

Towards Universal Basic Access: Case Studies and Future Directions



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Executive Summary

Accessibility is one of the ultimate goals of a transport system as it enhances the quality of life and access to opportunities. Transport 2050, Metro Vancouver's regional transport strategy, envisions a future where everyone can easily connect to the people, places, and opportunities they need to thrive. Based on this vision and existing concepts such as Universal Basic Income, Universal Basic Services, and Universal Basic Mobility, this document aims to draw a pathway toward framing a new concept: Universal Basic Access.

- **Universal Basic Income** proposes providing everyone a fixed amount irrespective of their income, wealth, willingness to work, or living conditions.
- **Universal Basic Services** focuses on offering all essential services to everyone free of charge at the point of use regardless of income or social status.
- **Universal Basic Mobility** is derived from Universal Basic Services and proposes the provision of a sufficient or baseline level of mobility service to everyone irrespective of factors such as income, wealth, or geographical location.
- **Universal Basic Access** aspires to ensure a basic or necessary level of accessibility to all essential services for everyone irrespective of income, wealth, social status, or geographical location through various modes of transport. Universal Basic Mobility would therefore be an essential component to achieve Universal Basic Access.

The study examined eight Universal Basic Mobility programs and pilots. These programs were focused on people earning low income or part of government assistance or affordable housing programs. They had components focused on meeting mobility needs through various transport modes and methods to distribute funds to eligible users such as prepaid cards, transit cards and Mobility as a Service platform.

Universal Basic Access encompasses three key ambitions: improving access to essential services, enhancing the affordability of transport services, and removing barriers to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. A comparison of the Transport 2050 strategy and the 10-year priorities revealed some ambitious actions that can help address existing gaps and lead the way to Universal Basic Access. This includes integrating components of a Language Access Policy and measures focused on making transportation more affordable for all, specifically people earning a low income. Additionally, it is necessary to incorporate measures beyond increasing HandyDart services and address other accessibility concerns by increasing spaces for wheelchairs, and mobility scooters, and providing sufficient washrooms. Other significant challenges in implementation include sustainable sources of funding and coordination among various responsibility holders.

While there are several other barriers and strategies that could lead to Universal Basic Access, this document serves as a crucial initial step, providing a comprehensive overview of the current landscape and offering strategic guidance for future research and implementation.

Introduction

Accessibility refers to people's ability to reach desired services, activities, and destinations and is one of the major outcomes and ultimate goals of a transportation system. It significantly affects the quality of life in any region and ensuring accessibility is essential for full participation in a community (Jansuwan et al., 2013) . Several factors can influence accessibility, including mobility/physical movement, affordability, user demand, mobility options and mobility substitutes available, connectivity, and the availability of user information (Litman, 2024). When these factors are optimized, people can more easily access what they need for daily living, enhancing their overall well-being.

However, any barriers or the inability to access essential services such as education, employment, or healthcare can lead to significant social justice and inequality issues. Such barriers restrict opportunities and can perpetuate cycles of disadvantage and exclusion. Addressing these challenges is crucial for fostering inclusive and equitable communities. (Pereira, 2018) (Nazari Adli & Donovan, 2018)

Transport 2050, Metro Vancouver's regional transport strategy adopted in 2022, places "Access for Everyone" at its core (TransLink, 2022). While the implementation of the strategy is underway, residents continue to face affordability challenges due to the rising costs of living, including housing and transportation. Additionally, there are persistent accessibility barriers, such as limited wheelchair access at certain bus stops, lack of washrooms at major stations, and constrained space for wheelchairs on public transport.

Universal Basic Access (UBA) is a new concept that aligns with the vision "Access for Everyone" and focuses on addressing barriers to accessibility. UBA aims to ensure that all members of society have access to essential services, regardless of their ability to pay, through various transport modes. This study aims to develop the concept of UBA by building on similar initiatives and addressing current gaps in accessibility improvements in Metro Vancouver.

Background

Framing a new concept such as Universal Basic Access requires an in-depth study of similar concepts in the landscape that can offer ideas, lessons on risks, and best practices applicable in the Metro Vancouver region. There are a few concepts, some very recent, some well-studied, that can help draw a pathway towards UBA. This includes Universal Basic Income, Universal Basic Services, and Universal Basic Mobility.

