

Subject: FW: TransLink News Release: Transit ridership continues to soar in 2004

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-----Original Message-----

From: Robbins, Jennifer [mailto:jennifer_robbins@translink.bc.ca]

Sent: August 24, 2004 11:13 AM

To: Robbins, Jennifer

Subject: TransLink News Release: Transit ridership continues to soar in 2004

TRANSLINK
NEWS RELEASE

Transit ridership continues to soar in 2004

TransLink released statistics today that show transit ridership continued to increase dramatically during the first six months of 2004, maintaining the red hot pace set last year. To the end of June, TransLink recorded 136.6 million passenger boardings - a 9.5 per cent increase compared with the first six months of 2003 and a 24.6 per cent lift over the first six months of 2002.

Compared with the first half of 2003, bus ridership is 11.1 per cent higher. SkyTrain passenger counts have risen by 5.4 per cent, SeaBus by 5.5 per cent and West Coast Express by 6 per cent.

"The numbers show that demand for public transit continues to grow in response to the significant expansion of services TransLink has introduced since it took over the system five years ago," said TransLink Chair Doug McCallum. "The new Millennium SkyTrain Line, the 97 and 98 B-Lines, new Community Shuttles and expanded regular bus service have all generated more ridership. In particular, the introduction and promotion of TransLink's U-Pass and OnBoard programs are making transit more accessible and affordable for students and commuters alike. As we'll see in the first part of September, the success of those programs is continuing to put pressure on the system."

McCallum noted that TransLink will invest close to \$1 billion in the transit system from 2005 through 2007 to update and expand the bus and rapid transit system. "A total of 228 new trolleys, construction work on the RAV and Northeast Sector rapid transit lines, more conventional buses and HandyDARTS are all in our next Three Year Plan. We've recently taken delivery of 95 new buses and are in the process of ordering about 190 more over and above the new trolley fleet," he said.

A number of factors have contributed to the strong transit ridership growth, including higher than anticipated student ridership thanks to the popularity of the U-Pass program that TransLink introduced in September 2003 with sponsorship support from the Van-City Credit Union. The universal student transit pass gives university students unlimited transit access at a substantially reduced cost. About 60,000 students will have U-Passes this fall.

There's also been strong regional employment growth, which means more commuters are taking public transit to and from work. Many of those commuters are taking advantage of TransLink's Employer Pass program, which works with employers to provide discounted transit passes and the convenience of payroll deduction. In particular, TransLink has had good success persuading employers located along the SkyTrain Millennium Line to join the program. Currently, 9,300 people are enrolled in the program - an increase of 55 per cent since 2002.

An increase in the number of tourists visiting Greater Vancouver earlier in the year has also buoyed transit ridership and higher gas prices have made public transit a more attractive and economical option.


This is the second year in a row that TransLink has seen a significant jump in transit ridership. Overall in 2003, transit boardings increased by 13.2 per cent - the highest yearly increase since the opening of the Expo SkyTrain Line in 1986.

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For more information, please contact Ken Hardie at 604.220.2450

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