridership generated approximately \$620,000. This includes:

- Fares paid directly by youth riders,
- Contributions from the school boards; and
- Equally shared contributions from the Region of Halton (50% subsidy for SPLIT).

For the proposed youth loyalty program, revenue loss is estimated as follows:

- \$32,000 from youth riders using transit greater than 20 times per month
- \$14,000 reduced SPLIT contributions from the Region of Halton.

The total estimated financial impact is approximately \$46,000.

Legal:

The rates and fees bylaw to be updated to reflect the changes to the youth loyalty program and reviewed in this report.

Climate:

The youth loyalty initiative encourages youth riders to use transit more frequently. Youth riders who exceed 20 rides in a month may choose transit over car rides, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Communication:

The Youth Tap into Free program will be promoted throughout the summer 2025. Key messages include:

- Tap into Free → 20 Paid Rides = Free
- Tap into Freedom with your PRESTO card

A PRESTO card is required to participate in the program.

Engagement:

Burlington Transit has actively engaged with youth, including:

- Consulting Burlington’s Youth Advisory Committee
- Participating in Youth Week (May 1-7, 2025).
 - Visiting community centres (Haber, Tansley Woods and Mountainside); and
 - Distributing over 500 free PRESTO cards.

Burlington Transit staff also engaged with the Halton Student Transportation Services, Halton District School Board, Halton Catholic School Board and the Region of Halton.

References

- [TR-02-2024 Fare Free Transit Study](#)
- [Follow up to TR-02-2024 – Transit Fare Capping for Youth Riders](#)

Strategic Alignment

- Designing and delivering complete communities
 - Providing the best services and experiences
 - Protecting and improving the natural environment and taking action on climate change
 - Driving organizational performance
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Author:

Catherine Baldelli
Director, Transit
Catherine.baldelli@burlington.ca

Appendices:

None.

Draft By-laws for Approval at Council:

- By-law 70-2024 amended for approval to Council on July 15, 2025.

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and approved by the Commissioner, Head of Corporate Affairs, Chief Financial Officer, and Commissioner of Legal and Legislative Services/City Solicitor.