

Engaging students to increase public transit ridership

A guide for using city-school partnership to inspire youth to choose sustainable transportation.



Source: Randy deKleine-Stimpson / ftd.ca

Acknowledgements

This guidebook shares the story and lessons learned from the City of Kingston, ON, and its Transit High School Bus Pass Program. The information is based on one of several programs operating in Kingston. A crucial partnership between the City of Kingston, Kingston Transit and Limestone District School Board played an instrumental role in the creation of the program.

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About this guidebook

This is a free resource that provides step-by-step information and tools for building an effective partnership between municipalities and local school boards to issue free bus passes to high school students and provide public transit orientation sessions.

The guidebook includes:

- ▶ Background information on the City of Kingston's Transit High School Bus Pass Program
- ▶ A step-by-step guide to implementing a similar program in your community



At a glance: The Kingston High School Bus Pass Program

Watch [these videos](#) to get to know the program that serves as the case study for this guidebook:

- ▶ Sustainable Communities Award Winner
- ▶ How to increase bus ridership by 70% in your city

Read through [these resources](#) for a program overview.

Additional resources

Media and the news: Check out [articles and stories](#) on Kingston's system.

Research: Examine the [Master's thesis that investigates how the program influenced transit ridership and households' ability to meet their transportation needs](#).



Frequently asked questions

Visit our FAQ section for [everything you need to know](#) about Kingston's program.

Templates and forms

Work with these templates to develop a transit orientation program for youth in your city:

- ▶ [School outreach email message](#)
- ▶ [Information letter and permission form](#)
- ▶ [Transit registration form](#)

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Case Study: The Kingston Story

The Kingston Transit High School Bus Pass Program

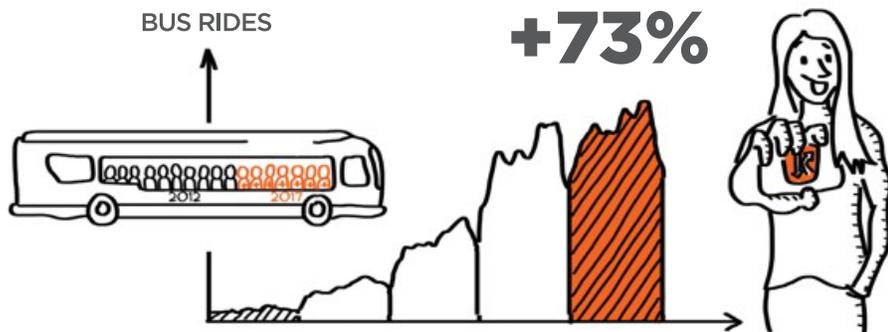
In 2012, Kingston City Council approved a pilot project that provided grade 9 students with fully subsidized transit passes. Today, all high school students in Kingston receive free transit passes, along with an on-bus orientation session to teach students how to ride the bus.

In the program's pilot year, students accounted for **28,000** rides, and that number has grown to over 600,000 rides annually (**10 per cent** of Kingston Transit's total ridership).¹ Since the launch of the Transit High School Bus Pass Program, overall transit ridership has increased by **73 per cent**.²

The Kingston Transit High School Bus Pass Program contributes to overall ridership growth, provides a meaningful alternative mode of transportation for youth, and influences behavioural change for a more sustainable future.³

The program is the co-winner of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) 2018 Sustainable Communities Award (SCA) for transportation, and received FCM's inaugural Inspire Award, celebrating sustainability, innovation and creativity ([visit FCM's Sustainable Communities Awards page for more information](#)).

How to increase bus ridership?





Source: Kingston Transit

IN KINGSTON (2011)

30%
of GHG emissions came from transportation⁴

71%
of commuters drove to work alone⁵

Overview of Kingston Transit High School Bus Pass Program

Program elements	Objectives	Program benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Partnership between City of Kingston and local school boards ▶ Fully subsidized transit passes at no cost for all high school students (21 years and under) ▶ On-site distribution and renewal of transit passes using a mobile printer at high school locations ▶ On-bus transit orientation to teach students how to ride the bus and the many benefits of choosing public transit ▶ Smart card technology gathers quality ridership data 	<p>For the city:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Educate the next generation of commuters to make more efficient and sustainable choices in transportation ▶ Encourage long-term public transit ridership ▶ Anticipate and envision the emerging future city <p>For the school boards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Increase affordability of field trips and cooperative education ▶ Encourage community integration and experiential learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Promotes social equity by providing all high school students with free access to public transit ▶ Improves quality of life for students through increased access, opportunity, choice and freedom ▶ Increases affordable access to cooperative education and experiential learning ▶ Generates cost savings and more efficient delivery of co-op, field trips and community education programs ▶ Reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improves air quality and reduces congestion

How Kingston's program started

The City of Kingston and local school boards created the Transit High School Bus Pass Program together. It all started in 2012, when Kingston City Council chose to give grade 9 students fully subsidized transit passes as a positive step toward a more sustainable future. At the time, Kingston Transit staff discovered that several barriers were preventing students from using a free transit pass, such as not knowing how to use the transit system, not knowing where or how to pick up the pass, and having no experience riding the bus. The solution? Transit orientation sessions to teach students how to ride the bus.

This program is low-cost and uses existing technology but requires **strong partnerships and willingness** to work with local school boards and students to reinforce incremental, positive change.

Program overview

At a glance

- ▶ The City of Kingston gives students in grades nine to 12 free access to Kingston Transit through the Transit High School Bus Pass Program.
- ▶ The fully subsidized passes are distributed on-site at schools along with a transit orientation session.
- ▶ The on-bus orientation introduces students to the bus, the transit system and proper rider etiquette.

Audience

- ▶ High school students 21 years or younger.
- ▶ Includes students from schools governed by all school boards (public, Catholic, French-language and private) as well as those receiving home-based education.

Purpose

- ▶ **Empowerment** — Youth learn how to ride the bus and build the skills, tools and confidence to explore public transit.
- ▶ **Encouragement** — Youth experience the social, economic and environmental benefits of using public transportation.
- ▶ **Confidence** — Riders gain practical experience taking the bus in a safe environment.
- ▶ **Independence** — Youth gain independent mobility at no financial cost.

Shared value for cities and school boards

- ▶ Address climate change
- ▶ Grow or improve the transit system
- ▶ Manage the cost of moving students
- ▶ Promote social equity
- ▶ Increase experiential learning
- ▶ Grow and attract new long-term riders

2 How Kingston's program works

Context

The City of Kingston

Kingston is a dynamic city located along Lake Ontario. It is the second-largest city in Eastern Ontario, with a population of 161,175 (as of 2016).⁶ Twenty-one per cent of the population (about 34,000) is under the age of 20, representing a large demographic group for the Transit High School Bus Pass Program.⁷

