



Memorandum

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1111 Broadway, Suite 800, Oakland, CA 94607 • 510.208.7400 • www.AlamedaCTC.org

DATE: March 17, 2016

SUBJECT: Affordable Student Transit Pass Program Site Selection and Model Program Evaluation Frameworks

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the Affordable Student Transit Pass Pilot Program site selection and model program evaluation frameworks.

Summary

The cost of transportation to school is often cited as a significant barrier to school attendance and participation in afterschool activities by middle and high school students. In recognition of this problem, the Measure BB 2014 Transportation Expenditure Plan approved by voters in November 2014 incorporated the implementation of a pilot program to test various ways of designing an affordable student transit pass that would meet a variety of program goals. Two key elements of this pilot program design are the methodologies used for selecting model program sites in each of four subareas in the county and evaluating the effectiveness of each of these model program sites. A framework for each of these elements is described as follows.

The site selection framework defines the approach for how to identify the middle schools and high schools that are strongest candidates for model program sites. The framework, which includes site criteria and the selection process, is an equitable model that takes into account geographic diversity, socioeconomic need, and public transit capabilities to guide the identification of the model program sites most likely to showcase the effectiveness of different concepts for implementing an Affordable Student Transit Pass program (Affordable STPP).

The model program evaluation framework provides an outline of the indicators that will be used to assess and compare the performance of the pilots to be implemented throughout the county.

Background

The Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) has undertaken the development, implementation, and evaluation of an Affordable STPP that it intends to pilot in middle schools and high schools in four communities in Alameda County beginning in the 2016-2017 school year. This pilot program provides a crucial opportunity

to assess student transportation needs in Alameda County and develop an approach to meet those needs through the implementation of a sustainable program to provide affordable student transit passes that can be used on the various transit providers that serve schools, afterschool activities, and job locations in Alameda County. This pilot program is identified in the 2014 Transportation Expenditure Plan (TEP) and is funded by Measure BB; the TEP specifies that the funds will be used to implement “successful models aimed at increasing the use of transit among junior high and high school students, including a transit pass program for students in Alameda County¹.”

The Affordable STPP aims to do the following:

- Reduce barriers to transportation access to and from schools
- Improve transportation options for Alameda County’s middle and high school students
- Build support for transit in Alameda County
- Develop effective three-year pilot programs

To date, the Affordable STPP team has researched national best practices and the current conditions and needs of Alameda County middle and high school students, as well as the availability and service provided by existing transit services. This research informs the recommended framework. The Affordable STPP team will now gather the necessary information to begin the process of identifying potential model program sites and developing respective pass program parameters for each selected model program site based on the recommended framework.

Details of the Affordable STPP parameters will be specific to the model program sites to be identified and will be brought to the Commission for approval in May, prior to implementation. As previously directed by the Commission in October 2015, at least one of the model program sites will include a universally free pass.

Development and implementation of the pilot Affordable STPP programs will be designed to allow for measurable outcomes that facilitate assessment of progress in meeting the Affordable STPP goals. Prior to implementation, a number of pass program parameters will be determined for each selected model program site, such as which students will be eligible, when and where the pass can be used, the administrative processes, and the physical attributes of the pass itself.

Site Selection Framework

The framework for site selection addresses geographic and demographic diversity among the potential model program sites. As previously established by Alameda CTC, there will be one model program pilot in each of the county’s planning subareas. However, to

¹ TEP, 2014

allow for adequate comparison, similar school sites will be identified across the planning areas to test for the effectiveness of different pass program characteristics:

School Site Characteristics – Needs-Based Assessment	
School Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Middle, high, mixed ▪ Charter/non-charter traditional
School Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poverty level as indicated through free and reduced-price meal eligibility
Transit Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bus stop within 1/4 mile of the school ▪ Number of routes serving schools
Geographic Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ North, central, south, east subareas ▪ Paired schools (these could be schools within proximity of one another, middle schools that feed a particular high school, or a high school that draws from select middle schools)
Existing Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presence of Safe Routes to Schools programs and other unique attributes of potential model program sites
Other Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Percent minority ▪ Ethnic diversity ▪ School interest ▪ School readiness ▪ Availability of crossing guards ▪ Potential student and community participation

A detailed description of the site selection methodology is included in Attachment A: Criteria and Process for Site Selection

Model Program Evaluation Framework

The framework for model program evaluation describes quantitative and qualitative performance measures that can be used to understand how well each of the model programs supports the goals of the Affordable STPP.

The evaluation framework consists of two components: 1) Attachment B is a matrix showing how each of the proposed indicators relates to the overall goals of the Affordable STPP; and 2) Attachment C presents a list of the performance indicators and metrics (measurable source of data) that intend to capture relevant changes in outcomes at each model program site.

Once the site recommendations are approved and the pilot pass program parameters are determined, the Affordable STPP team will begin collecting relevant data at each model program site. This will include both pre-implementation data collection, as well as preparations for other types of data gathering during and after the pilot period. This information will be compiled in the annual evaluation reports for each of the model

program sites, and will be used to adjust the programs as necessary for the following year. At the end of the three-year pilot period, these performance measures will be used to compare progress over time at each site as well as to compare program sites.

Stakeholder Workshop Overview

In January of 2015, Alameda CTC resumed meetings with stakeholders regarding the development of the Affordable STPP. These workshops occurred throughout the year and into 2016. Stakeholders invited to the workshops are from school districts, advocacy groups, the Alameda County Technical Advisory Committee and more. (Attachment D includes the invitee list.)

