

**A TICKET TO RIDE: TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS
FOR INCOME ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS IN METRO
VANCOUVER**

by

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Abstract

This study examines barriers faced by “expected-to-work” income assistance recipients when trying to transition into the workforce in Metro Vancouver. It focuses on the role of insufficient access to transportation as a barrier for recipients when seeking work. Currently, there are three transportation gaps in the BC Employment and Assistance program: (1) lack of transportation support provided during the initial three-week job search; (2) inadequate transportation support provided to those individuals in employment or life skills programs; and (3) no transportation support provided to beneficiaries who are no longer participating in any program. This study relies primarily on qualitative data compiled through interviews with advocates, client service providers and employment and assistance workers. Transportation is found to be a contributing barrier for income assistance recipients searching for work. The study formulates and assesses alternative policy options for alleviating this problem.

Keywords: BC Employment and Assistance program; expected-to-work; income assistance recipients; income assistance – British Columbia; barriers to employment; transportation barriers

Subject Terms: Income assistance; welfare; transportation barriers; barriers to employment

Executive Summary

This study uses qualitative analysis to explore the barriers faced by expected-to-work income assistance recipients in Metro Vancouver when transitioning into the workforce. The study focuses on gaps in access to transportation and the impact on employment opportunities for the target population. From this base, the study formulates and evaluates alternative policies to address the problem. The data used for this study is taken from secondary data and key informant interviews.

Three gaps were identified within the current system: 1) lack of transportation support provided during the initial three-week job search; 2) insufficient transportation support provided to those individuals in employment or life skills programs; and, 3) no transportation provided to beneficiaries who are no longer participating in any program. Key informant interviews conducted with advocates, client service providers and employment and assistance workers revealed the following barriers faced by Expected to Work income assistance recipients:

- The cost of transportation;
- Problems transporting children to daycare;
- Insufficient distribution of bus tickets;
- Restricted geographical region to conduct a job search;
- Lost job opportunities because individuals are unable to attend interviews scheduled on short notice;
- Difficulty attending employment or life skills programs; and,

- Low housing and support allowance that makes it impossible for individuals to afford transportation to get to work.

The most often cited barrier throughout the interviews was transportation, and therefore policy alternatives were created to address this issue. All of the alternatives focus on increased transit assistance as interviews concluded that a majority of the individuals on income assistance do not own a vehicle. The following alternatives are identified as potential reforms to the income assistance program provided by the BC Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance:

- Increasing government funding to client service providers to allow for a larger distribution of bus tickets and bus passes;
- Providing transportation support as early as the three-week job search that is required prior to receiving any benefits; this would enable applicants to conduct a thorough job search;
- Providing a monthly bus pass to all individuals enrolled in the BC Employment Program in order to allow those actively searching for a job unlimited trips to drop off resumes and attend interviews; and/or,
- Providing a triannual or monthly bus pass to all individuals categorized as Expected to Work to allow these individuals a means of transportation regardless of whether they are enrolled in an employment program.

In order to assess the appropriateness of the proposed alternatives, each is evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: effectiveness, administrative ease, budgetary cost, political and stakeholder acceptability, and work disincentive. Based on the multi-criteria analysis, I recommend the following: 1) Provide support as early as the three-week job search in order to allow applicants to conduct a comprehensive job search; and 2) Implement the monthly bus pass to all individuals actively participating in the BC Employment Program. The government's

expectation for everyone enrolled in this program is to secure a job; therefore, sufficient transit support must be accessible to this group in order to increase their job prospects and ensure they are not geographically limited.

Dedication

To my parents for encouraging me to forever challenge myself and supporting my passion for higher education; to my sister and best friend, who always believed in me no matter how often I doubted myself.

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Glossary

AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
BCEA	British Columbia Employment and Assistance Program
BCEP	British Columbia Employment Program
CAP2	Revised Community Assistance Program
CHST	Canada Health and Social Transfer
CIHR	Child in the Home of a Relative
CJP	Confirmed Job Placement
CSP	Client Service Providers
EAW	Employment and Assistance Worker
EDD	California Employment Development Department
ETW	Expected to Work
GAIN	Guaranteed Available Income for Need
IA	Income Assistance
JP	Job Placement program
MEIA	Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance
PPMB	Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers
PWD	Persons with Disability
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TFJ	Training for Jobs program

1 Introduction

Income assistance (IA), which includes money and/or in-kind benefits, is provided to individuals as a last resort if they do not have the resources to meet their basic needs. These individuals are usually out of work, have no savings and have exhausted all other options. In the past few years, the Government of British Columbia has adopted reforms similar to those made in the early 1990's in the United States. A general feeling among many policy-makers and social observers was that a dependence on income assistance had developed, and it was no longer being used as a last-resort option but rather as a way of life for too many employable adults. Thus reforms were made to encourage income assistance recipients to join the workforce and to discourage current members of the workforce from seeking assistance. There are two main arguments for the long run benefits of a work-based welfare strategy. The first is that welfare recipients often lack job-relevant skills and that by becoming employed they can learn these skills. The second argument is that working changes their perception about their ability to succeed and can break the cycle of welfare dependency (Gottschalk, 2005, 3).

One of the most common flaws expressed in relation to the current income assistance program is that the benefit rates are too low. The welfare rates make it difficult for people to pay for shelter and have the ability to meet their basic needs. Spending support money on searching for work means there is less money available for food and living necessities. Spending time in food line-ups or caring for children are also issues which arise when individuals are searching for a job. Klein and Long (2003) argued that British Columbia's new welfare policies were quite problematic and recommended numerous policy changes. Between 1982 and 2002 the real value of support allowance benefits declined by 46 per cent for a single adult and 25 per cent for a single parent with a child, thus cutting sharply into beneficiaries' living standards. The authors

indicated that the low benefit rates force recipients to choose between paying bills, bus fare, or maintaining a home, which makes job search efforts even more difficult.

1.1 Policy Problem

The BC government has reported that since the inception of the BC Employment and Assistance (BCEA) program in 2002, the employable income assistance caseload has declined by 53,850 cases or 70 per cent because more people have moved into the workforce. However, a report that took the government eight months to release shows that in fact there has been no increase in the number of employable income assistance clients declaring employment income after leaving IA (British Columbia Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, 2007). The question then arises: why are the paid employment rates of former IA beneficiaries not higher than the pre-2002 levels? A possible explanation is that more individuals are not transitioning into the workforce; rather they are ineligible for assistance under the new rules. Many studies in British Columbia have already examined the eligibility issues with the current income assistance program (Wallace, Klein, and Reitsma-Street, 2006; Klein and Long, 2003). As the reformed program was intended to help transition individuals from income assistance into the workforce, the aim of this study will be to examine barriers to employment faced by IA beneficiaries. I will give particular focus to the cost of transportation as one of the potential barriers.

Three transportation-related gaps appear to exist within the current system: 1) lack of transportation support provided during the initial three-week job search; 2) insufficient transportation support provided to those individuals in employment or life skills programs; and 3) no transportation provided to beneficiaries who are no longer participating in any programs to which they were referred to by Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (MEIA). Interviews with advocates, client service providers and employment and assistance workers help to fulfill my research objectives. These include: investigating areas in which Ministry support for expected-to-work (ETW) IA recipients is lacking, exploring how support could be increased and

providing recommendations as to how the gaps within the current system could be filled to facilitate beneficiaries' participation in the workforce.

1.2 Hypothesis

This study hypothesizes that transportation is a barrier for individuals on income assistance who are trying to enter the labour force. Transportation can be a problem for all recipients as it can inhibit access to training programs, medical appointments, childcare facilities and other basic needs. However, individuals in the ETW category are at a severe disadvantage when they are required to attend the weekly British Columbia Employment Program (BCEP) or the revised Community Assistance Program (CAP2) sessions as well as go out to search for jobs. The basic living allowance portion of the income assistance benefits is extremely constrained and leaves little if any room for transit fares. There are no direct transportation subsidies provided by the government of British Columbia during the job search. This responsibility has been shifted to client service providers who are given a small fund to cover any necessary costs including transportation for ETW individuals who are referred to their office. The client service providers assess the individuals and provide limited transportation subsidies on a case-by-case basis.

Those seeking a job make more trips per day and travel more during peak hours than those employed or not seeking work. Most of these individuals do not have their own vehicles and are expected to rely on public transit, which makes their job searches even more difficult. When people are looking for a job, their travel patterns and schedules are less predictable and change daily as they travel to job interviews in unfamiliar areas. This makes searching for a job difficult and time consuming (Janssen, Kelly, Yonashiro, Bannister, and Moreno, 2000, 25).

1.3 Study Outline

This study has eight sections including this introduction of the policy problem. Section 2 provides background information on the income assistance program in British Columbia. Section

3 provides a literature review describing the findings of other studies in both Canada and the United States. This section also helps address the context and challenges that IA recipients face. Section 4 describes the elite interview methodology used in conducting this study. This study uses qualitative data gathered by interviewing advocates, employment and assistance workers, and client service providers who have the greatest level of interaction with ETW income assistance recipients. Section 5 reports the findings of the interviews and Section 6 formulates and describes the policy alternatives. Section 7 evaluates these alternatives against a set of criteria, and section 8 provides recommendations and the conclusion.

2 Background

The BC Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance provides IA to individuals who temporarily need support while they search for work, or for those who are unable to fully participate in the workforce. The Ministry delivers a variety of benefit programs, all of which fall under the BCEA program. This program is income and asset tested, and the eligibility for each of these programs differs based on client groups. The Ministry recognizes six distinct client groups: Expected to Work (ETW); Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB); Persons with Disabilities (PWD); Seniors; Low and Moderate Income Families; and Child in the Home of a Relative (CIHR) (BC MEIA, 2007). The following table outlines the average number of cases on IA every month in 2007.

Table 1: 2007 Monthly Average Caseload Statistics

Temporary Assistance					Disability Assistance	CIHR	Totals
ETW	ETW with Medical Condition	Temporarily Excused	PPMB	Sub Total	Persons with Disabilities		
18,533	6,065	5,913	7,250	37,761	63,148	4,768	105,677

Source: Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance Summary Report – 2008

The ETW classification consists of the largest number of clients on temporary assistance. This group of individuals are thought to be employable clients who are in need of temporary or short-term support. Under the general ETW classification the Ministry includes individuals who are temporarily excused from employment due to a medical condition or a family situation, such as a single parent with a child under the age of three. However, in this study, unless specifically indicated ETW includes only those individuals that are assessed as capable of working and do not

include ETW with a Medical Condition or the Temporarily Excused. It should also be noted that currently only the Persons with Disabilities group are eligible for the discounted annual bus pass. The following table further breaks down the expected-to-work category by family type:

Table 2: 2007 Monthly Average Expected-to-Work Cases by Family Type

Expected-To-Work					
Single Men	Single Women	Couples	Two Parent Families	Single Parent Families	Total
8,764	4,471	614	893	3,791	18,533

As expected, single men and women comprise the largest portion of the ETW classification followed by single parents. According to the Ministry the median duration of these cases is 3.9 months.

2.1 History

2.1.1 Federal Legislation

The 1966 Canada Assistance Plan recognized that “the provision of adequate assistance to ... persons in need and the prevention and removal of the causes of poverty ... are the concerns of all Canadians” (Michael and Reitsma-Street, 2002, 3). This Act forced officials to provide welfare services as required to participants, and people were not to be denied assistance because they refused to take part in a work activity project. This meant that provinces could not deny welfare assistance to those in need, nor could they make recipients work or unwillingly volunteer or join retraining programs. This Act mandated the federal government to pay 50 per cent of operating costs incurred by provinces for income assistance and other related social services. Under this Act the provinces initially designed their welfare laws and regulations to conform to the federal requirements.

In the 1970's welfare rates increased and program coverage became more comprehensive. Laws and regulations expanded the definition of who was eligible for assistance, and administration of welfare programs became less arbitrary. However, over time the federal government found its open-ended commitment to cost-sharing with the provinces to be financially burdensome. In 1995, the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) program, which did not have the same provincial IA provision obligations, replaced the Canada Assistance Plan. With the CHST came a significant reduction in transfer payments from the federal government to the provinces. The CHST included funding for health, post-secondary education and social assistance.¹ Some observers believe that the Government of BC increased its spending on healthcare by reducing spending on programs like income assistance (Goldberg and Wolanski, 2005, 2).

2.1.2 Provincial Legislation

Up until 1996, the income assistance programs in BC were covered under a program called Guaranteed Available Income for Need (GAIN) whose objective was to alleviate poverty. Under GAIN people in need could obtain assistance along with preventative and rehabilitative social services. In 1996, the BC Benefits Income Assistance Act came into effect and replaced GAIN with the aim to "...make work a better deal than welfare" (Goldberg and Wolanski, 2005, 2). Financial support was combined with employment programs to enable people to get the skills they needed to succeed and to aid in changing people's perception to try and get them to value work over welfare.

In 2002, the BC Employment and Assistance Act replaced BC Benefits. Under this Act, further steps were taken to increase workforce participation. The government announced a welfare restructuring that included cutting the operating budget of the Ministry of Human

¹ In April of 2004, the CHST was replaced by the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) in support of health care and the Canada Social Transfer (CST) in support of the remaining social programs.

Resources by \$581 million or 30 per cent.² The Ministry staff was also cut by 459 full-time-equivalent positions, and 36 welfare offices across the province were closed. Many of the new policies were patterned after the US welfare restructuring that occurred in the 1990's. Although the government did borrow many ideas that reduced the number of people on the program including time limits, tough sanctions, and tighter eligibility rules, they did not incorporate many of the supports provided by the US government to transition recipients into the workforce such as increased minimum wage, enhanced training and educational opportunities, or transportation support (Klein and Long, 2003, 1).

In 2005, the Ministry of Human Resources was renamed the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance. The Ministry's current Service Plan outlines four goals that focus on the delivery of income assistance, disability assistance, and employment programs. The four goals are:

1. Deliver responsive, innovative and effective services to clients in need.
2. Provide low-income persons with disabilities with the best system of support in Canada.
3. Support integrated service delivery through cross-ministry services that provide disadvantaged British Columbians with supports that are responsive to their unique needs.
4. Provide employment programming that is flexible in meeting individual client needs to achieve sustainable employment (BC MEIA, 2007).