Kingston Transit

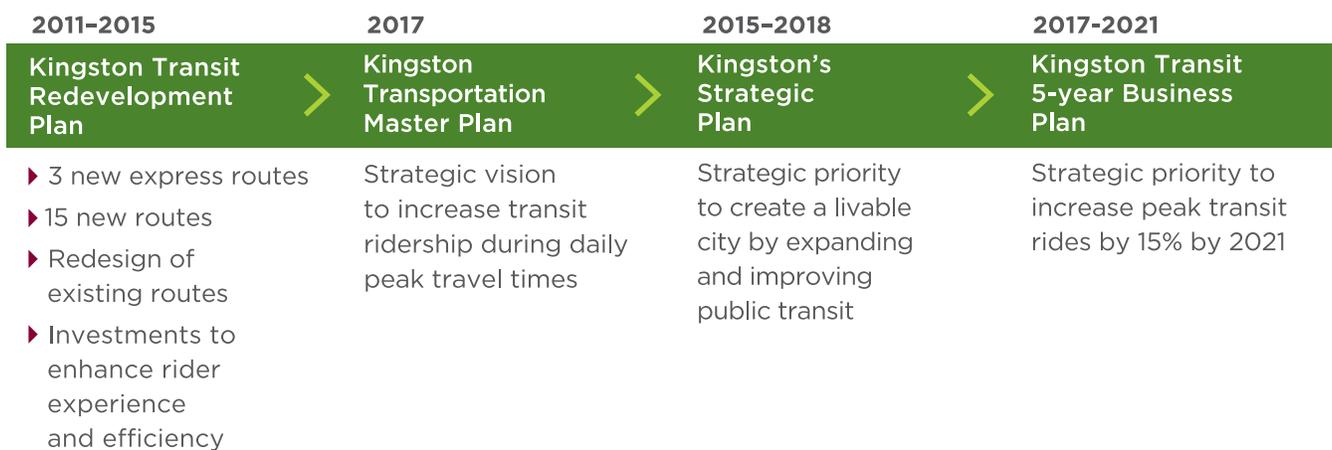
Kingston Transit operates under the Corporation of the City of Kingston. It provides public transit service to the urban areas of Kingston and local service to the neighbouring rural community of Amherstview. As of 2018, Kingston Transit operates 21 routes, including four express routes and three seasonal routes.⁸

Years of investment have made Kingston Transit the fastest-growing public transportation system in Canada.⁹ Since 2011, the City of Kingston has approved several transit service expansions, as laid out in the Kingston Transit Redevelopment Plan (2011–2015),¹⁰ Kingston Transportation Master Plan (2015),¹¹ Kingston Strategic Plan (2015–2018),¹² and Kingston Transit's 5-year Business Plan (2017–2021)¹³. Total ridership has increased by over 73 per cent since 2011 — the highest degree of ridership growth in any Canadian city.¹⁴ Kingston Transit's annual ridership continues to grow, with over six million rides per year and counting.¹⁵



Source: Kingston Transit

Transit policy context





Kingston school boards

In Kingston, Limestone District School Board (LDSB) and Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board (ALCDSB) educate the majority of students in the community.

LDSB

19,000+
students

57
schools

8
education centres

ALCDSB

11,000+
students

37
schools

5
adult learning sites

Transit fares (2018)¹⁶

Free access to transit increases demand, resulting in a need for increased service frequency. In turn, increased service frequency makes public transit a more attractive option for paying riders.

Kingston transit fares (2018)

Fare group	Per ride	Monthly pass
Child (0-14)	Free	Free
High school student (15-21)	Free	Free
Youth (15-24)	\$3	\$56.50
Adult (25-64)	\$3	\$76
Senior (65+)	\$3	\$56.50

Program team

Partnership is critical to the success of this program. The diverse members of the program team all contribute to the successful uptake of the program across the City of Kingston, Kingston Transit and the school boards. It is important to note that stakeholders will vary from community to community. In Kingston's experience, the three main roles that team members have played are as program initiators, operators and champions ([see Appendix D for more information on Kingston's program team](#)).

Program initiator

The program initiator has an essential role in kicking off a new project to meet the needs of a target group. The first steps involve working with various stakeholders to build momentum around the project. This includes defining the program's overarching goals and benefits for the community. One of the major strategic responsibilities is to garner political support for the program.

Program operators

To ensure successful implementation, it is important to have committed individuals both at the municipal transit authority and in the school board(s).

The director of transportation and several marketing administrators with Kingston Transit engaged and empowered their staff to launch this program. These staff members are critical to the delivery of the program, as they:

- ▶ assist with the coordination of school visits
- ▶ provide a mobile printer for on-site pass distribution at school
- ▶ book a bus and driver for on-site orientation
- ▶ communicate with the public
- ▶ schedule and prepare passes for school visits

At the school board(s), team members were responsible for:

- ▶ communicating with schools about the transit pass program
- ▶ preparing logistics for on-site orientations and pass distribution at all schools within respective school boards
- ▶ running the orientation for the students
- ▶ working closely with the school boards' communications teams on external communications

Program champions

Program champions are key to successful implementation and can be any individuals that support the program. They can be city council members or school board trustees, or they can belong to a community organization. In Kingston, the program champion supported the program from inception to delivery.

Resources

Financial considerations

Providing high school students with access to fully subsidized transit passes costs approximately \$250,000 per year. The costs are offset in part by a combined contribution of \$60,000 from the two school boards (LDSB and ALCDSB) and an additional \$100,000–125,000 from the Ontario Gas Tax Fund for each year of the program. The City of Kingston receives provincial gas tax funding based on population and transit ridership. As population and ridership grow relative to other Ontario municipalities, gas tax funding also increases.¹⁷ Ongoing funding from other sources is required to fill the funding gap, which ranges between \$65,000 and \$90,000 annually, currently paid by Kingston Transit.

For Kingston, securing external funding for the Transit High School Bus Pass Program did not determine whether the program would go forward. Implementing the program was driven by political leaders who chose to invest in educating the next generation of city commuters to make better use of transit for a more sustainable future.

Staff capacity

Staff capacity and staff time allocation are key to running the program successfully. For this program, the following staff resources are required:

Staff	Responsibilities
Transit representative (marketing/administration staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Takes photos and prints passes on-site for students
Transit operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Drives the bus during orientation
Transit authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide a mobile printer for on-site pass distribution ▶ Book a bus and driver for on-site orientation ▶ Assist with the coordination of school visits
Program champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Generates templates for information letters and field trip forms, and provides transit registration forms ▶ Works with each school to coordinate the schedule for the orientation session(s) ▶ Sets up site locations for pass distribution ▶ Delivers on-bus presentations for transit orientation ▶ Works with school board's communications department and media outreach ▶ Manages requests and questions regarding the program
School point person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provides materials for orientation set-up (tables, chairs, extension cords, etc.) ▶ Assists with coordination and set-up of orientation
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Accompany classes and bring students to orientation to get their passes

Kingston's Field Trip Pass

In 2017, the City of Kingston launched the Kingston Transit Teacher Field Trip Pass Pilot to complement the Transit High School Bus Pass Program. This program is available for all students from junior kindergarten to grade 12 and provides free access to Kingston Transit for school field trips.

The purpose of the program is to reduce the cost of field trips, encourage experiential learning and encourage future transit ridership.

Build momentum with a field trip pass program

Start the relationship. The Field Trip Pass is a great way to start the relationship between transit authorities and local school boards. Consider also other organizations or members of the community that could benefit from the partnership (e.g. cultural services, extracurricular sports teams, community organizations).

Eliminate barriers. The program teaches both students and teachers how to use the bus and navigate the city. If teachers do not normally take the bus, the field trip pass is a great way to promote experiential learning for students and teachers with clear communication and support from Kingston Transit. The design of the field trip pass program eliminates several steps for the teacher in planning field trips (e.g. booking a yellow bus, collecting money, subsidizing costs for students, paying the invoice, and rolling loose change).