Universal Basic Income (UBI)

UBI proposes a **periodic cash transfer** where a fixed amount is distributed to everyone in the society, irrespective of their income level, wealth, willingness to work, or living arrangements.

This sets it apart from other income supports withdrawn when the recipient's income reaches the threshold level. It arises from the argument that **some basic economic security is essential for the citizens to be actively and equally involved in democratic and communal life.**

However, the British Columbia Expert Panel on Basic Income in 2020 **advised against implementing the program** or any pilot projects in British Columbia. They argue that a cheque from the government cannot answer the diverse needs in society effectively. Instead, a mixed system with different approaches considering the differences in circumstances and needs would be more effective. They also suggest **targeting people earning low income, groups vulnerable to poverty, such as youth transitioning out of care, childless single members of the working age, and single parents where poverty may be endemic**, instead of seniors and children who already benefit from several income and social support programs. Moreover, they noted that regardless of how well the program is designed, **barriers to entry and exit facing the targeted population may result in inefficiency.** (Green et al., 2021)

Universal Basic Services (UBS)

UBS proposes providing **all essential services to every member of society free of charge** at the point of use, regardless of their income or social status, to ensure a high quality of life for all. It is founded on the principles of shared needs and collective responsibilities and focuses on **equity, efficiency, social cohesion, and sustainability.** The proponents argue that it is a dignified and unstigmatized measure, with no categorization of deserving and undeserving, that upholds the fundamental right of people to exercise their basic needs.

In Canada, examples of services that align with the principles of UBS include free K-12 education and Medicare. However, the proposal also underscores the importance of extending UBS to other vital services. It suggests that UBS along with the existing cash transfer and benefit systems will enhance the overall welfare of society.

The term Universal Basic Services can be broken down into:

1. Services: collectively generated activities that serve the public interest.
2. Basic: essential and sufficient, rather than minimal, in that these collective activities enable people to meet their needs.
3. Universal: everyone is entitled to services that meet their needs, regardless of their ability to pay. (Coote et al., 2019)

While UBS ensures that no one is denied access to services due to their inability to pay, it **does not necessarily advocate making all services entirely free for all users.** In some cases, it may be feasible to offer services free at the point of use for all. In others, the critical factor may be ensuring a realizable entitlement to the service through measures like collective funding, along with subsidies and partial or total exemptions.

Given that services differ from one another, the planning and organization of each service would vary while maintaining the common goal of providing fair and sufficient access to essentials. Under UBS, transportation will be made more frequent, well-regulated, interconnected, reliable, affordable, and adequately funded to meet this goal. It would also aim to discourage private motorized transport and promote active transportation. Offering free transportation could be a starting point, but its feasibility depends on the characteristics of the jurisdiction. Additionally, free transit can reduce active transportation, cause long-term funding challenges, and in certain cases increase the risk of antisocial behavior among transit users due to free riding. (Coote, 2021) (Coote et al., 2019)(The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, n.d.)

Universal Basic Mobility (UBM)

The concept of Universal Basic Mobility (UBM) is derived from Universal Basic Services (UBS) and entails **providing sufficient or necessary levels of mobility services to all members of society**, irrespective of factors like income, wealth, or geographical location. Mobility significantly influences accessibility; therefore, ensuring Universal Basic Mobility is a crucial step and an **essential component towards achieving Universal Basic Access**. Hence, an in-depth study of Universal Basic Mobility would provide valuable insights and guidance towards attaining Universal Basic Access.

As a new concept, UBM has generated diverse opinions. Some proponents advocate for free transportation for all, aligning with UBS's principle of making services free at the point of use. (The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, n.d.) Others argue that UBM should encompass accessibility, choice, and connection to essential services. For them, a successful UBM project will focus on societal needs while ensuring service availability for everyone, aligning with UBS's core focus areas of equity, efficiency, social cohesion, and sustainability. (Daniel Comeaux, 2019) (International Transport Safety Association, n.d.)

