

April 12th, 2023

AMS Council & Committee
Alma Mater Society
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, British Columbia

Dear AMS Council & Committee

Re: Formal Report

Economic inflation has affected the UBC Community in a way that hurts our fellow members. Over the past decade, the prices of our commodities have increased. One that has been affecting UBC is the price increase of transportation. Since UBC has an abundant amount of commuters, the affordability of transportation has been declining and negatively affecting student and staff members.

This report, Increase Affordability in Transportation for UBC Student and Staff Members, investigates the price increase in transportation and how it affects individuals who regularly commute to campus.

Data was collected from UBC students and staff members through an anonymous survey on their perspective on how the price increase affected their perception of transportation and if it is an aspect that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, an interview with the AMS Council and Committee has been done to gain insight into UBC's internal sectors. With this information, an analysis has been conducted, and a thorough investigation of the current trends and suggestions are provided.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the findings of this investigation. Please contact me at dkim98@student.ubc.ca if there are any further questions.

Sincerely,

Daniel Kim

April 12th, 2023

Dr. Deborah Buszard
Current UBC President
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, British Columbia

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Increase Affordability in Transportation for UBC Students and Staff
Members:

Formal Report

For

AMS Council & Committee

Dr. Deborah Buszard

University of British Columbia

Vancouver, British Columbia

By

Daniel Kim

Engl 301 Student

University of British Columbia

April 12th, 2023

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Abstract

Economic inflation has impacted society in a way that has negatively affected individuals' lives. Commodities that people consume or use daily have increased in price due to inflation over the past decade. One, in particular, is the increase in fees related to transportation. This phenomenon has been a specific factor for members within the UBC community since UBC carries an abundant amount of 'commuters.' With the price increase, those affected include students and staff members who rely on transportation regularly. This formal report investigates the effect of the price increase in transportation on student and staff members. Based on an anonymous survey of the student and staff population and an interview conducted to gain relevant data to analyze, it concluded that the price increase had affected student and staff members. Furthermore, UBC also acknowledges the inflationary price trends and is currently discussing ways to assist those most affected. With this information, it provides recommendations such as for UBC to re-negotiate UPASS prices and increase involvement in communicating with the community about efficient transportation methods through blogs, websites, or emails. In the end, a large organization relies on individuals to come in need to support their community. Thus, recognizing the issue and implementing new ideas will create an everlasting effect.

Introduction

A. Definition

Affordable transportation refers to the ability of individuals or households to access modes of transportation without experiencing a significant financial burden. This includes access to public transportation, personal vehicles, or alternative forms of transportation such as cycling or walking.

B. Background information about affordable transportation

The availability of affordable transportation has numerous benefits for individuals, communities, and the economy at large (Litman, 2013). One of the primary benefits of affordable transportation is that it increases access to employment opportunities, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and other essential services that society heavily relies upon. This, in turn, can help our communities improve by rectifying issues with poverty, increasing economic mobility for people and their families, and becoming a more progressive society (Litman, 2013). Additionally, affordable transportation can reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, which can have significant environmental and health benefits.

On the other hand, there are significant barriers to accessing affordable transportation, particularly for full-time students and low-income individuals. For example, one of the most significant barriers is the increasing cost of transportation due to rising fuel prices, vehicle maintenance costs, and public transportation fares (Mueller, 2015). As a result, this can lead to reduced access to essential services and increased financial burden for those who cannot afford a personal vehicle or pay for public transportation.

Moreover, transportation affordability is also affected by other factors, such as access to affordable housing, employment opportunities, and transportation infrastructure. Addressing these barriers is crucial to ensure everyone can access affordable and efficient transportation, leading to a more productive and thriving economy.

C. Motivation & Intended Audience

For this formal report, my motivation is to tackle the issue of the rising cost of transportation and provide potential solutions to ensure affordable transportation is put in place and maintained. With this formal report, my intended audience includes the AMS Council and the current UBC President, Deborah Buszard, as these individuals can consider my proposal holistically and implement the suggestions presented in this formal report.