Save money. In Kingston, children 14 years and under ride public transit for free. Other than the annual administrative fee, there are no additional costs per field trip.



Source: Limestone District School Board

How does it work?

- ▶ Public transit is identified in the field trip permission form for students as the method of transportation.
- ▶ Field trip passes for teachers and chaperones are available on lanyards in the main office of each school.
- ▶ Only one pass is required per class, regardless of the number of chaperones, aids, volunteers, etc.
- ▶ A transit point person is available via email or phone to assist teachers with route planning beforehand.

Benefits

- ▶ Reduces the cost of field trip transportation
- ▶ Reduces the administrative burden of organizing travel for field trips
- ▶ Allows schools to have more field trips
- ▶ Increases the number of transit rides off-peak
- ▶ Trains riders and creates exposure to transit at an earlier age
- ▶ Improves access to cultural and educational facilities, increasing the use of those facilities

Kingston's program timeline

2012

Program launch for **grade 9**

- ▶ Project initiated by former mayor Mark Gerretsen
- ▶ Launch of one-year pilot for grade 9 students attending high schools in Kingston from LDSB and ALCDDB (subject to annual review)
- ▶ Students travel to city hall or Cataraqui Mall to pick up passes

2014

Program extension to **grade 11**

- ▶ Council decision to extend the program to all grade 11 students from LDSB and ALCDDB
- ▶ Subject to continued \$30,000 combined contribution from both school boards

2016

Three-year program extension

- ▶ Council decision to continue student transit pass program on a pilot basis for another three-year period
- ▶ Subject to combined contribution of \$60,000 from the two school boards

2013

Program extension to **grade 10**

- ▶ Council decision to extend the program to all grade 10 students from LDSB and ALCDDB
- ▶ Subject to \$30,000 combined contribution from both school boards
- ▶ **First on-site pass distribution and transit orientation at high schools**

2015

Program extension to **grade 12**

- ▶ Council decision to extend the program to all grade 9-12 students in **all school boards** (public, Catholic, French-language and private) as well as those receiving **home-based education**
- ▶ Subject to \$45,000 combined contribution from the two school boards
- ▶ Council decision to assist graduating grade 12 students' transition to paid passes by providing an additional four months of free transit access after graduation

2017

Launch of field trip pass

- ▶ Introduction of **Kingston Transit Teacher Field Trip Pass Pilot** (see [Field Trip Pass section](#))
- ▶ Generates cost savings for school boards, encourages experiential learning, and increases efficiency of program delivery

3 Setting up your program: Working with schools to train ridership

“Providing passes to students is a great opportunity to encourage ridership as we continue to make transit service improvements.... Through a partnership with our local school boards, we can continue and expand this project to encourage young people to get on board.”
— FORMER MAYOR MARK GERRETSEN (2013)

Chapter at a glance

- ▶ Set up a rider training program and grow long-term ridership
- ▶ Determine possible funding sources
- ▶ Craft your narrative to create value for your community
- ▶ Design the program to meet your community’s needs

Six key stages to setting up your program

This chapter will walk you through the six basic stages of setting up your program. It is important to remember that the process laid out here is only a guideline. It assumes that communities do not currently have an existing partnership with local school boards. Municipalities should adapt the program to match their resources and needs. Although the decision to offer free transit passes to high school students in Kingston is unique, the explicit need for orientation, education and awareness applies to all communities.



CONNECT

Build new relationships and create strong partnerships to build your team



PRIORITIZE

Create a shared vision and prioritize benefits to make the case for action



DESIGN

Design your program to match the unique resources in your community



IMPLEMENT

Work together to implement the program and deliver the transit orientation



EDUCATE

Educate and inspire students about the benefits of riding public transit



SUSTAIN

Learn how to measure and report your results and share the story with others



Source: Rob Mooy

STAGE 1: Connect

Build new relationships and create strong partnerships to build your team

Define your challenge

Before starting, assess your community's needs and willingness to participate in a student transit pass program.

What is the particular challenge your community wishes to address? Use this to define what success looks like on a variety of time horizons and for different target audiences.

Imagine new partnerships

In order to deliver your program, you will need to identify key stakeholders who should be involved in the process and make a plan for how you will engage them. It is important to map key stakeholders to understand their unique perspectives and create narratives and program design elements to engage them effectively. All stakeholders will have different perspectives on the risks and rewards of your program. Your objective is to understand their concerns and consider those concerns in your design.

Map your stakeholders. Consider other organizations that may have an interest in, or influence on, the program.

Meet multiple objectives. Consider the priorities of other stakeholders and how to meet multiple stakeholder objectives (e.g. growing transit ridership).

Key stakeholders to consider in your program design:

- ▶ City council
- ▶ Transit authority
- ▶ School board(s)
- ▶ School staff
- ▶ Students
- ▶ Community organizations

TIP

Consider how you can form a partnership between your municipality and local school boards to initiate this program.

“It is especially important every year to inform staff at each school. This includes principals, vice-principals, teachers, educational assistants, or early childhood educators. It is a very large, somewhat transient system and there should be no expectation that they know about the intricacies of the program.” – DANIEL HENDRY, PROGRAM CHAMPION (2018)

Examples of engagement strategies in Kingston:

- ▶ Marketing posters (art collaboration with students)
- ▶ Bus wrapping collaboration with local art students
- ▶ Information letters and permission forms
- ▶ School presentations

Build relationships and engage partners

Every successful program brings together different perspectives, needs and opportunities.

Start with the political will and a core group whose interests align with the program, then expand outwards.

From your stakeholder map, assess and consider the desired level of engagement for each stakeholder. Will you want to inform, consult, involve, collaborate or empower them? The key idea here is to identify the different types of partners you will need, and then start to build relationships with them.

In Kingston, former mayor Mark Gerretsen initiated the program and brought together key decision-makers from city council and local school boards to offer grade 9 students free access to Kingston Transit. From there, they engaged school and transit staff, and identified a program champion to carry the program forward.

TIP

Consider other groups or organizations that would benefit from increased student mobility, like sports leagues, employers and volunteer organizations. Engage them and seek their support.

Identify engagement strategies by considering the interests of stakeholders:

- ▶ Can you identify the champions that already exist in your community and get them involved?
- ▶ Do any collaboration points already exist that you can build on?
- ▶ What is your current relationship with these stakeholders?
- ▶ What are the potential areas where you could collaborate?
- ▶ Could this opportunity complement any other initiatives in the community or region (e.g. municipal recreation program)?
- ▶ Are there external funders that may be interested in supporting this opportunity?

Questions to consider before creating a strategic partnership:

- ▶ Why do you want to form a partnership?
- ▶ What benefits do you hope to see from a stronger relationship?
- ▶ By working together, can you provide significant benefits for each partner or the community as a whole?
- ▶ Are there advantages to pursuing this opportunity together rather than separately?

Build a strong partnership

Mutual respect, shared value and trust form the basis of a strong partnership. Effective partnerships bring together the capabilities and resources of stakeholders to address a common goal. Forming a strategic partnership between the city and school boards in your community will be the foundation of your transit program.

The partnership between the City of Kingston and local school boards is informal — there is no formal or legal agreement between the organizations, which allows the staff to be nimble. However, this model may not work for every municipality.

