

Low Income Fare is Easy (LIFE) Program

The Low Income Fare is Easy (LIFE) Program is a regional program developed to assist low income LA County residents with free or subsidized transit access. Through a countywide partnership of 13 Transit Operators, FAME Assistance Corporation (FAME) and the International Institute of Los Angeles (IILA), and over 500 non-profit Community Based Organizations (CBOs), the recently added 5 Metro Customer Centers and governmental agencies (see Exhibit 1 for network locations). The LIFE program provides a broad range of transportation support to low income families, the unhoused, undocumented, victims of domestic violence, individuals seeking return to work, those unable to use traditional transit options, and others in need of immediate or alternative transportation options.

Launched with approximately 20K participants in July 2019 and has grown to now over 92K, representing 60% of Metro's low income riders (see table below).




	Pre-COVID	Current
Total Metro Riders	300K	200K
70% Low-Income	210K	140K
Registered LIFE riders (Regional)	80K	92K
Registered LIFE riders (Metro)	72K	81K
% of LIFE Riders	35%	60%

Per a recent study by the Transportation Research Board, the LIFE program is the most expansive in the nation in terms of income eligibility. As the program moved beyond initial implementation, with feedback from agencies and riders, and experience gained during the pandemic, staff has recognized opportunities for improvements surrounding ease and accessibility of program registration, information, and use. Staff is committed to continuous improvements that support LIFE patrons and their access to vital transportation. The next page outlines the LIFE Improvements now underway.

Immediate Benefits: Metro 50% Promotional Pricing upon resuming fare collection

The Metro Board adopted a motion to provide relief for current frequent riders by initiating the sale of promotional passes at 50% the cost of full-price passes for 6-months. This promotional pricing reduces fare revenue projections by \$20-\$28 million from transit operation funding, resulting in fare revenues of \$73 million for FY22.

LIFE Program Improvements

BEFORE		AFTER	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAME and IILA - social service network of > 500 agencies throughout LA County (<i>CBOs, non-profits, homeless shelters, agencies serving homeless, undocumented, hospitals, and domestic violence agencies</i>) 	 <p><i>Easier Access</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metro Customer Service Centers now accepting LIFE applications (expanding reach to >300K riders) Improving websites (TAP/Metro/Muni) for easier access to LIFE information and sign-up More LIFE pre-scheduled sign-up events at major transit centers/stations Expanded marketing campaigns (specifically to language and literacy challenged riders) Emails to Reduced Fare riders to promote enrollment 	<p>8/31/2021</p> <p>9/30/2021 Ongoing</p> <p>October & Ongoing</p> <p>October & ongoing</p> <p>9/27/21 & Ongoing</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email, mail and drop-off applications Auto-renewal 	 <p><i>Easier Sign-up</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LIFE Online application pilot test LIFE Online application public launch Continue auto-renewal Extend eligibility (1-yr to 2-yr) Started effort on distribution of LIFE TAP cards through county EBT agencies 	<p>10/8/2021</p> <p>10/15/2021</p> <p>Immediate</p> <p>Immediate</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FREE 20-Trips (Regional) FREE 4-Trips (through case workers) Monthly pass \$76 Discount not enough for low-income riders Upfront cost for a monthly pass too high 	 <p><i>More Affordable</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LIFE discounts apply to Metro promo Monthly pass \$26 (Metro promo) FREE 20-Trips (Regional) <p style="text-align: center;"><u>AFTER Metro Promo*</u></p> <p>Sustainable & Affordable options for low-income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider changes to discount rates Explore modifications to Metro passes Utilize fare capping to address high upfront costs 	<p>11/1/2021 Resume fare collection</p> <p>6/1/2022</p>

*Metro Promo: Board adopted motion to provide relief for current frequent riders by initiating the sale of promotional passes at 50% the cost of full-price passes for 6-months.

Details of LIFE Program & Improvements

Program Benefits – Two types of benefits: immediate needs and recurring monthly benefits

Immediate Needs

For those individuals who do not have access to transportation to meet their basic medical, shelter/housing and job search needs, have been discharged from the hospital, released from incarceration, or a victim of domestic violence. The 4 regional trip disposable ticket was developed at the request of homeless service providers as the type of product that would best serve their clients’ needs, is not limited and distributed at the discretion of the case managers.

Recurring Monthly Benefits

On a monthly basis, LIFE patrons can choose, at no cost, 20 free trips on any participating transit operator, or a discount towards the purchase of a monthly, weekly, or EZ pass, of up to \$24 per month. Depending on the price of an operator’s pass, discounts range from 24% off and up to 100% off, or free, for operators such as Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) local service operations. The table below summarizes the LIFE products and Exhibit 3 provides the regional discounts by operator.

