



Board Report

File #: 2019-0626, **File Type:** Motion / Motion Response

Agenda Number: 41.

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 19, 2019**

SUBJECT: EXPANDING METRO'S YOUTH ON THE MOVE PROGRAM

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. APPROVING a one-year pilot program to extend the expiration date of Youth on the Move (YOTM) passes for foster youth participating in the Independent Living Program (ILP) to their 23rd birthday;
- B. APPROVING a one-year pilot program to extend the lower age of the YOTM Program to 16-years of age at two (2) Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) offices in Los Angeles County; and
- C. INSTRUCTING staff to report back to Board within 12 months to determine whether or not these two pilot programs should be extended.

ISSUE

Young people in foster care and the probation system endure copious setbacks while they are system-involved and when they exit the system in their early twenties. For many of these young people, transportation can be a major barrier. The lack of financial support to purchase a Metro TAP card hinders their ability to navigate the county.

As part of an ongoing effort to pursue strategies to increase transit ridership and improve mobility for young people in foster care, Director Solis and others passed Motion 42 in April 2019 (See Attachment A), directing the CEO to report back on:

- A. Recommendations to expand eligibility of the Youth on the Move program, including considering expanding the eligible age range from 18 to 21 to 16 to 24 or beyond;
- B. Improved marketing strategies for Youth on the Move, in partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) and the Los Angeles County Probation

Department;

- C. Enhancements to the Youth on the Move application process to ensure it is seamless and low barrier, in partnership with DCFS and the Probation Department;
- D. Identification of other transportation needs for youth who relevant foster care or probation contact and recommendations on potential partnerships between Metro, DCFS, Probation, and other relevant stakeholders, to address those needs;
- E. Recommendations to ensure students receive support throughout their participation in Youth on the Move, especially during potential changes in their living situations, schools, or case workers; and
- F. Recommendations to reduce the cost of transit for K-12 and College/Vocational students in general.

DISCUSSION

In August 2011, the Metro Board approved a motion by former Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich to establish a one-year pilot program for foster youth transit mobility. The program gives current and former foster youth between the ages of 18-21 an Annual Transit Access Passes (A-TAP) or EZ Transit Annual Passes (EZ A-TAP) at no-cost to help them transition out of foster care into self-support through the Independent Living Program (ILP) managed by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

One year later, Metro officially launched the Youth on the Move (YOTM) 1-year pilot program, and in 2013, Youth on the Move (YOTM) became a mandated program by Metro Board and is now slated to continue indefinitely. The YOTM Program is managed internally by Metro Commute Services (MCS) under the Marketing Department.

The Youth Development Services Division is a joint division with DCFS and the Probation Department. Federal ILP eligibility applies to foster youth in out-of-home foster care one day after age 16 and for probation youth court ordered into placement (paid for with foster care funds) one day after age 16. There are approximately 2,000 Probation youth served by the Youth Development Division each year. They are eligible for almost everything offered to DCFS ILP youth, and they have always been included, in large numbers, in YOTM.

Foster and probation youth apply for the YOTM pass through the ILP program, and once approved, receive a photo ID TAP card that is good for unlimited use on Metro and other municipal transportation services, up to EZ Regional Zone 10, based on their individual needs. There are currently approximately 6,080 ILP-eligible youth under the jurisdiction of Los Angeles County DCFS, including 435 Probation placement youth. Since 2011, Metro has issued more than 8,300 YOTM TAP cards.

In FY '18, there were 1,278 new YOTM participants and 3,640 overall participants (73% of 5,000 total eligible participants). Of those, 1,430 (39% of YOTM Participants or 29% of total eligible participants) were actively riding transit, generating 399,687 total boardings at an average weekly boarding rate of 5.16. Although the retail cost of these passes would have been \$1,766,580.00 per year, the estimated cost of uncollected revenue for the boardings used was only \$330,103.86.

In FY '19, there were 1,259 new participants and 3,638 overall participants, and total boardings decreased to 263,035 (-34% year-over-year).

A. Recommendations to expand eligibility of the Youth on the Move program, including considering expanding the eligible age range from 18 to 21 to 16 to 24 or beyond;

During May, June, and July 2019, MCS staff held a series of meetings, including brainstorming sessions and research interviews, with Metro Board Staff, Metro Board Members, and DCFS staff and leadership. As a result of those sessions, MCS staff is recommending the following two pilot programs to test possible expansions of the YOTM Program.

Pilot Program 1: Expanding the upper age limit of YOTM

Currently, participants age out of the ILP program on their 21st birthday. They receive one extra year of free transit ridership, so their YOTM Passes expire on their 22nd birthday. Even though they are no longer in the ILP Program, the ILP staff continue to administer their transit passes until the passes expire.