Get your partners on board by establishing the relationship. There are many ways to formalize a partnership—for example a partnership action plan, memorandum of understanding (MOU), contract, council resolution or another form of written agreement.

Staff your program and build your team

In Kingston’s experience, there are three main clusters of team members: the initiators, the operators, and the champions.

As you move through to implementation, build your team to broaden your knowledge base, develop relationships and support successful implementation. Consider the type of members you need on your team to initiate and carry the program forward. This could differ from community to community.

Identify a program initiator. Identify the person who will kick-start the project. This is not a formal role within the team, but this individual will be responsible for bringing together the right people to initiate the program.

Identify a point person from the transit authority and one from the school board. To ensure successful implementation, it is important to involve committed individuals from both the municipal transit authority and the school board.

- ▶ The role of the transit point person is to assist with student orientation by providing a bus and transit operator and coordinating the logistics of pass distribution.
- ▶ The school board point person is responsible for communicating with schools to organize and run the orientation.

See Section 2 [for more information on roles and responsibilities.](#)

Find a champion...or champions. Program champions are the key to successful implementation. They act as the main advocates for the program. Champions can be anyone supporting the goals of the program — a councillor or mayor, a community member or business owner, a school principal or school board trustee. They play an integral role in carrying the program through implementation by offering support and assistance to overcome challenges or obstacles, and by championing the benefits of the program to other stakeholders.

Questions to consider when assembling your team:

- ▶ Is there someone at each school location who already has an interest in the initiative?
- ▶ How can you use existing staff resources from transit and the school board to support this program (e.g. marketing/administrative personnel)?



STAGE 2: **Prioritize**

Create a shared vision and prioritize benefits to make the case for action

To succeed, partners need to combine their efforts to achieve shared goals. Build support for a program in your community by understanding the benefits, aligning the interests of key stakeholders, and making the case for action.

Program benefits

Social	Community	Economic	Environmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Promotes social equity ▶ Encourages involvement in extracurricular activities and recreational programs ▶ Promotes travel independence and confidence ▶ Fosters skill development ▶ Encourages experiential learning ▶ Increases access to year-round volunteer, co-operative education and employment opportunities ▶ Improves quality of life through opportunity, access, choice and freedom ▶ Increases youth independence and fosters resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Fosters community development – transit corridors are natural focal points for economic, social and cultural activities ▶ Increases access to cultural facilities and incentivizes students to participate in recreational programs ▶ Redirects money to other needs in the community from programs and organizations that previously subsidized transit for students (e.g. United Way) ▶ Decreases congestion around schools ▶ Creates stronger community connections ▶ Provides opportunities to engage in community activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Grows and attracts long-term ridership by educating young riders ▶ Reduces the cost of moving students ▶ Delivers more cost-effective school programming ▶ Allows for more school activities and field trips at no extra cost ▶ Reduces the individual cost of student travel on a daily basis ▶ Increases access to gas tax funding for municipalities ▶ Provides students with greater independent mobility to access year-round employment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improves air quality and reduces congestion ▶ Reduces the number of single-occupancy vehicles ▶ Reduces the need for many separate trips in private vehicles ▶ Allows for more school outings and field trips using existing buses and routes (e.g. less need for school buses, reducing emissions) ▶ Encourages youth to make more sustainable transportation choices

Determine your funding strategy

Developing a coherent funding strategy is key to getting your program off the ground and requires careful consideration of how you will sustain your program in the long term. As you begin to design your program, you will need to anticipate what it will cost to provide subsidized public transit to high school students and develop a transit orientation program.

Explore funding opportunities available in your municipal jurisdiction and identify the best fit for your municipality's transit needs. Please keep in mind that the following is **not an exhaustive list** of the funding opportunities available for each municipality. Certain funding sources, such as the federal Gas Tax Fund, vary by province and territory based on agreements with the federal government.

Funding source	Example
In-kind contributions: Staff capacity and resources are key to ensuring municipalities and school boards have the resources they need for their program to succeed.	In Kingston, existing staff members from marketing/administration assisted with delivering and maintaining the program.
Dedicated allocation from existing taxes or fees: Even a small percentage of a larger tax or fee in your jurisdiction can provide the foundation for your program.	<p>In Quebec, the province raises revenues for transit funding through a provincial tax on vehicle registration.</p> <p>In British Columbia, the Victoria Regional Transit Commission offsets a portion of transit costs through a local fuel tax.¹⁸</p>
Federal Gas Tax Fund: This fund provides dedicated, long-term funding for each Canadian province. The funding helps local municipalities with a wide range of projects, including projects related to public transportation.	The Government of Canada and New Brunswick have a formal \$225.2-million agreement over a five-year period on the transfer of federal gas tax revenues. ¹⁹
Provincial Gas Tax Fund: This fund provides long-term, sustainable transit funding for municipalities.	In Ontario, the Gas Tax Fund provides funding toward both capital and operating expenditures for public transit. ²⁰ The City of Kingston receives provincial gas tax funding based on population and transit ridership. As population and ridership grow, gas tax funding also increases. ²¹
Federal Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (PTIF): PTIF offers dedicated funding for each Canadian province that supports investments in public priorities, including projects that improve public transit.	In Ontario, PTIF provides funding for transit projects in cities, which include investments in the repair, modernization and expansion of city transit and active transportation networks. ²²

Funding source

Financial incentive programs: Several provinces offer funding programs directly for transit projects.

Example

Nova Scotia has numerous programs, such as the Nova Scotia Transit Research Incentive Program (NS-TRIP), which provides funding for transit projects that generate new and improved transit services in rural areas and underserved urban areas of the province.²³

Top-up contributions: Many provinces share the cost of transit with local governments through matching contributions.

In British Columbia, the province provides BC Transit and its affiliates with matching contributions on an annual basis.²⁴



STAGE 3: Design

Design your program to match the unique resources in your community

Program set-up

Before you begin to design your program, consider these questions to define the scope of your project:

- ▶ How long do you want this program to run?
- ▶ Who will use the program?
- ▶ What short- and long-term municipal goals does the program advance?
- ▶ Whose interests (which stakeholders) are served?

The City of Kingston introduced the pilot transit pass program for grade 9 students after looking at the transportation patterns of high school student ridership. Data showed that grade 9 students used public transit less frequently than those in grades 10 to 12. The primary audience of the project was grade 9 students, who were identified as most in need of the social skills, decision-making authority and confidence to partake in sustainable transportation.

First steps:

- ▶ Define the short- and long-term goals of your program.
- ▶ Examine the ridership among high school students in your community. Do grade 9 students use public transit more or less than grade 12 students?
- ▶ Assess the administrative and logistical capacity of staff members.

Design the program

Examine high school locations and the existing bus service. Assess whether you will need to expand or change transit service to implement your planned program. Determine if overall transit service improvements or increased service frequency will accommodate high school students.

In Kingston, nearly all high schools are located on or near main transportation arteries with existing transit service.

Anticipate peak riding times and adjust schedules if necessary. Tracking quality data will help you anticipate peak riding times. With this information, you can adjust service schedules as needed.



Source: Kingston Transit

During program implementation, the City of Kingston invested in an incremental funding strategy to expand transit service broadly. This helped accommodate increased ridership from high school students. ([See Section 3 above for more information on Kingston's funding strategy](#)).