D. Data & Method

This formal report's primary data source is an anonymous survey distributed among UBC students and staff members. Furthermore, a set of interview questions has been sent to the AMS committee and the current president of UBC, Deborah Buszard, inquiring about the current state of UBC's stance on the increase in transportation costs and its current plans to assist with this issue.

The secondary data include a literature review from Statistics Canada, examining the inflationary trend of transportation costs within Canada and the historical trends of people utilizing public transportation. Along with the statistical assessment, articles from reliable news outlets such as CTV, CBC, and the Daily Hive are incorporated to supplement the inquiry.

E. Scope of Inquiry

To form the driving motivation behind this report, the scope of inquiry is as follows:

1. How much revenue does UBC's parking generate annually?
2. Are there any possibilities of creating discount prices for UBC students and staff members with car rental companies already associated with UBC, such as Evo?
3. What are some of UBC's plans to help promote affordability in transportation methods for students and staff members who commute to the school daily?
4. What additional resources will UBC require to create an accessible web page for all possible transportation?
5. Has there been an increase in demand for parking passes at UBC? If so, by how much or how much has it decreased?

6. Is UBC's current agreement with Translink reviewed annually? Are there ways to re-negotiate terms to lower the cost of bus passes?

Data Section

A. Overview of Current Methods of Transportation and Prices

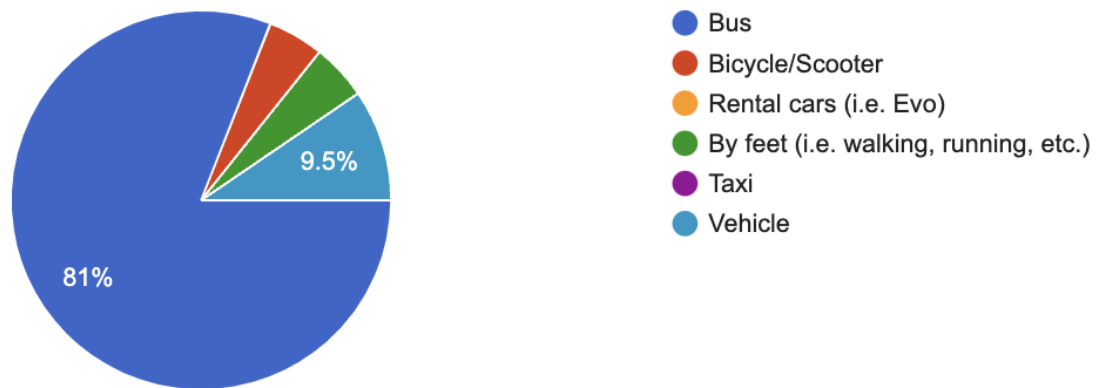
As of 2021, transportation in Vancouver, British Columbia, includes a mix of public transportation options, cycling infrastructure, and roadways. However, for students and staff members, public transportation provided by Translink, operating buses, trains, and ferries throughout Metro Vancouver, is the most common method of transportation (Dailyhive, 2023). Other popular transportation methods include a more recent phenomenon in rental cars such as Evo, car sharing in UBER and Lyft, cycling, and Taxis.

With Translink being the most common transportation in Vancouver for student and staff members, the cost of using Translink's transportation is split up into three zones, where Zone 1 is priced at \$2.50, Zone 2 is priced at \$3.65, and Zone 3 is priced at \$4.07. However, the current price is already a 2% increase from 2020, and another 2.3% increase in price is in place for the following year, 2024 (CityNews, 2023).