It would be difficult to issue new passes to former participants whose YOTM cards have already expired. Therefore, staff is recommending a one-year pilot program to extend the expiration date for current active cardholders to be the participant's 23rd birthday, giving current participants one additional year of transit ridership and giving Metro and DCFS the opportunity to collect data and assess the effectiveness of the expansion.

There are 1,034 current YOTM participants whose 22nd birthday falls between October 2019 and September 2020. Of these cardholders, 418 (40%) are actively riding transit and accounted for 94,664 (36% of total) boardings under the program.

The average Fare per Boarding (FPB) for Metro service is \$0.78 per boarding. The average FPB for EZ Regional service is \$1.27, \$2.65 for EZ Zone 5, and \$4.69 for EZ Zone 10. Based on this data, it is estimated that a one-year pilot program could cost Metro \$122,087.54 in uncollected revenue.

Pilot Program 2: Expanding the lower age limit of YOTM at two DCFS Service Centers

Currently, youth cannot participate in the YOTM Program until they turn 18. Below that age limit, monthly passes are distributed to youth through their social workers. DCFS is willing to try a pilot program at two of their twenty service centers to see how expanding YOTM to 16 and 17-year-olds affects their participation. They have chosen the El Monte and Glendora Offices as their preferred pilot locations, because they believe those offices are well-equipped with staff to manage the pilot

programs. There are currently 183 potential participants at those offices. YOTM active participation rates are approximately 29% of eligible participant base, or an estimated 54 participants. Based on the average FPB costs listed above, it is estimated that a one-year pilot program could cost Metro \$29,095.27 in uncollected revenue (See Attachment B).

B. Improved marketing strategies for Youth on the Move, in partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) and the Los Angeles County Probation Department

The YOTM Program is marketed through 20 DCFS offices and online at: <http://ilponline.org>. As part of this effort, the Metro Marketing Department recently updated the printed marketing materials (See Attachment C) and Metro's Digital Marketing Team will work with DCFS to share additional online marketing materials. In addition, although 73% of ILP-eligible youth have YOTM cards, only 39% of YOTM cardholders are actively riding transit. In an effort to increase use of the YOTM cards, MCS will work with DCFS to create a YOTM Orientation and Transit Training video to teach them how to navigate transit in Los Angeles County. The video will also include information on applying for jobs with Metro.

C. Enhancements to the Youth on the Move application process to ensure it is seamless and low barrier, in partnership with DCFS and the Probation Department

Currently, DCFS staff meet with each of the foster youth during their seventeenth year of age and explain the programs that will be available to them when they turn 18, including the Independent Living Program and the Youth on the Move Program. Apart from expanding the marketing efforts listed above, DCFS feels that they are doing all they can to remove any barriers to participation through these one-on-one meetings with foster youth.

The program uses a paper application system, and youth don't typically submit their own applications. Because an adult needs to be involved in the process to track application submission and receipt of the cards to headquarters, and to pick up and distribute the cards to youth, their social workers or ILP Coordinators assist with the application process. MCS will establish an online application, similar to the U-Pass application, to help streamline the application process for youth and the adults assisting them.

D. Identification of other transportation needs for youth who relevant foster care or probation contact and recommendations on potential partnerships between Metro, DCFS, Probation, and other relevant stakeholders, to address those needs;

MCS and TAP are jointly addressing technology issues that will allow participants in all MCS pass programs to utilize the TAP App, Metro Bike Share, Micro Transit, and participate in other new mobility opportunities. In addition, MCS staff is working with DCFS and the non-profit group iFoster to see if the TAP App can be installed on all foster youth smart phones provided by iFoster when they become available.

E. Recommendations to ensure students receive support throughout their participation in

Youth on the Move, especially during potential changes in their living situations, schools, or case workers; and

This recommendation will be addressed by Item A above, primarily in the expansion to the lower age range.

F. Recommendations to reduce the cost of transit for K-12 and College/Vocational students in general

In May 2016, the Board adopted the Universal College Student Transit Pass (U-Pass) Pilot Program. This program was designed to partner with schools to utilize technology and improve accessibility to reduced fares to increase student ridership, while keeping costs low for students. Students of participating schools can purchase semester passes online or on campus. They receive a sticker with an embedded TAP chip, which turns their student ID into a TAP card that can be renewed each semester. Schools partner with Metro in co-branded marketing and collect payments from students to fund the program. At the end of the semester, the schools are only billed for actual rides taken by students at the reduced rate of \$0.75 per boarding and the maximum charge is capped at \$43 per student per month to match the existing College/Vocational fare.

Staff has created boilerplate agreements, approved by County Counsel, and standard administrative procedures to make the U-Pass Program easy to implement, while allowing schools to administer the program in the way that works best on their individual campuses and reducing the cost to students.