Products	Subsidy Amount	Cost to Patron
Transit Trips		
20 Regional rides	\$35	FREE
4 Regional rides	\$7	FREE
Discount on Monthly Passes		
Full Fare rider *	up to \$24	Varies (\$0 - \$76)
Sr/Disabled, K-12, College *	\$8 - \$13	Varies (\$0 - \$30)
Taxi Media		
Coupon	\$11	FREE
Voucher	up to \$100	FREE

* Cost to patron varies by operator.

2019 Launch of LIFE Program & Improvements

LIFE officially launched in July 2019, consolidated the two programs with:

- Movement onto TAP (elimination of paper coupons)
- Integration with the region’s Point of Sale device upgrade project – effectively doubling the available vendor network
- Introduction of a FREE 20 trip option
- Development of a disposable FREE 4 trip ticket that replaced transit tokens

Program Eligibility & Sign-Up

To enroll in the program, a patron may email, mail, or visit any of the 500 participating agencies throughout the county and 5 Metro Customer Centers, and present qualifying information including:

1. A valid regular or Reduced Fare TAP card
2. Any governmental issued ID, including other countries
3. Proof of Income (see Exhibit 2 for income eligibility), any of the following:

- Any government-issued card that provides cash, food or other subsidies to the recipient including EBT or Medi-Cal card
- Any government-issued award or letter that verifies recipient’s eligibility to receive cash, income, or subsidized benefits including:
 - Social Security Award
 - Unemployment letter
 - CalFresh eligibility letter
 - Free or reduced lunch letter
- Check stub or Tax return form
- Wages and tax statement form (i.e. 1099 or W-2)

State of California ID and the Medi-Cal card are the most widely used proof of ID and income by LIFE patrons.

Case managers can provide LIFE products that meet the needs of their clients that are unable to show any proof of identity or income. Distribution and frequency of LIFE products are at the discretion of the case managers, based on the needs of their clients.

Use of LIFE Products – FREE 20-Trip

Results indicated that while the monthly and weekly pass subsidies were popular, the free 20 trip product was loaded 39,695 times, resulting in over 541,388 free trips on Metro and participating operators. February 2020 marked the peak of the program, resulting in about 115,000 free trips and subsidies for over 24,000 monthly and weekly passes.

The free 20 trip product is proving to be a popular product and when combined with the two-hour transfer window on Metro more than 20 trips can be made by patrons. For example, in February 2020, total estimated trips utilizing the 20 trip product exceeded 200,000 free transit trips to LIFE patrons. Data also suggests that approximately 80% of those riders utilizing the 20 trip product did not have a need for additional product purchases. The table on the right illustrates demand and used of 20-Trip product.



LIFE Program Improvements: Ease of Enrollment, Improved Accessibility, and Better Benefits

Like most transit programs the LIFE program was significantly impacted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a steady growth of enrollment and utilization during the first 8 months, but enrollment slowed down with the pandemic, average pass purchases fell from 21,375 per month to 1,573. Trips taken on the 20 trip product fell from an average of 67,671 to 7,533. To address the safety concerns of both patrons and partner staff, the program initiated an auto reenrollment process, mail, and email registrations.

As the region begins emerging from the pandemic, we are seeking to focus on not only current and returning patrons, but also attracting new individuals and families to expand the program with a focus on Accessibility, Ease of Enrollment, potentially expanded Eligibility, and other opportunities to make the program more affordable.

Ease of Enrollment and Accessibility

Initial Implemented Improvements

- Application of LIFE discounts to Metro's 50% 6-mo promo (\$76 monthly pass NOW \$26)
- Expanding access through acceptance of LIFE applications at 5 Metro Customer Service Centers (Implemented Aug 31)
- Continue mail and email COVID implemented processes
- Improving websites (TAP/Metro/Muni, Reduced Fare and Bikeshare) to make it *easier* to get LIFE information and sign-up including crosslinking among programs

Upcoming Activities

- Extending eligibility from 1-yr to 2-yr to make it *easier* for riders
- Exploring distribution of LIFE TAP cards through county EBT agencies to make it *easier*
- Creating new online portal to make sign-up *easier* and more *accessible*
- Pre-scheduled LIFE sign-up events at major transit centers/stations to increase *accessibility*
- Expanded marketing campaigns to make it *easier* to get information and reach more low income riders, with expanded outreach specifically to language/literacy challenged riders
- Direct messages to Reduced Fare Customers of LIFE information to see if they qualify

Affordability of the Program

- Analyze the subsidy during the Board approved 50% off fares promotion
- Consider changes to the discount rate