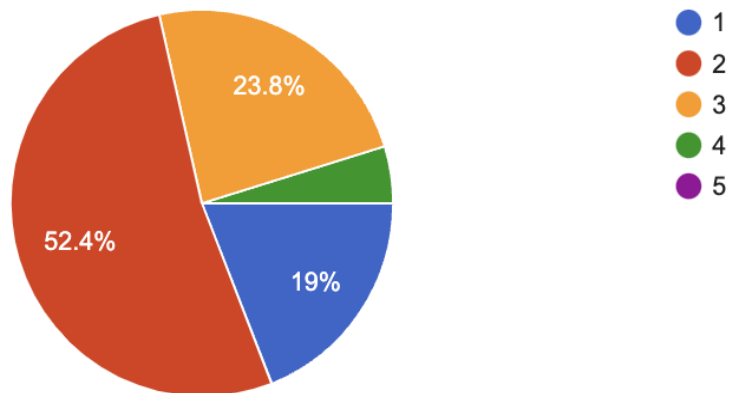
For rental car companies like Evo, the average hourly price is \$17.99. However, this is a current increase from a previous price average of \$14.99 in 2019 (CityNews, 2023). With Uber, the current price per ride is 0.33 cents per minute. However, Uber also increased its price by 5%.

B. Analysis of Student Surveys

According to the survey, 81% of the respondents take the Bus as their main means of transportation (Figure 1). However, more than half (52.4%) of the respondents are not very satisfied with the transportation system in place (Figure 2).

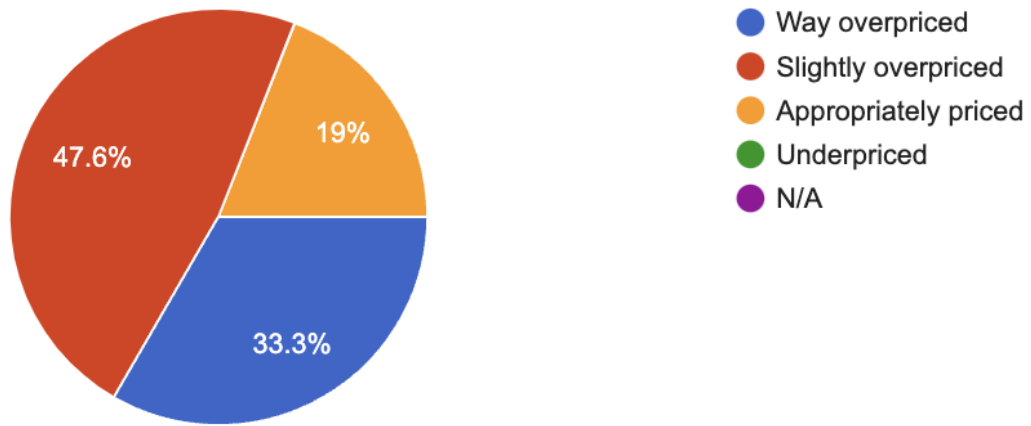


(Figure 1)



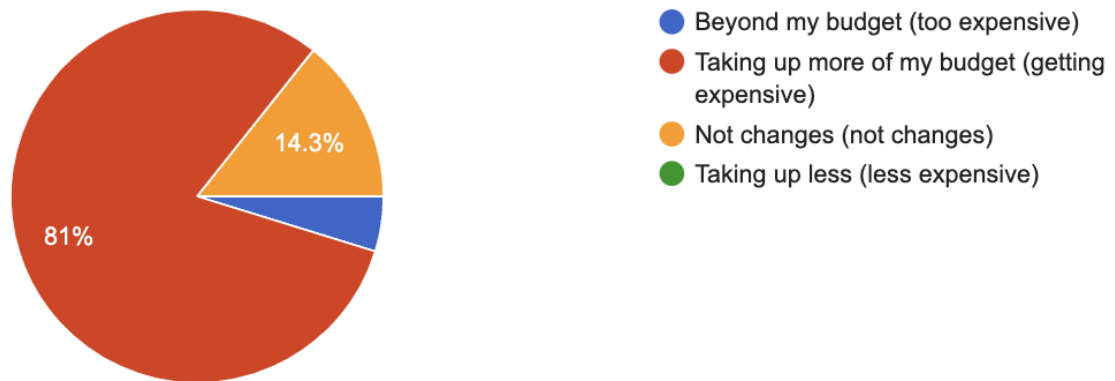
(Figure 2)

Figure 3 illustrates how the students feel about the current pricing of transportation. Figure 3 indicates that 47.6% of respondents feel that it is slightly overpriced, and 33.3% of respondents feel its is way overpriced.