Get quality data. Smart cards with tap technology guarantee high-quality data for tracking ridership and collect accurate ridership information based on time, date and location. Kingston Transit uses a unique product code for each school and grade level.

Consider pass coverage. Determine the priorities in your community and decide whether students will have eight- or 12-month access to free transit. The Kingston Transit pass for high school students is valid for 12 months (from September to August) to allow students the opportunity to continue using the passes in the summer for activities not related to school.

Plan your transit orientation. Transit orientation complements the bus pass program by teaching students how to ride the bus and navigate the

transit system. During the first week of school, transit passes are issued to all students on-site at each school. Grade 9 students receive an on-bus orientation, delivered while riding the bus. A transit bus and driver are available on-site for the orientation. Transit orientation is the key element of the Kingston Transit High School Bus Pass Program.

Benefits of smart card technology:

- ▶ Collects information about ridership
- ▶ Tracks individual and community-wide data
- ▶ Passes are identifiable by school board, grade level, and name

TIP Avoid gaps in pass coverage.

Kingston Transit allows a grace period until mid-September to ensure students have a smooth transition into the next school year.

Orientation content to include:

- ▶ Rider etiquette
- ▶ Navigating the transit system
- ▶ Public transit safety
- ▶ Social, economic, environmental and community benefits of riding the bus

See [Stage 5 — Educate](#) for more details on what to include in your transit orientation.



Source: John Laframboise

STAGE 4: Implement

Work together to implement the program and deliver the transit orientation

Coordinate with schools

Informing parents throughout the process is key to minimizing risks and anticipating challenges down the road. Parents will need to give informed consent for their children's participation in the program, before students can receive a transit pass and take part in the orientation. Reach out to schools earlier in the year (i.e. May–June) before the upcoming term to select the date of orientation in September. The program champion contacts each school to coordinate the timeline of events and to inform teachers, parents and students about the orientation.

TIP

In Kingston, pass distribution often coincides with grade 9 orientation at each school. If you are providing orientation for multiple schools on the same day, find a timeline that suits the needs of your community and coordinate with your local school boards.

1

Send an email to school contacts to coordinate the timeline of events and pick a date for orientation (Appendix A).

2

Contact each teacher and have them send an information letter and permission form (Appendix B) and a transit registration form (Appendix C) home with students.

3

Parents need to read, sign and return the forms to their children's teachers.

4

Teachers manage the distribution and collection of forms and keep forms until orientation day for students to give to transit representatives to get processed for passes.

Sample orientation timeline

Time	Pass distribution	Bus orientation
9:30–10:00 a.m.	Teachers bring students to the orientation location at the school (approximately 60 students at a time), with their forms, to get their transit passes and receive orientation. Divide students into two groups.	Bus arrives at the school.
10:00–11:00 a.m.	Group 1: 30 students get processed for passes by transit authorities on-site. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Students wait in line and give the forms to a Kingston Transit representative. ▶ A transit staff member takes their photo. ▶ The pass is printed and given to the student (this takes roughly 1.5 minutes per student). 	Group 2: 30 students board the bus and receive orientation.
11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	Group 2: 30 students get processed for passes by transit authorities on-site.	Group 1: 30 students board the bus and receive orientation.
12:00 p.m.–ongoing	Repeat the process for each subsequent group.	Repeat the process for each subsequent group.

Checklist for program planning

- ▶ **Pick a date.** Reach out to schools ahead of time to pick an appropriate date in the following school year for orientation. See [Appendix A](#) for an outreach email template.
- ▶ **Plan the agenda together.** The program champion should work with each school to clarify the orientation objectives and agree on the agenda and timeline of events for orientation.
- ▶ **Assign a point person for each school.** Each school will need to identify a point person to assist with the program on the day of orientation. The point person will be responsible for coordinating with teachers to manage the distribution and collection of forms to get students their transit passes.
- ▶ **Confirm a space for processing.** You will need a space at each school that can accommodate the printing and distribution of passes. There should be enough space for students to wait in line, and for tables, chairs and extension cords (if you are using a mobile printer or other electronic device to issue the passes).
- ▶ **Engage teachers.** Teachers will need to prepare permission forms ([Appendix B](#)) and transit registration forms ([Appendix C](#)) for their respective classes. The permission form should provide students with program information and indicate that students will be receiving bus passes. The transit registration form will require students' personal information and therefore will require informed consent from parents.



Source: iStock

- ▶ **Consider the logistics of pass renewal for existing students.** If your plan is to introduce the program starting with one grade and then add subsequent grades as the program develops, consider how existing students can renew their passes on-site.

TIP

In Kingston, students grades 10 and up can renew their passes starting in September at any authorized Kingston Transit service centre. Students must have a valid student identification card and their school timetable for the upcoming year to renew the pass.

Roles and responsibilities of staff on program orientation day

Roles	Responsibilities	Materials
Pass issuing team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Operator for mobile printer ▶ Transit representative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Mobile printer ▶ Computer ▶ Other electronic equipment ▶ Pre-loaded pass cards
On-bus orientation team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Transit operator ▶ Lead presenter for orientation (could be the program champion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Bus
On-site support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Program champion ▶ Teachers (to bring classes down to get their passes) ▶ School point person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Tables ▶ Chairs ▶ Extension cords ▶ Space



STAGE 5: Educate

Educate and inspire students about of the benefits of riding public transit

The need for orientation

Most high school students do not know how to take the bus, let alone plan the route to get to their destination. Exposing students to the public transit system at an earlier age increases their potential to continue as regular paying and committed passengers when they are no longer eligible for the program. Transit orientation trains riders, helping them gain confidence, and eliminates barriers to riding the bus. By integrating transit orientation with the distribution of free passes, the program teaches students practical skills for riding the bus, including proper rider etiquette, safety, rules and the environmental, economic and social benefits of taking the bus.



Sources: Kingston Transit

Logistics

Find someone who is willing to be the lead presenter. This could be the program champion, the program initiator, or anyone else on your team. You will need someone with high energy to engage and educate students on the bus ride.

TIPS FOR PRESENTERS

- ▶ **Be open to questions.** *Encourage students to ask questions throughout the orientation and use the orientation as a learning opportunity for skill development.*
- ▶ **Aim to educate.** *Identify which students already have experience with public transit and aim to teach them something new.*

Deliver the orientation

Orientation steps

Before boarding the bus

- ▶ **Introduce yourself.** As the presenter, introduce yourself to the students and let them know where they will be going on the bus.
- ▶ **Demonstrate the bike rack.** Starting at the front of the bus, show students how to use the bike rack.

Boarding the bus

- ▶ **Explain how to greet the bus driver and tap the card.** Show students how to board the bus, tap their card, and greet the bus driver upon entering the bus. Explain the significance of moving to the back of the bus to avoid congestion at the front and avoid blocking doors.

Riding the bus

- ▶ **Educate and inform.** Once students start to board the bus, introduce them to the driver, teach them about rider etiquette, explain the bus routes, and describe the newfound freedom this program offers. Explain the environmental, social, economic and health benefits. This information can instill in students the confidence to ride the bus more comfortably now and in the future.

