

# REPORT TO COUNCIL



Date: January 18, 2012  
File: 1405-50  
To: City Manager  
From: Director, Financial Services  
Subject: United Way Transit Partnership

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**Recommendation:**

THAT Council support expanding the transit partnership with the United Way by an additional 150 transit tickets per month, beginning in January, 2012.

**Purpose:**

To request approval for expanding the transit assistance program with the United Way.

**Background:**

Since 2001 the Kelowna Regional Transit system has had a partnership with the United Way to provide transit assistance for people experiencing poverty. The United Way currently receives 700 single ride adult tickets each month for distribution to their participating agencies. The agencies then distribute the tickets to qualified individuals to help them access essential services or meet other emergency transportation requirements. The United Way then reports to the City of Kelowna on a quarterly basis to account for tickets distributed.

The 700 tickets each month would cost \$17,010 annually if purchased by these agencies or individuals. The additional 150 tickets per month being requested would cost \$3,645 annually if purchased for a total program cost of \$20,655. We can assume that many of these individuals would not purchase tickets due to their financial hardship so the revenue loss would be considerably less than that number. Although we cannot be certain, there is also an assumption that many of these trips are taken at off-peak times when the buses are not at capacity.

Although the increase of 150 tickets per month is a substantial increase the areas being targeted for the additional tickets is mainly outside the City of Kelowna central area (where most of the services and agencies are headquartered) and this provides support to new clients that had been missed previously. This increases the scope of the program and reaches some of the areas that are not currently being served.

The United Way is a valuable partner in the provision of transit assistance to those that cannot afford the service. Their administration saves municipal resources in having to deal with requests for assistance. A further side benefit of the program is the introduction of transit service to people that may go on to become regular customers in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'M' or similar shape.

For these reasons, along with the minimal revenue loss from this very successful program, support for this expansion is being recommended.

**Legal/Statutory Authority:**

The provision of transit tickets is controlled by the local transit contract members of the Kelowna Regional Transit system. Support of this increase has been requested from each Finance Director from the local contract municipalities. A presentation on this request was made to the Regional Governance and Services Committee at their January 12<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Financial/Budgetary Considerations:**

There is minimal cost impact of this request (slight administrative requirement) however there is a potential loss of revenue if the ticket recipients would have purchased the tickets themselves.

**Considerations not applicable to this report:**

Internal Circulation:

Personnel Implications:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Existing Policy:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Alternate Recommendation:

Submitted by:



K. Grayston, Director, Financial Services

Approved for inclusion :



P. Macklem, General Manager Corporate Sustainability

cc: J. Dombowsky, Regional Programs Manager - City of Kelowna  
A. Paice, Director of Community Investment - United Way

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October 17, 2011



**United Way**  
Central & South  
Okanagan Similkameen  
*Change starts here.*

Mr. Ron Westlake, Director  
Mr. Jerry Dombowsky, Regional Programs Manager  
City of Kelowna  
1435 Water Street  
Kelowna, BC V1Y 1J4

For the past decade, a partnership between United Way and the Regional District of Central Okanagan has made it possible for people experiencing poverty to use public transportation. This assistance allows hundreds of community members to:

- attend job interviews and training
- maintain employment
- pick up food hampers
- take children to daycare
- attend health and wellness appointments

Access to bus tickets means that these individuals are connected to services and supports that ensure a good quality of life.

The United Way receives the bus tickets on a monthly basis from the City of Kelowna, and distributes them to participating agencies in 2 ways:

- 1. Registered:** 16 agencies are currently registered to pick up a set number of bus tickets on a monthly basis.
- 2. By Request:** An additional 12 agencies may request any tickets not used by registered agencies.

United Way reviews the status of agencies annually to determine whether they are registered in the appropriate category, and receiving the appropriate number of bus tickets in relation to the size of their client population. United Way periodically interviews and surveys participating agencies to ensure that the program continues to meet the needs of their clients. As well, United Way ensures that accurate records of usage are submitted, and submits this data to the City of Kelowna.

For a list of agencies currently accessing bus tickets, please see page 4 of this submission.