2.2 Eligibility

Individuals intending to apply for assistance must initially contact a BC Employment and Assistance office and complete an appointment form. Applicants are then expected to complete an in-person or online orientation session which explains the work search requirements, job search tips and application process. Upon completion of the form and orientation session,

² The Ministry of Human Resources was previously responsible for social assistance.

individuals are expected to conduct a three-week self-directed job search while awaiting the intake interview. During this time individuals must keep a detailed record of their work search and provide proof of their work search activities in the form of a resume and list of employer contacts. The Ministry may verify any of the information that is provided. Often this three-week waiting period can take up to six weeks before EAWs are satisfied that an adequate job search has been undertaken. This search is very difficult for individuals who have exhausted their financial resources and turned to welfare as a last resort.

Single individuals are allowed to possess \$150 cash and couples and families with children are permitted to possess only \$250 in order to be eligible for income assistance. People who own cars worth over \$5,000 are expected to live off the proceeds from selling the vehicle before they are eligible, which often hinders the employment search.³ At the intake interview an EAW determines the applicant's eligibility and their classification. The repercussions of committing fraud are also immense; any individual convicted of fraud is banned from receiving income assistance for the rest of their life.

2.3 Benefits

2.3.1 Monetary Benefits

The provincial government provides a shelter allowance for rent, utilities and a telephone line and a support allowance that is meant to cover all other costs including food, clothing, laundry, and transportation. These allowances vary by category of benefit and are based on a variety of characteristics such as age, marital status, and size of family. In April 2007, the rates were increased when the government decided to invest another \$188 million. Income assistance recipients are now eligible for an additional \$50 a month to the maximum shelter portion of their allowance and an increased support payment of \$50 a month (BC MEIA, 2007). The new rates

³ Other asset maximum levels are listed in Appendix B, Table 8.

are reflected in Table 3 which illustrates that a single employable person under the age of 65 receives a maximum monthly income assistance benefit of \$610.

Table 3: Maximum Benefits Payable through BC Employment and Assistance Program as of 2007

	Maximum Shelter Allowance	Support Allowance	Totals
Employable Single Individual Under 65 Years Of Age	\$375	\$235	\$610
Employable Single Parent With One Child Where The Parent Is Under The Age Of 65	\$570	\$375.58	\$945.58

Source: BC MEIA <http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/mhr/ia.htm>

With this total allowance, an employable individual must cover their rent, utilities, food, clothing, transportation, and all personal expenses. Given Vancouver's high rental costs, it can be difficult finding shelter, and often the rental cost absorbs more than the ETW beneficiary's maximum shelter allowance, thus consuming part of the already tight support allowance.

A major cost associated with seeking or holding a job is transportation. The most common form of transportation used by income assistance recipients is public transit. The rates for public transit are listed in the table below.

Table 4: Rates for Public Transportation in the Greater Vancouver Region as of 2008

	One-Zone Trip	Two-Zone Trip	Three-Zone Trip
Monthly Pass	\$73	\$99	\$136
Fare Per Ride	\$2.50	\$3.75	\$5.00

Source: TransLink http://www.translink.bc.ca/Transportation_Services/Fares_Passes/default.asp

According to Goldberg and Wolanski (2005), a two-zone adult pass is deemed necessary for those searching for a job. Expanding the area where individuals are able to look for a job increases their chances of getting off IA sooner. If an IA recipient purchases a two-zone adult

pass with their support allowance, they have only \$136 remaining to cover all other costs for the month. If the employable individual decides to pay the \$3.75 fare per ride, they are still paying a big portion of their support money to transportation, and it is unknown how many times an individual will need to travel for interviews, training, or visiting job sites. A round-trip ride for a single interview costs \$7.50 if it spans two zones, and the daily support allowance is less than \$8.00. Paying the fare per ride can end up costing individuals even more than the monthly bus pass, but either way ETW beneficiaries have almost no capacity to pay for the transit costs to pursue a job search within their limited budgets.

2.3.2 Training Programs

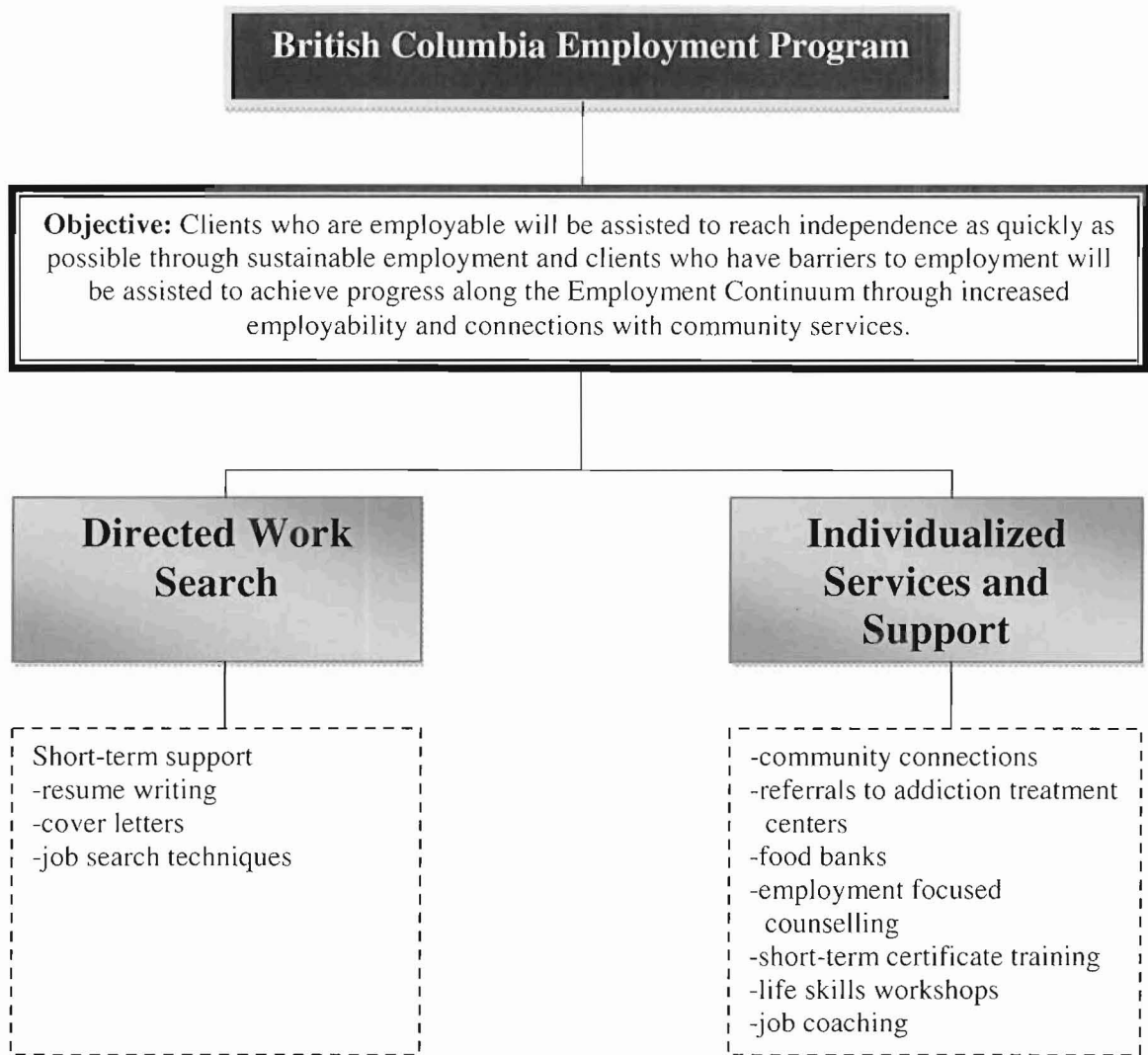
In addition to providing a monthly monetary allowance, the provincial government also refers individuals to training programs. In January 2000, the Ministry of Human Resources introduced the Job Placement program (JP) as a pilot project. In an attempt to encourage sustainable independence, this program's main objective was to place eligible employment assistance clients into jobs. Various job contractors were a part of the JP program. These contractors interviewed clients that were referred by local Ministry offices and then had 90 days to place their clients into jobs. In order to assist these individuals gain employment, contractors assisted with resume building and developing good interview skills as well as referring them to job openings. Upon receiving a job, the clients must have become independent of BCEA within a limited time or the contractor received no payment for the service provided. A contractor received full payment only once a client had been independent for 19 months, with anything less resulting in a prorated premium (Adams and Tait, 2004, 1).

In December 2002, the Ministry introduced the Training for Jobs (TFJ) program as a pilot project to assist individuals with short-term interventions. TFJ provided short-term job-relevant training and upon completion of the program placed clients into jobs (Adams, and Tait, 2004, 1).

The Community Assistance Program (CAP) was another program introduced in December 2002. The original objective of this program was to assist multi-barriered clients and some non-clients in gaining self-reliance and greater connections to their communities and in some cases move into the employment program. Types of services provided under this program included life skills, pre-employment, volunteering, and advocacy/support for individuals (BC MEIA, 2006).

In July 2006, the British Columbia Employment Program (BCEP) replaced both the JP and TFJ programs “...in response to the changing nature of the Ministry’s caseload and the requirement to provide increasingly barriered clients with flexible programming to meet their needs” (BC MEIA, 2006 a, 1). This new program is thought to be more comprehensive and assists clients in achieving independence as quickly as possible. The program is delivered by three main contractors who then sub-contract with 82 other community-based service providers in order to create a delivery network and offer services throughout all regions. The Ministry refers individuals to the contractors who assess their suitability of participating in the program. If they are accepted into the program, contractors assist with a directed work search for those individuals who are considered capable of conducting their own work search. Individuals who need additional support are provided with individualized services and supports. The following figure provides an overview of the BCEP:

Figure 1: BC Employment Program

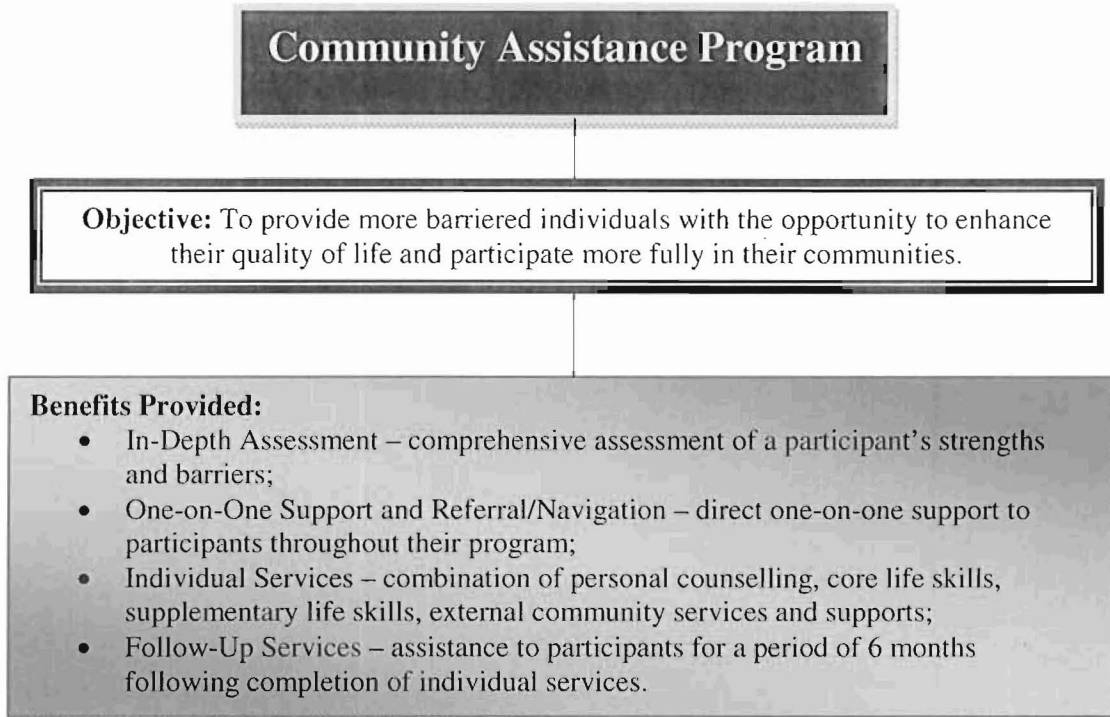


In 2006/2007 approximately 15,000 clients were accepted into the BCEP and nearly 90 per cent of the ETW clients had an individualized service plan. These plans provide clients with access to the tools and supports required to find a job. They outline employment objectives and identify available interventions and shared expectations. The expenditure of the program was over \$10 million in 2006/07 with the future annual budget for 2007/08 set at \$35 million. The Ministry has a performance measure in order to gauge the success of clients in achieving financial independence from IA. According to the 2006/07 Annual Service Report, the average percentage

of clients who find employment and leave the caseload each month has declined 0.9 percentage points. The percentage tracks the number of BCEP clients who move into BCEP employment which is defined as achieving at least \$560 in earnings or 70 hours of employment each month. Currently, 9.8 per cent of individuals leave the caseload each month due to employment-related obligations as opposed to 10.7 per cent of clients who left each month in 2004/05. An argument has been made by the Ministry that the reason for the decline in clients with employment-related obligations is that there is a decrease in the number of new employable clients and an increase in the proportion of barriered individuals (BC MEIA, 2007 b).

The Community Assistance Program was revised as well in September 2006 due to the increase in the proportion of clients with persistent multiple barriers or disabilities. The objective of the revised CAP program (CAP2) is to provide barriered individuals with the opportunity to enhance the quality of their life and engage more fully in their communities. The program no longer includes any employment elements and thus there is no measure of success (BC MEIA, 2006). In the 2006/07 year, approximately 5,000 clients were served by CAP2. The services were delivered in 50 communities by 33 local service providers who understand the community and the needs of the individual clients. The expenditure for CAP2 in 2006/07 was \$6 million with the ongoing future year's budget set at \$7.5 million. Today, the BCEP and CAP2 are the two main programs to which expected-to-work income assistance recipients are referred. The following figure provides an overview of the CAP2.