The proposed methodology was brought to the Affordable STPP Workshop on February 18, 2016. Participants provided comments on the proposed methodology, performance measures, and evaluation approach. Overall, participants were supportive of the approach. Some had questions and provided suggestions, which were addressed in the methodology and summarized below.

Summary of comments:

- Understanding where students live and how close their residences are to existing transit stops is important. It was acknowledged that this data is not readily available due to confidentiality requirements.
- Frequency of transit service should be considered in the selection process. Participants suggested other data that might be available from transit agencies. Staff from AC Transit clarified that ridership based on passes cannot be isolated at the school level, but could potentially be tracked at a given stop.
- Reach out to school districts to understand how student enrollment is distributed among the different schools.
- Ensure enough funding is available for administration at school sites.
- Request that funding in the TEP for crossing guards be used from the bicycle/pedestrian funding.
- Include the continuation schools as potential pilot sites, because they have a high incidence of truancy, and a transit pass could be a tool to reverse that. Based on this feedback, continuation schools that operate during traditional school hours will also be considered for potential pilot program implementation.
- Track the impact on existing yellow school bus ridership to determine the net effect of student transit ridership, affording an understanding of students potentially switching modes.

- Consider impacts on greenhouse gas emissions or vehicle-miles traveled. This will be considered in the evaluation as a secondary impact.
- There is concern about student perceptions of safety, particularly in East Oakland, and how safety might be considered in the evaluation.
- The Metropolitan Transportation Commission's equity measure looks to the reduction of household transportation expenses by 10 percent, which could be a useful measure for consistency.

Attendees at the February 18, 2016 workshop are listed in Attachment E.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact.

Attachments

- A. Criteria and Process for Site Selection – Preliminary Phase of Looking at Schools
- B. Alignment of Program Goals and Performance Measures
- C. Performance Measures and Metrics for Model Program Evaluation
- D. Affordable STPP Workshop Invitation List
- E. Sign in Sheet for the Affordable STPP Workshop on Thursday, February 18, 2016

Staff Contact

[Tess Lengyel](#), Deputy Director of Planning and Policy

[Laurel Poeton](#), Program Analyst

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Criteria and Process for Site Selection – Preliminary Phase of Looking at Schools

Site selection represents the first phase (Phase I) of the pilot program development process. The selection process includes definition of the site selection framework—described in this attachment—followed by an assessment of potential sites and subsequent recommendation of model program sites that will come before the Commission in May 2016.

Phase II of the development process is to design the program for the model sites, including program parameters, tailoring program characteristics to each model program site, and finalizing the implementation process.

Phase III represents the implementation of the pilot program at a minimum of four model program sites.

Methodology

The proposed approach deploys seven different steps using a mix of tools to assess characteristics of the student body, transit availability, and readiness of a school to administer the program. Starting with data collection and analysis, the steps are described as follows:

1. Identify paired schools within each subarea.

Approach

In this step, the Affordable STPP team will identify paired schools within each of Alameda County's four planning subareas. Paired schools are those in close proximity to one another that have access to the same transit system. They may have similar demographic characteristics and likely include middle schools that feed a common high school, or possibly a high school and the middle schools from which it draws students. Any of these combinations could represent a single model program site.

Rationale

A program site does not need to be a single school. By identifying two or more schools that can represent a model program site ("paired" or "linked" schools), Alameda CTC can:

- 1) Broaden the reach of the pilot to serve a greater number of students;
- 2) Build support for the program by serving more communities;
- 3) Allow for cohort analysis to assess how transit use with an affordable student transit pass might change over time (i.e., if middle and high schools are paired, the Affordable STPP team can track how pass use changes for students transitioning from middle school to high school);
- 4) Allow for evaluation of different outcomes in different schools within the same geographic area; and
- 5) Allow for evaluation of potentially different administrative approaches at schools participating in the "same" pilot program.

2. Tally enrollment to understand registration implications.

Approach

In this step, enrollment will be tallied by grade level to understand the implications in terms of the number of possible registrants for the program.

Rationale

Given funding constraints, it will be essential to understand cost implications and the number of students who can reasonably be accommodated as part of the pilot program.

3. Update demographic data.

Approach

In the third step, demographic data that was collected as part of the existing conditions analysis will be updated. Several schools are missing information about minority enrollment, and updated information is needed about ethnic diversity and the percentage of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches; this information feeds directly in to critical selection criteria in the next step.

Rationale

It is important to ensure that data from multiple sources is correct, and currently there are some anomalies. Demographic data will be considered in the model program site selection process.

4. Conduct initial sort.

Approach

In the fourth step, the Affordable STPP team will conduct an initial sort of the schools, based on factors deemed to be most important in establishing a baseline of schools to pilot the Affordable STPP.

These factors include:

- 1) Whether there is an existing transit stop within 1/4 mile of the school;
- 2) Whether the school operates during the traditional school day time;
- 3) Whether logical pairs were identified in Step # 1;
- 4) Whether the schools are in a geographic location where they might be able to leverage additional grant funding; and for schools where a free pass might be introduced; and
- 5) Whether the school is considered a high-poverty school, meaning that 75 percent or more of the students are eligible for free and reduced price lunches (based on a Title I measure of poverty in schools).

