



WHY CALIFORNIA SHOULD SUPPORT A STATEWIDE STUDENT TRANSIT PASS PROGRAM (AB 17, HOLDEN)

.... Student transit pass programs have been shown to significantly increase student transit ridership and to reduce the cost of an education and the carbon footprint: A study of student transit pass programs at 35 colleges and universities across the U.S. by renown UCLA researcher Donald Shoup and colleagues in 2001 found ridership increased by as much as 70%-200% in the first year, and 2%-10% in subsequent years, and that the cost of getting an education was reduced by \$2,000 a year per student (which equates to \$2,677 dollars in 2016 due to increases in the cost of living) because transportation expenses were lower.

.... A 2016 study of a student transit pass program in the Minneapolis school district found that not only did student ridership increase but so did overall transit ridership—because service added to accommodate students resulted in better overall service—and the cost was paid for with revenue from the sale of the student passes. Students who used the passes were also more likely to say they would continue to ride transit upon graduation than students who hadn't used the program. And this study found that the school district's carbon footprint was reduced: estimated annual emissions were 93% lower for nitrogen oxide, 89% for particulate matter, and 59% for CO₂.

.... These two studies suggest that student transit passes could help the State of California reach its ambitious GHG reduction goals and equity goals, meantime providing benefits for students, schools, transit agencies, and the general public:

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

College is hard.

Getting there shouldn't make it harder.

A statewide program would:

- Improve student access to education and opportunity
- Lower the cost of an education because students wouldn't need to own, maintain and park a car
- Make it easier for students from disadvantaged communities—who often need to work at least part-time to pay for their education—to get to jobs as well as school.

BENEFITS FOR SCHOOLS

Schools are big generators of traffic.

A statewide program would:

- Reduce the student drive-alone mode share
- Reduce the need for schools to build expensive parking structures on campus when the land and money could be used for educational purposes instead
- Reduce parking demand at schools by 400 to 1,000 spaces per campus, according to the UCLA study
- It could be partially funded by small increases in student registration fees; the UCLA study found that 54% to 94% of students approved referenda to increase student fees for passes (the average cost = \$30/year).

BENEFITS FOR TRANSIT AGENCIES

The UCLA study also found that universal student transit pass programs:

- Increase total transit ridership
- Fill empty seats on bus and rail lines
- Result in improved transit service because of higher demand
- Reduce operating subsidies.

BENEFITS FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Everyone benefits because:

- Of reduced traffic and car ownership
- Of reduced parking demand
- Of reduced air pollution and GHG emissions
- Students are prompted to make decisions about where to live and work based on the proximity of transit, perhaps creating a lifelong habit of transit use—with the result that California becomes more sustainable.
- An educated workforce will keep California economically competitive.

SUCCESSFUL CALIFORNIA PROGRAMS

Transit ridership is down in California and across the U.S. for reasons that include lower gas prices and transit budget cuts that result in poor service, but transit agencies that foster student ridership through these programs are seeing ridership increases or much smaller declines.

- New programs at Rio Hondo Community College and Pasadena City College in LA County caused ridership to jump from 7% in 2009 to 46% in 2014 at Rio Hondo, and from 11% in 2009 to 47% in 2014 at Pasadena City College.
- As a result of the "Any Line, Any Time" program at Santa Monica College more than 40% of students, faculty and staff arrive on campus by bus.
- UC Berkeley's Class Pass program resulted in student transit mode share increasing from 6% in 1997 to 27% in 2008, while the student drive-alone share fell from 16% to 7%.
- Student transit pass programs at the University of California at Davis and at Cal State University Sacramento increased annual student transit ridership by 79% and 71% respectively.

IN CONCLUSION

Transit is a key component of a multi-modal transportation system. Transit makes the highway system work more efficiently, which helps the economy work more effectively, which benefits all Californians. And by helping students get to school and stay in school, we are nurturing a well-educated workforce, which will help keep California competitive.