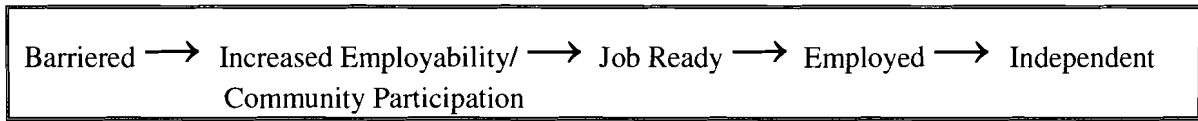
Figure 2: Community Assistance Program



Prior to the changes in 2002, many recipients had access to transition to work benefits of up to \$150 per month for a maximum of 12 months and a workforce entry benefit of up to \$200 to cover costs related to entry into paid employment. Both these provisions have now been replaced by the Confirmed Job Program (CJP). This program offers one-time grants averaging \$250 to recipients who have secured a job but require assistance to purchase essential work-related items.

Both the BCEP and the CAP2 have a specified amount of funds designated for each individual in the program. These funds are primarily for training or job search purposes with a small amount set aside to assist individuals by providing bus tickets, gas vouchers, money for food, interview clothing or gear and other supports. Resources are allocated as deemed appropriate by the client service providers with some individuals receiving more assistance than others, and funding is considered limited. Both programs are intended to assist clients to move along the employment continuum, with stages depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Employment Continuum



Source: Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, Annual Report 2006/07
http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual_Reports/2006_2007/eia/eia.pdf

3 Literature Review

Many studies have found that transportation is a barrier to employment for the poor in general and welfare recipients in particular. However, most of the literature comes from the US as little has been studied in Canada. In a US study by Julnes and Halter (2000), more than 25 per cent of former Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients interviewed reported having transportation problems. Henle and Kinsella (1996) find that after childcare, transportation is the biggest obstacle to employment. However, barriers faced by income assistance recipients when transitioning into the labour force are often complex and hard to isolate. Previous studies have also pointed to mental health, human capital, drug and alcohol abuse and childcare as factors that may restrict access into the workforce. The following sections describe some of the key perspectives on transportation barriers to employment and briefly outline the other barriers.

3.1 Transportation Barriers

Low-income individuals generally walk, bike or use transit. For daily activities such as travelling to work or shopping areas, it is necessary to have a safe, convenient, and reliable mode of transportation. Researchers studying the relationship between transportation and employment find that reliable transportation leads to increased access to job opportunities, higher earnings and increased employment stability (Blumenberg, 2002; Cervero, Sandoval, and Landis, 2002; Ong, 2002, 1996; Ong and Blumenberg, 1998; Raphael and Stoll, 2000). Many of the studies on transportation focus on connecting recipients to the labour markets and specifically look at the spatial mismatch issues. Advocates of the spatial mismatch hypothesis argue that low-income residents reside in urban areas separated from suburban employment opportunities and do not

have the resources to overcome this difficulty. The lack of adequate transportation is thought to amplify this problem (Cutler and Glaeser, 1997; Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist, 1998; Ross, 1998).

In Los Angeles in the 1960's, the McCone Commission identified inadequate transportation as contributing to high rates of unemployment among the urban Black population. In 1968, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders recommended that in order to increase employment opportunities for central city residents, improved public transit links between ghetto neighbourhoods and new job locations in the suburbs were needed. The dispersion of jobs has become a concern as trends of businesses relocating outside of the city centre have occurred. The educational background and skills of central city residents are often not suited for the jobs near their homes. Typically managerial and information processing services have remained in the downtown districts, while entry level low-skilled jobs are flowing to the lower-rent outskirts of the city. Over the years the distance between a central city resident's home and potential employment location has increased. As distances increase, low skill workers with lower mobility are not able to meet the travel requirements for the employment location.

Nightingale (1997) provides information on issues relevant to understanding the role of transportation in welfare reform. The most common mode of transportation in the United States is by personal vehicle, and most individuals spend less than 30 minutes to get to work. However, low-income individuals have more difficulty getting to work both in the suburbs and in the central city. These individuals are less likely to own a vehicle and thus depend on public transportation. Most metropolitan transit systems are designed for commuting within the city and are often inadequate for suburban employment. As states are attempting to more aggressively move welfare recipients into jobs, they are identifying transportation as one of the most serious barriers to employment. For example, in Indiana nearly 90 welfare agency administrators have reported that transportation was one of the top five problems in their communities.

Fletcher, Garasky, and Jensen (2002) examined transportation-related barriers to employment faced by low income households compared to other households in the US, as well as

how these barriers influenced employment and wages. Consistent with other research, the study found lower levels of employment among the low-income population combined with lower levels of human and physical capital. Transportation and human capital constraints were significantly higher among low-income households compared to high-income households. Other variables significantly associated with employment included poor health, prior use of income assistance, area of residence, awareness of a bus/van service in the community and ownership of a reliable vehicle. In addition, age, education, and access to a vehicle were positively correlated with wage.

Fletcher et al. concluded that human capital, location of residence and transportation are all important predictors of economic outcomes for low-income households. The authors suggest that access to transportation be increased in less populated areas by extending bus routes. Providing subsidized car loans and insurance programs, training programs teaching basic vehicle maintenance, and car pooling options were also recommended. The study emphasized the need for government to not overlook the issue of transportation because “without access to training, social services and basic needs such as groceries and healthcare, the well being of all low income families will suffer” (Fletcher et al., 2002, 24).

Many US studies have shown that access to reliable transportation has a statistically significant effect on finding and maintaining employment. Those with reliable modes of transportation are more likely to be employed (Janssen et al., 2000; Nightingale, 1997; Fletcher, Garasky, and Jensen, 2002). As mentioned before there has been limited research in Canada and specifically in British Columbia on barriers to employment for IA beneficiaries. However, the 2003 Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver involved kitchen table sessions in order to obtain input regarding the gaps in services. During these discussions transportation was mentioned as a concern due to the lack of bus tickets and bus passes available. Financial support for specific items such as bus passes or clothing for a job interview was thought to make a difference between finding employment and giving up all hope. Similar to most other studies in

BC, participants in the sessions also expressed concern about the inadequate income assistance rates and the need for supports to help people find jobs (3 Ways to Home, 2003).

3.2 Other Barriers

Kisker and Ross (1997) discuss the childcare needs of low-income families and the difficulties they face in arranging care for their children. Welfare recipients are often limited in the type of employment they can obtain due to their education and skill levels. Therefore, they often face special needs that make it difficult for them to find suitable childcare. The work schedules of welfare recipients are not usually the 8-hour day, or even a weekday schedule that day care centres accommodate. Flexibility and reliability of childcare arrangements are critical because often entry-level job positions do not allow recipients to miss a day of work. Because workers are easy to replace, employers are unlikely to tolerate late arrivals or absence from work. The study concludes that three features of childcare influence the employability of low-income parents: (1) the availability of childcare; (2) the cost of childcare, which often makes employment unattractive; and (3) the quality of available childcare. All three features can be associated with transportation problems as limited mobility further emphasizes these concerns. Limited mobility geographically restricts the area and number of facilities in which an individual can find childcare.

According to Danziger, Kalil, and Anderson (2000), the rate of depression among poor or unemployed women ranged from 29% to 48% as compared to 13% of non-poor working women aged 15-54. Women, who face a barrier of mental or physical health, or human capital, in turn had the lowest rates of employment. Individuals typically on IA or with low-income have lower levels of education and therefore more difficulties in finding appropriate work. Human Resources and Social Development Canada (2000) reported that high school dropouts are much less likely to be employed than graduates. It can be inferred that in order to encourage employment, structures need to be in place to recognize and resolve mental health issues as well as provide education and

skills training to allow beneficiaries to find sustainable long-term employment. It is also important to note that both mental health disorders and human capital limitations occur in isolation and can indirectly be linked to transportation. Without access to mobility individuals can become further excluded from participating within the community.

Research by Danziger et al. (2000) and Olson and Pavetti (1996) suggests that any one of these issues alone may not hinder a person's ability to work, but the presence of multiple issues may be detrimental to employment. Danziger et. al. (2000) surveyed a sample of single mothers in Michigan who were welfare recipients in order to explore how barriers of perceived discrimination, mental health, substance dependence, physical health, domestic violence and transportation constrained their employability. The study found that compared to other women in the general population, women on welfare were less likely to have graduated from high school, more likely to have experienced transportation problems, mental and physical health problems, child health problems and severe physical abuse. The majority of the women in the sample faced multiple barriers, making them severely disadvantaged in the labour market. For example, an employer might be less willing to hire a high school dropout when they also do not have access to transportation or are facing depression. However, the analysis does not show which barriers have the greatest impact. The study suggested four ways to improve labour force entry by beneficiaries: improving access to transportation, increasing specific types of job skills, improving the women's health status or accommodating disability, and treating major depression.

The studies cited in this literature review are mainly from the US, but they are still relevant to Canada due to our similar income assistance programs. Both nations are using a welfare-to-work strategy where states and provinces have created programs to assist individuals to join the workforce. A few studies have been undertaken for BC programs but have not been included in this study because they focus more on eligibility criteria and the low benefit rates.

The present study will add to the literature because it focuses on transportation benefits, an area of income assistance not previously examined in British Columbia.

4 Methodology

This study explores whether transportation is a major barrier faced by income assistance recipients in British Columbia and, if so, to develop policies to overcome this barrier and integrate these individuals more fully into the workforce. The methods used to gather data include elite interviews and assembly of secondary data. Fourteen interviews were conducted, and much of the statistical data came from the BC Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance which was publicly available.

My methodology consists of flexible qualitative design because it is well suited for an exploratory study of a topic about which little is known. The provincial government does conduct exit surveys when individuals leave the income assistance system, but their value is limited. Often these surveys are unsuccessful due to difficulties in contacting individuals with no permanent address or no phone number.

Using elite interviews as part of my methodology seemed appropriate in order to get a comprehensive idea of real-life barriers individuals faced. Most studies including those conducted in the US use the same methodology; however, previous studies have typically interviewed low-income women on income assistance due to their prevalence. The present study is unique as it looks for information from those persons having the greatest amount of contact with ETW income assistance recipients. These individuals are aware of the difficulties the target population faces when trying to integrate into the workforce and can provide a comprehensive account of their barriers. Combining the interview findings with the data and results from previous research in other jurisdictions allows for a triangulation to confirm my findings for Metro Vancouver.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a set of predetermined questions, where the order and wordings were at times changed depending on the interviewee. The questions were developed in order to get insight into the obstacles faced by IA beneficiaries when searching for work and to determine where government resources should be directed to better assist the target population. Prior to the interview, the anonymity of the respondents was ensured in order to increase the number of participants and to encourage respondents to be more open with their answers. Each interview lasted from 20 to 45 minutes, and all interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

The interviewees included welfare advocates, BC employment and assistance workers (EAWs) and contracted client service providers (CSPs) under BCEP and CAP, all mainly from the Metro Vancouver region. It is assumed that advocates could best communicate the major concerns that income assistance recipients have repeatedly expressed; CSPs could best describe the support they provide and any difficulties encountered by income assistance recipients when accessing their services; and EAWs would be most knowledgeable at describing the benefits provided by the government and assessing the effectiveness of the program. Each of the three groups has a different level of engagement with the beneficiaries, and thus each contributes in a unique manner.

The role of advocates involves assisting individuals to gain access to income assistance benefits and aid with any appeal processes. Advocates are also available to listen to any concerns that individuals may have about the program or their personal situations.

Employment and assistance workers (EAW) are government employees under the MEIA. They determine the eligibility of applicants, authorize payments, and provide information referrals to clients on services that may be available to them such as childcare, employment, and housing. EAWs also conduct assessment interviews with applicants in order to make appropriate referrals to various programs.

Client service providers deliver the CAP2 and the BCEP. They provide employment support which is tailored to local labour markets as well as to the individual interests and circumstances of the clients.

Through elite interviews, these three groups have identified the strengths and weaknesses of the available supports. It is also assumed that the sample size (N=14) could yield sufficient data as each participant deals with a significant number of income assistance recipients and that this study would inform future, larger-scale research. Of the 14 interviewees, five were later asked to evaluate the policy alternatives that were formulated in this study.

4.1 Recruitment of Participants

All advocates interviewed are from the Metro Vancouver region and were recruited from the website <http://povnet.org>. Phone calls were made to all advocacy groups that dealt with issues related to income assistance as well as general advocacy. Of the 13 agencies I contacted, five individuals from the various agencies were willing to be interviewed for this study. Two interviews were completed in person, and three were completed over the telephone.

The MEIA website listed BCEP and CAP contractors. All eight CAP contractors in the Vancouver Coastal region were contacted, and three individuals from various organization participated in the study. The three primary BCEP contractors listed on the website were contacted as well, who forwarded the request to their subcontractors, and three individuals participated in the study. One of the individuals is in a management position and works with both the CAP2 and BCEP. All interviews except one were conducted over the phone.

Attempts were made to try to recruit EAWs through the BC Government and Service Employees Union. However, after numerous phone calls and being referred from one individual to another, I was unable to recruit EAWs through this approach. Therefore, workers were recruited through personal contacts. Four EAWs initially agreed to be interviewed, but one later declined due to other work commitments. All three EAWs were interviewed over the phone.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

This section describes the characteristics of the interview respondents and their responsibilities. Appendix A offers a full listing of the questions asked during the interviews. The questions were designed to elicit information on which barriers affect ETW income assistance recipients when searching for employment and to test the hypothesis that transportation, specifically, is an impediment for this group. Advocates, CSPs and EAWs were all asked to describe their jobs in order to gauge the level of interaction they have with ETW income assistance recipients. Length of employment was also requested in order to determine the level of experience they have in the field. The number of individuals that they assisted on a daily basis was requested, as it is assumed more people served will result in the interviewees being able to provide more comprehensive answers to questions posed. These descriptive statistics, depicted in Table 5, exhibit the connection between the three groups of interviewees and the beneficiaries as well as help validate the reason these groups were chosen to be interviewed for this study.

