

# Evaluating the Impacts of Mobi's Equity Program on Access and Use of Public Bike Share in Vancouver

Report

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*Community Organization Perspectives*

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**MOBILIZING  
JUSTICE** \_\_\_\_\_

Towards Evidence-Based  
Transportation Equity Policy

# About Mobilizing Justice

The Mobilizing Justice Partnership is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Based at the University of Toronto Scarborough, the national intersectoral research partnership aims to understand and address transportation poverty in Canada and to improve the well-being of Canadians at risk of transport poverty. Learn more at [www.mobilizingjustice.ca](http://www.mobilizingjustice.ca).

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# Executive Summary

In 2016, the City of Vancouver launched its public bike share system (Mobi by Rogers) to provide a convenient and affordable mode of transportation for people's daily trips. Since this time, the City of Vancouver and Mobi have introduced several equity initiatives to make bike share more accessible for residents.

The [Community Pass](#) is Mobi's signature equity program which reduces financial barriers to bike share by providing a discounted membership, cash payment options, and reduced liability for bikes that are lost, stolen, or damaged. There are numerous ways to qualify for the Community Pass including providing proof of enrollment in other subsidized programs (e.g., subsidized leisure pass, subsidized bus pass, food bank membership), proof of an annual income less than \$27,000, Persons with Disabilities (PWD) designation, or referral from a community partner. Mobi has developed partnerships with local non-profit and government agencies to expand the reach of this program.

With funding from the Mobilizing Justice Innovative Pilots & Policies, our research team evaluated the impacts of the Community Pass on access and use of Vancouver's public bike share system. **To learn more about the benefits, facilitators, and barriers of the Community Pass program, we conducted a series of interviews with Mobi's community partners. This report summarizes what we heard from these interviews.**

## RESULTS HIGHLIGHTS

We spoke directly with community organizations that serve demographically diverse populations, including children, youth, and families living on low incomes; people experiencing homelessness, poverty, and substance use; bidders (individuals collecting refundable materials for income); and people in transitional employment programs. In the interviews, we heard feedback from Mobi's community partners on the benefits, facilitators, barriers, and recommendations for enhancing the program's uptake (Table 1).

**Table 1. Benefits, facilitators, barriers, and recommendations reported in community organization interviews.**

What We heard	
<b>Benefits</b>	Improves access to opportunities, including education, employment, and fostering social connections
	Facilitates entry into cycling
	Promotes autonomy & life skills for youth and adults
	Promotes recreation and active living
	Aligns with sustainability goals of community members and community organizations
	Aligns with organizational goals, including fostering community connections and reducing barriers for members
<b>Facilitators</b>	Sign-up process and membership support, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low membership cost</li> <li>• Low barrier sign-up requirements</li> <li>• In-person sign-up process</li> <li>• Responsiveness of Mobi’s equity coordinator</li> </ul>
	Champions who promote the Community Pass program
	Location of stations and supportive cycling infrastructure
<b>Barriers</b>	Sign-up process and membership support, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High membership cost</li> <li>• Location of Mobi Headquarters</li> <li>• Access to technology and digital literacy</li> </ul>
	Safety concerns around helmets and bike size
	Knowledge gaps about the Community Pass program and bike share system
	Limited organizational resources and staff capacities
	Location of stations and bike availability, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classic bike availability at each station</li> <li>• Too few stations in the Downtown Eastside</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations</b>	Connect with community organization and members to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bolster community presence</li> <li>• Enhance information sharing</li> <li>• Continue in-person sign-up events</li> <li>• Organize follow-up after referrals</li> </ul>
	Seek opportunities with existing programs & cross-organizational collaborations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with champions of the Community Pass</li> <li>• Integrate the pass into existing programming</li> <li>• Engage in cross-organizational collaborations to streamline efforts and resources</li> </ul>

## KEY TAKEAWAYS & THE TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

We summarize our findings in relation to the City of Vancouver’s Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Action Plan.<sup>1</sup> The action plan promotes and encourages active transportation and transit use as part of the City’s Climate Emergency Response, which aims to increase the use of sustainable transportation to reduce the city’s greenhouse gas emissions and improve public health and safety. The TDM plan is the policy guidance around Mobi, and in this section we look at findings from the interviews in the context of TDM goals, strategies, and actions.

### Takeaway #1:

**The Community Pass program improves access to various social and economic opportunities and resources, such as:**

- Education and employment opportunities
- Practicing autonomy and life skills for youth and adults
- Socializing with friends and family
- A safe alternative to public transit

These outcomes support the TDM Action Plan goal to create *a culture that celebrates cycling as an accessible, feasible, and safe option enabling people to access social connections, community resources, and economic opportunities.*

### Takeaway #2:

**The Community Pass program enables people to promote their own health and use a sustainable mode of transportation.** Public bike share allows people to:

- Access opportunities for recreation, fitness, and active living.
- Use a transportation mode that aligns with the sustainability perspectives of community members and the organizations that support them.

