

Free Youth Transit Passes in Effect Starting on September 6

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is pleased to announce that youth aged 13 to 18 can ride for free within the RDN starting September 6, 2026. The implementation of the fare-free youth transit program was approved for an initial two-year period at the RDN board meeting on April 14, 2026. The program will be reviewed at the end of the second year to see how well it is working and whether it should continue. Youth aged 12 and under currently receive fare-free transit on BC Transit and TransLink services through the provincial [Get on Board!](#) program.

To support the rollout, RDN staff will host pop-up events across the region from August 17 to September 6, where eligible youth can obtain their free transit passes. The passes can also be picked up at the RDN transit building at 6300 Hammond Bay Road, Nanaimo from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays starting August 17. Youth participating in the Fare-Free Transit Program can travel at no cost with the RDN by using a Fare-Free Transit Youth Pass when boarding transit. Passes will be available through the Umo card or app, with youth able to use their existing accounts if they are already Umo users. Program data collected through pass use will help evaluate participation, transit usage and overall program success.

Through this initiative, the RDN joins other local governments that provide complimentary transit passes to students. The program aims to improve access to education, employment, recreation and community services while encouraging greater use of public transit.

For information on how to obtain the Fare-Free Youth Pass, including proof of eligibility and the list of the pop-up locations where passes can be acquired, visit rdn.bc.ca/youth-transit-passes.

Quote

“We look forward to launching this program and seeing the difference it makes for youth and families across the region. By making transit more accessible, we can help young people get to school, work, recreation and community services more easily, which benefits the whole community.”

Stuart McLean, RDN Board Chair

Key Points

- Approximately 8,000 youth aged 13 to 18 can ride RDN Transit for free starting September 6, 2026.
- Youth fare-free programs can increase transit use, independence and access and support long-term ridership habits.
- Free transit passes will be available at pop-up events across the region starting August 17 until September 6.

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Quick Facts

- The financial impact of the program is uncertain as detailed youth ridership data is not available and will depend on participation levels. The cost of the program will be offset by Transit operating reserves.
- A Umo-integrated digital or physical pass will help provide data to evaluate participation and future service needs.
- Higher youth ridership may require more service hours over time. Some hours could be reallocated to meet peak demand, starting as early as 2028 should the program continue after the trial.
- Youth 12 and under can ride the bus for free province-wide and do not require a bus pass as part of this program. For information, visit gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation/passenger-travel/buses-taxis-limos/get-on-board.

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