

Summer 2026 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Hub is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the guidance of a mentor from the partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region. The pay rate for the summer 2025 program is \$31.25/hour or \$7,812.50 for a 250-hour project.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the application guide on the Apply page to confirm your eligibility before applying.

Applications close at 11:59 pm on Sunday February 1, 2026.

Project title: Evaluating Actions to Increase Customer Perceptions of Safety on Transit

Project Background

The public transportation system in Metro Vancouver enables millions of people get around the region sustainably. TransLink customers collectively save an estimated 500,000 tonnes of GHGs every year by not driving. Ridership on transit is impacted by many factors, including service frequency, speed, network coverage, cost, and the relative performance of alternatives to transit. Among the factors that influence ridership on public transportation is customer perceptions of safety.

TransLink's Transport 2050 Regional Transportation Strategy includes a goal of providing "safe and comfortable choices for everyone," and a supporting strategy of "ensuring everyone feels welcome, comfortable, and physically secure while getting around."

If a transit rider feels unsafe when they interact with the transit system, they may reduce their transit ridership, or stop riding the system altogether. For some riders this may result in increased driving and emissions, but for others without access to a car this can result in a loss of mobility and access to opportunity. The importance of feeling safe on transit can be especially important for those who experience vulnerabilities grounded in gender, identity, or ability.

Customer perceptions of safety are influenced by range of factors, including actual rates of crime on the system, high profile events in the news or social media, environmental design (e.g. lighting, sightlines, "eyes on the street"), cleanliness, transit mode, the behaviour of other riders, the quality of connecting infrastructure, staff and police presence, and individual preferences and experiences.

This project will take stock of current issues and opportunities related to customer perceptions of safety related to transit in the region and look at ways of improving outcomes. By contributing to TransLink's actions that support customer perceptions of safety on transit, this project will help support transit ridership and reduce transportation emissions in the region.

Project description

Working closely with staff across TransLink's policy development, customer experience, and customer safety teams, as well as with the Metro Vancouver Transit Police, the Sustainability Scholar will advance the state of TransLink's knowledge and practice on customer perceptions of safety on transit.

This purpose of this project is to identify the most effective ways of improving customer perceptions of safety on transit. This project will provide a valuable high-level perspective on TransLink's actions by bringing in fresh eyes and the latest in research and practice.

The project will focus on important research questions, including:

- What are the primary barriers to customers feeling safe on TransLink's system?
- How many residents in our region avoid or limit transit use because of perceptions of safety?
- What are the key trade-offs involved in actions aimed at raising perceptions of safety?
- How do efforts aimed at raising perceptions of safety compare against other efforts to increase transit ridership?
- How effective have recent safety initiatives, including increased officer visibility and fare enforcement, been at improving customers' perception of safety? Why have these initiatives been received in the ways that they have?

This project will be used to inform TransLink's ongoing and upcoming customer safety initiatives. Ultimately, this will support TransLink's progress on our *Access for Everyone* Regional Transportation Strategy and support sustainable transportation choices throughout the region.

Project scope

This project will conduct a deep dive into the many factors behind customer perceptions of safety on the TransLink system and include a review of current actions that are underway across the TransLink enterprise, a review of best practices and the academic literature, and the development of a structured framework for the prioritisation of actions and investments aimed at increasing customer perceptions of safety on transit.

1. **Current State Assessment:** Build an understanding of critical issues related to customer perceptions of safety on transit and of what is currently being done by TransLink in order to set the direction for the literature review.
 - Review TransLink crime data, customer experience surveys and related internal reports to identify priority issues (e.g., drug use on transit, feelings of safety at bus stops, areas of the regional where perceptions of safety are lowest, etc.) related to customer perceptions of safety on the TransLink system.

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- Interview TransLink and Transit Police staff to better understand current issues and ongoing actions
 - Review current initiatives, plans, research and projects related to customer perceptions of safety within the TransLink enterprise. This will result in a list of current actions that will be evaluated in the literature review.
2. Literature Review: Synthesize high level findings from peer agencies and the academic literature to answer key questions and inform the evaluation and prioritization of actions.
- Best practices review of the factors and considerations related to customer perceptions of safety on transit, focusing on priority issues from the current state assessment. The literature review will include 10-20 leading academic studies and a jurisdictional scan of 5-10 peer agencies. Key questions for the literature review will include:
 - What are the drivers of customer perceptions of safety?
 - What does the academic literature say about current actions being taken by TransLink? What additional actions should TransLink consider?
 - Which peer agencies have successfully improved customer perceptions of safety? What lessons can be drawn from their experience?
 - Does customer perception of safety impact ridership? If so, what is the elasticity?
3. Prioritization Framework: Develop organizational objectives related to customer perceptions of safety and create a framework for prioritization.
- Following TransLink's internal structured decision support process and with guidance from policy development staff, develop a core set of objectives related to customer perceptions of safety on transit.
 - Propose a framework for evaluating actions aimed at increasing customer perceptions of safety against the objectives
 - Conduct a preliminary review of actions using the prioritization framework, based on findings from the literature review. The purpose of this step is to fill in information where possible, and to identify requirements for further information and follow-up studies.
 - Review deliverables with staff across the enterprise.

Deliverables

- A final report containing the outcomes of the work completed.
- A final report for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#). Note that depending on the sensitivity of the project findings, the full report may not be made public, and an executive summary would instead be posted on the Scholars Project Library.
- Final presentation to TransLink and Metro Vancouver Transit Police

Time Commitment

- This project will take 250 hours to complete
- This project must be completed between May 1 to August 14.

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- The Scholars is to complete their hours between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 17 to 20 hours per week.

Required/preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability
- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently
- Deadline oriented
- Project management and organizational skills
- Familiarity with benchmarking methods and tools
- Interest in or familiarity with transportation, equitable access to transportation, or transportation security, would be an asset

Additional project requirements

Note that the successful scholar will require a security clearance to work with Metro Vancouver Transit Police. The security clearance will be conducted by the Metro Vancouver Transit Police and includes a criminal record check, detailed questionnaire, and review of social media posts.

Applications close at **11:59 pm Sunday February 1, 2026**

Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions

Useful Resources

We are holding a special **resume preparation workshop for prospective Scholars** on January 19, 2026. [Click here for details and to register.](#)

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume, cover letter and preparing for an interview (there are many more online).

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>