

TransLink Board
Via email: board@translink.ca
29 January, 2023

To the TransLink Board,

Re: “School Tripper” request for New Westminster students living in Queensborough and the West End

At the School District 40 (New Westminster) District Parents Advisory Council (DPAC) meeting on January 19th the following motion was passed by the members:

That the DPAC executive send a letter to the TransLink Board to request the consideration of “school tripper” runs added to routes 104 and 410 for students living in Queensborough and attending New Westminster Secondary School; and to route 155 for students living in the West End and attending Fraser River Middle School and Ecole Glenbrook Middle School.

New Westminster is a geographically small, but very densely populated city with one neighbourhood, Queensborough, located across the North Arm of the Fraser River. We have one high school for all students in the city to attend which is located at the north edge of the city along 10th Street. For grade 9 through 12 students living in Queensborough, getting over the North Arm of the Fraser River poses a significant challenge in travelling to New Westminster Secondary School (NWSS) both safely and on time.

Many Queensborough students take transit to NWSS, and these students face challenges both getting a bus on the Queensborough side as well as on the mainland side. The 410 bus is very frequently full during the morning and has no room to pick up student passengers by the time it reaches stops in Queensborough. The same scenario is also the case for the 104 bus, where it too is often full and has no room to pick up student passengers by the time it reaches stops in Queensborough. The addition of “school tripper” runs that would possibly service just Queensborough or would be labelled “Special” and thus deter non-student riders from boarding would help ensure that these students can make it to school on time. We have heard many stories of students who wait for a considerable time in the morning at Queensborough bus stops and full buses, one after another, pass them by. These students often decide to just walk along highway 91A and over the Queensborough Bridge, so as not to miss school and end up arriving an hour or more late.

For students in grades 6 through 8 (ages 11 through 14) who live in the West End, there is no middle school within their neighbourhood. These students either attend Fraser River Middle School (FRMS) or Ecole Glenbrook Middle School (EGMS) both located one or two neighbourhoods away. Often the 128 bus is full as soon as it leaves 22nd St Station, and

students waiting at stops in the West End are passed by in the morning. The same is true as it leaves Braid Station in the afternoon. Utilizing the 155 that runs along 6th St as a “school tripper” could serve both FRMS and EGMS with the addition of a jog down from Sixth Ave to FRMS before continuing back up to EGMS. Alternatively, there may be other routes or bus configurations that TransLink and Coast Mountain Bus Company identify that will work to get these young students to school safely and on time.

The New Westminster DPAC understands that getting students to school on time is not the mandate of TransLink. However, as a densely populated urban school district, we do not receive the additional funding that more rural districts do for operating dedicated bus services. We are looking to existing transportation providers to help the students of New Westminster meet this need and close the gap on their safe and timely transportation to school. We also understand that the pandemic has significantly impacted TransLink’s ridership levels, and in turn, revenues. However, by helping students get to school safely through public transit, you may foster lifelong public transit users and advocates!

If you would like to discuss our request further please do not hesitate to reach out via email at newwestdpacchair@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing back from you.

With kind regards,

Laura Kwong
SD40 DPAC Chair

Cc SD40 Board of Education
SD40 Superintendent Hachlaf, CEO
Mayor Patrick Johnstone, City of New Westminster