Mobility needs may vary in different locations within a jurisdiction/region. However, under UBM, **there should not be any differences in the guarantee of basic mobility offered within the region**. Additionally, mobility being a local experience, UBM as a policy should be tailored based on local needs and travel patterns to ensure access to jobs and essential goods and services. This principle is observed in several projects and pilots implemented in the United States. For example, mode-rich cities such as Portland, Oakland, Los Angeles, and Pittsburgh have integrated UBM in many transport modes compared to Sacramento and Stockton with fewer high-quality mobility options. In areas focused on congestion reduction in Portland, ride-hailing and taxis were excluded from the project while they were included in the accessibility-focused affordable housing region. Similarly, in Sacramento, to eliminate any first and last-mile barrier to transit in affordable housing regions, a free electric carsharing service with ridesharing facilities for those who cannot drive has implemented. Therefore, UBM could take forms planned around prioritized services that may guarantee the baseline level of mobility to meet the needs of the residents.

Support can be offered through universal subsidies to meet transportation expenses and improvement in the availability, reliability, and frequency of services. To locations where transit doesn't reach their home, schools, or workplaces, subsidized car-sharing for lower-income residents or financial support to use private automobiles may be some possible options. However, success would heavily depend on the shift from car-oriented development. (Lamperti, 2022)(Comeaux, 2019)(ITS International, 2022) (Rodier et al., 2024)

Current Projects and Pilots

UBM is currently being implemented in a few locations in the United States. There are approximately **eight UBM programs and pilots** across the country including three projects in Portland and additional projects in Stockton, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento, and Pittsburgh. No other jurisdictions with UBM programs were identified during the landscape scan. However, numerous other regions have programs and policies that offer affordable and accessible transportation.

Presently these UBMs **focus only on specific neighborhoods or sites and have not yet expanded** to everyone in the jurisdiction. Neighborhood-scale UBMs targeted more participants compared to site-focused UBMs. (Rodier et al., 2024)

Eligibility

Current UBM pilots and programs in the US have adopted various eligibility criteria. Most of the UBMs serve low-income groups, to ensure equity and offer support where the need is greatest. These programs have one or more of the following criteria:

- Participates in government assistance (Parking District and New Mover in Portland, Mobility Wallet in Los Angeles)
- Households below 200% federal poverty level (Parking District and New Mover in Portland, Mobility Wallet in Los Angeles)
- Income-qualified affordable housing residents (Affordable Housing UBM in Portland and Sacramento, Mobility Incentives in Stockton, and Mobility Wallet in Los Angeles)

Most programs **require documentation or self-attestation** of their residency, employment, participation in government assistance, or income level. (Rodier et al., 2024)

Recruitment & Enrollment

Recruitment took place through broad-based engagement and recruitment practices like tabling, social media, neighborhood newspapers, mailing, and newsletters. Some projects, such as the pilots in Oakland and Los Angeles, selected a representative sample of each neighborhood using US census data to study the impact of making benefits available for all eligible members in the neighborhood. There were also onsite informational transportation fairs and partnerships with Community-based organizations (CBOs) and other community partners

to identify participants.

The enrollment process included application via website, first-come-first-served basis at fairs, stratified random sampling by race and household income, or by CBOs who train and help enroll participants. (Rodier et al., 2024)

Fund Distribution to Users

Fund distribution to users took various forms, such as pre-paid cards, transit cards or passes, stored value on MaaS platforms, or service credits and discounts.

(i) **Low-cost prepaid cards** are directly mailed to participants, with expenditures tracked using a backend system. These credit cards provide funds to access selected transport services and are restricted by merchant codes to ensure the funds are used only for travel services. In Oakland, activation of the credit cards was identified as a challenge, leading to a switch to in-person distribution of cards. In contrast, Los Angeles increased activation rates by issuing numerous texts and alerts and adding the metro logo to the mailing. Some projects, such as in Sacramento, use a ‘use it or lose it policy,’ where unused funds are moved to subsequent months and subtracted from the stipend issued.

(ii) **Transit cards** that integrate shared mobility vendors and stored value payment applications on smartphones offer better advantages than traditional transit cards but less compared to prepaid credit cards. However, development costs and gathering vendor support are potential challenges. Los Angeles plans to implement this in their second phase.