Key content to include

Navigating the transit system

- ▶ **Stopping the bus:** How do you stop the bus? Where will it stop? Buses only stop at designated stops.
- ▶ **Express routes:** What is the difference between express and regular routes? Express routes generally operate at higher frequency during peak hours and can get you to your destination quicker with fewer stops, although express routes operate differently in every municipality.
- ▶ **Planning your route:** How do you use the transit app (if available) or Google Trip Planner? Show students how to use these applications by entering information on their destinations.
- ▶ **Transfers:** How does a transfer station work and why is it important? Transfer stations serve as stops for multiple bus routes and allow passengers to change from one route to another.
- ▶ **Taking the bus to school:** What is the closest bus stop to the high school? (Make sure to determine the location before orientation.)

Key content to include

Bus rider etiquette

- ▶ **What do you do with your backpack?** Take the backpack off when you enter the bus and keep it between your feet or on your lap.
- ▶ **Can you eat on the bus?** Yes, but please be respectful about it and dispose of your waste.
- ▶ **How do you use courtesy seating?** Show students how to lift and push the seats down and explain the importance of priority/courtesy seating for transit riders.

Benefits of riding the bus

- ▶ **Freedom:** The bus can give you freedom to volunteer or hold a job without needing a ride from someone. It also gives you freedom to hang out with your friends or meet your family.
- ▶ **Savings:** How much does a regular youth bus pass cost, and how much will they save with the program?
- ▶ **Health:** The bus improves quality of life by promoting healthier habits and better air quality.
- ▶ **Environment:** Cars have environmental impact. Riding the bus helps reduce the number of cars on the road, which in turn contributes to a reduction in GHG emissions.
- ▶ **Skill development:** Learning how to use transit is a transferable skill.

Public transit safety

- ▶ **What do you do if you feel uncomfortable on the bus?** Go to the bus operator and let them know that there is a problem. If possible, sit near the driver if you feel uncomfortable.
- ▶ **Stay alert:** Keep personal belongings close and be aware of your surroundings.
- ▶ **Be confident:** Use your voice to report harassment on public transit.
- ▶ **Buddy up:** Stay safe by travelling in pairs or with a group of friends. If you are travelling alone, make sure to only get off at well-lit areas or check with your transit system to find out if buses stop between designated stops after sunset.



STAGE 6: **Sustain**

Learn how to measure and report your results and share the story with others

Consider these questions to develop your communications strategy:

- ▶ How will you measure and share your results with others?
- ▶ Who are the key stakeholders you want to reach?

- ▶ How will you engage stakeholders and decision-makers?

Monitor and maintain your program

To understand the impact of your program, you will need to monitor and evaluate the program from start to finish.

Determine the need for measurement and evaluation. Monitoring program results helps you communicate value to your community, while managing risks, addressing issues as they arise, and understanding the impacts of your program. Determine why you want to measure and evaluate your results. Is it to show impact,



Source: Paul Wash

get more funding, increase ridership, or generate more revenue?

Decide what to monitor. Identify what type of information you will need to gather to show the program’s impacts. Possible data points include data on ridership (e.g. total trips by day, hour, time, etc.) and increase in transit sales.

Collect high-quality data. Based on the technology available in your community, consider how to collect the best-quality data to track your results. Smart tap technology can track ridership information more effectively by date, time and location, but must be set up at the beginning to enable the tracking of ridership data.

Consider stakeholders’ interests. Keep the program’s stakeholders in mind when measuring and evaluating impacts. In Kingston, high-quality

data is useful for demonstrating the importance and impacts of the program to council, school board trustees, committees and staff.

Share your story

Once the program is up and running it is crucial to have a robust communications strategy to disseminate ongoing and clear information about the program through various channels. Sharing information on the results of the program raises awareness and communicates what you have learned. For stakeholders like funders and partner organizations, this not only demonstrates value — it also builds trust.

Communicating program results is also a great way to share best practices with other municipalities interested in adopting a similar program.

Learn and improve. Capture feedback from various stakeholders and integrate this into your program design.

Examples of knowledge-sharing platforms:

- ▶ Local media
- ▶ Videos
- ▶ School board communications networks
- ▶ Social media
- ▶ Infographics
- ▶ Presentations
- ▶ Posters

4 Lessons learned



Source: Kingston Transit

The Kingston Transit High School Bus Pass Program has many lessons to share with other communities looking to apply this approach in their own communities.

These key lessons reflect both the positive experiences and the challenges of the Kingston Transit High School Bus Program:

- ▶ **Include transit orientation.** Orientation is essential. Giving fully subsidized passes to students is not enough to get them to ride the bus. They also need to learn how to use the service. Through orientation and experience with transit at an earlier age, students develop the confidence to continue as committed passengers in the future. Transit orientation teaches students the skills and benefits that come with riding the bus and encourages independence, confidence and freedom.
- ▶ **Simplify the process.** Once students in Kingston discovered how easy it was to get the pass, they were on board with riding the bus. At-school distribution with mobile printers allows students to receive their passes on-site the same day as transit orientation. In the first year of the program, students had to pick up their passes at city hall and present their school schedules (many school schedules were not issued until November), causing low uptake and delays in issuing passes.
- ▶ **Keep parents informed and receive consent.** Keep parents informed throughout the process and receive written consent for their children's participation in the program. Use permission forms, information letters and transit registration forms to ensure that you have informed consent to provide students with free passes and collect data for reporting. The forms should include a waiver of liability, the transit authority's privacy policy, terms of use, and disclosure of information.
- ▶ **Track quality data.** The data you use to measure progress and evaluate results must match the goals and priorities of your program. The use of smart card technology to track ridership helps the City of Kingston collect key information, such as peak boarding times and frequency of rides per person per day.

5 Frequently asked questions

The City of Kingston's Transit High School Bus Pass Program is the co-winner of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) 2018 Sustainable Communities Award for transportation, and received FCM's inaugural Inspire Award, celebrating sustainability, innovation and creativity.

1 How did the program start?

Former mayor of Kingston, Mark Gerretsen, brought together representatives from Kingston Transit, city council, and the Limestone District School Board (LDSB) to initiate the program. See [Section 1, How Kingston's program started](#), for more information.

2 Why did Kingston start with grade 9 students only? When did they decide to add grades 10, 11 and 12?

The City of Kingston chose to introduce the program for grade 9 students after looking at high school student ridership patterns. Data showed that grade 9 students used the bus less frequently than students in grades 10 to 12; so the program specifically targeted grade 9 students. The addition of grades 10, 11 and 12 occurred in each subsequent year of the program after council saw the benefits of the program.

3 Do high school students have 10 or 12 months of access?

Students have access to transit services for 12 months to allow students to transition into the summer months and the following school year. Providing access for the entire year increases students' access to recreational, cultural and educational facilities, and various employment opportunities. Ridership data from 2016 to 2017 shows that students used the pass for school travel but also outside of school trips. The highest-volume boarding locations were near retail hubs in Kingston.

4 What type of Kingston Transit orientation do students receive? Who delivers the orientation? How important is the orientation?

Daniel Hendry, the Sustainable Initiatives Coordinator for Limestone District School Board, leads the orientation for the majority of schools. The orientation is a critical component of the program. It teaches students how to use the bus and transit service, and discusses safety, etiquette, rules and the importance of using sustainable, active transportation from a young age. In the first year of the program, there was no orientation component. Data on the first year showed that students were still not using the bus, even with free transit passes. The solution to getting them on board was to teach them how to use the bus. See [Section 3, Stage 5 \(Educate\)](#), for more information.

