



**City of Kingston  
Report to Council  
Report Number 25-163**

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**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Ian Semple, Acting Commissioner, Transportation & Infrastructure Services  
**Resource Staff:** Christopher Norris, General Manager, Transit Services  
**Date of Meeting:** June 17, 2025  
**Subject:** Queen's University Universal Pass Renewal

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**Council Strategic Plan Alignment:**

Theme: 3. Build an Active and Connected Community

Goal: 3.3 Improve public transit and active transportation options.

**Executive Summary:**

The agreement between the City of Kingston and the student associations at Queen's University provides eligible students with universal access to Kingston Transit service. This universal pass (U-Pass) access has been in place for multiple decades, except for a pause of two years due to the impacts related to the pandemic.

This report provides an update and recommends entering into new three-year agreements between the City and Alma Mater Society of Queen's University (AMS) effective September 1, 2025, with a new annual, per student rate of \$165 in the first year, \$180 in the second year, and \$195 in the final year.

The proposed rates represent an increase of 35% in the first year compared to the existing rate of \$122 per student with increases of 9% and 8% in years 2 and 3 respectively. Based on the existing student population, this agreement represents approximately \$13.7M in revenue for the transit system over the course of the three-year contract – a net increase of approximately \$3.4M compared to the existing contract terms.

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**Recommendation:**

**That** Council authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute agreements with the Alma Mater Society of Queen's University to provide a universal transit pass program for eligible students, for a period of three years (September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2028), in a form satisfactory to the Director of Legal Services.

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**Authorizing Signatures:**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

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**Ian Semple, Acting  
Commissioner, Transportation &  
Infrastructure Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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**Lanie Hurdle, Chief  
Administrative Officer**

**Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:**

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	Not required
Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services	Not required
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required

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**Options/Discussion:****Background**

The City and the Alma Mater Society of Queen's University (AMS) have had agreements to provide all eligible students with universal, unlimited access to Kingston Transit in exchange for students paying a mandatory student fee for several years. The current agreement, approved through Council Report Number 22-160, ends on August 31, 2025.

There are benefits to having agreements for both the City and post-secondary students.

- The City benefits by having a reasonably stable and predictable source of ongoing revenue based on a mandatory fee being paid by each student. The proposed rates provide for approximately \$13.7M of revenue over the three-year contract period.
- Students benefit by having transit provided at a negotiated lower cost compared to regular transit fares. A lower cost is possible because of the large volume of students that pay the mandatory fee whether they use the transit service or not.

Staff have continued to meet with representatives of the student associations on a regular basis. As a result of those ongoing discussions, staff are recommending that new agreements with the student associations be established for a three-year period beginning September 1, 2025 and ending August 31, 2028 at rates that represent an increase of 35% in the first year compared to the existing rate of \$122 per student with increases of 9% and 8% in years 2 and 3 respectively. The student body has approved acceptance of these rates as part of a referendum in March 2025.

The terms and conditions of the proposed new agreement are the same as the previous agreements except for an increase to the agreement value noted above and opportunity to move towards fare validation using the university student card when available. Under the terms of the proposed agreement all eligible students would continue to be assessed a mandatory student fee that will provide for universal, unlimited access to the Kingston Transit network.

Although not part of this agreement the AMS expressed interest in participating in ongoing public engagement related to the service planning for Kingston Transit and to look at opportunities to partner with other post secondary associations in the future as part of new program discussions. Staff captured these points for future discussions.

**Summary of Terms and Conditions of the Proposed Agreement**

The terms and conditions of the proposed agreement are summarized as follows:

- Queen's University undergraduate and graduate students that are assessed a mandatory student fee will have unlimited, universal access to the Kingston Transit network.
- Escalating mandatory student fee per eligible student in each year of the agreement:
  - Contract Year 1 (September 2025 to August 2026): \$165
  - Contract Year 2 (September 2026 to August 2027): \$180
  - Contract Year 3 (September 2027 to August 2028): \$195

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- The AMS will be provided with advertising space on a 40-foot bus for a vinyl bus wrap for the promotion of AMS services. The AMS is responsible for the design, production, and installation costs of the bus wrap with Kingston Transit's current advertising supplier. At the expiry or termination of the agreement, the AMS is responsible for the costs, if any, to remove the bus wrap.
- The City will provide 50 hours of service (minimum three-hour blocks) within the City of Kingston in each year of agreement, subject to bus and transit operator availability. The use of the 50 additional hours of service will be determined between the City and the AMS each year. Any unused hours of service are not cumulative and will not carry over to the following year.

The proposed agreements include a clause that allows the City or each student association to terminate the agreement on August 31 of each year of the agreement by providing notice of termination to the other party no later than June 1 of the same year. This is the same termination provision that existed in the previous agreements. Language within the proposed agreement provides guidance for pro-rated reimbursement of agreement fees based on historical ridership trends should an event, similar to the pandemic, reoccur.

### **Public Engagement**

Engagement on the extension of this service was conducted by the respective student associations to the Queen's University student population through a survey in January 2025 where 95% of participants indicated support for the program and a referendum question in March 2025 where 87% of the participants approved the fee structure.

### **Climate Risk Considerations**

Providing access to transit service allows students to choose a more sustainable transportation option that can contribute to greenhouse gas reduction targets.

### **Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations**

This agreement allows unlimited access to the transit system for Queen's University undergraduate and graduate students as part of their assessed student fees. This access is intended to reduce economic barriers to travel, increase accessibility, and enhance safety of travel.

### **Financial Considerations**

The current agreement has a set annual mandatory student of \$122 for each of the contract years. Under the proposed agreement, the mandatory fee will increase to \$165 in year 1, \$180 in year 2, and \$195 in year 3.

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For the 2025 operating budget, the Queen's University U-Pass program was budgeted at \$3,436,125. The projected revenue based on the proposed agreement for the 2026 operating budget would be \$4,269,375.

**Contacts:**

Christopher Norris, General Manager – Kingston Transit, 613-546-4291 extension 2116

**Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:**

None

**Exhibits Attached:**

None