

# STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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**DATE:** February 26, 2024

**TO:** MAYOR AND COUNCIL

**NAME AND TITLE:** Blake McIntosh, Director of Civic Operations

**SUBJECT:** Prince George Transit System Electronic Fare Policy Update

**ATTACHMENT(S):** Electronic Fare Collection System (Umo) Presentation

## RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION the Cash Balance, Expiration and Refund policy changes as outlined in the report titled Prince George Transit System Electronic Fare Policy Update, dated February 26, 2024, from the Director of Civic Operations.

That Council APPROVE a change in the structure of the Monthly Pass, in which the pass is converted from a fixed-date pass to a rolling 30-day pass.

## PURPOSE:

To review and approve adjustments to the Fare Structure of the Prince George Transit System to accommodate the installation and implementation of the Electronic Fare Collection System (Umo) by BC Transit.

## BACKGROUND:

BC Transit is launching Umo, the new electronic fare collection system across many of their transit systems in 2023 and 2024. Umo is similar to other “smart-card” transit fare payment systems in other cities, where a user is provided with a reloadable card and account that can contain fare products for the transit system. In Prince George, the available fare products will roughly mirror the currently available selection, along with a balance on the card, with some adjustments outlined below. Cards will be available for purchase online and at external vendors.

## DISCUSSION:

While there are no changes proposed to the fare rates, there are two primary changes being proposed to the fare structure: addition of a Cash Balance and replacing the Monthly Pass with a rolling 30-day Pass. Additional adjustments of fare policy are outlined further below.

### Cash Balance

Cash Balance is a new fare product BC Transit will offer through the Umo system, which include a reloadable card and app. A cash balance is a sum of money loaded to a rider's Umo account that is deducted as additional trips are taken. The deductions from a cash balance will be capped after the second trip, in order to reflect the DayPass rate, and no further deductions from the account will be made for the remainder of the service day. The current 10-ticket One Fare sheets will continue to be sold in the interim, however will eventually be rolled into the Umo card in the future.

### **30-Day Pass**

The current date-bound Monthly Pass will be converted to a rolling 30-Day Pass to improve customer convenience and fare product availability. The current pass is valid from the first day of the month to the last day of the month (i.e. from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup>), whereas a rolling 30-Day Pass is valid from the date purchased in a month, through to 30 days later. This will also allow customers the option to auto-load passes after a previous pass has expired.

In summation, the full list of fare policy changes are as follows:

- Implementation of a Cash Balance, in which a cash balance that is loaded on to a customer's Umo card is deducted as trips are taken.
- Implementation of a Refund policy, in which refunds will now be made available for all unused fare products. Refunds will not be available for partially used or expired fare products.
- Implementation of a Universal Expiration policy, in which pre-purchased fare products will expire 365 days from the date of purchase.
- Conversion of the current "fixed date" monthly pass (first day of month to last day of month) to a rolling 30-day pass (requires approval).

These changes will be reflected in the Annual Operating Agreement for 2024-2025, which is expected in the new Provincial fiscal year, normally presented to Council in the late-Spring or early-Summer.

The expected timeline for installation and implementation of the Umo system for Spring 2024.

Staff will continue to work with BC Transit in communicating the transition between fare products and any changes that will impact customers. Engagement is expected to take place in March, prior to the rollout of the card.

#### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

Continue to improve processes and practices to support effective and efficient service delivery.

#### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Changes to fare revenue are expected to be minor. It is anticipated that the number of fare products sold will remain the same.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

The installation of the Electronic Fare Collection System (Umo) on the Prince George Transit System necessitates some minor adjustments in fare policy, which include the administration of a cash balance system, fare product refunds, and converting monthly passes to a rolling 30-day card. Fare levels themselves are remaining the same through this transition. It is expected that the new system will be active for spring 2024.

#### **RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Blake McIntosh, Director of Civic Operations

**PREPARED BY:** Michael Coulson, Transit Planner

#### **APPROVED:**

Andy Beesley, Acting City Manager

Meeting Date: [Enter 2024/02/26]