



Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
 One Gateway Plaza
 Los Angeles, California 90012-2952

January 2020

RE: LOS ANGELES UNIFIED'S REQUEST FOR FREE STUDENT TRANSIT PASSES

Dear LA Metro Board of Directors,

The signatories of this letter request the LA Metro (MTA) provide free transit for students attending the Los Angeles Unified School District. This is necessary to provide equity for all students, in particular those most in need. As the second largest school district in the country that resides within the largest metropolitan area in our nation, we believe MTA could set a leadership standard for other urban areas across the country.

Los Angeles Unified educates more than 600,000 students, with over 80 percent living in poverty. These circumstances place limitations on disadvantaged youth and their families who often have to make decisions between buying a transit ticket and purchasing food or other necessities. Over 41,000 students safely ride Los Angeles Unified school buses to and from school each day. However, given the size and complexity of our school district, which serves communities over 700 square miles, many of our students ride MTA buses to schools.

Eliminating obstacles for students to get to and from school, internships, and other activities should be a goal for our community. A 2015 study by Harvard University found access to transportation is the single biggest factor in the odds of escaping poverty and avoiding homelessness. While LA Metro offers reduced fares for students, many families still struggle with the cost of transportation.

A 2013 study by the LA County Department of Public Health found that securing free transit passes for all students from preschool to college could lead to families saving money in fewer fines for fare evasion, families would save money on student transit passes and, most importantly, students would receive more instructional time.

Jurisdictions across the country including Washington D.C., New York City and Alameda County successfully implement free transit passes programs for students in public schools. Most recently, Sacramento began a pilot to provide students in grades TK through 12 universal access to ride any of their regional fixed-route buses or light rail at any time free of charge. The Sacramento Regional Transit has partnered with the City of Sacramento and the City Council is paying the cost of passes.

We hope you will join us in our efforts to provide every child with a great education. We need to eliminate the barrier which falls disproportionately on our highest needs families and their students. For questions, please contact Martha Alvarez at martha.alvarez1@lausd.net.

Sincerely,

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