



Board Report

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Agenda Number: 48.

REVISED
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
JULY 25, 2024

Motion by:

DIRECTORS MITCHELL, BASS, DUTRA, SANDOVAL, SOLIS, AND DUPONT-WALKER

Enhancing the Effectiveness of the LIFE Program

Related to Item 45: Motion 22 Response: Bridge to Fareless Transit

The Low-Income Fare is Easy (LIFE) Program has substantially grown since Metro launched the program in 2019. Over the years, staff has implemented various efforts to streamline enrollment, expand partnerships, and enhance LIFE Program benefits. In 2021, the Board directed staff to double enrollment and since then, the LIFE program has tripled its enrollment to over 335,000 participants. While a substantial achievement for the program, the program needs to be evaluated not only by level of enrollment, but also utilization. Staff report that the current utilization rate among current enrollees is 16 percent. In other words, out of 335,000 participants, approximately 53,600 are actively using their LIFE benefits today. Staff have computed several statistics that begin to identify potential programmatic impacts to utilization - for example, about 13 percent of LIFE participants drop off after their free 90-day pass expires, and average rides during the free 90-day pass compared to the free 20 monthly regional trips drop by approximately 30 percent, from about 19 to 13 rides per month. Metro needs to conduct further analysis of the program's data and participant experience to identify effective strategies for increasing active users among current enrollees.

While the agency continues to seek funding to launch a Phase 2 pilot, a smaller scale pilot is underway with the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) grant in South Los Angeles. Among the projects in this five-year grant is the Metro Free Monthly Pass Program. The program will provide 1,400 six-month passes every six months of unlimited free rides for LIFE-qualifying adults in the project area. A similar program with TCC funds was also awarded in the City of Pomona. Metro can start now to understand the potential impact of a fully fareless system for low-income riders by leveraging the program's data collection and evaluation to project a more accurate assumption of operational costs, socio-economic benefits, and impact to the region.

SUBJECT: ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LIFE PROGRAM MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Mitchell, Bass, Dutra, Sandoval, Solis, and Dupont-Walker that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to:

- A. Conduct a survey among past and current LIFE participants to identify the greatest barriers and opportunities to increasing utilization of LIFE benefits.
- B. Report back in March 2025 with a presentation on the survey's key findings, an analysis of utilization data, and proposed plan for increasing utilization, including any programmatic adjustments based on the data and survey analysis.

WE, FURTHER MOVE, that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to:

- C. Utilize the findings from the Metro Free Monthly Pass Program for the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) grant in South Los Angeles and City of Pomona to evaluate and model a more accurate projection of costs and benefits to an unlimited LIFE program, including but not limited to ridership increases and behaviors, operational costs, quantified socio-economic and climate benefits, and projected regional impacts.

SOLIS AMENDMENT: Direct the CEO to expand the Youth on the Move Program to all Transitional Age Youth, regardless of age or enrollment in the Independent Living Program.