Rationale

These criteria are suggested to begin to narrow the number of schools appropriate for implementation of a pilot program:

- 1) Proximity of transit to school is important. Virtually all Alameda County schools are within 1/2 mile of a transit stop. Most studies substantiate the assumption that 3/4 mile is the distance people are most likely to walk to/from transit.
- 2) A traditional school program includes any school operating during daytime "school day" hours, inclusive of charter schools and magnet schools. Evaluating the program in schools that serve the general population during a traditional school day will be essential to establish approaches appropriate for eventual countywide implementation and for pilot comparative evaluation.
- 3) Paired/linked schools are more desirable (as noted above) for broadening participation in the pilot program and gathering information for the evaluation effort.
- 4) Schools in some areas may be eligible for state and regional opportunities for leveraging grants (including Metropolitan Transportation Commission Climate Initiatives, state cap-and-trade funds, and funds identified for Communities of Concern). The possibility of schools qualifying for future funding under these programs will be taken into consideration during the evaluation.
- 5) Because the pilot program will offer free transit passes for at least one site, income is an appropriate tool to assess which schools are likely the best candidates for free passes.

5. Sort for deployment-readiness characteristics and factors.

Approach

The paired schools within each subarea will then be sorted to assess various characteristics for the model program sites, based on the program goals and objectives.

Key factors identified include:

- 1) More than one transit route serving the stops within 1/4 mile of the school (also sorting by the frequency of transit routes serving the school during peak school travel hours);
- 2) The school district has identified transportation as an important issue in the school's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) or that transportation has been indicated by the school in public information, outreach, or advocacy efforts as an important tool for meeting educational goals;
- 3) Student population characteristics including minority versus non-minority enrollment and ethnic diversity;
- 4) School participation in the Safe Routes to Schools program (although participation is not a prerequisite and schools that do not participate will also be considered); and
- 5) The school participates in or has participated in transit travel training programs.

Rationale

These characteristics and factors are useful for selecting schools for onsite assessments:

- 1) Transit stops within 1/4 mile of a school suggest a higher propensity for transit use; higher frequency of transit service at these stops illustrates more transit options for students. Understanding the implications of access to transit on use of an affordable student transit pass will be important for evaluating the pilot program;
- 2) Where transportation has been identified as an issue by the district/school in an LCAP or other document, the school or district has prioritized seeking solutions and has a stated commitment to work on transportation issues, which will be essential for a successful pilot;
- 3) Two student population characteristics are considered for program design purposes: minority enrollment and ethnic diversity within the enrolled student body. These factors ensure diverse participation in the pilot program and ensure that the pilot model program site selection is balanced. Ethnic diversity factors also allow for the evaluation to consider different implementation experiences and outcomes in more homogeneous versus more heterogeneous schools;
- 4) Safe Routes to Schools participation is not a determining factor of whether the program should be implemented at a particular site, but it is illustrative of a school's experience with other school transportation programs. It may serve as a possible indicator of readiness and commitment by school administrators, parents and students; and
- 5) Similar to Safe Routes to School participation, a school's ongoing or past transit travel training participation is illustrative of experience with other school transportation programs and serves as a possible indicator of readiness and commitment by school administrators, parents, and students.

6. Conduct school site screen for highest-ranked model program sites.

Approach

In step six, an onsite assessment will take place at the schools identified based on the sorting criteria used in the first five steps. The assessment will allow the program team to assess the top-ranked schools based on administrative readiness to implement the program, potential staffing and administrative support, active student groups and their interest, parent involvement, languages spoken, safety/pedestrian incidents (and the availability of crossing guards or need for crossing guards), student body educational opportunities, and other factors which will be refined and incorporated into an assessment form.

Rationale

These onsite assessments will offer a qualitative determination of whether the schools in the model program site area could provide successful pilot program locations and

what their specific needs might be in the development of site-specific program parameters. Successful implementation will require a school to be responsive, collect and share information, and work closely with the Affordable STPP team.

7. Recommend preferred model program sites.

Based on the previous steps, at least four model program sites (each program site may include paired school)—one in each planning subarea—will be recommended to the Commission in May.

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Alignment of Program Goals and Performance Measures

Proposed goals and objectives are listed in the table below. Proposed metrics that will be recommended to be used to assess progress in meeting each goal are included in Attachment C.

GOALS	Goal 1: Reduce barriers to transportation access to and from schools	Goal 2: Improve transportation options for Alameda County's middle and high school students	Goal 3: Build support for transit in Alameda County	Goal 4: Develop effective three-year pilot programs
INDICATORS				
Quantitative				
1. <i>Student perception of transit options and barriers</i>	X	X	X	
2. <i>Transportation costs to families (participant cost)</i>	X	X		X
3. <i>Participant or student attendance</i>	X			
4. <i>Pass availability and use</i>	X			
5. <i>After-school activity participation</i>		X		
6. <i>Student ridership (including non-pass holders)</i>		X	X	
7. <i>Inclusion of students, parents, community members, administrators</i>			X	X
8. <i>Diverse participant reach</i>				X

GOALS	Goal 1: Reduce barriers to transportation access to and from schools	Goal 2: Improve transportation options for Alameda County's middle and high school students	Goal 3: Build support for transit in Alameda County	Goal 4: Develop effective three-year pilot programs
INDICATORS				
9. Program cost per participant				X
10. Administrative costs as a proportion of total program costs				X
Qualitative				
11. Effectiveness of marketing and outreach	X		X	X
12. Linkages with existing fare payment option(s)		X	X	
13. Leverage with other school-based transportation programs	X	X		
14. Leverage with other funding and administration programs		X		
15. Transit operator response(s)	X	X	X	X
16. Ease of participation	X	X		X
17. Ease of administration (county-wide, site-level, operator-level)	X	X		X
18. Cost performance against expectations				X

Performance Measures and Metrics for Model Program Evaluation

Proposed performance measures and metrics for the evaluation are presented below. These indicators support the goals listed in Attachment B.