(iii) **MaaS (Mobility as a Service)** is an emerging concept seen in Stockton, US, as part of their UBM project. Through this platform, users can gather information about the availability of electric car sharing and e-bike sharing. However, they later proceeded with prepaid credit cards. In the Pittsburgh pilot project, the MaaS platform was utilized, but paper credits were added to support those without smartphones and sufficient data plans.

UBM benefits are mostly exempt from income tax, as they are considered general welfare for eligible low-income participants rather than compensation for services offered. (Rodier et al., 2024)

Observations from the current pilots and projects

- The **most preferred method of fund distribution is the pre-paid cards** reloaded after specific time intervals. The cards were issued individually or per household. However, ensuring the activation of the issued card was identified as a challenge.
- Stockton’s UBM-issued debit cards were loaded with an initial value of \$100, and subsequent reload occurred only when balances were equal to or below \$50. This

ensured the proper utilization of distributed funds/incentives. (The San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG), n.d.)

- Some mobility wallets **offer the users options to choose from**, such as a transit-only or all modes option for both individuals and households. For example, Portland's Access for All UBM offers three choices: (i) transit-only 1-year pass loaded for individuals, (ii) individual all modes option with \$200 for public transit on Hop card and \$75 on prepaid Visa card for Uber/Lyft/Taxi, e-scooter, car-share, and bike-share, and (iii) all modes option for household offering \$225-\$300 for public transit on Hop card and \$100 - \$175 on prepaid Visa card for Uber/Lyft/Taxi, e-scooter, car-share, and bike share. (City of Portland, n.d.)
- Portland's Parking District UBM was initially a mobility wallet program implemented in 2017 and was aimed at reducing parking demand and the use of single occupancy vehicles while increasing the use of public transit, shared micro-mobility, and car sharing. (Portland Bureau of Transportation, 2023)
- Most of the **pilots and projects are in areas where residents have historically faced a lack of options or areas with affordable housing**. E.g. Mobility Wallet in Los Angeles is implemented in an area where 29% of the residents are below the poverty level and 19% receive supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits. The project area also qualifies as either a disadvantaged community or low-income community or both. The majority of the residents are people of colour with two-thirds Hispanic and a quarter African-American. (LADOT, n.d.) Other examples include Affordable Housing UBM in Portland and Sacramento. (Rodier et al., 2024)
- In addition to the choices offered in modes, UBM in Los Angeles provided a network of electric vehicle chargers throughout the project area, and incorporated elements to enhance street safety. The project's recent launch includes an E-bike lending library where users can rent e-bikes for one month at a time. (LADOT, n.d.)
- Evaluation of the Mobility Wallet program in Portland highlighted that transit users reported **improved flexibility in their schedule, and opportunity to try new modes, and the ability to manage their family budgets and to not rule out going to places that are farther away**. (Portland Bureau of Transportation, 2023)
- Some early evaluation reports from LA cited **gaining citizens' trust, efficient fund utilization, fund distribution method that does not create any barriers, and finding sustainable funds** as some of the challenges. (Bustamante, 2024)

Funding

Finding a sustainable source of funding has been a constant challenge for most of the UBM projects and is an important determinant of the success of the program. Six out of the eight programs (all small-scale) studied did not have a reliable source of funding. Three of the four programs in California are funded by cap-and-trade revenue allocated for equity and greenhouse gas reduction. Funding for other programs includes parking pass surcharges, Multimodal Incentive Fees from building developers, California Climate Investments (CCI) grants, and funds from foundations and shared mobility providers. (Rodier et al., 2024)

Skepticisms, Questions, and Counterarguments on UBM

While the reviewed literature strongly supports the implementation of UBMs, some skepticism, concern, and questions were noted. Most of them revolved around the modes of transportation included and the implementation of the UBM project.