5 Did Kingston Transit have a reduction in fare revenue? If so, how much?

The approximate annual revenue lost as a result of the program is \$250,000. A combined annual contribution of \$60,000 from the Limestone District School Board and the Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, as well as \$100,000–125,000 per year from the Ontario Gas Tax Fund, offsets most of the lost fare revenue. Kingston Transit provides additional funding to fill the gap. See [Section 2, Financial Considerations](#), for more information.

6 Did Kingston Transit have any issues meeting the increased ridership demand generated by high school students?

Because transit improvements and expansions were occurring simultaneously with the program, Kingston Transit did not need to expand or increase transit service to meet ridership demand from high school students.

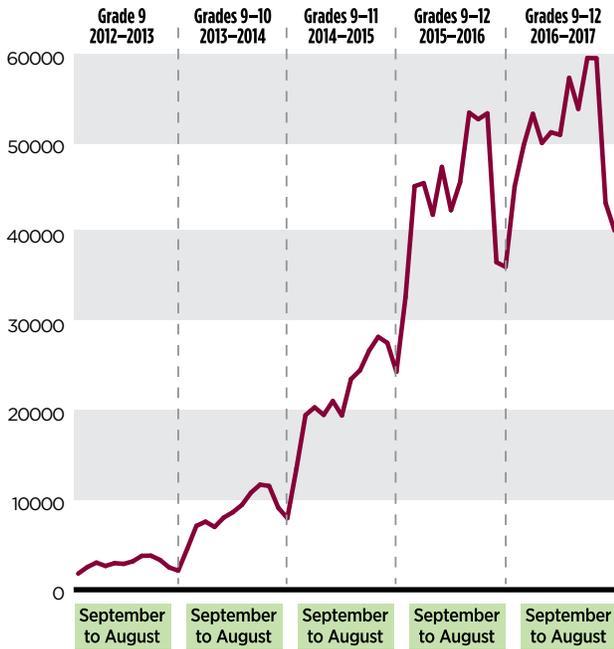
7 Is there a formal partnership agreement between Kingston Transit and the school boards?

There is no formal partnership agreement between Kingston Transit and local school boards. An informal partnership dictates the financial contribution from both school boards for every year of the program. See [Section 3, Build a Strong Partnership](#), for more information.

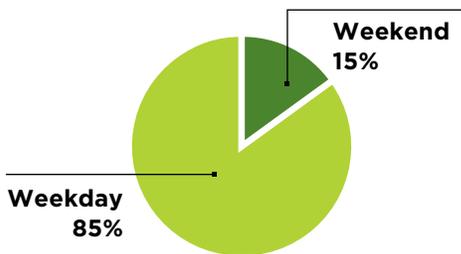
8 Was it important to track student transit ridership? How does Kingston track student ridership?

Tracking ridership is important to understanding the impact of the program. Kingston Transit uses smart card technology to collect accurate ridership data by person, time and location. See [Section 3, Stage 6 \(Sustain\), Monitor and Maintain Your Program](#), for more information.

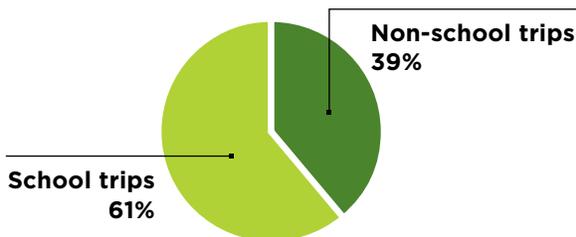
9 What are the trends in student ridership? How much ridership is school-related vs. non-school-related?



By day of week (2015-2016)



By weekday trips (2015-2016)



Graphics: Kingston Transit High School Smart Card Ridership Data from September 2012 to June 2017 (LDSB)

10 Are there any financial savings for the school boards?

The Transit High School Bus Pass Program results in savings by reducing the cost of transporting students to and from school. For instance, it has allowed certain schools to phase out a couple of yellow school buses for the morning and afternoon commutes. The program also enables students to transport themselves to cooperative education sites, removing the additional cost for schools to fund their travel. The field trip pass allows for more school outings and field trips on existing buses and routes at no additional cost per trip. See [Section 3, Stage 2 \(Prioritize\)](#), for more information on the various benefits.

11 Have there been instances of inappropriate student behaviour on Kingston Transit that required attention?

Since the inception of the program in 2012, there have only been two reported incidents of inappropriate behaviour on the bus. Kingston Transit staff addressed this behaviour by communicating the consequences of misconduct or misuse of the pass, which can include confiscation of the pass.

12 **Has there been any formalized research about the program?**

A University of Waterloo graduate student conducted research on free student transit passes for her Master's thesis.²⁵ The study looks at the impacts of Kingston's High School Transit Bus Pass Program, particularly changes in transit ridership and the benefits of increased independent mobility for students. Ridership data shows that students use the passes for more than school trips and that pass holders derive mobility benefits from non-school-related trips (social, recreational, work, etc.). The study also found that birth order, family composition, and access to free transit influence students' travel independence.

13 **Has there been continued transit usage by students after they graduate from high school?**

In 2016, Kingston Transit provided fully subsidized transit passes from July to December for graduated grade 12 students staying in Kingston and not pursuing post-secondary education. During this period, there was an average of over 100 transit boardings and the average ridership was 95 trips per person. Overall, the data indicates that youth continued to use the transit system at an above-average rate when given the opportunity to do so for free.

6 Appendices



Source: Randy deKleine-Stimpson / ftbd.ca

Appendix A:

School outreach email template

Hi everyone,

Thank you all for helping me coordinate the orientation and ride on (date) at (name of school). I have heard first-hand from students about the importance of orientation day and how it helps them get to school on the first day of the semester!

Here is what the day will look like:

Time	Activity
9:30-10:00 a.m.	Bus arrives at school
10:00-11:00 a.m.	Group 1 students get processed for passes on-site while group 2 students go out for bus orientation
11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Groups switch: Group 2 students get processed for passes on-site, while group 1 students board bus and receive orientation

Action: (Name of school contact), could you confirm a space at (name of school) that we can use for processing? We will need a couple of tables and an extension cord for this space.

Action: Teachers need to prepare a field trip form. It must include wording indicating that the students will be getting a bus pass and their personal information will be given to the transit authority.

Action: Teachers need to distribute the transit registration form in advance. I suggest doing this in the coming weeks as there might be a need for information that students do not have on hand (e.g. their postal codes). Enter “grade 9” on the transit registration form for grade eight students.

Are there any comments, questions and concerns? Please let me know.

Thank you for your help,

Appendix B:

Information letter and permission form template

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As you might be aware, (name of municipality) is providing a fully subsidized bus pass to all (grade X) students for the (YYYY-YYYY) school year. In order to assist our students in getting their bus passes, we are arranging for (name of transit authority) to come to our school to take photos for the bus passes. (Name of transit authority) will also be bringing a city bus for a mini “field trip” for bus orientation. Students will board the bus at (time) and go on a 15- to 20-minute bus orientation trip while learning about public transportation. Students will then be returned to school at (time). Students will be instructed on how to ride the bus, the benefits of choosing public transit, and safety and appropriate behaviour when using the bus.