Table 5: Comparison of the Demographic Characteristics of the Groups Interviewed

	Advocates	CAP2 Client Service Providers	BCEP Client Service Providers	Employment and Assistance Workers
# of Individuals Interviewed	5	3	3	3
Average Length of Employment	5.5 years	1 year	4 years	17.5 years
Region Serviced	Metro Vancouver	Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island	Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island	Metro Vancouver
Average # of Individuals Assisted on a Daily Basis	2-25 people	8-10 people	8-10 people	50 people
Duties Included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide moral support • listen to concerns of clients • provide emotional support • IA applications • appeal processes • providing information on benefits available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • move individuals along the employment continuum • pre-employment program which includes 5 hours of personal coaching, 2 life skills courses and 2-3 services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training programs • resume building; cover letters • preparing for interviews • identify and resolve any roadblocks • assist in finding employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • referrals to employment programs • referrals to community organizations • case management

4.2.1 Advocates

The duties of advocates ranged from assisting with completing applications for housing or disability status, providing support during any appeal processes, creating awareness of the income assistance benefits and eligibility criteria, and providing moral and/or emotional support. Advocates interviewed had been in an advocacy position anywhere from 6 months to nearly 11 years, but on average most had approximately five and half years of experience. Two of the advocates had been in advocacy for longer than five years and therefore have seen BC income assistance programs go through the 2002 changes. On a daily basis the advocates saw anywhere

from two to 25 individuals on income assistance. Most organizations saw individuals from all over Metro Vancouver, and two of the five advocates said approximately 40% of the individuals they see on a daily basis are categorized as ETW.

4.2.2 Client Service Providers

4.2.2.1 CAP2 Advisors

Three CAP2 client service providers were interviewed. They were first asked to describe their job and how they assisted individuals on income assistance in order to better understand their position in moving individuals along the employment continuum. One CAP2 client service advisor responded "...[we] help people to work on things they feel would improve the quality of their life so that eventually they get to a point where they're off of the assistance and feeling job ready" (CAP-CSP #1, 2007).

All of the CSPs described the CAP2 as a pre-employment program where preliminary assessments are made on individuals referred by the Ministry. Individuals are expected to choose at a minimum two life skills courses which include: communication skills, relationship building, personal hygiene, nutrition, self-care, self-esteem, stress management, recognizing abuse, anger management, goal setting and money management. The individual then moves on to the other services where they remain for another 6 to 12 months. The personal plan assists with issues such as housing, dental, medical, childcare, ESL, computer literacy, harm reduction, volunteer placement, counselling, and supplementary life skills which include basic things like finding clothing or food. Often individuals are referred to the community for many of these things. During this time, each client receives a minimum of five hours of one-on-one coaching (CAP-CSP #1, 2007; CAP-CSP #2, 2007; CAP-CSP #3, 2007).

Meetings with beneficiaries varied among the CSPs. One CSP advised they met with clients once a month; another CSP responded that they scheduled appointments for every two

weeks which would result in individuals actually showing up once a month; and the third CSP replied that attendance was contingent on the individual. Even though individuals are required to attend this program, the no-show rate of clients for scheduled meetings or appointments was identified as between 48 per cent and 66 per cent.

4.2.2.2 BCEP Advisors

Three BCEP client service advisors were interviewed. The experience of each of these individuals varies significantly, ranging from seven months to seven years. On average they assist between 5 and 10 clients a day. Likewise with the CAP2 attendance is compulsory for those individuals referred to this program, but the no-show rate still hovers around 20 per cent to 25 per cent, partially because life circumstances may be preventing clients from attending. The manager also noted that many individuals in this program are categorized as ETW but in fact should be categorized as Persons with Disability or Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers.

4.2.3 Employment and Assistance Workers

Three employment and assistance workers were asked to describe their job and how they assist individuals on income assistance. One EAW identified their primary goal as getting people back to work so long as they are able to work. Duties included making referrals to employment programs and outside community resources such as drug and alcohol counselling, determining eligibility, and crisis and case management. All three EAWs have been working with the Ministry prior to the 2002 changes. Experience working in the field ranged from 8 to 30 years. This allows them to provide some perspective on the IA program before and after the changes. On a daily basis each of these workers saw strikingly different numbers of beneficiaries. One worker reported that under the new system she saw 5 to 10 individuals; another worker reported she dealt with approximately 50 people each day, and the third worker said she dealt with 100 individuals but most interaction was via telephone. The discrepancies in the number of beneficiaries seen in

one day by EAWs could be linked to where they are located and by whether most of their contacts were in person or by telephone.

Many of the individuals on income assistance were described as having been on the system for a long time. The largest numbers of people coming on the system are those who are ill. Another worker agreed that overall there were more barriered individuals on income assistance than in previous times and the Ministry caseload statistics support this. An EAW advised that "...typically anyone on income assistance longer than three months has other barriers... People that are employable are usually in between jobs and get off quite quickly" (EAW #3, 2008). This meant that at the time of referral to a program other barriers had not been discovered. Often this is because people feel they have to lie and say they are able to work to get IA. All EAWs confirmed that at least initially almost all individuals are categorized as expected-to-work.

4.2.4 Comparative Analysis

All three groups of interviewees have a wide range of experience with individuals on income assistance. A wide range of clients are served through a variety of methods by the three categories of interviewees. EAW's have the greatest amount of experience working with IA beneficiaries and CSP's have the least amount of experience. This is most likely because the employment programs are new additions to the BCEA program. The experience and responsibility of the individuals interviewed reflected in the descriptive statistics will enable respondents to identify potential employment related barriers faced by ETW income assistance.

4.3 Theory and Data Analysis

The interview data will be analyzed by grouping questions and answers of similar concepts, which are later compared and analyzed. In this study the three categories of interviewees were asked similar questions. Interviewee responses were categorized by question and later examined for any emerging themes. Similarities and differences in interviewee

responses within and across each of the three categories were noted to see if comparable concerns and issues were raised and if these coincide with previous research findings. In addition, the interview responses were examined as a whole to see if my hypothesis of transportation being a major barrier to employment in BC is substantiated.

It is expected that the three categories of interviewees will provide a different perspective due to their differing interactions with the beneficiaries. Advocates may have a different perspective because they may be more concerned with broad social inclusion of all individuals. CSPs' main goal is to get individuals to successfully complete the program and integrated into society or the workforce. They are responsible for providing benefits to individuals and thus are able to report information based on direct observation. EAWs deal with all categories of IA applicants and beneficiaries, and in-depth interviews allow EAWs to listen to the concerns of individuals both prior to getting on the system and while being on the system.

4.4 Limitations of Study

One limitation of my study is that I am not directly interviewing income assistance recipients in order to understand the barriers they have or are currently facing. However, due to constraints of time and resources, as well as issues of access, this was not possible. My approach is still acceptable because it allows me to interview those individuals who interact most frequently with income assistance applicants and recipients and therefore would be most familiar with any issues that concern this group. Another limitation is that I have interviewed only 14 individuals, the majority of whom are from Metro Vancouver, which means my results cannot be generalized for all cities in British Columbia. Possibly in a small town setting, where most prospective jobs are within easy walking distance, transit may be an insignificant barrier to employment.

Another limitation is that the number of interviewees in each category is small, and therefore the views of these individuals might not be representative of all individuals in those

categories. Lastly, the measures for three of the criteria used to evaluate the policy options are subjective as they are based on stakeholder opinions due to lack of information on some of the policy alternatives.

5 Results

This section reports the findings from the interviews conducted with advocates, EAWs and CSPs. Transportation was mentioned by nearly all interviewees and therefore is considered a major barrier. All other concerns were mentioned less frequently and are categorized under other barriers. The results are first organized by each category of interviewee followed by a comparative analysis. This data will assist in creating alternatives to aid beneficiaries in participating fully within the labour force and the community.

5.1 Transportation as a Barrier

All interviewees were asked if transportation was identified as a concern by the beneficiaries as a way to measure the prevalence of the problem. They were also asked if their organizations provided any transportation assistance to determine when support was provided and where it was lacking. As a way to decipher whether funds should be directed towards vehicle ownership and maintenance or accessible public transportation, interviewees were asked how many individuals they served owned their own vehicle. Lastly, interviewees were asked if transportation support should be available during the three-week job search prior to receiving IA in order to determine how early support for mobility should be provided.

5.1.1 Advocates

All advocates responded that their clients identified access to transportation as a concern. One advocate stated transportation as a major problem because it leaves individuals isolated from the rest of the community and makes leaving the home difficult. The advocate also expressed

concern that the Ministry restricts an individual's employment opportunity with vehicle asset limitations. She said:

[Vehicle ownership is seen]... as a negative thing by income assistance and that's really hard because if you have a car you basically have your mobility... [Without it] it would be very difficult to walk around to a neighbourhood house...grocery store or whatever else (Advocate #1, 2007).

Another advocate said "...the biggest prohibitive factor we find a lot of people say is, I can't even afford the bus fare to go out and look for work" (Advocate #5, 2008). This often means that individuals are restricted to a limited geographical distance when searching for a job, typically within walking range. Advocates also identified most of their beneficiaries as primarily dependent on public transit or walking as a means for transportation. Very few of the clients they served owned their own vehicle.

Another concern brought up by an advocate was that no bus tickets are given to individuals by the Ministry when they are initially referred to employment or life skills programs. Having no transit access can limit attendance at mandatory programs and in turn jeopardize IA cheque payments (Advocate #5, 2008). Advocates were asked if their organizations provided any bus tickets to individuals. All advocates responded that the budget was very strapped, and that the cost prevented them from making bus tickets sufficiently available. Some organizations had specialized programs that were sponsored by other ministries that offered bus tickets to individuals if they attended the workshops (Advocate #1, 2007; Advocate #3, 2007). One advocate responded that the organization formerly provided bus tickets only when individuals were coming in for a follow-up appointment for any advocacy work. However, due to the fact that TransLink is not providing a discount to non-profit agencies to purchase bus tickets, they are no longer giving them out (Advocate #4, 2008).

When asked to identify the barriers faced by ETW income assistance recipients, advocates always cited the top three as being transportation issues relating to lack of funds, difficulties in attending jobs or interviews, and isolation problems. The advocates agreed that

assistance for transportation should be provided as early as the three-week job search period because individuals are turning to IA when they are low on or have depleted all their funds. Thus asking vulnerable individuals to pay for their own travel makes the job search difficult. Facilitating transportation might enable more individuals to find work and not require IA in the first instance (Advocate #1, 2007; Advocate #4, 2008).

5.1.2 Client Service Providers

5.1.2.1 CAP 2 Advisors

All three CAP-CSPs responded that their clients did not have access to a vehicle. One CAP-CSP responded that all her clients were dependent on public transportation, while another CAP-CSP indicated that most of her clients walked to her office (CAP-CSP #1, 2007; CAP-CSP #2, 2007). They all indicated that they individually distinguish the need for bus tickets for their clients on a case-by-case basis. One CAP-CSP explained that bus tickets or bus passes are available during the individual services support phase, as that is when individuals are being sent to doctors, alcoholics anonymous meetings and the like. The CSP also mentioned that typically bus passes are given to individuals who are volunteering or need to go to meetings on a daily basis (CAP-CSP #2, 2007). Another CSP advised that the organization provided books of bus tickets to allow individuals to visit their families, friends, or attend appointments with various other community resources (CAP-CSP #3, 2007). There appear to be no set rules that guide the various organizations on the allotment of bus tickets; therefore, the level of support a beneficiary receives depends to a degree on which provider they get referred to.

5.1.2.2 BCEP Advisors

All BCEP-CSPs confirmed that their clients expressed transportation as a huge concern. Two of the three advisors mentioned that during exit interviews clients stated that there was a greater need for transportation support. During these interviews, when individuals were asked

which supports were of the most help, nearly everyone cited transportation. When these individuals were asked if any of the services could be improved, they always said they could use more bus tickets or gas vouchers (BCEP-CSP #1, 2008, BCEP-CSP #2, 2008). BCEP-CSP #3 (2008) stated that the lack of transportation support provided is a concern for clients because it restricts them to their own region. Clients have also pointed out that often they must pre-plan their week in order to receive sufficient bus tickets from the CSPs and often job opportunities are lost because they are unable to attend interviews scheduled at the last minute.

BCEP-CSPs responded that very few clients owned a vehicle due to the cost of not only purchasing the vehicle but also insuring it. When asked if their organization provides any type of transportation assistance support, they all replied that some support is built into the training funding they receive from the MEIA but a separate fund is not designated for transportation. Each individual on average is allocated approximately \$300 for all services such as transportation, interview clothing, food and any other needs that may arise during their time in the program. However, not everyone gets the full amount; some get more than others. Similar to the CAP-CSPs, the distribution of bus tickets is contingent on individual BCEP-CSPs and what they consider appropriate.

BCEP-CSP # 2 (2008) reported she gives bus tickets to anyone who needs to travel around for job interviews or medical appointments or if individuals own a vehicle she will give them \$10 gas vouchers. If individuals are travelling two-zones, then bus passes are given as they are cheaper than giving out bus tickets. BCEP-CSP #2 (2008) also advised that bus tickets are typically given to moms with young children, individuals who have to walk a long distance to get to the employment program office, individuals applying for jobs in an industrial area, and individuals having to do cold calls or drop off resumes. The remaining two BCEP-CSPs said bus passes were given to individuals attending a training program on a regular basis (BCEP-CSP #1, 2008; BCEP-CSP #3, 2008). BCEP-CSP #1(2008) noted that if an individual was in a training

program 20 hours a week, then they would be considered full-time and would receive a bus pass. Otherwise they would be given bus tickets.

The limited nature of the transportation funding was recognized by all BCEP-CSPs. When asked how the transportation could be improved BCEP-CSP #3 described a creative idea that would require a partnership between the Ministry and TransLink. Similar to the U-PASS offered to university students, ETW IA recipients should receive a low cost bus pass as well. This would be of greater assistance to individuals searching for a job. When asked if support should be provided during the three-week period prior to receive IA, BCEP-CSP #3 said that if clients are expected to search for a job, they should be provided the means to be able to do so.