Some critique that **automobiles play a vital role in the everyday life of residents and should not be sidelined**. Its influence needs to be studied to improve the accessibility landscape. This is based on the argument that public transit and bike-share services would only save the budget and may not fill the gaps in mobility requirements (Bliss, 2021) and underscores the need for a full spectrum of modes, including micro-mobility and other innovative modes, where one complements the other. (ITS International, 2022)

Some individuals raise questions regarding the **practicality of UBM**, particularly concerning the **inclusion of various transportation modes**, the consideration of environmentally sustainable options exclusively for UBM, the criteria utilized for determining essential and easily accessible services, and the accommodation of personal preferences and choices of users, including the potential need to travel longer distances to access preferred services. Additionally, there are inquiries about how UBM will **distinguish between essential and luxury services**, considering the diverse needs of individuals. (Lamperti, 2022)

The rapid landscape mapping also prompts questions about the universality of the current UBM projects, particularly as they predominantly target low-income groups within specific neighborhoods or sites in the city. It is also questionable if this practice violates the concept of not classifying people as deserving and undeserving under UBS. However, they point out the **need to focus on areas where the need is the greatest to ensure universality**. It may be realistic and pragmatic to initially implement the project on a small scale to study the impact before scaling up.

Moreover, for a UBM project to succeed, it must also have sufficient and sustainable long-term funding and a timely evaluation mechanism to identify and address potential drawbacks.

Universal Basic Access

Sustainability Goal 11.2: By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

Universal Basic Access aspires to ensure a basic or necessary level of accessibility to all essential services for everyone irrespective of income, wealth, social status, or geographical location through various modes of transport. UBA has broader goals compared to Universal Basic Mobility and contributes to Sustainability Development Goal 11.2. While UBM focuses on enhancing mobility, UBA is aimed at improving access and enabling people to have sufficient access to all essential goods and services and reach their preferred activity or destination through various means of transport.

UBA cannot simply be achieved by increasing the geographical coverage and availability of various transport services to essential locations. It would require addressing various pressing challenges that hinder people from accessing essential services. Based on this, the key ambitions to achieve Universal Basic Access in Metro Vancouver by 2050 would include:

1. Improving access to essential services
2. Enhancing the affordability of transport services
3. Removing barriers to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities

1. Improving access to essential services

Transport services play a vital role in connecting everyone with all essential services such as employment, health, education, and entertainment. Poor quality of the transport system may even affect the quality of life, lead to exclusion, and aggravate poverty. To fulfill this ambition, the transport system should have the following characteristics:

- Offer people a variety of choices, good geographical coverage, and services throughout the day.
- Public transit should complement other modes such as micro-mobility options, ridesharing, and ride-hailing to eliminate first and last-mile barriers, be reliable, on-time with minimized delays, and offer frequent services.
- The available modes of transport should improve the flexibility in the user's schedule, enhance the ease of trip planning, especially for those that are time-sensitive, and discourage people from ruling out long trips.
- Promote social equity, connect communities, and improve social cohesion.
- Be dynamic, adapt to the changing travel patterns and demands of the people, and address any gaps.

2. Enhancing the affordability of mobility services

Transport affordability is a major barrier that restricts people's access to essential services. With the rise in housing and living costs in the region, the ability of residents to purchase basic levels of mobility services within their limited budgets has been significantly impacted. Two related concerns have been widely studied globally: (i) the rise in housing costs in regions well connected by transit and (ii) people moving to locations less accessible by transit to afford housing. (Luckey, 2018) Addressing these concerns and the affordability barriers specifically faced by people earning low income and those facing unexpected hardships is pivotal to ensuring Universal Basic Access.

3. Removing barriers to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities

People with disabilities may face several barriers to meeting their mobility needs and accessing essential services. This can significantly impact their social lives, participation in their communities, and sense of well-being. (Cochran, 2020) Additionally, between 2016 and 2021, the growth rate was more than twice as high in people aged 85 or more (12%) compared to the overall population in Canada (+5.2%). Projections suggest that there will be three times more people aged 85 and above by 2050. Disabilities tend to rise sharply after 70. With more seniors aged 85 and above, there will be an increase in the number of people facing limitations and long-term health challenges. The transportation system must address their unique challenges. (Statistics Canada, 2022)

Comparison of strategies planned in Transport 2050 and TransLink's 10-year priorities

Comparing the strategies and actions planned in Transport 2050 with the 10-year priorities can help identify existing gaps in improving accessibility and therefore achieving Universal Basic Access. Efforts have been put to bring in major concerns pointed out by advocacy groups to find any gaps that may help in building ambitions that set a path towards Universal Basic Access.

