

STUDENT TRANSIT PASS PROGRAM

Student Transit Pass Program in Alameda County

Presentation to Steering Committee
September 22, 2011



September 2011

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



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Student Transit Passes

- 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



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What does Alameda County currently do?

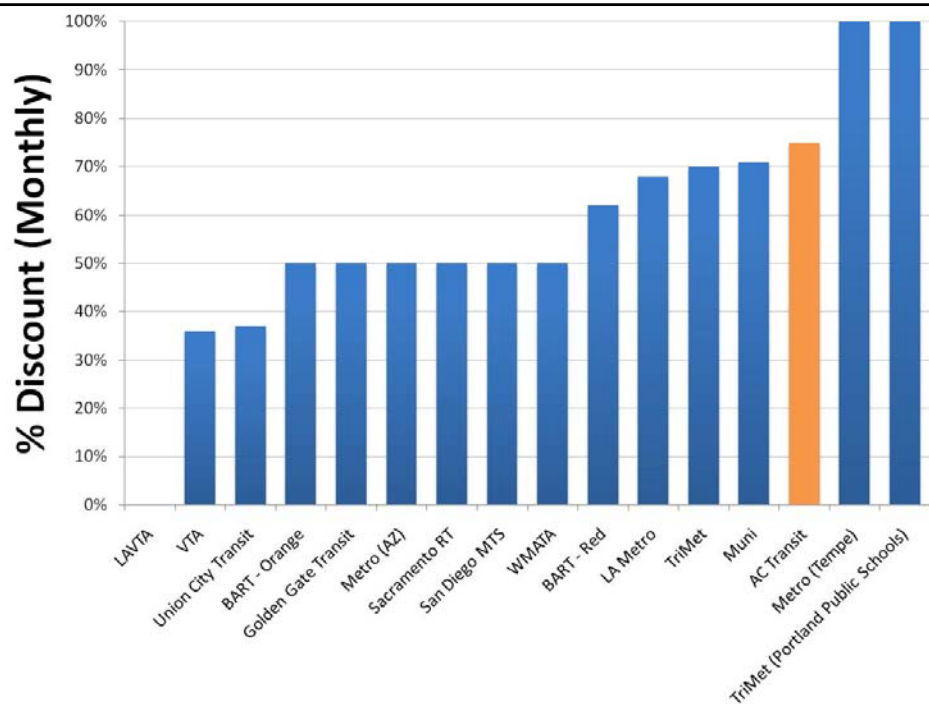
Alameda County Youth/Student Transit Passes

- 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



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.



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- **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



		DISTANCE FROM RESIDENCE TO SCHOOL			
		Less than ½ mile A*	½ mile or more, but less than 1 mile B*	1 mile or more but less than 1½ miles C*	1½ miles or more D*
GRADE LEVEL	K-2	Not Eligible**	Eligible for Full Fare Transportation		
	3-6	Transportation Not Provided	Not Eligible**		
	7-12				

- **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



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- **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.



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- **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.



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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%



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



AC Transit Pilot Program Evaluation

- UC Berkeley researchers evaluated effects of pilot program
 - ▣ McDonald, N., Librera, S., & Deakin, E. (2004). Free Transit for Low-Income Youth. Transportation Research Board, 1887, 153-160.
- 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



Availability of service

- Does a free pass necessarily increase the availability of service to all schools?
- Is cost the only barrier?
 - ▣ Many schools are not currently served by adequate transit service
- Free pass might result in demand for additional service, which will impact agency budget



Effects on student attendance

- Research is inconclusive regarding effects of such programs on attendance
- Attendance is determined by many factors – cost is not the only barrier
- Truancy coordinators suggest that transit passes must be part of larger package of initiatives to improve attendance



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?



Proposed Program Parameters

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?



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