5.1.3 Employment and Assistance Workers

Employment and assistance workers estimated how many individuals on IA had their own vehicle. Their responses ranged from very few to approximately 55 per cent (EAW #1, 2007; EAW #2, 2008; EAW #3, 2008). The variance in these answers could reflect the number of individuals they see on a daily basis or their office location. Two of the three workers reported transportation was of major concern for ETW income assistance recipients, and it is a concern they hear about quite frequently (EAW #2, 2008; EAW #3, 2008). One worker explained that the rates for IA barely meet the needs for shelter. With the remaining allowance being spent on food and personal needs, it can be difficult to have enough money for transportation, and a job search requires money (EAW #2, 2008). EAW #1 (2008) said she has heard people discuss their concern about transportation, but it is not their biggest problem. When EAW #3 (2008) was asked whether bus accessibility or shortage of funds for fare was the greater problem, she thought that they both were of concern but that lack of funds was a bigger issue. She was also asked how transportation concerns could be addressed, to which she responded getting everybody on income assistance a free bus pass would be the ideal solution because it would help increase their mobility and chances of finding a job.

5.1.4 Comparative Analysis

All groups agreed that transportation is or was expressed as a concern by income assistance recipients. CAP-CSPs did not see transportation as large a problem as all other interviewees perhaps because individuals referred to CAP2 are not immediately looking for employment. Therefore, their need to travel is lower than those who are expected to be actively engaged in a job search. Effects on individuals due to lack of mobility included restricted geographical job searches, isolation problems, and lack of access to services.

With the exception of one EAW, all interviewees agreed that very few of their clients had access to a vehicle, thus making them dependent on public transit. There was also a consensus that support should begin as early as the three-week work search period. However, though interviewees were able to identify transportation as a problem, it was difficult to gauge exactly how large a problem it actually is.

5.2 Other Barriers

This study recognizes that transportation is not the only barrier for individuals to integrate into the workforce. Job and skills training programs are intended to assist beneficiaries move along the employment continuum and are the point of contact for individuals to access any type of transportation support. Thus all interviewees were asked questions about what they saw as the role and purpose of these programs. Questions were also asked to help identify gaps and limitations of the programs as well as address how the programs could be improved to facilitate more movement along the continuum.

Interviewees were asked if childcare was ever identified as a barrier for those individuals searching for a job. This question was asked because literature shows that finding suitable and affordable childcare in one's neighbourhood can be problematic. Often childcare facilities are in the opposite direction or further away from home than work. Limited mobility can then decrease

the chances of finding childcare and limit one's ability to find a job. This section will also review any additional barriers that interviewees touched on during the interviews.

5.2.1 Advocates

Advocates were asked to share their opinions on the effectiveness of training programs and other employment supports provided by the provincial government. All advocates said that the Ministry does very little to help individuals transition into the workforce. Two advocates expressed a concern that the job trainers contracted by the Ministry are not the most effective and other job clubs provide far more assistance (Advocate #1, 2007; Advocate #5, 2008). Others said there was a greater need for the Ministry to provide assistance for daily necessities such as bus tickets, food, and housing as opposed to job training. More than half of the advocates responded that providing bus tickets as a means to get people to their interviews would be far more effective than job or skills training (Advocate #2, 2007; Advocate #3, 2007; Advocate #5, 2008).

When advocates were asked if access to childcare is a barrier for ETW individuals searching for a job, all interviewees agreed it was a major problem. They noted that there are few low-cost baby sitting centres and that those are usually full and often inaccessible to individuals who do not have access to transportation.

Advocate #3 (2007) expressed various other concerns they saw with the IA system in general. They emphasized there is still the notion that some individuals deserve to be on IA and some do not. Often those who have been on IA for a prolonged period are viewed as undeserving or lazy. Many individuals are on IA longer because they are categorized as ETW when they should be categorized as Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers or Persons with Disability as a result of disabilities that hinder them from obtaining or retaining jobs. This inaccurate classification also prevents some individuals from receiving an annual discounted bus pass to which they would otherwise be entitled.

Advocates pointed out structural and institutional problems they recognize with the current system. They stressed the importance of raising the support and shelter amounts to more realistic levels to meet current living costs. If these allowances were more adequate, then individuals would be able to purchase their own supports or services such as transportation that are needed as opposed to asking for these from client service providers. Two advocates pointed out that the elimination of the monthly earning exemption for welfare recipients in 2002 often deters a person from getting part-time jobs, gaining experience and networking—all of which are essential to integrate fully into the workforce (Advocate #2, 2007; Advocate #4, 2008). The amount of money a person may earn in a part-time job may not be sufficient after paying for childcare or transportation costs. The 100% clawback of IA benefits when an individual works part-time may not seem like an attractive choice when they can remain at home and receive the same amount of money through IA.

The three-week wait period is also thought to be problematic, because it puts an individual in a worse position where it will be more difficult for them to integrate back into the workforce. It is assumed that people will apply for welfare only as a last resort, and to expect them to wait the additional three weeks is thought to be counterproductive. At this stage individuals have limited funds and often do not have the resources needed to conduct comprehensive job searches as they cannot afford to search for jobs that may be available outside of their area (Advocate #4, 2008).

5.2.2 Client Service Providers

5.2.2.1 CAP2

Major outcomes of CAP2 include enrolling in employment related programs, education or training full-time, or obtaining employment. Secondary outcomes include increased community involvement, healthier lifestyles, drug and alcohol counselling, applying for disability

status, and moving out of Vancouver's downtown eastside (CAP-CSP #1, 2007; CAP-CSP #2, 2007; CAP-CSP #3, 2007). When asked how the program could be improved, two of the three CSPs said they were happy with the program design (CAP-CSP #2, 2007; CAP-CSP #3). Only one CSP suggested that "...an outreach component needs to be added where we go out into the community and work with them in the community so that it's not always expected of them to come into the office" (CAP-CSP #1, 2007). This would assist in reducing the burden of individuals needing to find transportation to seek assistance.

5.2.2.2 BCEP

The Ministry refers ETW IA recipients to employment programs contracted by BCEP-CSPs. CSPs have 21 days to conduct initial assessments of the individual's readiness to start working. The first phase begins as a self-directed work search during which the client looks for work on their own with little direction from the advisors. If an individual still has not found a job after 60 to 120 days, they get moved into the individualized services phase where they are given additional assistance for another 6 to 8 months. More funds are available during this phase for purposes such as transportation, food certificates, short term training and in-house workshops. BCEP-CSP #3 (2008) suggested increasing funds for training would allow them to allocate more money for support services such as transportation and interview clothing. BCEP advisors also suggested improving relations with the Ministry workers in order to decrease the no-show rate.

All BCEP client service advisors agreed that childcare was a potential barrier for ETW income assistance recipients. Two aspects of childcare seen as problematic were finding appropriate childcare in their neighbourhood and affordable pricing. In addition, dental hygiene was seen as problematic as it prohibited some individuals from finding work.

5.2.3 Employment and Assistance Workers

According to EAWs, all ETW individuals are referred to programs. EAW #1 (2007) stated that typically individuals who say they are able to work but just haven't found a job or show little or no barriers to employment get referred to the BCEP. People that have been ill or out of the labour force for some time or other transient type clientele with ongoing drug problems or homelessness get referred to the CAP. These programs offer supports including bus tickets and gas vouchers. The government is completely reliant on these training programs to provide supports to this group. EAW #3 (2008) said that any IA beneficiary who is not on PWD has to be referred to an employment program whether or not it is Ministry funded. This means those individuals that are not in Ministry funded programs may not be receiving the same benefits.

The CAP can take only a limited number of referrals, which varies by city. If spaces get filled, people are either placed onto waitlists or are referred to other programs, some of which are funded independently of the Ministry. One worker advised that there are no limits on the number of people that can be referred to the BCEP. However, there are time limits. If individuals don't get a job within six months of their individual services, their employment file is closed and they are referred to another program or may be requested to return to the BCEP (EAW #1, 2007). Another worker said that there are limits on the intake number for BCEP, and individuals are placed on waitlists if spaces are unavailable (EAW #3, 2008).

Two of the three workers agreed that childcare was a major barrier for individuals trying to transition into the workforce; they also stated childcare problems can hinder the rate of engagement in employment programs. Many IA beneficiaries cannot find appropriate childcare and therefore cannot attend the program, which makes them ineligible to receive transportation benefits (EAW #1, 2007; EAW #2, 2008).

EAW #2 listed as a concern the insufficient support provided by the government and the belief that people can actually live on the low rates provided by income assistance. She thinks the

welfare system's benefits should be adequate to cover the cost of living and allow individuals to cover their basic needs and have a means to go find a job.

5.2.4 Comparative Analysis

When interviewing advocates, CSPs and EAWs, it appears as though each group has a different viewpoint on the job/training programs. The CSPs believe that the programs they operate are effective and that delivery methods are appropriate, contrary to advocates who believe the programs are unproductive. CAP-CSPs for the most part are satisfied with the program design, while BCEP-CSPs suggest better engagement and referrals from the Ministry as the only point of improvement. EAWs believe the programs are useful but that there are limitations and room for improvement. Advocates are the only group that feels the contracted programs are ineffective and government funds should be directed elsewhere.

All groups with the exception of CAP2 service providers agreed that childcare was a concern for ETW income assistance recipients. Finding suitable childcare and funding appeared to be the biggest problems. CAP2 service providers did not identify childcare as a problem, perhaps because it is a part-time program with less frequent attendance than for the BCEP.

Other barriers that interviewees mentioned were problems of housing and inadequate benefit rates. It was emphasized that rates need to reflect the current cost of living. Dental hygiene was another issue that was mentioned. Due to the visible nature of the problem, it could potentially limit an individual's chance of employment.

5.3 Summary of Key Points

Below is a summary of the key information identified in the interviews with advocates, client service providers and employment and assistance workers.

Expected-to-work income assistance recipients face the following barriers when trying to transition into the workforce:

- The cost of transportation;
- Insufficient distribution of bus tickets;
- Restricted geographical region to conduct a job search;
- Lost job opportunities because individuals are unable to attend interviews scheduled on short notice;
- Low housing and support allowance that makes it impossible for individuals to afford transportation to get to work;
- Problems transporting children to daycare; and,
- Difficulty attending employment or life skills programs.

The following solutions were suggested by advocates, employment and assistance workers and client service providers:

- Increase funding to job contractors to allow them to give out more bus tickets
- Provide bus passes to all expected-to-work income assistance recipients
- Increase the IA benefit rates so individuals can take care of their basic needs

6 Policy Alternatives

It is important to recognize that individuals on IA often have complex and multiple barriers. The respondent interviews reveal that transportation is a significant concern for IA beneficiaries. Though we do not know how big a problem transportation alone is in finding employment, it is a barrier that was repeatedly expressed as a concern by all interviewees. Therefore, this section outlines policy alternatives to enhance access to transportation toward the goal of assisting more individuals in becoming self-sufficient by joining the workforce. This would support the BCEA program's goals of individual independence and welfare-to-work. In the short-term these alternatives can assist individuals to engage more fully within the community and move them along the employment continuum. Because very few interviewees reported that individuals had their own vehicles, none of the options involves assistance with vehicle ownership.

These alternatives were developed with the input of interviewed advocates, CSPs and EAWs. In addition the following five strategies from a US study by Turner and Hughes (1997) were taken into consideration when creating the policy options.

- 1) One size does not fit all. Every region must have meetings set up with local advocates and practitioners in order to identify the specific barriers that separate the poor from employment;
- 2) Transportation alone is not the answer. It is often a crucial barrier but it is rarely the only barrier. Skills, education and discrimination are some of the other barriers that separate the poor from employment.
- 3) Collaboration at the local level is worth the effort. All stakeholders must collectively decide on mutually beneficial strategies.

- 4) Innovation is risky. Public transit routes, schedules and budgets may have to be adjusted.
- 5) Federal mandates can help. The federal government can foster local collaboration by requiring an inclusive planning process as a condition of funding.

Status Quo

Given that transportation has been expressed as a concern to some degree by all interviewees, the status quo is not seen as a viable policy option. Instead it is used as a comparison case against which the other policy alternatives can be evaluated. Currently, the status quo is that ETW income assistance recipients do not receive any transportation support during their job search from the Ministry. They are required to enter into employment or life skills programs and are given bus tickets or bus passes as deemed necessary by the CSPs. The two main programs these individuals are referred to are the BCEP and CAP2. Those who are not referred to Ministry funded programs can receive more or less transportation support depending on the organization they are referred to. CSPs issue bus tickets to individuals when attending a program, going to an interview, applying for jobs, and attending workshops. Individuals can be issued bus passes when they are participating in regular training, typically in excess of 20 hours. There is no separate fund for transportation. The current funding provided is inclusive of all job-related expenses including interview clothing, lunch money, raingear and so forth. Therefore, in some organizations bus tickets are rationed and bus passes are rarely given out.

6.1 Status Quo Plus

This policy alternative would leave the distribution of bus tickets and bus passes unchanged, but it would increase funding from the provincial government for each individual referred to the program. This increased funding would allow client service advisors to distribute bus tickets and bus passes more frequently. This fund would also be separate from the support

fund that is currently provided to cover other costs such as clothing, work boots, and other one-time expenses. Transportation is a constant, almost everyday need, whether it is to go to work, school or training, medical appointments or other community engagements. Thus there a case can be made for providing a separate fund designated specifically for transportation.

Critical Issues

- Tickets can be sold to other individuals.
- Unclear how much additional funding for transportation tickets is needed in order to see a movement along the employment continuum.

6.2 3-Week Job Search Transportation Support

This policy alternative shifts some of the transportation support responsibility back onto the provincial government directly. The Ministry would be responsible for providing ETW IA recipients with three two-zone books of 10 bus tickets for an individual to adequately search for a job during the designated 3-week job search period. Two-zone books of bus tickets would be provided as literature has pointed out the need for access to at least two zones when searching for a job. The number of bus tickets provided is based on the assumption applicants will use two tickets per day for a period of 15 weekdays. Individuals would be required to come in at the beginning of each week to receive one book of bus tickets. A tracked job search record is currently needed and would verify that individuals are using the bus tickets to search for jobs. Income and asset testing will have to be done prior to applicants conducting their job search after which applicants will come in for their interview date which will fully determine whether they are approved for IA. It is hoped that with this assistance more applicants will be able to find a job and thus no longer need IA.

