

GRT U-Pass Fee FAQ

What is Grand River Transit (GRT)?

Grand River Transit (GRT) is the public transit system in Waterloo Region servicing the cities and townships of Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Elmira, St. Jacobs and New Hamburg. GRT transit options include local buses, an express bus network, and ION light rail.

What is a GRT U-Pass?

The GRT U-Pass is a bus pass included in your tuition fees as an ancillary fee that provides students with unlimited trips on all GRT buses and ION trains using your OneCard, at an affordable price, all year long. The U-Pass provides affordable transportation not only to school, but for other trips such as shopping, employment, entertainment, and to connect to out-of-town bus or train stations.

For registered Mobility PLUS users, the U-Pass allows access to Mobility PLUS service.

Do all students receive a GRT U-Pass?

All students registered as full-time, in-person, and enrolled in an academic program available at Conestoga campuses/sites in Waterloo Region automatically participate in the U-Pass program. This does not include full-time distance education/online students, part-time students, or apprenticeship students.

How do you use a GRT U-Pass?

Your Conestoga OneCard is your U-Pass and can be used on any GRT bus or ION train. When boarding a bus, tap your OneCard on the farebox card reader. Before you board a train, tap your OneCard on the card reader, located on the ION light rail station platform.

What is the cost?

Effective September 1, 2024, the U-Pass Base Fee is \$118.97 per term and adjusted annually in subsequent years by no more than 5%. Students are charged the U-Pass fee for two of the three terms in an Academic Year, and the U-Pass remains valid on student cards on the “off-term” at no charge as long as the student remains enrolled and eligible for a U-Pass under the terms of the program.

This is the same U-Pass price as Waterloo and Laurier universities.

Can a student opt-out of the GRT U-Pass?

The fee is automatically included for all eligible students. All eligible students are required to pay the U-Pass fee and have equal access to transit at an affordable price, all year long. An eligible student is a student registered as full-time, in-person, and enrolled in an academic program available at Conestoga campuses/sites in Waterloo Region.

Opt-out exceptions will be limited and only provided on a case-by-case basis. Details about the opt-out process will be available in the Fall semester.

Can a non-eligible student opt-in to the GRT U-Pass?

Students who are not automatically included in the U-Pass can submit a request to opt-in to the U-Pass, which may be approved on a case-by-case basis. Details about the opt-in process will be available in the Fall semester.

How was the GRT U-Pass implemented?

In the Fall 2023 semester, a student referendum was held at all Waterloo Region campuses asking students if they would be in favour of a mandatory universal transit pass. 93% of students voted in favour of GRT's U-Pass program.

Is the GRT U-Pass temporary or permanent?

The initial term of the U-Pass program agreement ends August 31, 2027. To provide a stable long-term program, Conestoga College, CSI, and GRT have the mutual option to renew the agreements when they expire without referenda, if they choose to do so.

The agreement can be renewed indefinitely if the terms of the agreement remain the same (e.g., annual fee increase no more than 5%), and all parties continue to support the U-Pass program through an annual review after the initial term of the agreement expires.

I drive to school and pay for parking, do I have to pay for the U-Pass?

Yes. All eligible students will be charged the U-Pass fee regardless of whether they drive and pay for a parking pass or not. The U-Pass fee is much less than parking, and eligible students who typically drive can still use their U-Pass whenever they need it during the school year. Exceptional opt-outs are available and details about the opt-out process will be available in the Fall semester.

Does this apply to Brantford and/or Guelph students/campuses?

If you are a Brantford Conestoga College student, you have access to a U-Pass included in your tuition during the Fall and Winter semesters that provides you with unlimited access to Brantford Transit. More information can be found here: <https://www.conestogac.on.ca/parking-services/public-transit>

Guelph Transit currently provides a discounted rate for Guelph Conestoga College students of \$2.25/ride until 32 total monthly rides, at which point riding Guelph Transit becomes free for the remainder of the month. This is the equivalent of \$72/month.

For more information: <https://www.conestogac.on.ca/parking-services/public-transit>

CSI is exploring other affordable and equitable transit fare options with Guelph Transit and will provide more information when available.

Who can I contact with additional questions?

Any questions that are not answered through the available information online should be directed to csiadvocacy@conestogac.on.ca