Indicators	Rationale	Metric	Data Source	Collection Time
Quantitative				
1. <i>Student perception of transit options and barriers</i>	To understand how students understand transportation options and perceive barriers to accessing those options	Number and extent to which students perceive pass options and barriers to accessing those options, including cost	Surveys or focus groups conducted by program team and school sites	Annual
2. <i>Transportation costs to families (participant cost)</i>	To determine the financial burden of transportation to/from school	Amount that families pay for school transportation and/or the pass	Determined as part of model program parameters; surveys	Before and after implementation
3. <i>Participant or student attendance²</i>	To discern a relationship between pass program design and attendance	Average daily attendance	Mandated school reporting	Annual

² Secondary metrics associated with this indicator, such as graduation rates and test scores, may be used to evaluate potential implications for school performance.

Indicators	Rationale	Metric	Data Source	Collection Time
4. <i>Pass availability and use</i>	To determine the level of penetration of the pilot program (i.e. how many students could use the pass vs. actually use the pass)	Number of eligible students; Number of passes distributed; Number of passes used (depending on choice of model program fare media)	School sites, transit operators, and Clipper if applicable	Before implementation and annually after implementation
5. <i>After-school activity participation</i>	To discern a relationship between pass program design and after-school activity participation	Attendance of students at key clubs, activities, and organizations associated with each model program site	School site and afterschool programs	Monthly
6. <i>Student ridership (including non-pass holders)³</i>	To determine the impact of the pass program on ridership (i.e. net and gross change in ridership)	Number of passes provided; Agency-level student ridership; Yellow bus ridership (if applicable)	Transit operators; Travel diaries and hand tally surveys from program team and school sites; baseline data collection	Annual
7. <i>Inclusion of students, parents, community members, administrators</i>	To determine if community members are integrated and informed	Attendance of these stakeholders at meetings; Amount of comments received	Sign-in sheets and feedback submissions	Throughout program implementation

³ Metrics associated with this indicator may be used to evaluate potential implications for greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion.

Indicators	Rationale	Metric	Data Source	Collection Time
8. <i>Diverse participant reach</i>	To determine that geographic diversity and equity are addressed	Demographic information of model program sites	Determined as part of model program parameters	Before implementation
9. <i>Program cost per participant</i>	To understand the overall cost-benefit ratio of the pass program	Overall program costs per participant, beyond what the pass price is (if applicable)	Model program parameters; Financial information provided by schools, county agencies, and transit operators	Annual
10. <i>Administrative costs as a proportion of total program costs</i>	To understand the overall cost-benefit ratio of the pass program	Costs borne by the transit operators, schools, etc. Including costs with an onsite administrator	Financial information provided by schools, county agencies, and transit operators	Annual
Qualitative				
11. <i>Effectiveness of marketing and outreach</i>	To ensure that community members are integrated and informed	Extent to which participants know about the program	Student and parent feedback	Annual
12. <i>Linkages with existing fare payment option(s)</i>	To discern if linkages with existing options affects pilot outcomes	Key features of fare payment options	Determined as part of model program parameters; Clipper if applicable	Before and after implementation
13. <i>Leverage with other school-based transportation programs</i>	To discern if coordination with existing programs affects pilot outcomes	Aspects that benefit related programs (SR2S, crossing guards, etc.)	Determined as part of model program parameters	Before and after implementation

Indicators	Rationale	Metric	Data Source	Collection Time
<i>14. Leverage with other funding and administration programs</i>	To understand potential for future funding opportunities	Key findings regarding funding eligibility and partnerships	Program team assessment of model program design	Before and after implementation
<i>15. Transit operator response(s)</i>	To understand how the pilot programs are perceived by transit operators	Perceived impacts of program to service delivery	Transit operator feedback	Throughout program implementation
<i>16. Ease of participation</i>	To discern how students perceive the model program and how to use it	Perceived ease of use of model program	Participant surveys	Annual
<i>17. Ease of administration (county-wide, site-level, operator-level)⁴</i>	To discern how program administration is perceived by different entities involved at different scales	Perceived ease of administration by school sites, transit operators, and county-wide coordination	Feedback from school sites, transit operators, other stakeholders	Throughout program implementation
<i>18. Cost performance against expectations</i>	To understand or anticipate any potential future costs and issues	Degree to which any cost overruns represent “one-time” versus recurring and/or unpredictable issues	Feedback from school sites, transit operators, other stakeholders	Before and after implementation

⁴ Metrics associated with this indicator may be used to evaluate potential implications for the level of decentralized oversight and potential for replication in other schools.