Critical Issues

- There is concern that individuals who are ineligible for IA benefits could access the bus tickets.
- Increased incentive to apply for IA.
- Bus tickets could be sold to other individuals.
- Can be inefficient to ask people to come in on a weekly basis to get bus tickets, particularly since it is time consuming and one would need tickets to get to the office.

6.3 Monthly Bus Pass for All Individuals in Employment Programs

This policy alternative provides free monthly bus passes to all individuals enrolled in the BCEP. Rather than purchasing books of bus tickets CSPs would be responsible for purchasing the bus pass that is then given to individuals that are actively attending the program. This means beneficiaries must be attending all required meetings unless an acceptable reason for no-show has been given to the CSP. Beneficiaries are eligible for the monthly bus pass for duration of the time they are enrolled in employment program. The reason for providing support specifically to the BCEP clientele is because they have the greatest need for transportation as they are actively expected to search for employment from the very beginning of the program.

Critical Issues

- People may sell or loan their bus pass.
- Because bus passes are given at the beginning of the month, it can be difficult to enforce attendance for the remainder of the month.

6.4 Triannual Bus Pass for All Individuals Classified as Expected-to-Work

This policy alternative requires the provincial government to reach an agreement similar to the one between some universities in the Lower Mainland and TransLink known as the U-Pass. If a similar agreement were reached between MEIA and TransLink, it would result in a triannual bus pass for all ETW IA beneficiaries. The cost would be \$99 per person and would ideally be covered by the Ministry as opposed to providing bus tickets. This would enable all IA beneficiaries classified as expected-to-work to receive a 4-month bus pass three times a year. Passes would be available in January-Winter, May-Spring, and September-Fall. At the end of each four month period, an evaluation would be conducted to ensure an individual is fulfilling the requirements of their employment plan. Individuals that are a part of BCEP or CAP2 would require their CSP to conduct an assessment to determine if they are fulfilling the requirements of their employment plan and are eligible for the next four month bus pass. If eligible, CSPs would refer the individuals to the Ministry where the passes would be allocated. Individuals participating in any other programs or who have an employment program created for them would have an assessment done by the Ministry.

These passes include photo identification and therefore would prevent individuals from selling or loaning them out. It could also provide additional incentive for individuals to meet the requirements of their employment plan. Upon completion of a program individuals would no longer be eligible for another bus pass, but their existing pass would be valid until its expiry date.

Critical Issues

- Some individuals may receive more benefits from the bus pass depending on when they get approved for benefits.
- TransLink's willingness to reach an agreement with the Ministry.

- May decrease attendance in employment or life skills programs because individuals don't have to come in frequently to access bus tickets. Alternatively it may increase attendance in employment or life skills programs because of improved access to transportation.

6.5 Universal Transportation for All Individuals Classified as Expected-to-Work

This policy alternative is modelled after the Saskatchewan Discount Bus Pass Program. All individuals classified as ETW would be eligible to purchase a monthly bus pass at a reduced cost. Applicants must provide proof of IA benefits and have photo identification. People wishing to purchase the bus pass must visit their local transit office. Individuals would be eligible to purchase this pass at any point after they begin receiving income assistance benefits. Individuals would no longer be eligible to re-apply for the discounted bus pass once they are off IA.

In Regina, individuals on IA pay \$15 a month or 25 per cent of the actual cost of the bus pass which is \$57. The government provides an \$18 dollar or 30 per cent subsidy to Regina Transit. In Metro Vancouver, the proposed percentage would be the same. For example if an individual wants to purchase a two-zone bus pass valued at \$99, they would pay \$25 per month and the government would provide a monthly subsidy of \$30. It may be difficult to get TransLink to agree to absorb the remainder of the cost. Regina Transit agreed to the subsidization because under their system a larger number of individuals are eligible to purchase the bus pass. Getting TransLink to agree to a two-year pilot project would be the best way to pursue this option.

Critical Issues

- Reaching an agreement with TransLink.
- Could create an incentive to remain on IA.
- These monthly bus passes would not have photo id on them and therefore there could be issues with individuals selling or loaning out their bus pass.

7 Evaluation of Policy Alternatives

7.1 Criteria for Analysis

Each of the policy alternatives has been systematically evaluated using the following five criteria: effectiveness, administrative ease, budgetary cost, political and stakeholder acceptability, and work disincentive. These five criteria have been selected based on responses from interviewees and my assessment of what a policy must possess to achieve its objectives. Five stakeholder interviews, selected from the 14 original interviewees, were conducted to assist in the analysis of the policy alternatives. Two advocates, one CSP, one BCEP worker and one EAW provided their expert opinion on feasibility and effectiveness issues.

Any policy being implemented to increase individuals' participation in the workforce or engagement in the community must:

- Have reasonable cost to the government in implementation and annual expenditure due to budgeting constraints and competing uses for other provincial programs;
- Gain the acceptance of key stakeholders such as TransLink and client service providers in order to secure the support needed to administer the policy;
- Improve the attractions of work relative to income assistance; and,
- Improve beneficiaries' current state of life by moving people along the employment continuum.

Scaling

The criteria are each assigned a measure which is ranked low, medium, or high and has a corresponding numerical score as follows:

- Low = 1 Point
- Med = 2 Points
- High = 3 Points

The cost criterion will be ranked inversely, with a high ranking indicating a lower cost and a score of 3, and a low score of 1 signifying a higher budgetary cost. The total score for each policy alternative will be calculated and compared against a maximum score of 15. All criteria will be weighted equally as a benchmark, but the analysis is amenable to different weightings to reflect differing priorities. The policy option that receives the highest score will emerge as the recommended course of action.

Table 6: Criteria and Measures for Policy Evaluation

Criterion	Definition	Measurement	Sources
Effectiveness	Will ETW income assistance recipients be successful in transitioning into either the workforce or engaging more fully within the community? (Movement along the employment continuum)	<p>Low – one stakeholder interviewee suggests improvement would be made in moving beneficiaries along the employment continuum.</p> <p>Med – three stakeholder interviewees suggest improvement would be made in moving beneficiaries along the employment continuum.</p> <p>High – five stakeholder interviewees suggest improvement would be made in moving beneficiaries along the employment continuum.</p>	Interview participants, literature review, case studies, and subjective assessment based on information gathered through the study.
Administrative Ease	Does administrative structure or required partnerships currently exist to implement policy without excessive additional resources?	<p>Low – difficult/complex changes required; only one of the key considerations is positively addressed.</p> <p>Med – moderate changes required; two of the key considerations are positively addressed.</p> <p>High – minimal changes required; all three of the key considerations are positively addressed.</p>	
Cost	Short-term: How will the costs compare with the current total annual budget for an individual in a training/life skill programs?	<p>Short Term</p> <p>Low – costs exceed \$9,000,000 per annum.</p> <p>Med – \$6,000,000 to \$9,000,000 per annum.</p> <p>High – costs are below \$6,000,000 per annum.</p>	
Political and Stakeholder Acceptability	Will the option be supported by different stakeholders? (government officials, IA beneficiaries, CSPs, and the general public)	<p>Low – one interviewee believes this option will be supported by the various stakeholders.</p> <p>Med – three interviewees believe this option will be supported by the various stakeholders.</p> <p>High – five interviewees believe this option will be supported by the various stakeholders.</p>	
Work Disincentive	Is it likely that this option will cause people to choose to remain on IA as opposed to seeking employment?	<p>Low – one stakeholder interviewee suggests the policy option will create greater incentive for IA beneficiaries to leave IA for work.</p> <p>Med – three stakeholder interviewees suggest the policy option will create greater incentive for IA beneficiaries to leave IA for work.</p> <p>High – five stakeholder interviewees suggest the policy option will create greater incentive for IA beneficiaries to leave IA for work.</p>	

Each criterion is discussed in further detail below:

7.1.1 Effectiveness

Effectiveness measures the extent to which the policy alternative fulfils the objectives of the CAP2 and BCEP. These objectives include both assisting individuals in transitioning into the workforce and/or engaging more fully within the community. All interviewees stated the effectiveness criterion as a top priority. However, they indicated that it should be measured as not only the number of beneficiaries moving into the workforce but should also reflect the increased level of community engagement. The measurement for effectiveness is based on the opinions of the five stakeholder interviewees. I recognize that the measure for this criterion is based on the speculation that each of the alternatives will improve a person's position along the employment continuum. It is unclear exactly how much movement will occur, so the policy alternatives are ranked relative to one another and the status quo. A maximum score of three is achieved if all five stakeholder interviewees agree the policy is effective. A score of one is achieved if only one interviewee believes the policy is effective, and a score of two is allocated if three interviewees believe the policy is effective.

7.1.2 Administrative Ease

This criterion measures the relative ease or difficulty of implementing a policy option. It assesses whether the policy can be implemented within existing administrative constraints or if changes are necessary. Key considerations include:

- Does MEIA have the authority to implement the proposed policy alone?
- Does MEIA have the resources to implement the proposed policy in terms of staff, facilities, time, etc?
- Does the proposed policy allow for easy accessibility to those eligible?

A maximum score of three is given if the alternative positively addresses all three considerations. This criterion is important as complex administrative changes and/or requirements may not be supported by all stakeholders.

7.1.3 Cost: Short- and Long-Term

Short Term:

The budgetary cost criterion helps to determine the impacts of public spending on the economy and society. It is an important criterion to consider as the BC government funds many programs and is limited by its tax revenues and federal transfers. The short-term costs include the direct cost that may arise from the implementation of a policy alternative. The evaluation process involves identifying the direct costs associated with the policy alternatives and assessing how each policy alternative compares against the others. The direct costs associated with each policy option have been derived from key respondent interviews and from similar policy models used in other provinces across the country. As no one could provide precise numbers on how much money is spent on transportation per person in a program, I am assuming that under the status quo an average of \$100 is allocated per person regardless of their duration in the program. This number is derived from estimates provided by BCEP-CSPs.

To calculate an aggregate short-term cost under the status quo I multiply the \$100 by the number of individuals in both the CAP and BCEP (5,000 + 15,000) which equals 20,000. The cost of the status quo is therefore estimated at \$2,000,000.⁴ It is expected if a government is looking to make policy changes they are prepared to allocate additional funds for the change especially if there are potential long-term savings. Funding for the BCEP has a little over tripled since last year, and it is expected that there should then be more money available for transportation supports. Therefore, I have assumed that with such an increase in the budget it is

⁴ This figure is calculated by multiplying the number of BCEP and CAP by the average of \$100 transportation support that is allocated per person in the programs (20,000*100=\$2,000,000).

not unrealistic to expect the amount of transportation support be increased in the same proportion; hence, \$6,000,000 is the cap for a high ranking.⁵ Also, as the calculations specified under the long-term costs sub-category will describe, in the future the government can expect to see over \$6 million in savings annually. Taking this into consideration I have set the medium ranking range from \$6 million up to \$9 million. The cut off point for this ranking is set at \$9 million because assuming that the government is able to see the long-term savings of over \$6 million, the government should still be willing to pay \$2 million towards transportation. Lastly, anything exceeding \$9 million is given a low ranking.

Long Term:

Long-term policy impacts are important to consider as a part of the budgetary cost criterion in order to reflect that initial expenditures can result in future savings and lack of short-term expenditures can result in future costs. Long-term impacts will include the cost savings from quicker facilitation of individuals into the workforce. The long-term cost impacts are not a separate weighted criterion because without implementation of the alternatives it is difficult to calculate actual time savings that would result with each policy option. In order to get an accurate idea as to how much each policy option would expedite employment for IA beneficiaries, multiple pilot projects would need to be conducted.

However, the hypothetical long-term cost savings have been calculated by assuming each of the policy options expedites ETW IA beneficiaries into the workforce by one week. Currently, the BC government pays out approximately \$13,179,903 monthly to 18,533 ETW cases.⁶ The Ministry has not provided the mean length of time an individual is on income assistance; however we know the median length of time is 3.9. In order to calculate the mean, it must be taken into

⁵ Current annual transportation cost multiplied by 3 ($2,000,000 \times 3 = \$6,000,000$).

⁶ Calculations are based on \$610 received by 13,235 single ETW individuals, \$877.22 received by 614 ETW couples, \$945.58 received by 3,791 one parent with one child families, and \$1101.06 received by 893 two parent with two children families. These groups represent the total 18,533 ETW beneficiaries. The monthly payments represent the maximum benefits eligible for each category.

consideration that the mean will be higher than the median, as the few long-term IA beneficiaries will skew the score. Based on this information and conversations with interviewees, I have assumed the mean time an individual is on IA as five months. Therefore, in a one year period there are approximately 44,479 distinct IA cases.⁷ I then calculated the cost savings of one ETW individual facilitating into the workforce one week sooner which equals \$152.50.⁸ In order to calculate the annual cost savings I multiplied the cost per claimant (152.50) by the number of distinct cases (44,479) which totals \$6,783,047. This implies that if the government were to implement one of these policy options, and these options were to reduce the length of time an individual is on IA by one week, the BC government would save \$6,783,047 annually. It should also be taken into consideration that the Ministry pays employment and life skills service providers to train and engage IA beneficiaries with the community. If individuals are leaving IA one week early, then these costs are reduced as well. These total cost-savings should be taken into consideration when looking at the short-term costs that have been used to evaluate each policy alternative.

7.1.4 Political and Stakeholder Acceptability

This criterion involves evaluating and assessing the feasibility of a particular policy option among key stakeholders and decision makers. Key issues that require consideration are whether the policy options will be accepted by key stakeholders and decision makers, whether they meet the real or perceived needs of the target group, and whether the policy options are appropriate to the values of Canadian society. Persons included in this group include MEIA officials, TransLink, IA beneficiaries, CSPs, and the general population, specifically the low-

⁷ This figure is calculated by taking 12 months in one year divided by the mean time an individual is on IA ($12/5=2.4$). This number is then multiplied by the annual average number of cases per month on IA which is 18,533 ($2.4*18,533=44,479$).

