



## Board Report

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### REGULAR BOARD MEETING MAY 26, 2016

**SUBJECT: COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT TRANSIT PASS PILOT PROGRAM - MOTION 49.1**

**ACTION: APPROVE ADOPTION OF UNIVERSAL COLLEGE STUDENT TRANSIT PASS (U-PASS) PILOT PROGRAM**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Adopt the Universal College Student Transit Pass (U-Pass) Pilot Program.

#### **ISSUE**

As part of an ongoing effort to pursue strategies to increase student transit ridership, motion 49.1 requested an assessment of the feasibility of piloting a Universal Community College Student Transit Pass Program.

Currently, there are more than 1.4 million public college students in Los Angeles County, and only 14,000 (1%) are actively participating in Metro's reduced fare college pass programs, the College/Vocational (C/V) Pass and Institutional Transit Access Pass (I-TAP) programs. In addition, the C/V and I-TAP programs are only offered to full-time students who represent only 30% of public students in Los Angeles County, while the remaining 70% of students are considered part-time and are not eligible for these programs. Lastly, Metro's systemwide average fare per boarding (FPB) is \$0.75 while the I-TAP group rate pricing is only generating \$.29 per boarding. As a result, the I-TAP group rate pricing model is no longer revenue neutral to Metro, and combined, these programs are not reaching a large enough percentage of the student population.

Riding transit is an important life skill that should be learned at a young age. Many adults who have not previously ridden transit are intimidated by learning new routes and afraid of getting lost on an unfamiliar system. Broadening the use of transit at the college level will teach this skill in conjunction with other learning and create riders for life because users will understand the system.

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## **DISCUSSION**

Full-time undergraduate and graduate students in Los Angeles County are eligible for a reduced fare College/Vocational 30-day pass that is offered at a \$43 per month, a 57% discount from the regular Metro 30-day pass which is \$100 per month. In order to be eligible for the C/V pass, undergraduate students must be enrolled in a minimum of 12 units or 12 hours of in-classroom study per week for a minimum of 3 consecutive months. Graduate students must be enrolled in a minimum of 8 units of in-classroom study per week for a minimum of 3 consecutive months. Students can purchase the reduced fare TAP card directly from Metro and load it at Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs), customer centers, vendor outlets, or online.

In 2003 the Board adopted the I-TAP program. This program was designed to increase student ridership, while keeping the program revenue neutral for Metro. The I-TAP program allows schools to purchase passes directly from Metro on a semester or quarterly basis. Currently, there are only four (4) colleges participating in the I-TAP program:

- UCLA and USC are enrolled in the retail pricing model. The retail pricing model is the regular price of \$43/month or \$9.92/week multiplied by the number of weeks in a semester. (The weekly rate has been corrected to \$10.03 moving forward to reflect the 30-day rate divided by 30 multiplied by seven days.)
- Pasadena City College and Rio Hondo College are enrolled in the group rate pricing model. The group rate pricing model is based on the total number of full-time students multiplied by the group rate multiplied by the number of weeks in a semester.

Ridership data indicates that the I-TAP group pricing model resulted in a substantial increase in transit ridership over a five (5) year period (2010 - 2014):

- PCC increased ridership from 11% to 41% of their full-students
- Rio Hondo increased ridership from 7% to 44% of their full-time students

This resulted in an average ridership increase of 7% per year. Additional Metro bus services were added to support this growth in ridership. However, the current I-TAP Program at PCC and Rio Hondo is no longer revenue neutral for Metro. The average fare collected for these programs is \$0.29 per boarding versus the system average of \$0.75. Currently, there are approximately 7,000 active I-TAP users and 16,400 active College/Vocational TAP cards, but on average only 6,800 C/V Monthly Passes are being loaded.

In addition, Metro has not been utilizing existing and new technologies efficiently to improve these programs. Currently, the I-TAP and C/V paper applications are processed and uploaded manually. C/V applications became available online in September 2015 and represent approximately 5% of the total applications received since then. In March 2016, staff added a web link to the online application from the College Programs page on Metro.net and online applications rose to 9%. Metro has been processing an average of 2,100 paper applications per month and also handling the verification of each individual student's units, which has caused a wait time of 4-6 weeks for students to receive their C/V TAP cards from the time of application. However, many students are registering for their classes online and colleges have the ability to electronically verify their enrollment. Online

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registration could be modified to allow students to add transit participation along with their enrollment. New TAP chip technology also exists which would allow a sticker with an embedded computer chip and an RFID antenna to be applied directly to the student ID cards, replacing the need for photo ID C/V TAP Cards. Just like existing TAP cards, these chips have the ability to be loaded remotely, reducing the need for a student to physically go an office to reload or reactivate their cards once they have registered.