Student Transit Pass Program Contacts

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First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Email
Alameda County Technical Advisory Committee			
Chris	Andrichak	AC Transit	candrichak@actransit.org
Nathan	Landau	AC Transit	Nlandau@actransit.org
Art	Carrera	Alameda County	artc@acpwa.org
Cindy	Horvath	Alameda County	cindy.horvath@acgov.org
Ruben	Izon	Alameda County	rubeni@acpwa.org
Albert	Lopez	Alameda County	Albert.Lopez@acgov.org
Miriam	Chion	Association of Bay Area Governments	miriamc@abag.ca.gov
Donna	Lee	BART	dlee@bart.gov
Anthony	Fournier	Bay Area Air Quality Management District	afournier@baaqmd.gov
Cameron	Oakes	Caltrans	cameron.oakes@dot.ca.gov
Fredrick	Schermer	Caltrans	Fredrick.Schermer@dot.ca.gov
V.	Patel	City of Alameda	vpatel@alamedaca.gov
Gail	Payne	City of Alameda	gpayne@alamedaca.gov
Jeff	Bond	City of Albany	jbond@albanyca.org
Aleida	Chavez	City of Albany	achavez@albanyca.org
Farid	Javandel	City of Berkeley	FJavandel@ci.berkeley.ca.us
Hamid	Mostowfi	City of Berkeley	hmostowfi@ci.berkeley.ca.us
Beth	Thomas	City of Berkeley	BAThomas@ci.berkeley.ca.us
Jeff	Baker	City of Dublin	Jeff.Baker@ci.dublin.ca.us
Marnie	Delgado	City of Dublin	marnie.delgado@dublin.ca.gov
Obaid	Khan	City of Dublin	obaid.khan@dublin.ca.gov
Amber	Evans	City of Emeryville	aevans@ci.emeryville.ca.us
Diana	Keena	City of Emeryville	dkeena@emeryville.org
Rene	Dalton	City of Fremont	rdalton@fremont.gov
Norm	Hughes	City of Fremont	nhughes@fremont.gov
Hans	Larsen	City of Fremont	HLarsen@fremont.gov
Jeff	Schwob	City of Fremont	jschwob@ci.fremont.ca.us

Student Transit Pass Program Contacts

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Email
Noe	Veloso	City of Fremont	nveloso@fremont.gov
Fred	Kelley	City of Hayward	fred.kelley@hayward-ca.gov
Abhishek	Parikh	City of Hayward	abhishek.parikh@hayward-ca.gov
David	Rizk	City of Hayward	David.Rizk@hayward-ca.gov
Debbie	Bell	City of Livermore	dlbell@cityoflivermore.net
Steve	Stewart	City of Livermore	scstewart@cityoflivermore.net
Bob	Vinn	City of Livermore	bgvinn@cityoflivermore.net
Soren	Fajeau	City of Newark	soren.fajeau@newark.org
Terrence	Grindall	City of Newark	Terrence.Grindall@newark.org
Iris	Starr	City of Oakland	IStarr@oaklandnet.com
Bruce	Williams	City of Oakland	bwilliams@oaklandnet.com
Kevin	Jackson	City of Piedmont	kjackson@ci.piedmont.ca.us
Mike	Tassano	City of Pleasanton	mtassano@ci.pleasanton.ca.us
Adam	Weinstein	City of Pleasanton	aweinstein@cityofpleasantonca.gov
Keith	Cooke	City of San Leandro	KCooke@ci.san-leandro.ca.us
Tom	Liao	City of San Leandro	TLiao@sanleandro.org
Michael	Stella	City of San Leandro	mstella@sanleandro.org
Carmela	Campbell	City of Union City	CarmelaC@unioncity.org
Thomas	Ruark	City of Union City	ThomasR@ci.union-city.ca.us
Sean	Dougan	East Bay Parks District	sdougan@ebparks.org
Erich	Pfuehler	East Bay Parks District	epfuehler@ebparks.org
Christy	Wegener	Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority	cwegener@lavta.org
Kenneth	Kao	Metropolitan Transportation Commission	kkao@mtc.ca.gov
Matt	Maloney	Metropolitan Transportation Commission	mmaloney@mtc.ca.gov
Ross	McKeown	Metropolitan Transportation Commission	rmckeown@mtc.ca.gov
Matthew	Davis	Port of Oakland	mdavis@portoakland.com

Student Transit Pass Program Contacts

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Email
Staff and Consultants from Transportation Agencies, Commissioners, Cities and County			
Beverly	Greene	AC Transit	bgreene@actransit.org
Michele	Joseph	AC Transit	mjoseph@actransit.org
Nathan	Landau	AC Transit	Nlandau@actransit.org
Sue	Lee	AC Transit	slee@actransit.org
Victoria	Wake	AC Transit	vwake@actransit.org
Paul	Keener	Alameda County	paulk@acpwa.org
Charlotte	Barham	BART	cbarham@bart.gov
Pam	Herhold	BART	pherhol@bart.gov
Donna	Lee	BART	dlee@bart.gov
Val	Menotti	BART	vmenott@bart.gov
Julie	Yim	BART	jyim@bart.gov
Dawn	Argula	Board of Supervisor Office - District 1	dawn.argula@acgov.org
Christopher	Miley	Board of Supervisor Office - District 2	Christopher.Miley@acgov.org
Dave	Brown	Board of Supervisor Office - District 3	dave.brown@acgov.org
Jeanette	Dong	Board of Supervisor Office - District 3	Jeanette.dong@acgov.org
Steven	Jones	Board of Supervisor Office - District 3	Steven.jones@acgov.org
Eileen	Ng	Board of Supervisor Office - District 4	eileen.ng@acgov.org
Paul	Sanftner	Board of Supervisor Office - District 4	paul.sanftner@acgov.org
Amy	Shrago	Board of Supervisor Office - District 5	amy.shrago@acgov.org
Roselle	Loudon	City of Emeryville	rloudon@emeryville.org
Ipsita	Banerjee	City of Fremont	IBanerjee@fremont.gov
Juliet	Naishorua	City of Oakland	jnaishorua@horizon.csueastbay.edu
Matthew	Nichols	City of Oakland	MDNichols@oaklandnet.com
Sheng	Thao	City of Oakland (Office of Vice Mayor Rebecca Kaplan)	sthao@oaklandnet.com
Jan	Cornish	Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority	jcornish@lavta.org
Michael	Tree	Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority	mtree@lavta.org
Jennifer	Largaespada	Metropolitan Transportation Commission	Jennifer.Largaespada@ch2m.com
Anne	Richman	Metropolitan Transportation Commission	arichman@mtc.ca.gov
Glen	Tepke	Metropolitan Transportation Commission	gtepke@mtc.ca.gov
Darryl	Yip	Metropolitan Transportation Commission	dyip@mtc.ca.gov
Calli	Cenizal	Nelson Nygaard	ccenizal@nelsonnygaard.com