By reducing barriers to using Mobi’s bike share, the Community Pass program aligns with the TDM Action Plan’s goals and actions to *increase the use of sustainable transportation in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve public health and safety, and promote cycling as a fun, practical, and healthy transportation choice.*

### Takeaway #3

**The Community Pass program supports an equitable approach to active transportation by:**

- Facilitating a low-cost entry into cycling for equity-deserving populations.
- Aligning with the goals of the community organizations that serve equity-deserving populations.

The Community Pass Program aligns with the TDM Action Plan’s commitment to *advance social equity by ensuring that the mobility needs of disproportionately impacted communities are taken into account.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/transportation-demand-management-action-plan.pdf>

#### Takeaway #4

**The Community Pass program's facilitators and barriers overlapped across different priority populations.**

This may reflect the diversity and intersectional identities of Community Pass members, their needs, and the barriers that they face.

By adopting various low-barrier options and partnering with community organizations that support residents facing diverse barriers, the Community Pass program aligns with the TDM Action Plan equity goal, *taking an approach that considers the multiple intersecting identities of Vancouver residents*. Mobi should continue to support each community partner according to its target members' transportation needs and barriers.

#### Takeaway #5

**Given the limited organizational resources and capacities, Mobi's partners gather membership feedback informally and infrequently.** Community organizations receive little feedback from their members about their experiences with bike share after they have made the pass referrals.

All the community organizations we spoke with recognize the value of the pass program and are keen to work with Mobi to find ways to collect feedback to further promote the pass. In line with action 3E, the City should support Mobi to continue to work with community partners on *encouraging and promoting public bike share use* by collecting more feedback from pass users.

#### Takeaway #6

**Most participants felt they did not have the first-hand experience to be able to speak to the experiences of specific populations,** such as women and people who identify as Indigenous. We recommend future evaluations to directly engage directly with these populations.

Speaking directly to pass members can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impacts of the Community Pass program, aligning with the TDM's goal to *ensure the needs of disproportionately impacted communities are centered in TDM actions and, as much as is possible, involve those who will be directly impacted or who will benefit in the design and implementation of TDM actions*.

# Project Background

Vancouver's public bike share system, Mobi by Rogers [Mobi], has been operating since 2016. Previous research conducted by our research team found there were inequities in terms of access and use of public bike share. The bike share service area disproportionately served higher socioeconomic status neighbourhoods and attracted riders who were wealthier, more educated, and less racially diverse than the general Vancouver population.<sup>1,2</sup>

Mobi has since implemented numerous changes to reduce barriers, enhance uptake, and make bike sharing more equitable. The specific changes include hiring an equity coordinator, expanding the service area, adding e-bikes to the fleet, reducing financial barriers through a community pass program, and partnering with community organizations to reach more diverse populations.

With funding from the Mobilizing Justice Innovative Pilots & Policies, our research team aimed to evaluate the impacts of these equity initiatives on access and use of Vancouver's public bike share system. The three research objectives were:

1. To assess whether the bike share service area expansion improved equity in spatial access,
2. To characterize bike share members and their use of the system, with a focus on community pass members and e-bike usage, and
3. To explore the benefits of and facilitators and barriers to Mobi's Community Pass program.

This report shares results from the third objective. Report for the first objective can be found [here](#) and the report for the second objective is [here](#).

## THE COMMUNITY PASS PROGRAM

Mobi introduced the Community Pass program in 2018 to make bike share more accessible and affordable for people facing various social and financial barriers in the city. The Community Pass allows more people to enjoy the benefits of cycling by offering the reduced cost of \$20 for a 365 Day Pass Plus membership with unlimited 60-minute rides. The program further reduces barriers by offering cash payment options and reduced liability for bikes that are lost, stolen, or damaged.


Riders can qualify for the Community Pass program in numerous ways, including providing proof of enrollment in other subsidized programs (e.g., subsidized leisure pass, subsidized bus pass, food bank membership, etc.), proof of an annual income less than \$27,000, proof of a Persons with Disabilities (PWD) designation, or a referral from one of Mobi's community partners. Individuals who enroll in the program with a PWD designation can use e-bikes without an additional per-minute charge.

Mobi has developed partnerships with local non-profit and government agencies to expand the reach of the Community Pass program. These community partners play a key role in referring members<sup>2</sup> to the program, with about 60% of pass applications coming from a community organization referral. As of December 2022, there were 58 community partners, who serve equity-deserving populations including youth, Indigenous

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<sup>2</sup> We use the term 'member' in our report to refer to individuals who receive services from the participating community partners, as well as Community Pass program members. Our partners also used the terms 'client' and 'participant' in our interviews.





residents, people with lower socioeconomic status, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ+ community members, amongst others.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

We conducted a series of interviews with Mobi's community partners to **gain a richer understanding of the equity impacts of the Community Pass program** based on their experiences. We aimed to capture their views on the following questions:

1. How does the Community Pass program impact the ability of pass members **to participate in activities and reach destinations** in their communities?
2. What are the **benefits, facilitators, and barriers** to accessing and using the program for community members and community organizations?