1. Improving access to essential services

Transport 2050	10-Year Priorities
<p>1.1 Make active transportation the most convenient choice for shorter trips</p> <p>1.2 Make transit the most convenient choice for longer trips</p> <p>1.3 Make it convenient for all households to make the occasional car trip without needing to own a car</p> <p>1.4 Seamlessly connect different transport services both physically and digitally</p> <p>2.1 Make transit more reliable</p> <p>2.3 Make driving and parking more reliable</p> <p>2.4 Maintain transportation infrastructure in a state of good repair</p> <p>3.4 Help people and businesses connect to more economic opportunities.</p> <p>Other notable actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanpools in lower-density businesses and industrial parks that may be challenging to serve with fixed-route transit (3.4.2) • Helping businesses set up in the right location to minimize the distance that customers, workers, goods, and services will need to travel (3.4.3) • Introduction of additional passenger ferry services where water-based transit would offer better accessibility to services (1.2.2 i) • Offering a basic level of transit access at low demanded times and to low-demanded locations through local fixed-route service or on-demand micro-transit where it can 	<p>Focus on increasing services, improved customer service, reducing wait times, geographical coverage, and better infrastructure through actions like increasing over the double of current local bus services, 25% increase in sea bus service, major transit network expansion, 11 RapidBus lines, expanded walkways, and bikeways. (TransLink, 2022c)</p>

<p>provide better service for the same cost or less. (1.2.2 g.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support access to shared micro-mobility services for Indigenous Peoples living on reserve and treaty lands, where desired by the community. (1.1.5 d.) • Provide wayfinding in languages other than English, consistent with the language needs of the community. (4.2.1 c.) (TransLink, 2022b) 	
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10-Year Priorities has actions focused on most of the strategies mentioned in Transport 2050. **Language accessibility** is a concern pointed out by several advocacy groups. Although action (4.2.1 c.) focuses on some aspects of it and a Language Access policy has been framed, there is no mention of it in the 10-year priorities. The time taken for the implementation of the Language Access Policy may be considered a gap.

2. Enhancing the affordability of mobility services

Transport 2050	10-Year Priorities
<p>3.1 Make living close to frequent transit more affordable.</p> <p>3.2 As a priority, invest in the most cost-effective and most affordable modes.</p> <p>3.3 Ensure that transportation fees and taxes are affordable for everyone.</p> <p>3.4 Help people and businesses connect to more economic opportunities. (TransLink, 2022b)</p>	<p>There is no mention of affordability other than through cost-effective investments such as BRTs. (TransLink, 2022c)</p>

One of the key goals of Transport 2050 is to ensure affordable access for everyone. The strategy outlines that by 2025, no one in the region, especially those with less ability to pay, should have to spend more than 45% of household income on housing and transport combined. However, there is **no mention of affordability in the 10-year priorities** or interventions focused on people earning low incomes or facing unexpected hardships.

3. Removing barriers to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities

Transport 2050	10-Year Priorities
<p>Strategies mentioned under “Improving access to essential services” such as enhancing the convenience of active transportation and public transit can directly or indirectly contribute to improved accessibility for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Other notable actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritization of protection for road users with the least physical protection and who may be easily injured or killed in car-dominated environments (4.1.4) • Supporting the transition to universally accessible car-share vehicles, taxis, ride-hail vehicles and eventually robo-taxis to make them available for people with specific disabilities (1.3.5) • Ensuring everyone feels welcome and secure while getting around (4.2.4) • A robust network of clean and safe washrooms available to the public including at mobility hubs at major destinations, and in shopping areas (4.2.4 d.) • Ensuring space to enable passengers to sit and move around in transit (4.2.2) • Transit system orientations and skill training (4.2.6 d) • Inclusive transportation planning focused on removing barriers to accessibility, equity and inclusion (6.3.1) 	<p>Focus on providing 60% more available HandyDart (TransLink’s paratransit facilities) trips, extending operating hours to make it available 24 hours a day, and implementing other service investments that could improve the customer experience. (TransLink, 2022c)</p>

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating social equity into planning and network design (6.3.4) (TransLink, 2022b) | |
|---|--|

