

**Board Report**

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**REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
JANUARY 23, 2020****Motion by:****DIRECTORS SOLIS, GARCETTI, BONIN, DUPONT-WALKER, BUTTS AND HAHN****Free Transit for Los Angeles County Students**

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is the second largest school district in the country, educating more than 600,000 students in the largest metropolitan area of the country. Over 80% of LAUSD students live below the poverty line. These trends are consistent across the region; among households across Los Angeles County (County), 56% spend more than 30% of their income on housing, which is the threshold at which residents are at risk of becoming homeless. These circumstances place limitations on youth and families living in one of the country's most expensive areas in regard to cost of living. While Metro offers reduced fares for students and low-income families, many families still struggle to balance living and transportation costs. The existing student pass program has multiple barriers to entry and a high administrative burden that could be avoided through a universal program. In April 2015, a Harvard University study found that access to transportation is the single greatest factor in the odds of escaping poverty and avoiding homelessness. The availability of reliable and low-cost or free transit is a critical component of housing affordability in the County.

Efforts across the state, including initiatives led by Metro, have been made recently to address the transit needs of student populations. The Los Angeles Department of Transportation launched the DASH to Class program in August 2019, which offers free rides on DASH buses for K-12, college, and vocational students in the City of Los Angeles. Shortly after, in September 2019, Metro partnered with LAUSD, South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z) and Move LA to give free, unlimited Metro passes to juniors at Manual Arts Senior High School, under the Just Transit pilot program with funding from the Schmidt Family Foundation. Also, in October 2019, the Sacramento Regional Transit District and City of Sacramento partnered with other cities and school districts to offer free fares for K-12 students for bus and light rail vehicles through the RydeFreeRT program. On January 6, 2020, Assembly Bill 1350 (Gonzalez) was amended with requirements for transit agencies to offer free transit passes to youth under 18 years in order to receive funding from various state programs including the State Transit Assistance program and the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program. Providing free Metro transit services for LAUSD K-12 students could have widespread effects including increases in school attendance, improved mobility and health, and less traffic

congestion.

**SUBJECT: FREE TRANSIT FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY STUDENTS**

**RECOMMENDATION**

APPROVE Motion by Directors Solis, Garcetti, Bonin, Dupont-Walker, Butts and Hahn that the Board direct the CEO in collaboration with LAUSD and other school districts, local municipalities, the State and other stakeholders, to return to the Board in April 2020 with a report that includes:

1. Review of the performance of existing free transit programs for K-12 students, including the City of Los Angeles' DASH to Class program, Metro's Just Transit pilot with LAUSD and other school districts, and the City of Sacramento's RydeFreeRT program;
2. Cost estimates for the provision of free Metro transit services for LAUSD and other school district students and potential funding mechanisms to offset those costs with considerations for phasing based on Metro's Equity Platform; Cost estimates should include information on fare subsidies and costs to administer the program;
3. Forecasts of impacts to Metro farebox revenues as a result of free Metro transit services based on existing K-12 student pass utilization and other data;
4. A survey of various schools, in collaboration with LAUSD and other school districts, to determine transit dependency and interest of students switching to transit as a result of potential free fares;
5. Mapping of various school district boundaries in the County in relation to existing and planned transit services utilizing Metro's Equity Platform to identify high-need communities;
6. Analysis of effects on ridership, inclusive of impacts to operations on transit lines that may experience over-crowding during peak hours and potential impacts to school bus ridership;
7. Outreach to municipal operators that have transit service supported by Metro formula funds connecting to K-12 schools;
8. Recommended actions to minimize or eliminate barriers for Los Angeles County households to take advantage of potential free transit for students, including, but not limited to, partnering with LAUSD and other school districts for administrative support;
9. Return to the Board in June 2020 with a separate report, covering directives 1 through 8 of motion 46, on a partnership with Community College Districts within Metro's service area to provide no-cost transit programs for campuses that have self-imposed supplemental student fees dedicated towards the cost of transportation, including but not limited to the LA Community College District (LACCD) and LACCD's College Promise program.