### U-Pass Task Force Results

In November 2015, Metro Commute Services established two (2) U-Pass Task Force teams that included:

#### Internal Task Force (Metro):

- Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
- TAP Operation
- Office of Extraordinary Innovation

#### External Task Force:

- Los Angeles County colleges and universities including:
  - California Institute of Technology (CalTech)
  - California State University Dominguez Hills
  - California State University Long Beach (CSULB)
  - California State University Los Angeles (CSULA)
  - California State University Northridge (CSUN)
  - Cerritos Community College
  - Citrus College
  - LA Community College District (LACCD)
  - LAUSD Adult Vocational Programs (LAUSD)
  - Mount San Antonio College (Mt. SAC)
  - Pasadena City College (PCC)
  - Rio Hondo Community College
  - University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA)
  - University of Southern California (USC)
- Local municipal transit providers and organizations including:
  - Foothill Transit
  - Long Beach Transit
  - Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT)
  - Move L.A.

In addition, an online survey was distributed to collect feedback from the colleges. The survey was anonymous to allow for the highest level of honest feedback and addressed issues such as satisfaction with existing Metro transit service, and cost and funding of student transit programs. Primary findings from the survey included:

- College transit programs are currently funded through pass sales, student fees, revenue from

- parking fines and fees, and associated student associations
- 73% are very satisfied or satisfied with the transit service at their campus
- 82% say not having enough parking is an issue on their campus
- 64% do not believe they have adequate funding for the program
- 30% feel that not including part-time students is limiting participation, and
- 60% are willing to co-market a Universal Pass program on their campus with Metro support

As a result of the feedback from the, Internal and External Task Force teams and survey responses, the overall recommendations are as follows:

- Make passes more affordable for students
- Make passes more accessible for part-time students
- Make program easy to understand and administer

### U-Pass Pilot Program

Upon Board approval, Metro Commute Services will implement a two-year U-Pass pilot program beginning in Fall 2016. U-Pass Pilot Program will:

1. Target at least 10 new schools to participate in the program.
2. Reduce the minimum units required under the pilot to 8 units or more per quarter/semester to allow more part-time students to participate in pilot program.
3. Transition to a pay per boarding model:
  - a. Charge an estimated boarding fee of \$0.75 per boarding, which is the cash-boarding equivalent of the 30-day College/Vocational pass. Payment must be made by the school at the beginning of the term and the rate will be reassessed annually as part of the budget process.
  - b. For the introductory term, estimated boardings will be based on existing I-TAP or C/V ridership data. If the school does not have existing data, the initial student participation will be estimated at 10% of eligible students. Any overage paid by the school based on the estimated boardings for the introductory term will be credited toward the payment for Term 2.
  - c. For the second term and subsequent terms, estimated boardings will be adjusted to reflect the actual boardings from the previous term based on TAP data.
  - d. At the end of the second term and each subsequent term, actual boardings will be reconciled against the initial fee payment and a charge or credit will be issued to the school based on the difference, capped at \$43 per month (\$10.03 per week) per participant.
  - e. Schools may elect to cover the cost of the program through student fees, other funding, or by charging the students for participation. Fees collected from students may not exceed \$43/month or \$10.03/week, and the total amount collected may not exceed the total amount due to Metro.
  - f. Schools are encouraged to build U-Pass participation into their existing class registration process to allow for a seamless integration and the ability to charge the appropriate student fees, if any.

4. Schools will be responsible for collecting demographic data to assist in completion of the required Title VI analysis, for verifying enrollment eligibility for each quarter/semester, and for distributing or reactivating TAP stickers/cards for eligible students. Schools are encouraged to collect as much information as possible as part of online registration, which will also allow cards to be activated and loaded electronically by Metro.
5. Schools will report all issued TAP card/sticker numbers to Metro for tracking purposes and to facilitate replacements.
6. Schools are encouraged to partner with Metro for in-kind marketing materials and promotion of the U-Pass Program.
7. Establish goal of increasing student participation by 10% over existing C/V and I-TAP levels during the two year pilot program and use the data from the pilot program as a foundation for establishing an ongoing U-Pass program, which will ultimately replace both the I-TAP and the C/V programs. Performance measures to be assessed include:
  - a. Compare total U-Pass revenue and boardings to current I-TAP and C/V revenue and boardings and assess changes in fare revenues and ridership among the college/vocational student population
  - b. Assess changes in ridership on key lines near pilot schools
  - c. Compare the percentage of students who were issued passes on a term-by-term basis to assess changes in utilization of the U-Pass

### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

This program does not affect the incidence of injuries or healthful conditions for patrons or employees. Therefore, approval of this request will have no impact on safety.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

As a pilot, this program will be managed within existing resources. Therefore, there will be no financial impact at this time.