Although HandyDart wasn't explicitly mentioned in Transport 2050, it has received significant focus in the 10-year priorities. However, there **are no other actions mentioned** specifically addressing the frequently reported concerns such as **limited spaces in buses** for wheelchairs, mobility scooters, and baby carriages which are often occupied on some routes. Additional concerns include the **lack of washrooms** at major destinations, mobility hubs, and SkyTrain stations, the **need for people to display their disabilities** to occupy reserved seats, and the challenges of **limited shelter and seating at stops and parking spaces for wheelchairs**, especially during the rain. (Traboulay, 2022) (Doherty, 2023)

Some Ambitious Actions to Fill the Gaps

Transport 2050 has numerous measures addressing UBA's three key ambitions. However, additional actions focused on affordability and accessibility may be necessary considering the rising living costs and the aging population. Following are some ambitious actions to fill the gaps in existing policies to ensure Universal Basic Access.

- Integrating some components of the Language Access Policy into the 10-year priorities to ensure language accessibility.
- Including specific measures in the 10-year priorities to ensure transport affordability for low-income individuals and those facing financial hardships.
- Addressing gaps in spaces for wheelchairs, mobility scooters, and baby carriages in buses on specific routes where need is the most.
- Expanding the focus beyond HandyDart to include sufficient washrooms in SkyTrain stations and eliminating the need for displaying disabilities to occupy reserved seats. (shelter, seating, and parking spaces for wheelchairs)
- Strengthening the coordination between various responsibility holders (local government, Metro Vancouver, Provincial and Federal Government, TransLink) to address any disparities or gaps in implementation throughout the region and ensure public participation in decision-making.

Guiding Lessons from Similar Concepts

- **Basic Economic Security:** Establishing basic economic security is crucial for enabling full participation in the community and ensuring access to essential services.
- **Mobility Wallet Program:** Implementing a mobility wallet program can help overcome affordability barriers and offer significant improvements. This program can

enhance scheduling flexibility, provide opportunities to explore new modes of transport, and support better family budget management. Additionally, it facilitates access to more distant places, ensuring that people do not rule out accessing essential services and opportunities that are far away.

- **Targeted Benefits:** To address affordability barriers, targeting related programs based on experienced financial strains may be more beneficial than an age-based approach.
- **Sustainable Funding:** Identifying and securing sustainable sources of funding is necessary to ensure the long-term success and viability of the programs.

Funding Sources

Finding a sustainable source of funding has been a constant challenge. Considering the funding challenges that UBM projects have faced and the financial crisis TransLink currently experiences, it is important to identify reliable and sustainable funding sources, as inadequate funding could hinder the ability to offer affordable transportation services, particularly for low-income individuals. While a detailed study on funding sources is beyond the scope of this report, effort has been made to understand the funding landscape of essential universal services in Canada.

Understanding the funding landscape of essential services

Essential services are crucial for enhancing quality of life and providing the foundation for daily functioning. Exploring the funding mechanisms of other universal programs in Canada can offer valuable insights and help pave the way toward Universal Basic Access. To support this, efforts have been made to develop a comprehensive spectrum that outlines the percentage share of revenue generated through user contributions and government transfers to assess the financial burden on users and its impact on affordability.

Healthcare

Canada has a universal healthcare system called Medicare. 78% of the funding required is generated by the provinces and territories, and the federal government provides the rest through the Canada Health Transfer (CHT). This covers medical visits, hospital services, immunizations, and prescription drugs provided in the hospital. Other services, such as dental care, vision care, and prescriptions, are covered through insurance or paid out-of-pocket by the users. (Canadian Medical Association, n.d.)

Education

The public school education system offers free education for all children of citizens and permanent residents from kindergarten to the end of high school. The funding is generated either directly from the provincial or territorial government or through a mix of provincial transfers and local taxes. (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, n.d.)

Transportation

TransLink plans and manages the Metro Vancouver region’s transportation system. The funding for the transportation system in the region is generated through a combination of sources such as taxes (fuel tax, property tax, parking sales tax, hydro levy, and replacement tax), transit fares and programs, government transfers, amortization of deferred concessionaire credit, investment income, development cost charges, and other miscellaneous revenue. Table 1 represents the percentage share received from taxes, transit, and government transfers.