## **Program Snapshot**

- **Currently, United Way distributes 700 bus tickets per month, or 8400 per year.**
- **28 agencies are currently requesting access to the bus tickets.**
- **77% of the bus tickets are being distributed in the downtown Kelowna area.** Feedback from agencies indicates that a significant percentage of these tickets (25% or more) are used by persons traveling to and from areas outside the downtown core in order to access medical services and employment.
  - For those living outside of downtown Kelowna, limited access to the bus tickets has been identified by United Way as a priority concern to be addressed in 2012.
- **United Way has seen a 20% increase in agency requests for additional bus tickets in the past year.**
  - The increase is attributed to a growing population, more individuals needing to access services like food banks, and more families struggling to make ends meet. The costs of gas, childcare, housing and food are frequently cited as reasons that individuals and families are struggling.
  - These indications are supported by the findings of the 2011 Vital Signs study conducted by the Central Okanagan Foundation, which can be located online at <http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca/local/okanagan/>. Vital Signs graded the Central Okanagan as a D (p. 10) on "Gap Between Rich and Poor" and a C (p. 12) on "Getting Around." The report cited concerns that the transit system may not be affordable for all low-income families, and that the gap between the rich and poor may be increasing.
  - 22 agency requests for additional bus tickets were declined between January – October 2011, because all of the available tickets had been given out. 10 of these agencies were those registered for monthly pickups who had exhausted their supply part-way through the month, and the other 12 requests were from agencies eligible to receive bus tickets by request, where no additional tickets were available at the time.

## **2011 – 2012 Request from United Way**

1. **At this time, United Way respectfully requests that the Transit Assistance Program be continued in the coming year.**
2. **We would also like to ask that, as per discussions, consideration be given for the creation of an off-peak day pass when the technology infrastructure is in place.** Our conversations with agencies have indicated that such a day pass would be invaluable for those attending medical appointments and job searching, and could replace some of the single use bus tickets currently being distributed.
3. **We further request consideration for an increase in the number of tickets from 8400/year to a total of 10,200 tickets per year.**

The requested increase will provide access to under-served residents of smaller outlying communities (Lake Country, Rutland, Mission, West Kelowna and Peachland). The request for increased access is outlined on page 3 of this submission.

## Proposed Agency Access to Bus Tickets for 2012 – Agencies in Outlying Areas

COMMUNITY/ NEIGHBOURHOOD	SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY	CURRENT ACCESS (tickets per year)	INCREASED ACCESS (tickets per year)
LAKE COUNTRY	LAKE COUNTRY FOOD BANK	40/year Has not accessed tickets since 2010.	200/year (increased by 160)
RUTLAND	ADVENTIST COMMUNITY SERVICES	Using 10/year but can access up to 120/year	No change
	HOUSE OF MERCY – KELOWNA CHRISTIAN CENTRE	480/year	No change
	SALVATION ARMY	0	60/month
	LIVING POSITIVE RESOURCE CENTRE	0	20/month
	WILLOW PARK OUTREACH CENTRE	0	20/month
	ST VINCENT DE PAUL – ST THERESA PARISH	0	20/month
MISSION	ST VINCENT DE PAUL- ST CHARLES GARNIER PARISH	240/year	No change
	EVANGEL CHURCH OUTREACH	BY REQUEST – 100 IN 2011	240/year
	METIS COMMUNITY SERVICES	0	240/year
WEST KELOWNA	BETTE'S SINGLE PARENT FOOD BANK	720/year	No change
	WESTSIDE COMMUNITY FOOD BANK SOCIETY	0	720/year
	WESTBANK FIRST NATION OUTREACH	0	120/YEAR
PEACHLAND	PEACHLAND WELLNESS CENTRE	BY REQUEST – 20 IN 2011	200/year
		<b>Total Increase Requested</b>	<b>1800/year</b>



## **CURRENT TICKET DISTRIBUTION – REGISTERED AND BY REQUEST**

<b>1. REGISTERED (MONTHLY) ACCESS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF TICKETS/month</b>	<b>NUMBER OF TICKETS/year</b>
1. ALEXANDRA GARDNER SAFE CENTRE (NOW CANADA)	60	720
2. KELOWNA COMMUNITY RESOURCES	30	360
3. JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY/CARDINGTON APARTMENTS	100	1200
4. ELIZABETH FRY SOCIETY	20	240
5. ADVENTIST COMMUNITY SERVICES	10	120
6. KELOWNA WOMEN'S SHELTER	60	720
7. CORAL HOUSE (OKANAGAN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES SOCIETY)	30	360
8. FIRST UNITED CHURCH	60	720
9. HOUSE OF MERCY (KELOWNA CHRISTIAN CENTRE)	40	480
10. KELOWNA FOOD BANK	60	720
11. KELOWNA'S GOSPEL MISSION	120	1440
12. KELOWNA YOUNG PARENTS PROGRAM (KELOWNA CHILDCARE SOCIETY)	50	600
13. LAKE COUNTRY FOOD BANK	40/YEAR	40
14. BETTE'S SINGLE PARENT FOOD BANK (WEST KELOWNA)	60	720
15. WINGS/SERENITY PLACE	50	600
16. ST VINCENT DE PAUL – ST. CHARLES GARNIER PARISH	20	240
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>*773</b>	<b>*9280</b>