Exhibit 1: Participating Agencies & Patron Registration

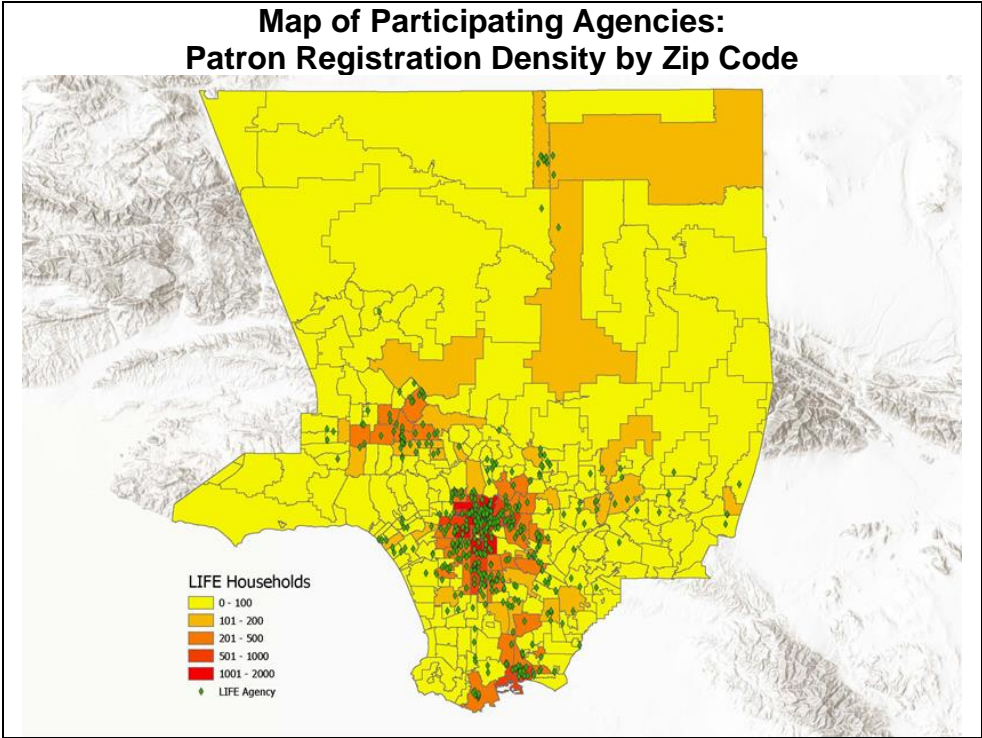


Exhibit 2: Income Qualifications

Income Qualifications 2021	
Household Size	Annual Income
1	\$41,400 or less
2	\$47,300 or less
3	\$53,200 or less
4	\$59,100 or less
5	\$63,850 or less
6	\$68,600 or less

Income levels are updated annually. Level of income qualification reflects US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Very Low Income levels defined as 50% of Median Household Income in the Los Angeles/Glendale HUD Metro area.

Exhibit 3: LIFE Regional Discounts

LIFE Program Subsidies	
Fare Type	LIFE Subsidy
Pass Option	
Regular 30-Day/Monthly Pass	\$24.00
Regular 7-Day/Weekly Pass (up to four/mo)	\$ 6.00
Senior/Disabled 30-Day Monthly Pass	\$ 8.00
College/Vocational 30-Day/Monthly Pass	\$13.00
Student K-12 30-Day/Monthly Pass	\$10.00
Regular EZ Transit Pass (base fare)	\$24.00
Senior/Disabled EZ Transit Pass (base fare)	\$ 8.00
Ride Option	
20-Regional Rides: Base Fare Only. Interagency transfers are additional cost	Free for LIFE Participants
Bike Share	
Bike Share 30-Day Pass	\$12.00
Bike Share 365-Day Pass (\$8.33 Per month)	\$100.00
Bike Share Passes can be purchased each month in addition to the options above.	
Agency Partner Distributed Options	
Taxi Coupons	\$11.00
Taxi Variable Rate Vouchers	Up to \$100
4 Regional Rides	Free for LIFE Participants

Percentage Discounts by Participating Operator - Monthly Pass		
Operator	Monthly Pass Price*	LIFE Discount (%)
LADOT - Local Dash Service	\$ 18	100%
Pasadena Transit	\$ 15	100%
Santa Clarita Transit	\$ 34	71%
Torrance Transit	\$ 35	69%
AVTA	\$ 50	48%
Santa Monica Big Blue Bus	\$ 50	48%
Foothill Transit	\$ 60	40%
Long Beach Transit	\$ 65	37%
LA Metro	\$ 100	24%
Operators Using EZ Pass Only		
Culver City Bus	\$ 110.00	22%
Gtrans	\$ 110.00	22%
Montebello Bus Lines	\$ 110.00	22%
Norwalk Transit	\$ 110.00	22%

* Represents Operators Monthly Base Pass Price

Discounts applied to Operator Promotional Discounts		
Foothill Transit - Summer Sale	\$ 30	80%
Long Beach Transit - March 2022 Sale	\$ 50	48%
LA Metro - 50% Pass reduction Promo.	\$ 50	48%