# Methods

## INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

We consulted our partners at the City of Vancouver, Mobi, and the [Mobilizing Justice Community and Equity Advisory Table](#) (CEAT) to determine which community organizations were eligible to participate. We identified two selection criteria:

- 1) The organization should support at least one of the priority populations identified in the phase one of our project on the geographical expansion of docking stations (a socio-spatial analysis), including:
  - Children, youth, and older adults
  - Indigenous residents
  - Immigrant populations
  - Racialized populations
  - People with lower socioeconomic status

We were also interested in reaching priority populations that could not be included in our socio-spatial analysis based on data availability from Statistics Canada, including:

- Persons with disabilities
  - 2SLGBTQ+ community members
- 2) The organization should have frontline engagement with community members to provide first-voice insights on the Community Pass program from both the perspectives of pass provider and pass user.

Based on these criteria, we e-mailed invitations to 15 diverse organizations; however not all organizations responded, had interest in participating, or had the capacity to participate. The six participating organizations signed consent forms prior to our interview sessions. The ethics for this study were approved by the Simon Fraser University Research Ethics Board (#30001544).


## DATA COLLECTION

Our semi-structured interview guide was informed by feedback from Mobilizing Justice's CEAT and our partners at the City of Vancouver and Mobi. The guide was iteratively adapted throughout the data collection process to account for the differences in the community partner's organizational goals, programs, and target membership. See Appendix A for a version of the interview guide.

The interview explored topics on the perceived benefits of the Community Pass program, its facilitators and barriers, and opportunities and recommendations to improve the program's uptake. We interviewed six community partners over Zoom, ranging from approximately 30 to 45 minutes in length, and offered each participant \$40 for their time.

## ANALYSIS

We used framework analysis to draw out key ideas related to benefits, barriers, and facilitators, with two team members independently coding and then meeting as a broader team to name, refine, and categorize themes and subthemes.<sup>3,4</sup>



**In this report, we first provide general details on the community partners that participated in our project, the community members that they serve, and an overview of their pass referral process. This is followed by a synthesis of what we heard from participants, including supporting quotes. We finish the report with key insights and concluding recommendations.**

# Community Organizations and Referral Process

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Mobi's community partners often have a target population for their membership services. It is important to note, however, that their members face not just one barrier but deal with multiple barriers given their intersecting social identities, including gender, race and ethnicity, disabilities, and more. The organizations we spoke with are located in the Downtown Eastside (DTES), Strathcona, Grandview-Woodland, and Chinatown.

### The community organizations we interviewed support:

- **Strathcona neighbourhood families**, including children, youth, and older adults. The community organization supports members of all ages by providing recreation and social activities, and support services for individuals and families.
- **Children & youth** facing all types of barriers. One organization we connected with supports Indigenous youth, racialized and newcomer youth, youth living on low incomes, and youth with disabilities by promoting healthy active living and fostering employment and life skills. Another organization works with youth from low-income communities in Strathcona, Chinatown, and the DTES, providing resources and supportive networks for high school students to graduate and build foundations for a successful future.
- **People experiencing homelessness, poverty, and substance use** and who face multiple social and economic barriers, and stigmatization. The community organization supports members through a continuum of care, such as providing meals, shelter, recovery, and transitional housing to long-term social housing.
- **Bidders**, individuals collecting refundable containers for supplementary income. Members face marginalization, poverty, and barriers to full social and economic inclusion. The community organization supports members by de-stigmatizing the work of bidders, advocating for their expertise in waste diversion and sustainability, and by offering community-building and employment programs.
- **People in transitional employment programs** overcoming homelessness, poverty, and substance use, and/or living with a disability. We spoke with an organization located in the DTES that supports members by providing transitional work experience and community-networking opportunities for those ready to enter the workforce.

We interviewed organizations based on the responses we received to our invitations. We acknowledge that as a result not all community voices are represented in our report. We also recognize the importance of hearing directly from members of the Community Pass program. We plan to draw insights from Community Pass members from the 2023 Mobi Member Survey and recommend that future evaluations speak directly with members of the program.



## COMMUNITY PASS PROGRAM REFERRALS

Participants shared that they facilitate Community Pass referrals by hosting organized sign-up events with a Mobi representative, and/or by referring members on a rolling basis. The sign-up events are used to introduce Mobi to the community, to share pass program information, and to provide an opportunity to register on the spot. Community organizations subsequently provide intermittent referrals for eligible members to sign up online or in person at Mobi's headquarters office. One organization mentioned it increases its promotional efforts in the spring and summer when the weather becomes warmer. Most participants shared that they only gather membership feedback about their experiences with bike share informally and infrequently.



# Findings

In this section, we summarize the key themes that emerged from our interviews with Mobi’s community partners. Our findings focus on the program’s benefits, facilitators, barriers, and recommendations, from the perspective of these community partners. A few themes were described as facilitators by some participants but identified as barriers by other participants. Table 2 provides an overview of which findings emerged as a facilitator, as a barrier, or as both.