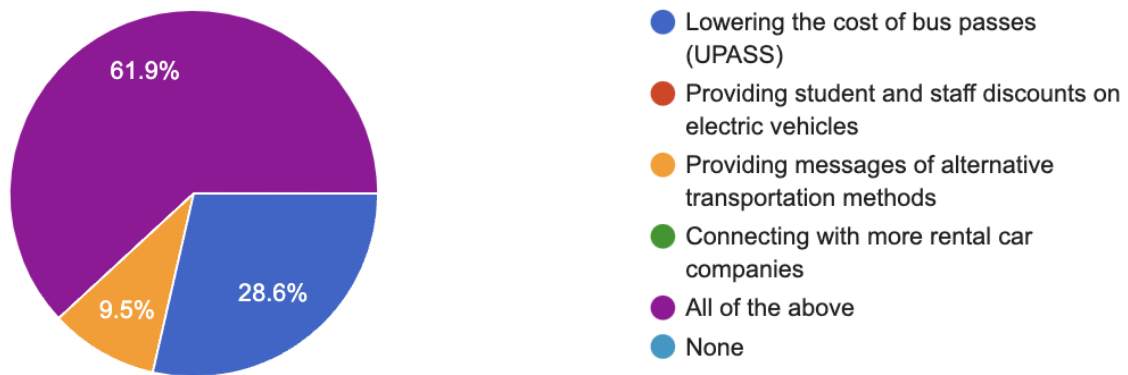
(Figure 3)

Figure 4 shows that 81% of respondents report that the current trend of transportation is taking up more within their budget compared to the past.



(Figure 4)

Figure 5 illustrates that 61.9% of respondents are motivated to see improvements in all areas, including lowering the cost of bus passes, providing student and staff discounts on vehicles, active messaging of alternative transportation methods, and UBC connecting with other car rental companies.



(Figure 5)

Based on these results, from the perspective of UBC students and staff members, the majority want to see improvement in handling the increase in the cost of using transportation. With most respondents indicating that they use the bus as their main form of transportation, UBC’s actions to assist students in this area would be the most beneficial.

C. Evaluation of interviews from UBC Stakeholders and AMS Committee

I decided to interview the Alma Mater Society (AMS) Committee and Council for this formal report. The reason for selecting the AMS Committee and Council is due to their position within UBC and their representation of the student body. Since the AMS' inception in 1915, a selected study body has been governing the student body by advocating for students and ensuring their voices are heard by the University Administration and the Provincial and Federal government (AMS, 2023).

In recent years, the AMS has addressed the students' concerns, such as fall reading break, Credit/D/Fail optionality during COVID-19, and inclusion of Majors on Degree Parchments, ultimately advocating for these implementations or changes with success. Due to the influence and regulation of the AMS being considered by the University Administration, the AMS was the perfect candidate to interview about the growing concerns with the increase in transportation prices.

Based on the interview, the AMS committee acknowledged the rise in prices of transportation and is "navigating the [trends] ... and actively seeking ways to assist student and staff members" (AMS Committee, 2023). Furthermore, the AMS continued by saying they are "currently discussing a wide variety of potential solutions" (AMS Committee, 2023) to this issue. These responses indicate that UBC is aware of the inflationary prices of transportation and its effect on students.