Student Transit Pass Program Contacts

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Email
Joey	Goldman	Nelson Nygaard	jgoldman@nelsonnygaard.com
Richard	Weiner	Nelson Nygaard	rweiner@nelsonnygaard.com
Steve	Adams	Union City Transit (City of Union City)	SAdams@unioncity.org
Wilson	Lee	Union City Transit (City of Union City)	WilsonL@unioncity.org
Community-based and Business Organizations			
Keiva	Hummel	Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment	khummel@calorganize.org
Alia	Phelps	Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment	aphelps@calorganize.org
Brett	Hondrop	Alta Planning/Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools	bhondorp@altaplanning.com
Kaley	Lyons	Alta Planning/Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools	kaleylyons@altaplanning.com
Lisa	Hagerman	DBL Investors	lisa@dblinvestors.com
Vanessa	Hernandez	Eden Housing	VHernandez@edenhousing.org
John	Claassen	Genesis	jpclaassen@comcast.net
Michelle	Jordan	Genesis	mjordan823@sbcglobal.net
Mary	Lim-Lampe	Genesis	marylimlampe@gmail.com
Mahasin	Abdul-Salaam	Genesis	center4learningbynature@gmail.com
Mim	Hawley	League of Women Voters	mbhawley@earthlink.net
Lana	Adlawan	Oakland Public Library	ladlawan@oaklandlibrary.org
Winifred	Walters	Oakland Public Library	wwalters@oaklandlibrary.org
Wendy	Alfsen	Sierra Club	wendyalfsen@gmail.com
Patrisha	Piras	Sierra Club	patpiras@sonic.net
Matt	Williams	Sierra Club	mwillia@mac.com
Geoffrey	Johnson	TransForm	gjohnson@transformca.org
Joël	Ramos	TransForm	joel@transformca.org
Nora	Cody	TransForm/Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools	nora@transformca.org
Alissa	Kronovet	TransForm/Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools	akronovet@alamedacountysr2s.org
James Martin	Perez Work	TransForm/Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools	jmperezwork@alamedacountysr2s.org
Bob	Allen	Urban Habitat	bob@urbanhabitat.org

Student Transit Pass Program Contacts

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Email
Gayle	Eads	Volunteer Tutor	gayle.s.eads@gmail.com
Sikander	Iqbal	Youth Uprising	siqbal@youthuprising.org
Neda	Said	Youth Uprising	nsaid@youthuprising.org
Alice	Alvarado		alice.alvarado@rocketmail.com
Kumar	Malini		kumarmalini@gmail.com
See e-mail address			jlf7800@netzero.com
See e-mail address			luzy65@att.net
Educational Organizations and Other Schools			
Unique S.	Holland	Alameda County Office of Education	uholland@acoe.org
Dan	Bellino	Alameda County Office of Education	dbellino@acoe.org
L Karen	Monroe	Alameda County Office of Education	lkmonroe@acoe.org
Mark	Salinas	California State University East Bay	mark.salinas@csueastbay.edu
K-12 School Districts			
Kerri	Loneragan	Alameda Unified School District	kloneragan@alameda.k12.ca.us
Kristen	Zazo	Alameda Unified School District	kzazo@alameda.k12.ca.us
Marsha	Brown	Albany Unified School District	mbrown@ausdk12.org
Susan	Craig	Berkeley Unified School District	susancraig@berkeley.net
Parvin	Ahmadi	Castro Valley Unified School District	pahmadi@cv.k12.ca.us
Rinda	Bartley	Castro Valley Unified School District	rbartley@cv.k12.ca.us
Aimee	Cayere	Castro Valley Unified School District	acayere@cv.k12.ca.us
Dr. Candi	Clark	Castro Valley Unified School District	cclark@cv.k12.ca.us
Stephen	Hanke	Dublin Unified School District	hankestephen@dublin.k12.ca.us
Diane	Lang	Emeryville Unified School District	diane.lang@emeryusd.k12.ca.us
Debbra	Lindo	Emeryville Unified School District	debbra.lindo@emeryusd.org
Greg	Bailey	Fremont Unified School District	gbailey@fremont.k12.ca.us
James	Morris	Fremont Unified School District	jmorris@fremont.k12.ca.us
Katherine	Brown	Hayward Unified School District	klbrown@husd.k12.ca.us
Stan	Dobbs	Hayward Unified School District	sdobbs@husd.us
Kelly	Bowers	Livermore Unified School District	kbowers@lvjUSD.k12.ca.us