**Table 2. Facilitators and barriers to accessing the Community Pass program.**

Finding	Facilitator	Barrier
Low barrier sign-up requirements	X	
Responsiveness of Mobi’s equity coordinator	X	
Champions of the Community Pass program	X	
Cycling infrastructure	X	
Cost	X	X
In-person sign-up process	X	X
Location of stations	X	X
Location of Mobi headquarters		X
Bike availability		X
Safety concerns		X
Knowledge gaps of community organizations and pass users		X
Organizational resources and staff capacities		X

## BENEFITS OF THE COMMUNITY PASS PROGRAM

### Improves Access to Opportunities, Resources, and Social Connections

**Access to opportunities & resources.** Participants described how many youth use bike share to reach different types of destinations and reach various social and economic opportunities, not only cycling between home and school settings, but also cycling to participate in other youth-oriented activities, peer groups, life skills classes, mentorship programs, and part-time work.

Bike share provides access to opportunities and resources for adults living, working, or accessing community resources in the DTES. For instance, the Community Pass program helps individuals participate in transitional employment programs by *“connecting people who are coming from outside of the community to the program and get them to work on a daily basis”*. They further shared that *“being connected and having more of a community... things that are going to support [them] moving forward after [the program].”*

**Social benefits.** In addition to reaching various destinations, the Community Pass program provides opportunities for fostering social relationships. This was shared by several participants, particularly those working with family and youth. One participant shared that both youth and adults have signed up for the pass with the intention of using Mobi bikes for outings with friends and *“family adventures”*.

**An alternative to public transit.** Bike share provides an alternative - and often a preferred - option to public transit. Participants shared with us that the pass offered people the freedom to either cycle or take the bus, which was described as often late and overcrowded, and perceived by some youth as unsafe:

*“... there's just a lot of stuff that the youth have shared with us that they don't want to see on buses, you know, whether it's someone who is disrespecting someone else ... they feel very helpless in those situations as a young person. ”*

In this way, having access to bike share was described as an opportunity for youth to make their own decisions on how they move around their communities and the city by providing an alternative to other options that may expose them to disempowering circumstances.

### Promotes Autonomy and Life skills for Youth and Adults

Some participants noted how bike share created opportunities for Community Pass program members, younger and older, to build a sense of autonomy and new life skills. One participant who works with adults experiencing various barriers to employment described how the practice of enrolling in the program, learning how to access Mobi bikes, and then using the bikes to connect to other resources in the community was as an opportunity to foster a sense of self-empowerment by *“taking on and owning as much as they can... as independently as they can.”*

Another community partner that supports children and youth shared how the program allows youth to build self-confidence and independence when planning and navigating their routes around the city, cultivating life skills that *“they could teach their siblings...[by] passing [and] sharing knowledge.”*

## Facilitates Entry to Cycling

Some participants shared how the Community Pass program facilitates entry into cycling for youth and adults by reducing the costs associated with bike ownership. The cost of owning, storing, and maintaining a personal bike can prohibit individuals from exploring cycling as a means of transportation, recreation, and exercise. One participant noted how *“it’s a good way [for] people... experimenting and being like: Oh! This is something that really betters my quality of life.”*

## Promotes Recreation and Active Living

Many participants highlighted how bike share is used for recreation and exercise. Cycling was described as both a way to reach destinations, such as school and work, and as a *“fun and healthy hobby”* for pass users. For several of Mobi’s community partners, the physical health aspect of bike share aligns with the organization’s programming. For example, one participant explained how fitness is incorporated into the organization’s recovery programming and how cycling is promoted as part of an active recovery journey. The participant suggested that with greater collaboration between Mobi and the organization, the Community Pass program could do more to promote health and active living for their members.

## Aligns with Organizational Goals

**Community Connections.** Part of the organizational goals of many community partners is to support their members by connecting them to community opportunities and resources beyond their own organization. The pass program is a community resource that people might not otherwise be able to access or might face barriers when accessing on their own. For some organizations, connecting to equity initiatives like Mobi’s pass program is a valuable opportunity to broaden their own inter-organizational relationships with other community partners.

**Reduced Barriers.** Every participant we spoke to named ‘reducing barriers for their members’ as one of their primary organizational goals. The Community Pass program emerged as a tool to help Mobi’s community partners achieve these goals by reducing barriers to educational, employment, economic, and other opportunities by improving access to mobility. One community partner spoke of transportation as *“a basic need”*, yet noted how costs of mobility, getting around the city where people need to go, like to school or work, were prohibitive. They considered that cycling *“should essentially be part of that mobility”*, and *“the Community Pass program was one way to reduce transportation barriers for their members”*.

**Sustainability Goals of community members and organizations.** As a means to access bike share, the Community Pass allows community members to practice environmental sustainability by cycling to their destinations. One participant spoke of sustainability as not only an organizational priority, but as an issue that mattered for their members: *“marginalized people, they’re also critical thinkers, and many of them understand the importance of climate change”*. Another participant explained that youth recognize that cycling and bike share are *“part of our sustainability goals as a city”*, and that being able to participate in these goals, *“knowing that they’re part of sustainability”*, is important to them.