\*Note: Registered agencies do not always pick up their tickets every month.

United Way receives 700 tickets/month, and tickets that are left over and given to agencies on the "by request" list.

<b>2. BY REQUEST ACCESS (TICKETS LEFT OVER FROM REGISTERED AGENCIES)</b>	<b>2011 USAGE PER YEAR</b>
1. ST VINCENT DE PAUL – ST. THERESA PARISH (RUTLAND)	20
2. ST VINCENT DE PAUL – OZANAM HOUSE	120
3. CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION	160
4. BC CANCER AGENCY	20
5. EVANGEL CHURCH OUTREACH MINISTRY	60
6. PEACHLAND WELLNESS CENTRE	20
7. BRAINTRUST CANADA	50
8. WESTBANK FIRST NATION OUTREACH	0 (NEW REQUEST)
9. METIS COMMUNITY SERVICES	0 (NEW REQUEST)
10. INN FROM THE COLD	0 (NEW REQUEST)
11. PROJECT LITERACY	0 (NEW REQUEST)
12. LIVING POSITIVE RESOURCE CENTRE	0 (NEW REQUEST)

As always, United Way is grateful for the support of the Regional District of Central Okanagan and the Regional Transit System in providing these tickets to clients of non-profit organizations.

We know that the Transit Assistance Program is essential to ensuring quality of life and access to basic necessities for hundreds of people, and we are proud to be part of such an important initiative.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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Harry Grossmith  
Executive Director

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Avril Paice  
Director of Community Investment

## Quotes from agencies surveyed in 2011:

"Our clients require bus tickets to attend ESL classes. This is crucial because without English, they are unable to find work or communicate with others, and are in danger of becoming isolated. Some come as refugees who have no support system and no resources."

- Kelowna Community Resources

"We put a limit on the tickets to 4 per person per month, and since there was a shortage in the summer, we limited it to 2 per month. The tickets are given to persons attending medical appointments who have no way to get home."

- Canadian Mental Health Association

"Poverty limits options. More and more people losing jobs, or facing a reduction in working hours, means that others can't help out as much as they have in the past. People have fewer "natural" supports and turn to social services. We experienced an increase in women seeking bus passes and services when the Drop-in Centre closed, and when the Women's Resource Centre closed."

- Elizabeth Fry Society

"Affordable rent in the Kelowna area tends to impact our clients as they are looking in areas outside Kelowna, such as Lake Country, West Kelowna and Peachland. Some services (Living Positive and Salvation Army) have also moved to Rutland recently."

- NOW Canada

"Since 2009 the number of people accessing our Outreach Ministry has doubled. We noticed an initial increase when the Kelowna Drop-In Centre closed. This increase is also a result of ongoing challenges to find affordable housing in Kelowna, cut-backs in other services our clients previously accessed (Women's Resource Centre), and the fact that levels of income assistance for unemployed, under-employed and those with disabilities have not increased while the cost of food, housing and fuel continue to rise. Our clients live as far away as Peachland and Winfield/Lake Country and we have issued bus tickets for people to travel as far away as Vernon and Peachland for medical appointments and work."

- First United Church

"We have more people in need every month. More young and old people in need. I could easily use 100 tickets per month, or bus passes for the seniors."

- Lake Country Food Bank

"The tickets are for emergencies - I need to get to work, I need to go look at a place to rent, I need to go to the doctor, I need to get home (more for women at night), etc."

- Kelowna's Gospel Mission

"We never seem to have enough to meet client needs but summer is easier because clients are more able to walk or bike in the warmer weather. Winters are more challenging because clients often don't have appropriate clothing. We greatly appreciate this resource and United Way always advocating for our clients' needs. THANK YOU!!"

- John Howard Society