Student Transit Pass Program Contacts

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Email
John	Mattos	New Haven Unified School District	jmattos@nhusd.k12.ca.us
Blanca	Snyder	New Haven Unified School District	bsnyder@nhusd.k12.ca.us
Dan	Marken	Newark Unified School District	dmarken@newarkunified.org
William	Whitton	Newark Unified School District	wwhitton@nusd.k12.ca.us
Yusef	Carrillo	Oakland Unified School District	yusef.carrillo@ousd.k12.ca.us
Julia	Gordon	Oakland Unified School District	Julia.Gordon@ousd.k12.ca.us
Clara	Henderson	Oakland Unified School District	carla.henderson@ousd.k12.ca.us
Tom	Hughes	Oakland Unified School District	tom.hughes@ousd.org
Jacqueline P.	Minor	Oakland Unified School District	jacqueline.minor@ousd.org
Carlene	Naylor	Oakland Unified School District	Carlene.Naylor@ousd.k12.ca.us
Randall	Booker	Piedmont Unified School District	rbooker@piedmont.k12.ca.us
Sandy	Eggert	Piedmont Unified School District	seggert@piedmont.k12.ca.us
Kevin	Johnson	Pleasanton Unified School District	kjohnson@pleasantonusd.net
Brenda	Montgomery	Pleasanton Unified School District	bmontgomery@pleasantonusd.net
Lynn	Novak	Pleasanton Unified School District	lnovak@pleasantonusd.net
Roseanne	Pryor	Pleasanton Unified School District	rpryor@pleasantonusd.net
Mo	Brosnan	San Lorenzo Unified School District	mbrosnan@slzusd.org
Linda	Freccero	San Lorenzo Unified School District	lfreccero@slzusd.org
Janette	Hernandez	San Lorenzo Unified School District	jhernandez@slzusd.org
Ammar	Saheli	San Lorenzo Unified School District	asaheli@slzusd.org
Molleen	Barnes	Sunol Unified School District	mbarnes@sunol.k12.ca.us
Lowell	Hoxie	Sunol Unified School District	lhoxie@sunol.k12.ca.us
High Schools			
Tim	Sbranti	Dublin High School	tim@timsbranti.com
Karen	Seals	Oakland - Oakland High School	kseals5@aol.com
Katherine	Herrick	San Lorenzo - San Lorenzo High School	kherrick@slzusd.org
Dana	Wickner	San Lorenzo - San Lorenzo High School	dana.wickner@gmail.com
Abhi	Brar	Union City - Logan High School	abrar@nhusd.k12.ca.us
James	Rardin	Union City - Logan High School	jrardin@nhusd.k12.ca.us

Student Transit Pass Program Contacts

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Email
Middle Schools			
Lucy	Bryndza	Albany - Albany Middle School	lbryndza@ausdk12.org
Peter	Parenti	Albany - Albany Middle School	pparenti@ausdk12.org
Marty	Place	Albany - Albany Middle School	mplace@ausdk12.org
Amber	Evans	Berkeley - King Middle School	amber@thetrollfamily.com
Janet	Levenson	Berkeley - King Middle School	jlevenson@berkeley.k12.ca.us
Charles	Patterson	Emeryville - Emery Secondary School	charles.patterson@emeryusd.org
Louisa	Lee	Fremont - Centerville Junior High	louisalee@fremont.k12.ca.us
Sherry	Strausbaugh	Fremont - Centerville Junior High	sstrausbaugh@fremont.k12.ca.us
Lisa	Davies	Hayward - Bret Harte Middle School	ldavies@husd.k12.ca.us
Scott	Vernoy	Livermore - Junction Avenue K-8 School	svernoy@lvjUSD.k12.ca.us
Carissa	Cooksey	Oakland - Elmhurst Middle School	crcooksey@yahoo.com
Laura	Robell	Oakland - Elmhurst Middle School	laura.robell@ousd.k12.ca.us
Terry	Conde	Pleasanton - Hart Middle School	tconde@pleasantonusd.net
Patty	Reichhorn	Pleasanton - Hart Middle School	jreichhorn@comcast.net
Elementary Schools			
Tess	Johnson	Dublin - Dublin Elementary	johnsontess@dublin.k12.ca.us
Lauren	McGovern	Dublin - Dublin Elementary	mcgovernlauren@dublinusd.org
Lynn	Medici	Dublin - Kolb Elementary	medicilynn@dublinusd.org
Douglas	Whipple	Fremont - Gomes Elementary	dwhipple@fremont.k12.ca.us
Judy	Nye	Fremont - Grimmer Elementary	jnye@fremont.k12.ca.us
Julie	Asher	Fremont - Hirsch Elementary	jasher@fremont.k12.ca.us
Jennifer	Casey	Fremont - Hirsch Elementary	jcasey@fremont.k12.ca.us
Mary Liu	Lee	Fremont - Leitch Elementary	mlee@fremont.k12.ca.us
Tammy	Eglinton	Fremont - Mattos Elementary	teglinton@fremont.k12.ca.us
Jim	Hough	Fremont - Niles Elementary	jhough@fremont.k12.ca.us
Irma	Torres-Fitzsimons	Hayward - Burbank Elementary	itorres-fitzsimons@husd.k12.ca.us
Pete	Wilson	Hayward - Burbank Elementary	pwilson@husd.k12.ca.us
Irene	Preciado	Hayward - Cherryland Elementary	ipreciado@husd.k12.ca.us
Juan	Flores	Hayward - Eden Gardens Elementary	jflores@husd.k12.ca.us
Daisy	Palacios	Hayward - Longwood Elementary	dpalacios@husd.k12.ca.us
Fernando	Yanez	Hayward - Longwood Elementary	fyanez@husd.k12.ca.us