## FACILITATORS TO THE COMMUNITY PASS PROGRAM

### Flexible and supportive sign-up process

**Cost.** Participants identified the low cost of Mobi's Community Pass as a benefit of the program. The discounted fee helps reduce financial barriers that are commonly associated to accessing daily destinations and participating in community activities.

**Low barrier sign-up requirements.** For people who do not have a credit card or bank account, Mobi's flexible cash payment option supports a low-barrier approach that is essential for some community members and the organizations that serve them. This aspect of the program was described by several participants as a facilitator for accessing the Community Pass.

**In-person sign-up process.** In-person sign-up events at community organizations are effective at reaching community members. Participants value having a Mobi representative attend community events in order to provide information and answer questions about the pass and bike share. One participant described these targeted sessions as "gold" for program enrolment.

Mobi's in-person sign-up option ensures that individuals who experience challenges with digital literacy and accessing technology can still enroll for the Community Pass. One participant working with DTES residents explained how:

*"Mobi has been very open to us just sending people to their office. A lot of the people we work with will do best if they can go somewhere and actually have someone support them in setting that up. It's really helpful to have that option... we, as staff, don't have the capacity to set that up for every single person."*

**Responsiveness of Mobi's equity coordinator.** Mobi's equity coordinator was identified as an important facilitator of the pass program. The role of the equity coordinator was often mentioned by participants as one that is valuable in making "the process really seamless", whether at targeted sign-up events, for in-person enrolment at Mobi's headquarter offices, or to address questions that arose.

### Champions who promote the Community Program pass

Each participant we spoke with has cycling enthusiasts within their organization who can champion the Community Pass program in different ways. Some champions have helped introduce Mobi's program to the community organization, while others continue to regularly encourage their members to join on an individual basis.

In some organizations, frontline workers individually advocate for the Community Pass, as one participant does with youth in their program: "I bring it up in conversations pretty often I would say, just because I personally love biking...". In other organizations, the role of the 'program champion' is shared by several frontline workers in a team. One participant explained: "I was sending out information to our youth team because I know they were really, really interested in getting young people signed up in the program". Community members were also champions of the program, advocating for the organization to promote the pass. "... one of [our members] signed up before... he was the one that was like: You need to get Mobi in! He was really excited for it."

## Location of stations and supportive cycling infrastructure

Several participants cited the locations of docking stations and the network of bike lanes in the city as important facilitators to using the Community Pass program. *“There’s a very large social housing complex like right next to [the community centre]”,* explained one participant when discussing the location of docking stations, *“and [our centre’s] kind of a hub for community activity. So, I think the location is absolutely amazing!”*

The network of bike routes around docking stations and popular destinations enabled some community partners to feel comfortable recommending bike share to their members. As one participant noted: *“Vancouver’s really bike-friendly in the neighborhoods where I work and where the students attend school. So, I know it’s reasonably safe for them”.*

These findings suggest that the successful uptake of public bike share and the Community Pass program relies on the quality of the area’s existing cycling infrastructure.

## BARRIERS TO THE COMMUNITY PASS PROGRAM

### Sign-up process and membership support

**Cost.** While participants cited the discounted annual fee as a benefit of the Community Pass program, the cost remains a challenge for many community members. When asked if the membership fee was reasonable for their members, one participant replied:

*“Yes, and no. I think they recognize that’s a great deal for the year but coming up with 20 dollars to spend in one go is definitely something our members are quite aware of. They’re like, that’s quite a bit of money.”*

**Location of Mobi headquarters.** The program’s flexible cash payments require individuals to visit the headquarters office to sign up for a pass in person. For many residents in the DTES wanting to join the Community Pass program, the distance to this office presents both a social and geographical barrier to accessing the program. One participant elaborated on this challenge: *“I think at times it’s just really a barrier to kind of go outside of your comfort zone and to leave the community to access services.”*

Another of Mobi’s community partners expressed how sending members to Mobi’s headquarters on a regular basis can be inconvenient. *“There’s not really something in the center of the Downtown Eastside for people to just have that touch-base with... so that’s not exactly very accessible.”*

This challenge also relates to gender-specific barriers. As explained by one participant when we discussed transportation barriers for their members who identify as women: *“if you’re in a childcare position, you’re juggling work, you’re doing our program... [It’s] just being able to take an hour of your day or whatever it takes to get that pass sorted.”*

**Access to technology and digital literacy.** Organizations that serve people overcoming homelessness, poverty, and substance use cited the lack of access to digital technology as a barrier to using the Community Pass program. This barrier relates to the program enrollment process, to communicating with Mobi representatives when questions or problems arise, and to navigating the bike share system in general. For example, the email requirement to activate the pass is a challenge. In addition, pass members without cell phones face communication barriers when dealing with bike-related concerns or questions: *“If they’re having trouble pulling out a bike or docking it, or anything like that, they don’t have that accessibility at their fingertips to be able to give [Mobi] a call or things like that,”* explained a participant.