Year	Tax	Transit	Government Transfer
2018	44%	35%	16%
2019	44%	33%	19%
2020	40%	18%	37%
2021	54%	25%	12%
2022	46%	26%	20%
2023	37%	26%	27%

Table 1. Revenue Share from Taxes, Transit Fares, and Government Transfers

The percentage breakdown indicates that users contribute a significant share of the revenue compared to government transfers. Some fluctuations observed are mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated decrease in ridership. The increase in government transfers between 2020 and 2023 is mostly attributed to the Senior Government Relief funding received to avoid any service cuts and to keep the fares affordable and it is not expected to be a long-term source of revenue. (TransLink, 2019) (TransLink, 2020) (TransLink, 2021) (TransLink, 2022a) (TransLink, 2023)(TransLink,2024)

While other essential services such as healthcare and education are fully or mostly covered by the government, users contribute a significant share of the revenue generated for the transportation system (Fig.1). Since **transportation connects people to all other essential services, it may be necessary to initiate a shift in this spectrum by reducing the financial strain on users**, especially those with low incomes, to ensure equitable access to services. This forms a crucial consideration for achieving universal basic mobility and universal basic access.

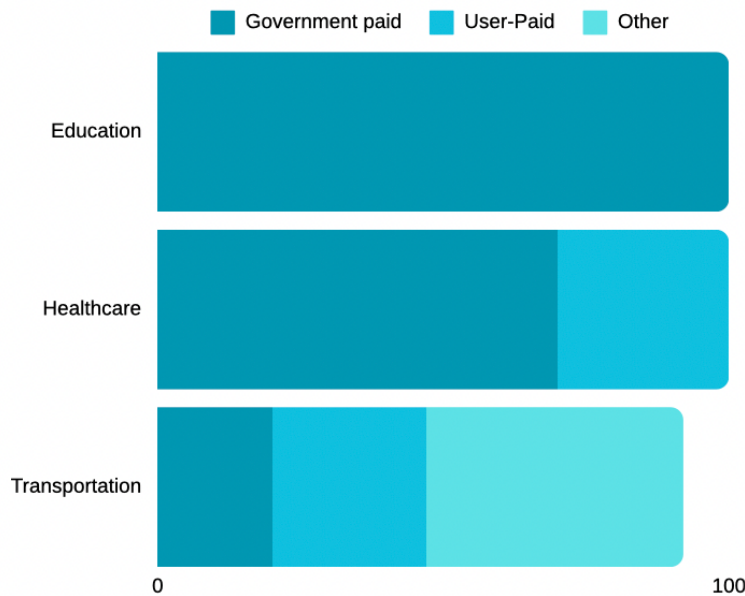


Fig.1. Revenue Breakdown: User vs. Government Contributions

Further study is required to better understand the funding landscape, identify other funding sources and the percentage shift needed to make transportation services more affordable.

Limitations

- UBM and UBA are new ideas, and there isn't sufficient literature about the concept or best practices.
- Most of the programs and pilots are very recent. Hence, there is no data regarding the long-term benefits or challenges.
- The study was completed in 250 hours.

Conclusion

Universal Basic Access (UBA) is a new concept focused on ensuring a basic level of accessibility to essential services for all. This study has framed a pathway to achieve UBA based on the accessibility needs, major challenges experienced in the Metro Vancouver region, and drawing lessons from concepts like Universal Basic Income, Universal Basic Service, and Universal Basic Mobility. Based on this, improving access to essential services, enhancing the affordability of transport services and removing barriers to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities were identified as some of the major ambitions to achieve UBA.

Implementing UBA may face significant hurdles, such as securing sustainable funding and ensuring cooperation among stakeholders under Transport 2050. Exploring new funding sources and reducing the financial burden on low-income users are crucial steps, following the

models of other universal programs in Canada. Additionally, strengthening partnerships and coordination among responsibility holders is vital to ensure accessibility across the region and to eliminate any disparities in implementation.

Moreover, this document serves as an initial step toward UBA; further study and stakeholder engagement are essential to address additional gaps and develop effective policies for a universally accessible transport system.

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