Student Transit Pass Program Contacts

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Email
Brian	White	Hayward - Southgate Elementary	bwhite@husd.k12.ca.us
Denise	Nathanson	Livermore - Emma C Smith Elementary	dnathanson@lvjUSD.k12.ca.us



Affordable Student Transit Pass Program Workshop

6.6E

ROSTER OF ATTENDANCE

Wednesday, February 18, 2016, 3:30 to 5:00 p.m.

1111 Broadway, Suite 800, Oakland, CA 94607

510.208.7400

www.AlamedaCTC.org

	NAME	JURISDICTION/ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL
1.	Marion McWilliams	OUSD	510-879-8267	marion.mcwilliams@ousd.org
2.	Swashante Dillon	OUSD	510-879-4113	swashante.dillon@ousd.org
3.	Ellen Murray	ACCE	415-286-1712	ejredtrans@bcglobal.net
4.	Dave Lyons	ACCE	510-325-1268	dfriscored7@aol.net
5.	Steven Jones	Supv. Wilma Chan	510-278-0367	steven.jones@accen.org
6.	PAUL SANFTNER	SUP. NATE MILEY	510 670 5967	PAUL.SANFTNER@ALAMEDA.ORG
7.	Pat Piras	Sierra Club	—	on file —
8.	Brandon Ortega	Student @ CCPA	N/A	Brandon.ortega@ccpa.edu.com
9.	Kenneth Gibson	Sierra Club, former teacher	—	kennethgibson@gmail.com
10.	Mary Lim-Lampe	Genesis	510-882-3404	MaryLimLampe@gmail.com
11.	John Claassen	Genesis	510-482-2077	jpclaassen@conest.net
12.	Gayle Eads	volunteer tutor OUSD	916-529-2941	gayle.s.eads@gmail.com
13.	Yusef Carrillo	OAKLAND UNIFIED DISTRICT	510-846-0296	yusef.carrillo@ousd.org
14.	Nichole Laynes	ACTransit	510-891-4879	nlaynes@actransit.org
15.	DIANA DORINSON	TRANSPORTATION ANALYTICS	510-717-4137	dd@transportationanalytics.net

	NAME	JURISDICTION/ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL
16.	Calli Ceniza	Nelson / Nygaard	415-281-6942	
17.	Jay Goldman	" "	415-284-1544	jgoldman@nelsonnygaard.com
18.	Tess Lengyel	Alameda CTC	510 208 7420	tlengyel@alamedactc.org
19.	Laurel Poeton	Alameda CTC	510.208.7415	lpoeton@alamedactc.org
20.	Richard Weiner	Nelson / Nygaard	415 284-1544	rweiner@nelsonnygaard.com
21.	Brett Hondorp	Alta Planning + Design	510 540-5008	bhondorp@altaplanning.com
22.	Nothan Landau	ACTRANSIT	510 891-4792	nlandau@actransit.org
23.	Darryl Yip	MTC	510 817-5654	dyip@mtc.ca.gov
24.	James Perez Work	Safe Routes + Schools / Transform	(510) 512-2444	jperezwork@transformca.org
25.	Alissa Kronovet	"	510 7403150 x329	akronovet@alameda-county-sr25.org
26.	Matt Nichols	Oakland Mayor's Office	510-235-7608	mdnichols@oaklandnet.com
27.	Dan Bellino	ACOE	510-670-4200	dbellino@acoe.org
28.	Ipsita Banerjee	City of Fremont		IBanerjee@fremont.gov
29.	Amy SHRACIO	Sup. CARSON'S OFFICE	510.272.6685	Amy.SHRACIO@accio.org
30.				
31.				
32.				
33.				

	NAME	JURISDICTION/ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL
34.	Felix Vasquez	Acce		
35.	Adriano Gomez	Acce		
36.	Tajsh Bartie	Acce		
37.	Josiah Garcia	Acce		
38.	Octavio Piña Junior	ACCE		
39.	Davonte Ford	ACCE		
40.	Brandon Ortega	ACCE		
41.	Jonathan Soria	ACCE		
42.	Keith Evans Jr	ACCE		
43.	Lesila Lapota	ACCE		
44.	Blanca Figuerod	ACCE		
45.	Alia Phelps	ACCE	269-4692	aphelps@calorganize.org
46.	Jennifer Laggaspek	MITC		
47.	Scott Vernoy	Livermore School Dist	925-606-3207	svernoy@lvjUSD.k12.ca.us
48.	Bill Whitton	Newark USD	510/810-4226	wwhitton@NewarkUnified.org
49.	LANA ADLAWAN	Oakland Public Library		
50.	KEN BUKOWSKI	Regional-Video.com		KTB@EPOA.US
51.				

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