

Move LA's Advice on Student Transit Pass Programs

1. To really boost ridership, the program needs to be universal and include *all* students in the effort, both full- and part time. It should be really easy for students to pay any fees, by making it part of the same process as registration, for example, and not requiring students to stand in separate lines at other windows.
2. Programs like Metro's current student transit pass program, which provides a discount pass for \$43 dollars/month (a 57% discount over the regular \$100/month cost), and which also requires documentation of fulltime student status (students can come to Metro or apply online) may appeal to students who are already regular riders but will not significantly expand student ridership. And while it may help to reduce the cost and do a better job of marketing the program, it will not rely in a dramatic boost to ridership.
3. A number of transit operators, big and small, have implemented universal student transit pass programs that resulted in *very significant ridership increases*. These are cases in which all students pay a registration fee, and all students get a pass. Some use transit often; some moderately; some very little. *But overall ridership soars*.
4. Studies a decade old say universal programs cost on average a bit over \$30 per student per year. Now, the Santa Monica College program with the Big Blue Bus costs about \$45 per student per year.
5. Metro should meet with operators and colleges that have implemented programs with dramatically increased ridership to identify best practices. These include:
 - Rio Hondo College, Mount San Antonio College and Foothill Transit
 - Santa Monica College and the Big Blue Bus
 - Cal State Long Beach and Long Beach Transit
6. The initial objective should be full cost recovery for Metro. Once it is determined what that looks like this should be discussed with other operators.
 - Keep in mind that increasing ridership will mean more money from the State of California, because ridership is part of the formula that is used to distribute funding from the GHG Reduction Fund and State Transit Assistance program.
7. What brings the cost per student down and at the same time significantly increases ridership? If all students pay for a pass through their registration fees the number of payees grows much more significantly and so does the number of potential riders.
8. A good target would be to cover half the cost of the universal passes with student registration fees. These fees will likely be \$10 to \$20 per semester on average.
9. The California Education Code says enhanced registration fees can be levied in two ways:
 - By an Associated Students (student government) vote to approve, in which case any individual student can opt-out of the fee increase—though in practice very few students do.
 - By a full student-wide vote, in which case there is no opt-out permitted.
10. Subsidies will be important to keeping student registration fees low. But Metro should expect to not subsidize their program except with funds intended for this purpose, such as GHG Reduction Funds,

grants from the Mobile Source Reduction and Review Committee (MSRC), or funding from the half-cent sales tax measure that Metro may put on the ballot in November.

11. Students should be able to use their student IDs as the transit pass, or better yet, they should use specially programmed TAP cards that can also record data useful for understanding how much students use the transit system and when and where. This will help clarify real costs for future planning.