Department of Community Services Bus Pass Pilot Project

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. What is the Department of Community Services (DCS) Bus Pass Pilot Project?**

The DCS Bus Pass Pilot Project is a partnership with Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) to offer bus passes to all eligible IA clients in HRM. An annual bus pass will be issued to all eligible recipients, spouses and dependent children between the ages of 12 and 18 (with parental consent). Children under 12 can ride the bus for free with an adult who has a DCS pass. The DCS Bus Pass will replace transportation allowances issued to clients to purchase a bus pass or bus tickets.

**2. What is the new transportation approach for Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) clients?**

If an ESIA client meets the pilot criteria, they will receive a physical bus pass to address their transportation needs. This will remove the administrative burden currently involved in getting a transportation allowance, such as a doctor’s note saying that the client needs a certain number of doctor’s appointments each month.

**3. Why is this a pilot project?**

DCS is improving the ESIA program to provide better support to clients and deliver services in an easier and quicker way. As a pilot, we will monitor and evaluate the outcomes to determine next steps, including whether we could offer a similar pilot in areas that have a public transit system.

**4. What will the DCS Bus Pass look like?**

The DCS Bus Pass will look just like the current annual Metro Transit pass, except it will not include the employer/organization name. It will include the picture of the client, the client’s full name and Registry ID number. The DCS Bus Pass was designed with the privacy of our clients in mind so as not to identify clients as income assistance recipients.

**5. How will DCS be issuing bus passes?**

Due to the volume of clients who will be eligible for the annual bus pass, the Department will be implementing in phases:

* Phase 1: For recipients who receive less than $78 per month for transportation.
* Phase 2: For recipients who receive $78 or more per month for transportation.
* Phase 3: For all other recipients who have not received a pass in Phases 1 or 2.

**6. What communication is being sent to clients?**

Clients eligible under Phase 1 of the launch were sent a letter on June 4th, 2018 outlining that they are eligible for the pass and what they need to do to receive one.

Those involved in phases 2 and 3 will receive similar letters at a later date.

**7. Where can eligible clients get their passes?**

For Phase 1 of the program launch, the Department is setting up 8 enrolment locations. Letters sent to clients outline the details of these locations, and days/hours of operation. Clients are required to visit one of these off-site locations to have their photos taken and enroll in the program. Details are still being determined for phases 2 and 3.

**8. What about a new client who applies for Income Assistance?**

While the enrolment locations are open, any new client who is eligible for Income Assistance (IA) can visit one of these sites to enroll in the bus pass pilot project.

Once the locations are closed, ongoing enrolment in the DCS Bus Pass Pilot will be completed at any of the DCS office locations in HRM. Additional information will be shared regarding this at a later date.

**9. Who qualifies for a bus pass?**

Recipients, including spouses and dependent children between the ages of 12 and 18 (with parental consent), are eligible for the bus pass. Children under 12 can ride the bus for free with an adult who has an annual pass.

• Dependents aged 19-20 and attending an approved educational program not designated for student loan purposes are eligible for the annual bus pass.

• For the launch in June 2018, post-secondary students receiving Income Assistance are eligible for the annual DCS Bus Pass. (*This will be reviewed for duplication and more information will follow.)*

• For the launch in June 2018, school-aged children who might be eligible for the student pass issued through the Provincial Advisory Council during the school year are eligible for the annual bus pass. (*This will be reviewed for duplication and more information will follow.)*

• Clients in homeless shelters and transition houses are eligible for the annual bus pass.

**10. What about transportation allowances within the client’s IA budget?**

The DCS bus pass will replace the transportation allowance currently issued within the IA budget to purchase a bus pass or bus tickets. Information regarding this change was communicated directly to recipients in the letter issued announcing the program.

**11. Will anyone keep the travel allowance as part of their IA budget?**

Recipients who cannot take the bus and receive a transportation allowance for other types of transportation (for example taxis) will retain their transportation allowance and will not receive a DCS annual bus pass.

**12. How will we determine who can keep their travel allowance?**

Caseworkers will review each client who receives a travel allowance before the transportation allowance is removed from the income assistance budget.

**13. When will the travel allowances be removed from the IA budgets?**

The transportation allowance to purchase a bus pass or tickets will not be paid on the October 2018 cheque.

**14. What if a client is issued an annual DCS Bus Pass but requests an additional transportation allowance?**

A client with a DCS bus pass can request and be assessed for additional transportation allowance provided there is an identified need that the bus pass does not meet. These cases will be individually reviewed by caseworkers.

**15. What if a cIient received a letter to enroll in the bus pass program, but they do not want to get a pass and want to continue to receive their transportation allowance?**

Any client who has a need for transportation and is able to ride the bus is expected to enroll in the bus pass program. If a client chooses not to enroll in the program, and no special circumstances apply, they will be advised that their transportation allowance will still be removed from their income assistance budget effective October 2018.

**16. How long will the DCS Buss Pass be valid?**

All passes issued in the first year of the pilot will be valid until June 2019. At that time, stickers will be issued for placement on eligible passes to indicate they are valid for the second year of the pilot, until June 2020. Information regarding the renewal process will be provided at a later date.

**17. What if a client with a pass becomes ineligible for IA?**

If a client becomes ineligible for IA they still keep the bus pass and will be able to ride the bus until the pass expires. Bus passes will not be renewed for these clients in the next year if they are still not receiving IA.

**18. How will clients know where to go to have their picture taken?**

Letters have been sent to clients eligible under Phase 1explaining the bus pass launch and what is required to get their pass. (See attached). Details are still being determined for Phase 2 and 3.

**19. What will happen at the enrolment locations?**

For the launch of the program, clients must visit one of eight enrolment locations in HRM and bring the letter they received with them. DCS staff at these sites will confirm identity and take photos of eligible clients and family members.

**20. How will clients receive their bus pass?**

Clients will receive their annual bus pass in the mail. Clients are being advised that no information, including change of address, can be updated during enrolment at a site location and to contact their caseworker prior to visiting an enrolment site if changes are needed.

**21. How will a client access transportation between the time they have their picture taken and receive the pass in the mail?**

Clients will be provided with a one-month paper bus pass for July 2018 once they have their photo taken at the site enrolment location.

**22. Will child care be provided at the offsite locations?**

DCS will not be providing child care at the sites.

**23. What should the client do once they receive the letter?**

The client should follow the instructions contained in their letter, and arrange to attend one of the enrolment locations between the dates and times provided.

**24. Will clients be required to bring identification to the enrolment site?**

Yes, clients (and, if applicable, spouse and/or dependent(s)) must provide one piece of identification to enroll in the bus pass program. Acceptable ID includes:

* an income assistance cheque stub
* Birth Certificate
* Nova Scotia ID
* Drivers’ License
* Passport.
	1. NOTE: SIN or HCN are **not** acceptable for identification.