For some individuals, "a huge barrier... is digital literacy and just kind of being able to use an app or something on [their] phone and getting that [Mobi account] set up independently".

### **Safety concerns**

Some youth-serving providers expressed concerns around safety and helmet use. Given that helmets are not provided with every Mobi bike, this emerged as a challenge for youth without the resources to acquire a helmet. One participant noted:

*"I could see that a youth decides to use the bike to go to work and they forget their helmet. That would be a safety issue on us, so there's that trust factor as well."*

For another youth-referring organization, bike sizes were also noted as a safety concern for smaller and younger riders enrolled in the Community Pass program.

### **Knowledge gaps about Community Pass program and public bike share**

**Knowledge about the Community Pass program.** Participants did not always feel they had the most up-to-date information about bike share or the Community Pass to share with their clients, and reflected that this might hinder more enrollment. This knowledge gap was most notable around information on e-bike access, pass types, and complimentary Wi-Fi at Mobi's docking stations. For instance, one participant estimated that up to 30% of the organization's members have a Persons with Disabilities (PWD) designation yet they were not aware of the PWD Community Pass program option that includes e-bike access:

*"I didn't actually know that. Maybe some of that information sharing from Mobi to organizations like ours, that would be great 'cause I know there's people in our program... they'd be stoked on [an] e-bike."*

**Knowledge about the bike share system.** For new or potential Community Pass members, gaps can exist in understanding how to use Mobi's bike share system, including accessing and returning bikes to the docking stations, using the bikes, and knowing where stations were located around the city without a cell phone to consult a map online. According to one participant, despite a "huge amount of enthusiasm amongst [the] community ... a real kind of gap [exists] in terms of even really understanding how the bikes work."

### **Organizational resources and staff capacities**

**Limited resources.** Half of the organizations we spoke with either routinely subsidize the cost of the Community Pass program for their members or do so as needs arise. One participant noted that "it's very low cost but paying for it just seemed to be a huge barrier. We've never referred anyone who paid for [the pass] themselves." Some community organizations were able to find creative ways to cover the costs for their clients, while others indicated that the grants they received were allocated to specific programming and could not be used to cover transportation costs for their members.

**Limited staff capacity.** Most participants listed staff capacity as a barrier to supporting members with accessing and using the Community Pass program. "Unfortunately, it's one of those things that I'd like to help out more with, but [recognize] our capacity as an organization..." explained one participant as we discussed potential ways to bolster pass enrollment and renewals.

For community partners that are not actively (or only infrequently) recommending the pass to their members, limited resources and staff capacity can impact the number of their referrals to the Community Pass program. Given these challenges, referring members to the program is not at the forefront of their routines: "...because it's not necessarily on the radar of anyone anymore, it's not being utilized."

### **Location of stations and bike availability**

We heard from one youth-referring organization that the limited number of bikes available at each station often prohibits group recreational rides, especially along popular cycling routes in the city. They shared that efforts to use Mobi meant that they had to visit multiple neighbouring docking stations to access additional Mobi bikes, or alternatively resort to using more costly private bike rentals.

Furthermore, the addition of e-bikes to Mobi's bike share system has contributed to the reduced availability of classic bikes at each docking station. This is especially a barrier for Community Pass members who pay for the pass in cash and are not able to access e-bikes. One participant heard feedback from a member that they sometimes must go to multiple stations to find a classic bike.

Community partners serving people overcoming homelessness, poverty, and substance use felt there was a shortage of docking stations.

*"It doesn't feel like there's a lot in the Downtown Eastside. And that's probably just, that's a systemic thing, I'm sure. We have no public space or anything here...finding ways to bring more into the community would be helpful."*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY PASS PROGRAM**

### **Continue connecting with community organization and members**

**Community presence.** Given that the distance to Mobi's headquarters location is a challenge for people to access Community Pass-related services, some participants recommended that Mobi increase its presence within the low-income communities it supports. They emphasized the value of having a Mobi representative at community events:

*" There [are] so many community fairs [and] information sharing fairs, and I think the more that Mobi can establish a presence in low-income areas like the Downtown Eastside...it's huge. People need that face-to-face, and that's the best way to get people using something that's such a great resource."*

**Information sharing.** In response to the knowledge gaps around the Community Pass program, participants recommended increasing information-sharing opportunities for both pass-referring organizations and pass members. For example, participants were keen to learn more about the specifics of e-bikes in relation to the Community Pass. Some participants also suggested organizing workshops with a Mobi representative to provide educational opportunities for both staff and members about the Community Pass program.

Information around "safety, going over how the program works, the benefits..." and other important topics came up as areas of interest for both youth and adult-referring organizations. One participant recommended emphasizing the environmental benefits of using bike share at information-sharing events and workshops, and in Community Pass program promotions because many community members "understand the importance of climate change. So, thinking about cycling in those terms, I think is good."