This initiative is to encourage public transit use by youth as they become independent and start making choices about transportation. All (grade X) students attending a high school in (name of municipality) will be able to ride (name of transit authority) free from (MM/DD/YY to MM/DD/YY).

On (date of orientation), a (name of transit authority) bus will arrive at the school. Between (start time) and (end time), students will leave (name of school) for a 15- to 20-minute bus orientation trip. Students will not be getting off the bus until they return to (name of school). There is no cost to students for this field trip. Classroom teachers and school administration will accompany students and supervise them on the bus.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact (name of program contact) at (phone) or (email).

Sincerely,

(Name of program contact)

I give my permission for (name of student) to participate in the field trip for bus orientation. I understand that my child will also need to have their photo taken and provide personal information on the bus application form in order to receive a bus pass.

Signature of parent/guardian

Health card number

The school should be aware of special health conditions that might affect the progress or welfare of the students while on this activity. Please specify this information, with comments or recommendations on the back of this sheet.

Appendix C: Transit registration form template

Note: Adapted from Kingston Transit



Transit Card Registration Form

Please fill in each box and print clearly.

Type of Card	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement (fee applies) <input type="checkbox"/> Updating Information		
Classification	Reloadable Cards <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Ride Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly Pass – Unlimited Travel (photo required) <input type="checkbox"/> Commuter Pass – Monthly Weekdays – Unlimited <input type="checkbox"/> Travel (photo required)		
Fare Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult <input type="checkbox"/> Student (check 1 below)	<input type="checkbox"/> *Affordable Transit Pass Include expiry date shown on your Transit Card	
	<input type="checkbox"/> *Youth (15-24 years) <input type="checkbox"/> *Senior (65+ years)	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 10 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 11 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 12	Month Day Year
First Name		Middle Name	Last Name
Home Address (incl. Apt. or Unit #)			City
Province	Postal Code	Telephone or Cell	Email Address
High School Name (if applicable, check 1 below)			
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Other:			
Employer (if applicable)		*Date of Birth	Month Day Year
* Proof of age is required for Youth and Senior cards. If no proof of date of age is provided, an Adult fare card will be issued.			
Terms and Conditions			
By using the _____, you agree that:			
a) The card remains the property of _____. It can be revoked for misuse, tampering or damaging the card. No cash refunds will be permitted. Lost or stolen cards should be reported to _____ at _____.			
b) The card must be shown at the request of _____.			
c) The Monthly Transit Card is not transferable and the card can only be used by you, the person photographed on the card.			
About your Privacy			
Include the Transit Authority's privacy statement or policy here.			
Today's Date	Month	Day	Year
Signature			
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY		Date Registered (MM-DD-YY)	
Card Registration No.		Initials	

Transit Card Registration Form

Appendix D: Details on the Kingston program team

Program Initiator



Source: Office of Mark Gerretsen

MP MARK GERRETSEN

***Member of Parliament for Kingston and the Islands, City of Kingston
Former Mayor, City of Kingston, 2010–2014***

Political leadership was the spark that started the Kingston High School Bus Pass Program. Kingston City Council and former mayor Mark Gerretsen recognized the value of children and youth learning to use public transit as a positive step toward a more sustainable future. Then-mayor Gerretsen convened a meeting with senior leadership at the school boards, which included the director of education and superintendent of business, to kick-start this program. They made the decision to provide free transit passes as a way to educate the next generation of youth on making wiser choices about where to live and work, and to encourage them to make good use of a more efficient, effective and sustainable transportation system.

Program Operator



Source: Kingston Transit

JEREMY DACOSTA

Director of Transportation, Kingston Transit

Jeremy DaCosta has been helping dramatically change Kingston's transit system over the past decade. He led initiatives such as the 2015 Kingston Transportation Master Plan, the introduction of new express routes, the inclusion of real-time bus and trip information on transit apps, the extension of Sunday and holiday service, and improvements to fare options for commuters and employers. Jeremy and his team form the foundation of this program, as they organize the buses, coordinate the distribution of student passes, and promote the program.

Program Champion



Source: Randy deKleine-Stimpson / ftbd.ca

DANIEL HENDRY

Sustainable Initiatives Coordinator, Limestone District School Board

Daniel Hendry's dedication to the local community, environmental sustainability, and community-based learning is evident through his work as the sustainable initiatives coordinator for LDSB and the manager of community-based learning and innovation at St. Lawrence College in Kingston. Daniel is the program champion for the Kingston Transit High School Bus Pass Program. He was one of the architects of the program and has played a role in every orientation session since its start. He provides guidance and inspiration to community leaders and delivers informative and encouraging presentations to students and the public.

Endnotes

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- 2 Daniel Hendry, “Kingston’s high school transit orientation program: 2018 Sustainable Communities Award winner,” Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2018, online: <<https://data.fcm.ca/prebuilt/transcripts/6EiWh82OzIw.htm>>
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- 4 “Kingston Climate Action Plan,” City of Kingston, 2011, online: <<https://www.cityofkingston.ca/documents/10180/2304312/Kingston+Climate+Action+Plan-web.pdf/fd0ac4d5-7c12-4ae7-b5db-1a48a9ed4dc7>>
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- 12 “Kingston’s Strategic Plan 2015–2018,” City of Kingston, online: <<https://www.cityofkingston.ca/apps/councilpriorities/>>
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Source: Erin Bailey

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- 24 “Regional Transit System,” BC Transit Corporation, online: <https://bctransit.com/*/about/funding-and-governance/regional>
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Additional resources

At a glance:

The Kingston High School Bus Pass Program

Videos

- ▶ FCM Sustainable Communities Award presentation by Dan Hendry: *Kingston's high school transit orientation program: 2018 Sustainable Communities Award winner*. Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2018. Online: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EiWh82Ozlw>>
- ▶ Video on Kingston increase in bus ridership: *How to increase bus ridership by 70% in your city?* Sustainability Illustrated, 2018. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdSmZ2X_6-s>

Overview

- ▶ General information on the transit passes: "Kingston Transit Passes." Limestone District School Board. Online: <https://www.limestone.on.ca/students/kingston_transit_passes>
- ▶ FCM guide/case study: *2018 Sustainable Communities Awards project guide: Transportation - Kingston*. Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2018. Online: <<https://fcm.ca/en/resources/gmf/guide-2018-sustainablecommunities-awards-project-guide-transportation-kingston>>

Media and the news

- ▶ Feature story: Jim Neill, "Kingston Transit – An award-winning formula." *Municipal World*. Online: <<https://www.municipalworld.com/feature-story/kingston-transit-award-winning-formula/>>
- ▶ *The Agenda in the Summer*. "The Agenda with Steve Paikin: Getting Midsized Cities Moving." TVO, 2018. Online: <<https://www.tvo.org//video/programs/the-agenda-with-steve-paikin/getting-midsized-cities-moving>>
- ▶ Article: David Rockne Corrigan. "Why Canadian cities are asking Kingston for public-transit advice." TVO, 2018. Online: <<https://www.tvo.org//article/current-affairs/why-canadian-cities-are-asking-kingston-for-public-transit-advice>>

Research

- ▶ Master's thesis: Veronica Lee Sullivan. "Impact of Free Transit Passes on Youth Travel Behaviour." UWSpace, 2017. Online: <<http://hdl.handle.net/10012/12199>>



Source: Tina Carquez

FCM offers funding and resources to support municipal environmental transportation initiatives.

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