When asked about specific details of potential plans, and their feedback on possible solutions highlighted in this formal report (i.e., Re-negotiating UBC's partnership with Translink UPASS, Active communication between the school and students on efficient transportation methods), the AMS Committee, unfortunately, did not disclose their meeting information due to "privacy reasons." However, the AMS commented that they are "actively discussing all possible options to assist the UBC community in making transportation more affordable" (AMS Committee, 2023) and that "all are possibilities" (AMS Committee, 2023). This comment exemplifies UBC's commitment to their annual partnership with Translink in creating discounted UPASSes of all three zones for UBC members and the increased rental-car availability on campus. As a result, implementing future programs or price changes to help students and staff members make transportation affordable is on the horizon.

Unfortunately, this formal report will not include a response from the current President, Dr. Deborah Buszard, since there has yet to be a response. However, this formal report highlights the issues of the price increase related to transportation and its effects on students and staff members. With the anonymous survey representing students and staff members and the AMS Committee still clearly expresses the issue at hand.

D. Strategies to Promote Affordability

Evaluation of current approaches

Currently, UBC is partnered with Translink that allows all associated members of UBC which include student and staff members a discounted UPASS, allowing universal

transportation across all three zones. Without this benefit, individuals would have to purchase separate UPASSes and Translink's tiered pricing system of their designated three zones.

UBC is also partnered with alternative transportation companies such as Evo and HOPR. Evo is a rental-car service company that allows members to rent their cars for a fixed amount of time. HOPR is a bike-rental company that helps the UBC community to rent bikes. Uber is also another noteworthy company. Uber is not currently associated with UBC; on the other hand, Uber has been a common transportation method employed by the UBC Community and has only increased in demand.

As of right now, UBC's Translink UPASS is \$45.10 per month (Translink, 2023), but in 2017, it was priced at \$41 per month. Furthermore, in 2013, the UPASS price was \$35 per month for University partnered individuals (Translink, 2013). This price increase, despite its relatively cheaper option, is still increasing.

For UBC rental options, Evo increased its price from \$14.99 in 2019 to \$17.99 in 2023 (CityNews, 2023). With HOPR, it increased its price from \$21 in 2018 to \$25 per month (CityNews, 2023). With Uber, the current price per ride increased by 5% over the past three years (CityNews, 2019).

With all these transportation methods increasing their prices, individuals who rely on them are negatively affected. As a result, I will be introducing new strategies UBC can implement to assist with this issue.

Potential New Methods

Here are potential solutions:

- 1) A web page that lays out the most cost and time-efficient methods of transportation
- 2) UBC establishing a partnership with car rental companies that offer student and staff discounts for rental cars
- 3) Re-negotiating UBC's partnership with Translink UPASS

- 4) UBC promoting car-pooling through their website (i.e. UBC creating a page where students and staff members can connect together for efficient car-pooling options)

Validating the Importance of Integrating New Approaches

Integrating new approaches helps identify and address improvement areas and provides fresh perspectives and solutions to complex problems that fluctuate consistently. (Israel et al., 2001). As inflation affects students and staff members in a place most heavily relied upon, being open to new ideas and solutions will help the overall experience and growth.

Israel et al., (2001) express that as the world rapidly evolves and new technologies emerge, individuals and organizations must be willing to adapt and adopt new approaches to succeed. The potential solutions mentioned in the 'Integrating New Methods' section can decrease the worry of students and staff members about transportation increasingly getting beyond their expected budget and view of transportation being too expensive.

E. Feasibility of recommendations

UBC already has a foundation in place with the right intentions of making transportation more affordable with their partnership with Translink that provides UPASS for student and staff members, and it's allowed the availability of Evo rental cars widely present on campus. However, companies' consistent annual price increases are increasingly making UBC partnerships less impactful. There are two suggestions for UBC to facilitate more affordable transportation for their students. These include:

- 1) Re-negotiating UBC's partnership with Translink UPASS
- 2) Active communication between the school and students on efficient transportation methods through websites, blogs, or emails

Based on feasibility, these two suggestions allow for the most realistic timelines for change and implementation. The reason is that UBC already has an established relationship

with Translink, making a re-negotiation plausible. Furthermore, the student body can elect members to the AMS Committee through votes, so voting for candidates who will voice these options will have a lasting effect and create change.