***In-person sign-up events.*** Participants recommended that Mobi continue organizing sign-up services with the community organizations. They indicated that these sessions resulted in greater community member engagement. As one participant explained, “*whenever community partners bring their services to us, we see a huge uptick in interest and motivation [and] actually following through.*” This was particularly important for community members that lack access to digital technology or are faced with digital literacy barriers.

***Follow-up after referrals.*** Participants recognized the importance of following up with members after the referral process to better understand how the different barriers that people face might impact their access to and use of the Community Pass program. When asked what this process might look like for the community organization, some participants described a feedback system as something “*to bake into the process [of referring the pass]*”, while others described implementing a more informal approach such as checking in more often with their members. Importantly, however, all participants expressed that they would require support from Mobi to incorporate a feedback system given their limited resources and staff capacities.

***Seek input from community partners about station locations.*** Community partners were knowledgeable about destinations their members frequented and identified where there were gaps in stations. In particular, community partners serving people overcoming homelessness, poverty, and substance use felt there was a shortage of docking stations in the DTES.

### **Opportunities within existing programs and cross-organizational collaborations**


***Connect with champions of the Community Pass.*** Given that each community partner has cycling enthusiasts and program champions within their organization, connecting with these individuals or groups of individuals can be a valuable way to establish a strong program’s presence and potentially increase membership and renewal rates.

***Integrate the Community Pass into existing programming.*** While establishing a connection to cycling champions was recommended, participants also suggested integrating the pass into existing organizational programs to reduce barriers, increase pass uptake, and prevent the program participation from waning after the champion(s) leaves the organization. One participant cautioned that the program should “*not just live with one person*”, but that it should also be “*integrated as part of programming*”. They provided an example of how the pass could be incorporated into their recovery programs given its focus on fitness as an important component of the recovery process. “*We have running groups ... we have cycling groups. So, I think the culture is probably there for this to be successful. It's just about making it even lower barrier.*”

Incorporating the pass into an existing program also came up for a youth-supporting organization with a youth leadership program. They spoke of the potential value of incorporating the Community Pass to facilitate their interns’ travels between school and internship shifts.

Some partners mentioned that Mobi could target specific equity-deserving groups in their community organization by incorporating the pass into existing women- and senior-specific programming.

***Cross-organizational collaborations.*** Some participants recommended cross-organizational collaborations with local partners and businesses already working in the community, describing these as opportunities to form community networks that can further promote and build the Community Pass program while supporting equity-deserving communities.



As described by one participant: *“every organization is generally good at doing different things. So, how can we work together to strengthen the work that we’re all doing in the community?”* For instance, one participant suggested that Mobi could collaborate with other partners to address safety concerns by providing youth with helmets upon registration to a program or workshop.

# Key Takeaways and Connections

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

We found that by reducing financial barriers to public bike share, the Community Pass program allows people to access important social and economic opportunities and resources; enables them to engage in health-promoting activities; offers them opportunities to build and practice autonomy and life skills; and provides them a sustainable mode of transportation. In addition, the Community Pass program fosters an equitable approach to active transportation that aligns with the goals of community organizations that support equity-deserving populations in the city.

Of the organizations we interviewed, the Community Pass referral process was felt to be more successful for organizations that supported youth and families with lower incomes, and less so for organizations that supported populations experiencing homeless, poverty, and substance use. Opportunities to increase enrolment identified by organizations supporting these population groups included integrating the pass into existing programming and offering more stations and in-person sign-up sessions in the neighbourhoods where these populations reside. Our findings also suggest that the successful uptake of public bike share and the Community Pass program relies on the quality of the area's existing cycling infrastructure.

## CONNECTIONS TO THE CITY OF VANCOUVER'S TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN (2021-2025)

We summarize our findings in relation to the City of Vancouver's Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Action Plan. The action plan promotes and encourages active transportation and transit use as part of the City's Climate Emergency Response, which aims to increase the use of sustainable transportation to reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions and improve public health and safety. In this section, we draw from the plan's commitment to social equity through its goals, strategies, and actions for encouraging and promoting public bike share use. Specifically, we refer to the plan's strategy and action 3E *to develop public campaigns that promote active transportation and transit options, services, and programs in ways that are culturally appropriate and accessible by supporting Mobi by Rogers with encouraging and promoting public bike share use*. These commitments, goals, strategies, and actions are pulled from the TDM Action Plan 2021-2025.<sup>5</sup>

### Key Takeaways and the TDM Action Plan

#### Takeaway #1:

**The Community Pass program improves access to various social and economic opportunities and resources, such as:**

- Education and employment opportunities
- Practicing autonomy and life skills for youth and adults
- Socializing with friends and family
- A safe alternative to public transit

These outcomes support the TDM Action Plan goal to create *a culture that celebrates cycling as an accessible, feasible, and safe option enabling people to access social connections, community resources, and economic opportunities*.



## Takeaway #2:

**The Community Pass program enables people to promote their own health and use a sustainable mode of transportation.** Public bike share allows people to:

- Access opportunities for recreation, fitness, and active living.
- Use a transportation mode that aligns with the sustainability perspectives of community members and the organizations that support them.