⁸ This cost savings per claimant is based on the maximum benefit rate received by single employable clients. This benefit rate was used because this specified client group makes up the majority of the ETW category. An average month has 30 days, and for 5 month that equal approximately 21.5 weeks. One week reduction in benefits would result in approximately 5% reduction in benefits. In 5 months individuals would earn ($610*5$) \$3,050 dollars, 5% of that is \$152.50.

income population that is not on IA. A maximum score of three is achieved if all stakeholder interviewees believe the policy will be accepted, a minimum score of one is given if only one stakeholder interviewee believes the policy will be accepted and a score of two is given if three stakeholder interviewees believe the policy will be accepted. The opinion of all these people is important as political action is more plausible when elites and grass root populations provide high levels of support. However, it is important to note, no representative from TransLink nor any political official was interviewed for this study. Therefore, any views on TransLink's or the Ministry's possible position on a policy alternative are based on the beliefs of the other interviewees.

7.1.5 Work Disincentive

This criterion reflects the idea that work should be made a better deal than welfare. It is important that the policy alternatives do not indirectly encourage individuals to remain on IA as opposed to searching for a job. The policy alternatives are ranked relative to one another and the status quo based on the opinions of stakeholder interviews. A maximum score of three is achieved if all stakeholder interviewees believe the policy will not create a work disincentive, a minimum score of one is given if only one stakeholder interviewees believes the policy will not create a work disincentive and a score of two is given if three stakeholder interviewees believe the policy will not create a work disincentive. The criterion is important because a policy may be effective in moving people along the employment continuum but indirectly it could also be creating a work disincentive if the benefit is being used incorrectly and not for its intended purpose of increasing community or workforce engagement. For example, a bus pass may be seen as more valuable if sold or loaned.

Equity

Equity is not considered as a criterion in this study because it can be argued that each beneficiary does not need equal access to all of the benefits. Benefits need to be flexible as individuals on and off IA have unique and differing needs. It can also be argued that CSPs need flexibility to distribute bus tickets as they are in the best position to determine the needs of the beneficiaries.

7.2 Evaluation of Policy Alternatives

The following subsections evaluate the five policy alternatives on the basis of the five cited criteria.

7.2.1 Status Quo Plus

Effectiveness: Low –1 Point

The need for increased funding for transportation was repeatedly mentioned by CSPs. Currently, CSPs provide bus tickets as often as possible, but due to financial limitations are restricted in the number of tickets that can be distributed. When stakeholder interviews were conducted to determine the effectiveness of this policy alternative, four out of five interviewees responded that they did not predict this policy alternative would provide sufficient funding to create movement along the employment continuum. Relative to the other policy options this alternative receives a low effectiveness rating. Similar to the status quo, distribution of bus tickets will remain uneven between the 20,000 BCEP and CAP clients.

Administrative Ease: Medium –2 Points

This policy alternative positively addresses two of the three key considerations. There would be no need for additional administrative structures in order to implement this strategy as MEIA possesses both the authority and the resources to implement this policy option. However, accessibility to bus tickets for those who are eligible remains flawed. Under this alternative bus tickets will still be allocated by CSP's and often individuals do not have the means to access the

employment or life skills programs and in turn are unable to access bus tickets even though they are eligible.

Cost: Medium – 2 Points

In the short term, the cost of providing more funding for bus tickets would be higher than the status quo. Key informant respondents did not recommend a specific increase in funding. Seeing that the annual budget for the 2007/2008 year has a little over tripled since the 2006/2007 year, I have chosen to increase funding for transportation from \$100 per person to \$350 per person. This would also enable CSPs to on average allocate one book of two-zone bus tickets per month to each person in the two programs. This policy alternative would serve 20,000 clients, and the annual total expenditure would be \$7,000,000. In order for there to be no net budgetary costs for the government in the long-term, beneficiaries would need to expedite off of IA by one week and one day.⁹

Political and Stakeholder Acceptability: Med-High – 2.5 Points

Four out of five stakeholder interviewees believe this policy option would gain political and stakeholder acceptability. This policy alternative would address the need for increased funding expressed by key informant respondents. Relative to the other policy options, IA beneficiaries may not see this as the ideal situation as the number of bus tickets will remain limited to some degree. It is expected that this policy would receive political approval as the increase in funding is not as large as some of the other policy alternatives.

Work Disincentive: Medium – 2 Points

Three out of five stakeholders believe this policy option will not encourage individuals to remain on income assistance as opposed to joining the workforce. The restricted nature of access to bus tickets limits any disincentive to work.

⁹ To calculate the length of time individuals would need to expedite off of IA in order for the government to break even in the long run, I divided the total cost of the policy option divided by the potential long-term savings if beneficiaries expedited off IA one week sooner ($7,000,000/6,783,047=1.03$).

	Effectiveness	Admin. Ease	Cost	Political and Stakeholder Acceptability	Work Disincentive	Total
Score:	1	2	2	2.5	2	9.5

7.2.2 3-Week Job Search Transportation Support

Effectiveness: Medium – 2 Points

This policy alternative receives a medium score as three out of five stakeholder interviewees revealed that they believe providing individuals with bus tickets during the three-week job search would enable them to perform a more thorough job search. This alternative also has the potential to decrease the number of people receiving IA, as more individuals may find employment prior to being accepted to IA as a result of their better job search. A large number of individuals have the potential to benefit from this option as this support would be available to all those applying for the expected-to-work category of IA assistance. The annual number of distinct cases eligible for this support is 44,479.

Administrative Ease: Med – 2 Points

Moderate changes would be required in the Ministry’s resources in order to implement this policy. The Ministry staff would be required to buy bus tickets to provide transit assistance to individuals participating in the three week job search, and income and asset tests would have to be done prior to the 3-week job search. The Ministry does have the authority to implement this policy option independently. In addition, the expectation that individuals must access a Ministry office is already in place; therefore, this policy option does allow relatively easy accessibility for eligible applicants. However, it can be inconvenient for individuals to come in on a weekly basis to receive their bus tickets as it can be time consuming.

Cost: High – 3 Points

Three books of bus tickets that consist of 10 tickets and span two-zones cost an additional \$85.50 per person. However, this aid would be provided in addition to maintaining the status quo. Per annum this would be equivalent to \$5,802,955 or \$2,000,000 to maintain the status quo and an additional \$3,802,955 in transit expenses for 44,479 applicants during the three-week job search. In order to break even in the long-term with this policy option, beneficiaries would need to expedite off of IA on average six days sooner.¹⁰

Acceptability among Stakeholders: Med-High – 2.5 Points

Four out of five interviewees agreed that transportation support during the three-week job search was needed in order to fully achieve the Ministry's expectation of an in-depth job search record. It was mentioned that there may be some possible opposition from political officials who may oppose providing support to individuals prior to acceptance in the program.

Work Disincentive –High – 3 Points

All stakeholders agreed this policy would not create a work disincentive as the benefit is paid out for only a three-week period, and in order to receive each week's bus tickets a job search record must be provided. This policy alternative may slightly increase the number of individuals applying for income assistance. However, an individual will still be required to meet the appropriate asset limitations and eligibility criteria before they will be able to access the bus tickets. This process will assist in filtering through ineligible people.

	Effectiveness	Admin. Ease	Cost	Political and Stakeholder Acceptability	Work Disincentive	Total
Score:	2	2	3	2.5	3	12.5

¹⁰ To calculate the length of time individuals would need to expedite off of IA in order for the government to break even in the long run, I divided the total cost of the policy option divided by the potential long-term savings if beneficiaries expedited off IA one week sooner ($5,802,955/6,783,047=.85$).

7.2.3 Monthly Bus Passes for All Individuals in BCEP

Effectiveness: Medium – 2 Points

Three out of five stakeholder interviewees revealed that this alternative would be effective in getting beneficiaries into employment as it would allow them to make unlimited trips as needed. Having the increased access to transit would enable them to conduct wider job searches as they will no longer be geographically restricted. This assumes that individuals attend the BCEP sessions when referred. The increased mobility through this policy alternative has the potential to increase attendance at the program or decrease attendance as people may prefer to use their increased mobility for other networking purposes. This program does not serve the entire ETW category. Approximately 15,000 individuals participate in the BCEP annually.

Administrative Ease: High – 3 Points

The Ministry has the resources and the ability to implement this policy option on their own. It is also accessible to all individuals regularly attending BCEP.

Cost: Medium – 2 Points

This policy option provides a monthly two-zone bus pass valued at \$99 to all beneficiaries participating in BCEP. As previously discussed, the mean length of time individuals are on IA is five months, therefore the cost to the Ministry per person enrolled in this program would be \$495 and the annual total program cost would be \$7,425,000.¹¹ In addition to this expenditure, the 5,000 CAP clients would remain on the status quo resulting in additional \$500,000 in spending for a grand total of \$7,925,000. Taking long-term costs into consideration,

¹¹ 5 months multiplied by 99 equals \$495. The annual cost of the bus pass program can be calculated by multiplying 15,000 BCEP by \$495 which equals \$7,425,000.

this policy option would require beneficiaries to expedite off of IA one week and one day sooner than the present time.¹²

Political and Stakeholder Acceptability: Low-Med – 1.5 Points

Two out of five interviewees believe this policy will be accepted by all stakeholders. However, one of the interviewees pointed out that the response from individuals not enrolled in Ministry funded employment programs could potentially be negative as they would not be receiving bus passes. The cost factor could also make it unattractive to government officials.

Work Disincentive: Low – 1 Point

Four out of five stakeholder interviewees revealed that this program could create some work disincentive. Beneficiaries may find it profitable to remain in the program and sell their bus pass. The relative time savings involved in not working, receiving IA and money earned from selling a bus pass could be valued higher relative to obtaining a job that results in less leisure time and paying out-of-pocket for transportation expenses. However, an individual is eligible for the bus pass for only a limited time period and therefore it may discourage them from viewing the transportation benefit as an incentive not to work.

	Effectiveness	Admin Ease	Cost	Political and Stakeholder Acceptability	Work Disincentive	Total
Score:	2	3	2	2	1	10

7.2.4 Triannual Bus Pass for All Individuals Classified as Expected-to-Work

Effectiveness: Med- High – 2.5 Points

This policy alternative was suggested by a few of the key informant respondents. Four out of five stakeholder interviewees expect it to be highly effective in moving individuals along

¹²To calculate the length of time individuals would need to expedite off of IA in order for the government to break even in the long run, I divided the total cost of the policy option divided by the potential long-term savings if beneficiaries expedited off IA one week sooner (7,925,000/6,783,047=1.17).

the employment continuum. As opposed to the U-Pass, the purpose of this bus pass is not to decrease single occupancy vehicles and increase transit ridership. Instead, its purpose is to provide the means for transportation and connect individuals from various communities to jobs related to their interest and experience. The increased bus routes that have resulted from the initial U-Pass program will enable workers to commit to a job and have 4 months of guaranteed transportation to get them to work. This four month period also provides sufficient time for beneficiaries to arrange alternate transportation once their tri-annual bus pass expires. It is estimated that approximately 44,479 distinct cases in the expected-to-work category would be served by the policy option.

Administrative Ease: Low – 1 Point

This policy option could not be implemented without an agreement with TransLink in order to provide low cost bus passes. It would also create an increased workload for EAWs and CSPs who would be required to conduct triannual assessments on meeting eligibility requirements for the following term. Therefore, the Ministry must ensure there is an adequate supply of staff workers. All those eligible would have access to the bus pass.

Cost: Medium – 2 Points

This program would cost \$99 per person for a 4-month term. Taking into consideration that the average length of time on IA is five months, the government would need to buy two 4-month terms costing \$198 per person. This will enable some individuals a transition period while for others it will just cover the time they are on IA. As this pass is offered only three times a year, (January-Winter, May-Spring, and September-Fall) how long an individual is given a transition period varies. For example, if someone is on IA effective Jan 1, they will be eligible for a bus pass until the end of August. Assuming the individuals is on IA for five months, they have the months of June, July and August as a transition period. If someone were to come on to IA effective March 1, their bus pass would also be valid until the end of August as well, because they

would be receiving the winter and spring pass. However, their transition period would be shorter, as they would be on IA for the five months until July and only have the month of August as their transition period. There are 44,479 distinct annual cases in the expected-to-work category; therefore the total program cost would equal \$8,806,842.¹³ In order for the government to incur zero net budgetary costs in the long-run IA beneficiaries need to expedite on off IA on average by one week and two days.¹⁴

Political and Stakeholder Acceptability: Low – 1 Point

One out of five interviewees believes this policy option will be supported by most stakeholders. Some opposition may include low-income individuals not on IA as well as IA recipients in other categories, since they may feel it is unfair that they are not receiving the same benefits when they are facing similar circumstances. It may also be difficult to reach an agreement with TransLink because though there are agreements with UBC and SFU other colleges are having a difficult time reaching similar agreements with TransLink.

Work Disincentive: High – 3 Points

Surprisingly, all stakeholder interviews revealed that they expect that this policy option will not create a work disincentive. Perhaps this is because individuals will be unable to sell or loan their bus pass as it would have their photo identification displayed on it. Nevertheless, I believe this program could create a slight work disincentive. Beneficiaries may find it in their best interest to wait until early on in their last four month term before beginning employment in an attempt to maximize the use of their bus pass.

	Effectiveness	Admin. Ease	Cost	Political and Stakeholder Acceptability	Work Disincentive	Total
Score:	2.5	1	2	1	3	9.5

¹³ 44,479 distinct cases multiplied by the two-period bus pass costing \$198 equals \$8,806,842.

¹⁴ To calculate the length of time individuals would need to expedite off of IA in order for the government to break even in the long run, I divided the total cost of the policy option divided by the potential long-term savings if beneficiaries expedited off IA one week sooner ($8,806,842/6,783,047=1.30$).

7.2.5 Universal Transportation for All ETW Individuals on IA

Effectiveness: Low-Med – 1.5 Points

Two out of the five stakeholders believes this policy option would be effective in increasing workforce and community engagement. Interviewees stated that a universal bus pass for ETW IA would not be extremely beneficial as there is an individual cost to purchase the pass that many will still not be able to afford. Therefore, even though a large number of individuals would be eligible to receive this benefit, not everyone will be able to access it. Approximately 44,478 distinct cases are classified in the ETW category of income assistance.

Administrative Ease: Low –1 Point

This policy option cannot be implemented by the MEIA alone. It requires an agreement to be made with TransLink in regard to monthly fees, government subsidization and eligibility criteria. This policy would not be considered accessible to all those eligible as long as they must provide photo identification which interviewees have identified can be a problem, and they must be able to afford the monthly fee. No additional resources are required by the Ministry.

