



Date: June 25, 2004

**TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation**  
**FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation**  
**SUBJECT: Ticket prices and price structure at the Hallowe'en Ghost Train and Bright Nights in Stanley Park**

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## RECOMMENDATION

*THAT the Board approve the proposed ticket prices and price structure for the Ghost Train and Bright Nights events at the Miniature Railway as set out in this report*

## POLICY

The Board's User Fee Policy sets out the following user classifications and fee structure for its facilities:

<u>category</u>	<u>age / definition</u>	<u>rate as % of adult rate</u>
Adult	19 - 64 years inclusive	
Pre-school	5 years and under	free
Child	6 - 12 years inclusive	50%
Youth	13 - 18 years inclusive	75%
Senior	65 years +	70%
Family	1-2 adults of the same household and their children	50%

The **Finance Committee** discussed the proposed ticket prices and price structure for these events at its meeting on May 31, 2004 and adopted a motion to recommend them to the Board for approval.

## BACKGROUND

The Stanley Park Hallowe'en Ghost Train started up in 1999 and, except in 2000, has run every October since then. In 2003, it attracted 43,000 riders. Bright Nights in Stanley Park evolved from the extremely popular Christmas Train which has operated every December since 1980. In 1998, the Board partnered with the BC Professional Fire Fighters Burn Fund to create the Bright Nights event. Over 73,000 people rode the 2003 Bright Nights train.

In 2003, for the first time, Ticketmaster (TM) sold tickets to both events. TM was allocated 50% of the tickets for each night to sell in advance. The other 50%, plus any that TM did not sell, were available for same day sales to the public at the ticket booth in the Train Plaza. The actual ticket sales by TM were about 37% of the total number of tickets sold for both events.

## DISCUSSION

### Current Rate Structure

There are five different categories of fees for these events. Except for a different lower age limit for the child rate (at the Train & Farmyard, the child rate applies for ages 2 - 12), the pricing structure follows the Board's User Fee Policy. The currently approved 2004 ticket prices for a ride on the Train and a visit to the Farmyard at these two events are:

	<u>Ghost Train</u>	<u>Bright Nights</u>
Adult	\$9.50	\$8.50
Senior	\$6.75	\$6.00
Youth	\$7.00	\$6.25
Child	\$4.75	\$4.25
Family (per person)	\$4.75	\$4.25

### Issues with the Current Rate Structure

One of the ongoing issues at the two events every year is that of application of the family rate. Staff receive regular feedback from groups of adults, seniors and children who do not qualify for the family rate and who feel that it is unfair that they should be paying more than a group of adults and children who do qualify for it. Despite specific information on the event promotion material and onsite signage, many buy family rate tickets when they do not meet the criteria for the rate. Some only purchase one family ticket as they think it allows admission for a whole family.

Now that TM is selling tickets for the event, many people are buying online, by phone or at TM's ticket booths. This alternative method of ticket sales was well received by the public in 2003 and TM did a good job working on these complex events. We intend to continue using TM to sell a portion of the tickets for these events in future years, with the balance of the tickets being available for onsite, same day sales.

However, there were issues with the family rate that need to be addressed. For TM's online or phone sales, there is no ability to visually confirm that customers appear to be purchasing the correct tickets. TM has a large staff selling tickets at its booths and phone centre. While these staff have details of the Board's pricing categories, they are also selling tickets for many other unrelated events and it is not possible to ensure they are always giving customers the correct information.

### Proposed Rate Structure and ticket prices

#### **Proposed rates for 2004 are:**

	<u>Ghost Train</u>	<u>Bright Nights</u>
<b>Adult</b>	<b>\$8.00</b>	<b>\$7.00</b>
<b>Discount</b>	<b>\$4.50</b>	<b>\$4.00</b>

There would be only two rates - adult and discount. Adult rate would apply to everyone aged 19 - 64. Discount rate would apply to children, youth and seniors, i.e. everyone aged 2 - 18, and 65 and over. For both events, the proposed discount rate in 2004 is approximately 56% of the adult rate. Children under 2 would continue to be free of charge. Where relevant, the Leisure Access rate (50%

off the adult rate or, for a child, off the discount rate) and the group rate (20% discount for groups of 10 or more) would continue to apply for tickets purchased on site. The proposed changes to the pricing structure would make it simpler for the public to understand, fairer for the various combinations of family and friends who come to the events and easier for both Park Board staff and TM staff to accurately apply.

With these new rates, everyone would pay less than they would with the currently approved 2004 rates, except for adults who previously qualified for the family rate and would now be paying the adult rate. However, their children would pay the discount rate, which is lower than the current child rate. If attendance at these events remains the same as in 2003, these proposed new rates should result in total net admission revenues in 2004 which are only slightly higher than the revenues would be with the currently approved rates.

Traditionally, Bright Nights has been priced lower than the Ghost Train to encourage visitors to also give a donation onsite to the Burn Fund. The Burn Fund, which receives 13% of the net ticket sales revenues from Bright Nights, is in favour of this proposed change to the rate structure.

Prices for these events in future years would be set annually as part of the Board's Fees & Charges. If other events of similar nature are added at the Miniature Railway in future, this new fee structure would also apply to them. There is no proposal to change the fee structure for regular admission at other times of the year. The current family rate admission to the Train or Farmyard in the spring and summer is \$2.50 per family member and would remain at that price.

#### Pricing at Other Vancouver Attractions

The Ghost Train & Bright Nights events are quite different than the regular Miniature Railway & Children's Farmyard, and other Park Board facilities. These events are a combination of art, theatre and attraction rides, drawing large crowds, at night time, over a short period each year. It is reasonable to consider having a pricing structure for them which could be different than the standard Park Board one, and comparable to that of other local private or not for profit attractions. A review of pricing at other attractions (including the Aquarium, Science World and Storyeum) shows that they typically have no more than three different prices and the discounted rates for children, youth and seniors are all at least 57% of the adult rate, often significantly higher.

#### **SUMMARY**

The **Finance Committee** are recommending that the Board approve the proposed ticket prices and price structure for the Miniature Railway special events.

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