By reducing barriers to using Mobi's bike share, the Community Pass program aligns with the TDM Action Plan's goals and actions to *increase the use of sustainable transportation in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve public health and safety, and promote cycling as a fun, practical, and healthy transportation choice.*

## Takeaway #3

**The Community Pass program supports an equitable approach to active transportation by:**

- Facilitating a low-cost entry into cycling for equity-deserving populations.
- Aligning with the goals of the community organizations that serve equity-deserving populations.

The Community Pass Program aligns with the TDM Action Plan's commitment to *advance social equity by ensuring that the mobility needs of disproportionately impacted communities are taken into account.*

## Takeaway #4

**The Community Pass program's facilitators and barriers overlapped across different priority populations.** This may reflect the diversity and intersectional identities of Community Pass members, their needs, and the barriers that they face.

By adopting various low-barrier options and partnering with community organizations that support residents facing diverse barriers, the Community Pass program aligns with the TDM Action Plan equity goal, *taking an approach that considers the multiple intersecting identities of Vancouver residents.* Mobi should continue to support each community partner according to its target members' transportation needs and barriers.

## Takeaway #5

**Given the limited organizational resources and capacities, Mobi's partners gather membership feedback informally and infrequently.** Community organizations receive little feedback from their members about their experiences with bike share after they have made the pass referrals.

All the community organizations we spoke with recognize the value of the pass program and are keen to work with Mobi to find ways to collect feedback to further promote the pass. In line with action 3E, the City should support Mobi to continue to work with community partners on *encouraging and promoting public bike share use* by collecting more feedback from pass users.

## Takeaway #6

**Most participants felt they did not have the first-hand experience to be able to speak to the experiences of specific populations,** such as women and people who identify as Indigenous. We recommend future evaluations to directly engage directly with these populations.

Speaking directly to pass members can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impacts of the Community Pass program, aligning with the TDM's goal to *ensure the needs of disproportionately impacted communities are centered in TDM actions and, as much as is possible, involve those who will be directly impacted or who will benefit in the design and implementation of TDM actions.*

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# Appendix

## Interview Guide

### Background information

1. To start, can you provide a brief overview of your organization's goals and the people you support?
2. What is your position in the organization and how long have you been there?
3. What role do you specifically play in supporting the Community Pass program?
4. Before getting into the details of the community pass program, we wanted to ask more generally about the transportation barriers that the clients you serve face.
5. In what ways, if at all, is the Community Pass helping address some of the transportation barriers you mentioned?

### Referral process and demographic profile

6. We're going to move on to how [organization name] refers their members to the pass program, could you briefly walk me through the referral process for Mobi's Community Pass program?
7. Once you refer members to the program, do you remain in contact with them or offer follow-ups specifically regarding the pass?
  - a. (IF YES - what are some of the topics covered?)  
Prompt: pass renewals, bike access (docking station and/or bike availability), learning how to use the bike share system, safety, etc.
8. What is the demographic profile of members who use bike share?

### Benefits and barriers to members

The next set of questions will look at how the pass program is perceived by your members. These questions would be answered based on either the feedback you've received from them or based on your observations in working with them:

9. What are some of the benefits of the Community Pass program for your clients?
  12. Probe: Are there any aspects of the pass program that have made it easier for your members to get around their community or to participate in activities?
10. What would you say are some of the challenges that make it more difficult for them to use the Community Pass program or bike share in general?

We're also looking to get some information on more specific pass users. In particular, the City of Vancouver and Mobi are interested in supporting the needs of girls, women, and Indigenous residents that might use the Community Pass program.

11. Based on your experience with the Community Pass program, are there are barriers to using the program that are more commonly experienced by your members who identify as

15. Indigenous?

16. Women/girls?

Probe: Based on these challenges that you've mentioned, do you have any recommendations on how to address them?

### **Benefits and barriers for the organization**

I'm now going to focus on your organization and its involvement with Mobi and the pass program.

12. Since you first learned about the program, would you say your organization's level of involvement with Mobi and the program has grown, lessened, or changed in any way?

Prompt: has the number of referrals you provide changed?

13. Are there benefits to offering the Community Pass program for your organization?

Prompt: Has offering the program met some of your organizational needs and/or goals, and if so, how?

14. What do you consider to be some of the biggest challenges of offering the pass program for your organization based on your experiences of providing pass referrals?

### **E-bikes**

15. Mobi introduced e-bikes to the system in 2022. Have you heard any feedback from your clients about accessing or using e-bikes?

Probe if issues: do you have suggestions on how they might be addressed?

### **Opportunities for enrollment**

We're now coming to the end of our interview, and I'd like to ask one more question.

16. What do you think are some opportunities for greater enrollment in the Community Pass program and greater pass renewals that you think would be useful to explore?

Prompt: This could be within your organization, or support from Mobi, etc.

### **Close**

17. Are there any additional comments you'd like to add about the Community Pass program?

18. Open to questions from the note-taker.