In the first 16 months of the U-Pass program, there were 3.9 million boardings in the U-Pass Program. The success of the program has been largely due to schools subsidizing passes, Metro's presence on participating campuses, co-branded marketing, and the ease of purchasing passes. This growth has been accomplished without adding any new staff members to the Commute Services unit, and MCS Management has been working with IT and TAP to automate the billing and reporting processes to alleviate staff burdens from continuing expansion.

As of August 2019, there are twenty (20) schools participating in the U-Pass Program, with four more expected to join for Fall Semester 2019. The average cost of U-Pass for participating students is \$103.50 per semester, which is equivalent to \$19.29 per month, a 65% reduction from the regular 30-day College/Vocational rate of \$43. In addition, this rate includes all Metro Rail and bus services (including Express Zones) and service from 9 additional transit agencies: Big Blue Bus, Culver CityBus, DASH, GTrans, Long Beach Transit, Montebello Bus, Norwalk Transit, Pasadena Transit, and Torrance Transit. While reducing the cost to students, the U-Pass Program has also increased ridership, showing a 21% increase in participants from FY '18 to FY '19 from 20,943 to 25,384 students. Additionally, California State University Los Angeles (CSULA) showed a 265% increase in U-Pass boardings at their transitway station from 107,340 boardings in FY '17 to 392,339 boardings in FY '19.

Metro launched its first K-12 U-Pass Pilot Program on August 20, 2019, in partnership with Move LA and LA Promise Fund. Move LA was awarded a grant to cover the cost of 400 K-12 U-Passes for the 2019-2020 Academic Year, and they have chosen the Junior Class at Manual Arts High School (MAHS) to receive these passes. The program will be administered on campus at MAHS by LA

Promise Fund, under an agreement with Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), at their MAHS College Center. Students and their parents must complete a Metro K-12 Reduced Fare Application and a Supplemental U-Pass Application to receive their U-Pass stickers. Paper and online versions of the application form are available in English and Spanish.

Metro is also working with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and LAUSD on the "DASH to Class" program, which provides free rides on LADOT DASH Buses with a Metro K-12 or College-Vocational Reduced Fare. Metro assisted with designing and producing the marketing materials for this program, which also inform students that they are eligible for reduced fare on Metro and other regional transit agencies with their reduced fare cards.

Lastly, Metro has implemented the GradPass Program, a reduced fare transitional pass available at \$43 per month to college U-Pass participants for 12-months after graduation. Previously, these students would have been required to pay full fare once they were no longer enrolled. The goal of the GradPass Program is to connect recent college graduates with employers that also offer transportation benefits during their job search.

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

The estimated cost of expanding YOTM to include 22-year-olds for a one-year pilot program is \$122,087.54 in uncollected fare revenue. The estimated cost of expanding YOTM to include 16 and 17-year-olds for a one-year pilot program at two DCFS Centers is \$29,095.27 in uncollected fare revenue.

Impact to Budget

The funding source for the MCS programs is Enterprise Fund operating revenues including sales tax and fares. The source of funds for this action, operating revenues, is eligible to fund bus and rail operating and capital expenditures.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

1. Continue current YOTM program with no changes.

NEXT STEPS

1. Send written notices to participants set to age out of the YOTM Program letting them know their passes will be available for one additional year;
2. Work with the El Monte and Glendora DCFS Offices to establish procedures and enroll their 16 and 17-year-old participants into YOTM;
3. Work with DCFS to create a new online application process and orientation video;

4. Continue to market the program and changes via digital media; and
5. Report back to Board in 12-months on success of pilot programs.

ATTACHMENTS

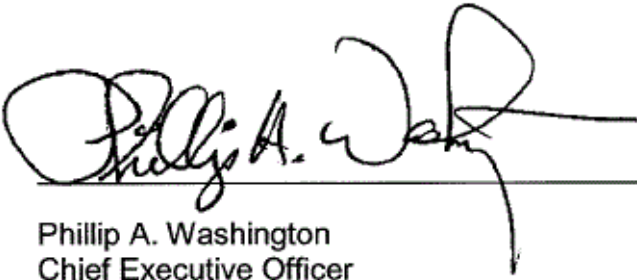
Attachment A - File #:2019-0265, Board Report on Expanding Youth on the Move Program, Motion 42, April 2019

Attachment B - FY '19 YOTM Data and Estimated Data for Pilot

Attachment C - YOTM Flyer Updated May 2019

Prepared by: Devon Deming, Dir. of Metro Commute Services, (213) 922-7957
Jocelyn Feliciano, Communications Manager, (213) 922-3895
Glen Becerra, DEO Communications, (213) 922-5661

Reviewed by: Yvette Rapose, Chief Communications Officer, (213) 418-3154



Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer