



FILE – A bus is pictured in downtown Vancouver, Friday, November, 1, 2019. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jonathan Hayward

Public transit to be free for kids 12 and younger – a ‘bold’ B.C. budget line advocates applaud

Program could save families upwards of \$50 per month

KATYA SLEPIAN / Apr. 20, 2021 1:50 p.m. / NEWS

If you have a child who’s 12 years old or younger, you soon won’t have to pay for their public transit pass.

The B.C. government has unveiled a free transit plan for kids as part of their 2021 budget Tuesday (April 20). The plan will cost the government \$26 million per year and come into effect in September.

It will apply to any public transit system in B.C., including TransLink (and HandyDart) and BC Transit. Previously, both transit agencies had allowed children up to four or five years old to ride for free.

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According to B.C. budget documents, the new program will save families in the Metro Vancouver area about \$672 per year if they typically bought their child a monthly pass.

While BC Transit fares vary by community, a youth pass in Victoria or Kelowna was \$45 per month, while one in the Central Fraser Valley cost \$35 and one in Williams Lake was \$36.

Late last year, Victoria city officials announced a free U-PASS program for youth ages six to 18, which launched in February and will run until December.

Viveca Ellis, provincial organizer at the Single Mothers' Alliance for Gender & Economic Justice, said Tuesday's announcement represents a win for advocates.

“We’ve been advocating for free transit from zero to 18 and we applaud this bold move to make transit free for all children and youth ages zero to 12,” Ellis said. Ellis has been calling for free transit for teens for years, and presented the idea – along with three former youth in care – to [TransLink](#) in 2018.

“So we advocate for government to immediately expand it to age 18 when they roll it out in the fall of 2021.”

For more on the 2021 B.C. Budget, [click here](#).

[@katslepian](#)

katya.slepian@bpdigital.ca

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