Presentation Overview

- Background and consideration of objectives and purpose for a program in Alameda County
- Background on student pass programs
  - Why student pass programs?
  - What does Alameda County currently do?
  - What do other regions currently do?
  - What does the existing data and research say?
- What are the key issues to consider?
  - Potential program parameters
  - Potential next steps
Background

- Background
  - Alameda County Office of Education application
    - Support at outreach, many CAWG members
    - Support letters: ACOE and all superintendents of all Alameda County schools, state delegation, Sierra Club, Urban Habitat
  - Steering Committee requested research of other programs and presentation in July for September meeting

Objectives and Purpose

- Considerations for objective and purpose of a Student Transit Pass Program in Alameda County
- What is key intent of a potential program?
  - Increase transportation options for travel to school
  - Improve participation in after school activities
  - Lower financial burden on families
  - Improve social equity
  - Improve school attendance
  - Improve academic performance
  - Reduce emissions and traffic congestion
  - Educate about climate change
Research includes...

- Review of 14 transit agencies from Bay Area and across the country with youth and/or student pass programs
- Review of academic research related to student passes, including study of 2002 AC Transit pilot program
- Review of 7 youth pass programs in the nation
- Review of 11 University student pass programs
- Review of City of Berkeley employee pass program

Why student pass programs?
Student Transit Passes

- Budget challenges have led to elimination of student busing in most parts of the country
- Transportation burden now falls to families
- Options typically include:
  - Paying for yellow buses
  - Paying for public transit
  - Finding other means

Lack of transportation to school may have significant impacts on students and families
- Access and attendance
- Participation in after school activities
- Participation in after school jobs
- Difficulty coordinating parent work and school travel schedules
What does Alameda County currently do?

Alameda County Youth/Student Transit Passes

- **AC Transit**
  - Single: $1.05 (50% discount)
  - Monthly: $20 (75% discount)
  - Ages 5-18
  - Can obtain at sign-up events and AC Transit offices
  - Monthly pass is Clipper only

- **BART**
  - Orange (ages 13-18): $32 for $16 (50% discount)
  - Red (ages 5-12): $24 for $9 (62% discount)
  - Orange sold by schools, only for school trips (Mon – Fri)
  - Red sold online, mail, or vendors
Alameda County Youth/Student Transit Passes

- Union City Transit
  - Single: $1 (43% discount)
  - Monthly: $29 (37% discount)
  - Ages 6-17
  - Can obtain by mail, fax, email, or sold at City Hall

- LAVTA
  - No discount
  - Occasional free fare events

% Discount (Monthly)
What do other regions do?

Summary of Other Youth Programs

- Programs reviewed outside Alameda Co
  - Tempe, AZ
  - Portland, OR
  - New York, NY
  - Washington, DC
  - Sacramento, CA
  - Fort Collins, CO
  - San Diego, CA

- General Characteristics
  - 57% required student payment*
  - 86% offered bus and rail transit
  - 43% funded by sales tax

*NY has distanced based payment
**Tempe, AZ**

- **Description:** Youth can ride METRO local/regional bus and light rail for free
- **Cost of pass:** Free to all eligible youth
- **Source of program funding:** City of Tempe pays through local sales tax. Annual program cost: $423,416.
- **Pass availability:** Must be obtained at Tempe Transit store. Multiple forms of documentation required (student/parent ID, birth certificate, utility bill, etc.). Parent must accompany youth.
- **Number of Students:** 4,400

**New York, NY**

- **Description:** K-12 students; passes valid from 5:30 AM to 8:30 PM on schooldays.
- **Cost of pass:** No cost or 50% based on location
- **Source of program funding:** State and City of New York. Annual program cost: $161,500,000.
- **Pass availability:** Schools distribute Student Metrocards to eligible students (without photos); varying benefits are dependent on students’ distance from school
- **Number of Students:** 585,000
Portland, OR

- **Description:** Free all-zone Tri-Met pass for all Portland Public School high school students
- **Cost of pass:** Free to eligible students
- **Source of program funding:** School district, City, State of Oregon. Annual program cost: $3.5 million
- **Pass availability:** School issued student ID
- **Number of Students:** 12,600

Washington D.C.

- **Description:** ½ price passes for students (18 or less) who live and attend school in D.C.
- **Cost of pass:** $30 per month (50% discount)
- **Source of program funding:** Paid by city. Annual cost: $5 to $6 million per year
- **Pass availability:** Must fill out application to be signed by school administrator. Will receive Student Metro Travel Card, which can be used to buy SmartStudent pass.
- **Number of Students:** 16,000
Sacramento, CA

- **Description:** ½ price transit pass for students ages 5 to 18.
- **Cost of pass:** $50 per month (50% discount)
- **Source of program funding:** Local sales tax measure
- **Pass availability:** Passes sold through multiple medium. Schools provide monthly stickers.

Other case studies include...