Cost: Medium – 2 Point

The cost for this policy option has been derived from the Saskatchewan Discount Bus Pass Program. Similar to the Saskatchewan government, BC MEIA will provide a 30% subsidy, or \$30 towards the monthly bus pass purchased. As previously mentioned the mean length of time an individual is on IA is five months. Therefore, for each individual the government would be paying a maximum of \$150.¹⁵ A generous estimate would assume that all 44,479 distinct IA cases would purchase this bus pass and this implies the total annual expenditure of \$6,671,880.¹⁶ This measure reflects the maximum cost as not all ETW IA beneficiaries will be able to afford or desire to possess the pass. With this policy option in the long-term IA beneficiaries need to

¹⁵ This figure is derived by multiplying the monthly subsidization fee by the mean length of time individuals are in the program ($30 \times 5 = \$150$).

¹⁶ This figure is derived by multiplying the annual expenditure by the number of distinct annual IA cases ($\$150 \times 44,479 = \$6,671,850$).

expedite off IA on average one week sooner than the present time in order for the government to incur no net budgetary costs.

Acceptability among Stakeholders: Low-Med –1.5 Points

Two out of five interviewees believe this policy will be accepted by stakeholders. This policy has been approved in Saskatchewan by all affected parties and could similarly be implemented in British Columbia. However, opposition might be expected from the public; specifically, low-income individuals who are not on IA are not eligible for the same benefit and those individuals that are on IA but a different classification, such as PPMB or ETW with a medical condition, and ETW – temporarily excused would not be eligible for this benefit either. The public reaction would in turn influence government action to some degree. There is expected to be no opposition from CSPs and advocates.

Work Disincentive: Low – 1 Point

Four out of five stakeholders believe this policy will create a disincentive to work. The idea is that a person’s time is considered more valuable and therefore an individual may not want to get a low paying job and pay for their own transportation. Instead they may choose to remain unemployed and have the spare time to travel as desired. They also may choose to sell their bus pass, and because they are eligible for this transportation support for the entire period they are on IA, it may allow them to make a significant amount of money that is exempt from the 100% claw back that occurs when individuals work even part-time while on IA.

	Effectiveness	Admin. Ease	Cost	Political and Stakeholder Acceptability	Work Disincentive	Total
Score:	1.5	1	2	1.5	1	7

7.3 Evaluation Matrix

Table 7: Evaluation of Policy Alternatives

Criteria	Status Quo Plus	3-Week Job Search Support	Monthly Bus Pass for All Individuals in the BCEP	Triannual Bus Pass for ETW IA Recipients	Universal Bus pass for ETW IA Recipients
Effectiveness	Low (1) 1 out of 5 stakeholders believe this policy is effective	Medium (2) 3 out of 5 stakeholders believe this policy is effective	Medium (2) 3 out of 5 stakeholders believe this policy is effective	Med-High (2.5) 4 out of 5 stakeholders believe this policy is effective	Low-Med (1.5) 2 out of 5 stakeholders believe this policy is effective
Admin. Ease	Medium (2) 2/3 key considerations positively addressed	Medium (2) 2/3 key considerations positively addressed	High (3) 3/3 key considerations positively addressed	Low (1) 1/3 key considerations positively addressed	Low (1) 1/3 key considerations positively addressed
Cost	Medium (2) \$7,000,000	High (3) \$5,802,955	Medium (2) \$7,925,000	Medium (2) \$8,806,842	Medium (2) \$6,671,880
Acceptability among Stakeholders	Med-High (2.5) Slight opposition: IA beneficiaries	Med-High (2.5) Opposition: Government	Medium (2) Opposition: Individuals not enrolled in employment programs, government	Low (1) Opposition: IA recipients in other categories, public, government, TransLink	Low-Med (1.5) Opposition: Public, other classifications of IA, government
Work Disincentive	Medium (2) 3 out of 5 stakeholders believe this policy will not create a work disincentive	High (3) 5 out of 5 stakeholders believe this policy will not create a work disincentive	Low (1) 1 out of 5 stakeholders believe this policy will not create a work disincentive	High (3) 5 out of 5 stakeholders believe this policy will not create a work disincentive	Low (1) 1 out of 5 stakeholders believe this policy will not create a work disincentive
Total Score	9.5	12.5	10	9.5	7

None of the policy options could on its own achieve all of the specified objectives, nor is any of the policy alternatives completely effective in ensuring movement along the continuum. There are two reasons for this conclusion. First, none of the policy options has been previously implemented for the purpose of increasing labour force participation, making it hard to know exactly how much of an effect they will have on movement along the employment continuum. Second, transportation is a concern for IA beneficiaries, but these individuals often face multiple problems and barriers so that there is no single solution to increase workforce participation.

Another important issue to recognize is that each of these policy alternatives requires increased funding. However, the potential long-term cost savings must be considered as an offset to the incremental costs of each policy initiative. If all the policy options facilitate beneficiaries' movement into the workforce at least one week sooner, the immediate costs will be more than offset.

The criterion of effectiveness and work disincentive use speculative measures, and thus it is difficult to gauge the real-life impact of each policy alternative. However, it is useful in providing the policy options with relative scores. It would also be useful to run pilot projects for a one or two year period in order to test effectiveness, observe any potential long-term cost savings, and determine if the alternatives create a work disincentive.

The universal policy alternative ranked the lowest, largely due to the significant financial costs to the government and to the beneficiaries themselves. The bus pass charge could adversely impact accessibility and effectiveness of the policy option. Additionally, the low administrative feasibility due to the need to reach an agreement with TransLink contributes to the overall low score of the policy option. The status quo plus received the lowest effectiveness rating compared to all other policy alternatives, and therefore I do not recommend this option.

The three-week job search support fared the best in the overall policy evaluation. This was largely due to the option receiving perfect rankings in budgetary cost and work disincentive. The monthly bus pass for all individuals enrolled in BCEP scored the second highest score. This

policy option ranked fairly well in all categories with the exception of work disincentive. This alternative is easy to implement, cost-effective, and suggests movement along the employment continuum can be made. It is also focussing the benefits on a group of individuals who are actively searching for work and need the transportation support in hopes of successfully integrating into the community. The triannual bus pass option was fairly close to placing second and it received the highest effectiveness rating. However, the work disincentive ranking seems to have faired excessively well and it can be difficult to implement due to the fact that an agreement with TransLink is required.

8 Recommendations and Conclusion

8.1 Recommendations

Based on my evaluation of the policy alternatives, the MEIA may choose to implement more than one policy option as not all alternatives are mutually exclusive. This section outlines my recommendations based on the matrix and policy evaluation of the most viable alternatives.

My first recommendation would be to begin providing transportation support as early as the three-week job search period. This option received the highest overall ranking and would appear to be fairly effective in achieving the goal of moving people along the employment continuum. Stakeholder opinions suggest providing support early will allow individuals to conduct a comprehensive job search that is not geographically limited. These individuals are already facing other barriers such as lack of education, job skills, and experience, so that transportation should not further limit their job choices.

My second recommendation would be to implement the monthly bus pass program for all individuals actively participating in the BCEP. It received a relatively high effectiveness rating which is important as one of the objectives of this study is to alleviate the barriers and encourage employment and community engagement. Interviewees suggest stakeholder acceptability will be high and administration of this policy option will require minimal changes.

Implementation of these recommendations can occur by forming a committee of individuals from a variety of organizations, including academics, CSPs and advocates to engage in a lively discussion on the policy alternatives as well as resolving what additional steps need to be taken before collectively making a presentation to the MEIA.

8.2 Conclusion

Employment is often seen as improving the quality of one's life. In addition to providing economic security, it encourages social networking, creates a sense of identity and self-worth, increases self-esteem, and provides new learning opportunities among various other things. Income assistance beneficiaries often feel isolated and devalued because they are not engaging in employment, but often this is because of various barriers that restrict their access to the labour force. Previous literature and key informant interviews reveal that transportation is one of the barriers that restrict an individual's movement along the employment continuum along with other obstacles such as childcare, low benefit rates and an inadequate housing supply. This study focuses on transportation barriers and concludes that the current support for transportation provided by the Ministry is inadequate. Therefore, I provide recommendations for ways in which the MEIA can increase the mobility of IA beneficiaries, in an attempt to increase labour force participation and community engagement. Five policy alternatives are presented that offer strategic choices for MEIA ranging from limited bus tickets to an all-encompassing universal transportation bus pass for ETW IA beneficiaries.

This study acknowledges that accessible transportation is not the only solution to increasing IA beneficiaries' participation in the workforce. Therefore, suggestions for areas of future research include interviewing income assistance recipients to determine the impact of other obstacles that hinder their employability and often lead to social isolation. Provincial research focusing on barriers other than low benefit rates and housing problems is limited, and further studies are required to gain an understanding of ways in which the IA system can be improved. The current system focused exclusively on the Metro Vancouver region and recommends policies that address the unique concerns of a metropolitan area. Smaller municipal environments are different with specific community issues and barriers to consider. Therefore, the results of this study should not be generalized across the province. Region specific research is required to address barriers to employment and produce appropriate policy recommendations.

Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questions:

Demographic Questions:

- 1) How long have you been working at your job?
- 2) Are your clientele from a particular region?
- 3) How many people on average do you assist on a daily basis that are on income assistance?
- 4) Are most of the individuals you are in contact with categorized as expected-to-work?
- 5) Are you aware if many of the ETW IA individuals that you assist own or have access to a vehicle?
- 6) Please describe your job and how you assist ETW IA beneficiaries.

All interviewees were asked a variation of the following questions:

- 1) Have individuals expressed access to transportation as a concern for them when looking for a job?
- 2) From the individuals you have come in contact with what kind of impact do you see on individuals who do not have access to transportation?
- 3) What benefits provided by the Ministry do you think are the most beneficial to ETW IA recipients?
- 4) How is eligibility for transportation subsidies determined?
- 5) What kind of success rate do people have with the training programs?
- 6) What is the role of client service providers?
- 7) How effective are the CSPs in finding jobs for beneficiaries?
- 8) How could the job training process be improved?
- 9) What can the government provide to ETW income assistance recipients during the job search in order to make the transition into the labour force more efficient?
- 10) What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the IA system in providing assistance to those searching for a job?
- 11) Is access to childcare a barrier for those searching for a job?
- 12) Should transportation support be provided during the initial three-week job search?
- 13) What are the top three barriers faced by ETW IA recipients?
- 14) What criteria should be used to look at income assistance policies?
 - a. How important is"
 - i. Effectiveness
 - ii. Administrative feasibility
 - iii. Cost
 - iv. Acceptability among stakeholders and politicians
 - v. Equity

Appendix B

Table 8: Maximum Asset Limits

Description	Item	Maximum Amount
Asset Exemptions	Maximum cash surrender value for an uncashed life insurance policy to be exempt	\$1,500
	Maximum for a motor vehicle to be exempt	\$5,000
	Maximum for a reserve account established to meet anticipated future business expenses to be exempt	\$5,000
	Lifetime maximum for a non-discretionary trust fund to be exempt	\$100,000
Asset Levels	Single Person	\$1,500 (includes \$150 cash maximum for applicants)
	Couple or family with one or two parents	\$2,500 (includes \$250 cash maximum for applicants)

Source: Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance <http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/mhr/assets.htm>

Appendix C

Table 9: MEIA General Supplements

Supplement	Item	Maximum Amount
Persons with Disability Bus pass fees	Annual fee	\$45
	Replacement fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First lost pass:\$10 • Second lost pass:\$20 • Third lost pass: \$50
Christmas supplement	Single person with no dependent children	\$35 per calendar year
	Childless couple	\$70 per calendar year
	Either single- or two-parent family with dependent children	\$70 per calendar year plus \$10 for each dependent child
Crisis supplement	Food	Up to \$20 per person per month
	Clothing	Up to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$100 per person per year • \$400 per family of four or more per year
	Shelter	Restricted to the actual cost up to the maximum shelter allowance
Guide animal supplement	Per eligible recipient or dependant	\$95 per calendar month (April 1/07)
Transportation to Residential Alcohol and Drug Treatment Facility Supplement	Travel allowance related to vehicle transportation	\$0.20 per kilometre

Source: Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance BC Employment and Assistance Rate Tables <http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/mhr/gs.htm>

Appendix D

Table 10: Average Apartment Rents in 2004 by Zone and Bedroom Type

Area	Bachelor	One Bedroom	Two Bedroom	Three + Bedroom	Total
City of Vancouver	\$695	\$823	\$1,160	\$1,499	\$863
City Zone:					
1. West End	\$718	\$902	\$1,388	\$2,056	\$925
2. S. Granville/Oak	\$682	\$817	\$1,135	**	\$855
3. Kitsilano	\$796	\$850	\$1,211	**	\$903
4. Kerrisdale	\$713	\$889	\$1,335	\$1,812	\$1,020
5. Marpole	\$582	\$680	\$876	**	\$706
6. East Hastings	\$593	\$680	\$831	**	\$694
7. Remainder	\$711	\$842	\$1,210	**	\$954
Metro Vancouver	\$668	\$774	\$984	\$1,153	\$821

Source: CMHC 2004 Vancouver Rental Market Report <http://www.cmhc.ca>

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Interviews

The following fourteen individuals were interviewed for this study:

1. Advocate #1, December 12, 2007
2. Advocate #2, December 13, 2007
3. Advocate #3, December 13, 2007
4. Advocate #4, January 4, 2008
5. Advocate #5, January 14, 2008
6. Community Assistance Program – Client Service Advisor #1, December 12, 2007
7. Community Assistance Program – Client Service Advisor #2, December 18, 2007
8. Community Assistance Program – Client Service Advisor #3, December 19, 2007
9. British Columbia Employment Program – Client Service Advisor #1, January 4, 2008
10. British Columbia Employment Program – Client Service Advisor #2, January 9, 2008
11. British Columbia Employment Program – Client Service Advisor #3, January 11, 2008
12. Employment and Assistance Worker #1, December 18, 2007
13. Employment and Assistance Worker #2, January 3, 2008
14. Employment and Assistance Worker #3, January 16, 2008