#### **Impact to Budget**

As a pilot, this program will be managed within existing resources. Therefore, there will be no impact to budget at this time.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

#### **Reduction of Units**

Reducing the unit requirements for the U-Pass program was considered. With the existing 12-unit requirement for undergraduate students, there are approximately 14,000 active college transit program participants. This represents 3% of the total eligible public school students who meet the

requirement.

Decreasing the unit requirement for the U-Pass pilot program to 9 units (semester) or 8 units (quarter) would increase the potential pool of eligible participants by 17%, or approximately 250,000 public students. Based on the current 3% participation, this could result in about 7,500 new college/vocational riders. Decreasing the unit requirement for the U-Pass pilot program to 6 units would increase the potential pool of eligible participants by 35%, or approximately 536,000 public students. Based on the current 3% participation, this could result in about 16,000 new college/vocational riders.

For both cases, increasing the potential pool of eligible participants will likely result in revenue loss for Metro, with the possibility of recouping the loss through a potential increase in new riders. However, the potential revenue impact will depend on how many of the new college/vocational riders were full fare transit riders (negative impact to revenue) versus how many are new transit riders (positive impact to revenue).

Because the financial impact of the unit reduction will not be known until the overall fare revenue changes for the pilot program and the agency can be assessed, staff recommends starting the pilot program with an 8-unit minimum requirement with a commitment to review the revenue impact after six months and consider lowering the requirement to 6 units based on the assessment. The 12-unit requirement for current monthly C/V passes will remain intact.

The College/Vocational Pass requires graduate students to be enrolled in 8 or more units. Under the U-Pass Pilot Program, staff is recommending reducing the units required for graduate students from 8 units to 6 units. The 8-unit requirement for graduate students utilizing monthly C/V passes will remain intact.

#### Continuation of I-TAP and C/V Programs

Due to the lack of widespread usage, difficulty of administration, and the loss of revenue, staff does not recommend continuing the I-TAP program during the U-Pass Pilot Program. All current I-TAP schools will be converted to U-Pass. However, Metro will continue to offer the regular monthly College/Vocational Pass for students at schools not participating in the pilot program.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

Upon approval of this pilot program, Metro will:

1. Communicate details of U-Pass Pilot Program with all 77 schools in L.A. County and target 10 or more schools to participate in the program.
2. During initial registration period, schools will collect required Title VI data from participating students. Title VI evaluation will be conducted and a findings report will be brought back to the Board of Directors for approval prior to the end of the sixth month of the pilot program.
3. During the pilot program, Metro will continue to seek additional funding through Greenhouse

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Gas Reduction Fund/Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) revenue Cap and Trade, the South Coast Air Quality Management District's Mobile Source Air Pollution Reduction Review Committee (MSRC), or other sources to further reduce the cost of the program to the schools and will work with schools to identify other sources of funding such as parking fees and/or fines, student association fees, and/or activity fees and/or referendums and as a means of subsidizing the program.

4. During the pilot program, Metro will continue to partner with schools to address transit service and service alignment issues.

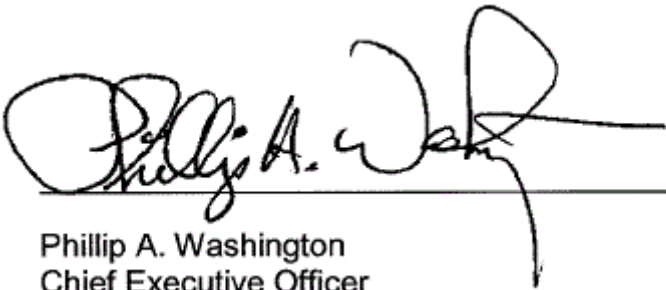
### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Motion 49.1 Community College Student Transit Pass Pilot Program

Attachment B - Report 49 on Community College Student Transit Pass Pilot Program in response to Motion 49.1

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