- Golden Gate Transit
- Muni
- VTA
- New York
- Los Angeles Metro
- San Diego MTS
- Fort Collins, CO
- University programs
What does the data and research say?

Data and research on student transit passes

- Academic research is very limited
- Most transit agencies with free or reduced passes track ridership or sale of passes
- Transit agencies do not typically monitor other data points (attendance or academic performance)
- Numerous social, economic, and demographic factors are at play with attendance and performance
Findings from other regions

- **Tempe, AZ**
  - 4,400 youth enrolled, double since 2005
  - Staff unable to conclusively link growth to passes as there have been enhancements to service (e.g. new light rail line)

- **Portland, OR**
  - 44% of students use Tri Met before program, 80% since implementation
  - Ridership highest in low-income areas

- **Washington D.C.**
  - 16,000 D.C. students receive passes
  - Board considering limiting days and hours of operation as students overwhelm the system at times.

- **Sacramento, CA**
  - 30% increase in ridership after first year of program
  - Discount has been reduced from 75% to 50%

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AC Transit Free Youth Pass Pilot Program

- Pilot program to distribute free bus passes to low-income students in middle school and high school
- Began in August 2002: 25k passes distributed
- Initial estimates for costs: $3.75m per year, not including administrative costs
- Eligibility requirements same as Free and Reduced Lunch program
- Budget challenges cut project short after one year
- New $15 monthly pass for all youth was introduced
AC Transit Pilot Program Evaluation

- UC Berkeley researchers evaluated effects of pilot program
- Looked at 17 schools sampled from across the county
- Used surveys, focus groups, interviews, and attendance data
- Study limitation
  - Had only one year of data

AC Transit Pilot Program Evaluation

- Travel Patterns
  - Bus ridership among those receiving passes was 46% before passes and 52% after free passes were offered
- Non-school ridership
  - Weekend ridership increased
  - After-school program participation increased substantially
AC Transit Pilot Program Evaluation

- **Attendance**
  - Attendance remained constant among bus pass holders, even when controlling for age, gender, and race.

- **Lost revenue**
  - Estimated that AC Transit lost $3.04 - $5.26 million in revenue

- **Conclusions**
  - Increased ridership, especially to after-school programs
  - Data was inconclusive regarding attendance
  - Study authors: “Student attendance is a complex issue that demands comprehensive, long-term policies to affect significant change.”

What are the key issues to consider?
Program Costs and Funding

3 elements to program cost:
- Lost revenue from current youth cash fares/passes
- Lost revenues from new riders
- Funds needed to finance any new service

Estimated program costs in FY 2014/15 (w/o admin costs) for AC Transit, BART, LAVTA, and UCT
- All students: $16.4 million
- Low-income only: $6.9 million

Other regions have shown that multiple funding mechanisms and partnerships are necessary

Increased student ridership

Increased ridership is probable, which would be a positive outcome

However...substantial increases in youth ridership, especially in AM/PM peaks, can impact existing operations

Are ridership restrictions appropriate?
- Day of week
- Time of day
- Specific routes
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Availability of service</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Does a free pass <strong>necessarily</strong> increase the availability of service to all schools?</td>
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<td>- Is <strong>cost</strong> the only barrier?</td>
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<th>Effects on student attendance</th>
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<td>- Research is inconclusive regarding effects of such programs on attendance</td>
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<td>- Attendance is determined by many factors – cost is not the only barrier</td>
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<td>- Truancy coordinators suggest that transit passes must be part of larger package of initiatives to improve attendance</td>
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Distribution of passes

- Passes should be as easy to obtain as possible, yet method should also prevent fraud and abuse
- Some regions require:
  - Adult application
  - Multiple forms of ID
  - Travel to a designated location
- Key Considerations for Alameda County
  - What type of pass program is appropriate for Alameda County and who would administer it?
  - How do we balance need for privacy and convenience with program efficiency?
  - What role can technology (i.e. Clipper) play?

Who should receive a pass?

- Should all students receive a pass, even those whose families could easily afford the existing youth fare?
- Should there be different types of programs for different areas of the county?
- Will there be an “opt out” for parents that do not want their student to have a pass?
- Should there be requirements on students to receive a pass?
  - Low-income
  - Attendance
  - GPA
  - Connection to workforce development programs
Leveraging Current Resources

☐ How would this program relate to other efforts, such as Safe Routes to Schools?
☐ Does there need to be a travel training or educational component?
Start small...

- 3 year pilot program
- Develop a comprehensive program scope in next few months that identifies:
  - Partnerships: schools, transit, funding agencies, parents, non-profits
  - Targeted schools and specific youth transit program activities by age
  - Eligibility parameters: needs based, yet pass accessible to all?
  - Technology: Clipper card or other method?
  - Implementation: How to implement in different areas of the county?
  - Performance Measures and monitoring to evaluate effectiveness and best use of public funds
  - Leveraging other resources: Safe Routes to Schools Program, travel training, school resources, grants
  - Governing body: who will oversee this program long-term with many partners?

Questions?