Conclusion

With the current trends in the increase in costs related to transportation over the past decade (Dailyhive, 2023), and the reliant use of transportation, especially for students and staff members, a directive measure is needed to assist with this issue. Transportation has become critical as it helps facilitate our economy and society (Litman, 2013).

However, inflation across all expenditures has made this necessity more difficult for hard-working individuals, who will be the ones running society, to handle. The cost of living has increased over the past ten years (Gössling, Nicolosi, & Litman, 2021). Transportation costs are one of the main culprits as companies are also navigating the increased pricing in gas, supply chain, and manufacturing (Gössling, Nicolosi, & Litman, 2021).

As a result, large institutions that rely on the many individuals who use transportation, such as UBC, must assist in this matter. It is no secret that UBC has made its efforts with its current plan with Translink, but it is time for an update and to come up with innovative methods to counteract the rising cost of transportation, affecting many people alike.

Based on the survey reports, most respondents report they view the current price of transportation as expensive and taking up more expenses in their budgets. From UBC's perspective, the price increase is also acknowledged, and actions are currently in place to assist with this phenomenon. It is apparent that action is needed, and the two suggestions provided in the 'Feasibility of Recommendations' section highlight what UBC can do to help.

Appendix

A. Survey Questions

Survey available here: <https://forms.gle/bhiWgHArDHESQX6e7>

1. What form of transportation do you take the most often?
 - a. Bus
 - b. Bicycle/Scooter
 - c. Rental Cars (i.e. Evo)
 - d. By Feet (i.e. walking, running, etc.)
 - e. Taxi
 - f. Vehicle
2. What if your preferred method of transportation?
 - a. Bus
 - b. Bicycle/Scooter
 - c. Rental cars (i.e. Evo)
 - d. By feet (i.e. walking, running, etc.)
 - e. Taxi
 - f. Vehicle
3. How often do you use these types of transportation methods on a per week basis? (i.e. bus, bicycle, rental car, walking, running, taxi, vehicle)
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. 6
 - g. 7
4. How would you rank the transportation system currently in place: rank 1 - 5 (1 being very unsatisfied, 3 being neutral, 5 being very satisfied)

- a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
5. Using transportation in Vancouver is:
- a. Way overpriced
 - b. Slightly overpriced
 - c. Appropriately priced
 - d. Underpriced
 - e. N/A
6. Spending on transportation is:
- a. Beyond my budget (too expensive)
 - b. Taking up more of my budget (getting expensive)
 - c. Not changes (not changes)
 - d. Taking up less (less expensive)
7. Rank your experience with UBC's partnership with transportations companies such as translink (upass), Evo (rental car), and electric scooters (e-bike, scooter): rank 1 - 5 (1 being very unsatisfied, 3 being neutral, 5 being very satisfied)
- a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
8. UBC students and staffs transportation can be improved most by:
- a. Lowering the cost of bus passes (UPASS)
 - b. Providing student and staff discounts on electric vehicles
 - c. Providing messages of alternative transportation methods
 - d. Connecting with more rental car companies
 - e. All of the above

f. None

B. Interview Questions to AMS Committee & Council

- 1) What is UBC stance on the increase in price fares for transportation such as gas prices, parking passes, bus passes, and rental-car?
- 2) Are there are plans in place for UBC to help mitigate this increase in prices? If so, what are they?
- 3) UBC has been partnered with Tanslink that allows students access to the student and staff UPASS? Would UBC consider partnering up with car-rental companies such as Evo that offer student and staff discounts?
- 4) Would UBC be open to re-negotiating with currently partners transportation organizations to lower the costs to help mitigate the rising cost of living in Vancouver?
- 5) What is the most effective way for students and staff members to voice their concerns and make suggestions for this particular issue?
- 6) Approximately, how much time would it for these plans to come into place? In your opinion, is it feasible?

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