



Memorandum

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DATE: November 29, 2018

TO: Alameda County Transportation Commission

FROM: Tess Lengyel, Deputy Executive Director of Planning and Policy
Cathleen Sullivan, Principal Planner

SUBJECT: Approve Affordable Student Transit Pass Program Year Two Evaluation and Recommendations for Program Continuation

Recommendation

The item includes updates on Year Three of the Affordable Student Transit Pass Pilot (STPP), the Year Two Evaluation Report and approval of a work plan to implement a 5-year expansion of the STPP.

Summary

The Alameda CTC has undertaken the development, implementation, and evaluation of an Affordable Student Transit Pass Pilot (STPP) to assess student transportation needs in the county and develop an approach to meet those needs through implementation and testing of different student transit pass program models across Alameda County. This three-year pilot to increase youth transportation access to school is identified in the 2014 Transportation Expenditure Plan (TEP) and funded by Measure BB.

The pilot provides transit passes to students in selected schools in each of Alameda County's planning areas for use on AC Transit, LAVTA Wheels, Union City Transit, and BART. In the spring of 2016, the Commission approved a framework for evaluating the pilot program including 18 qualitative and quantitative metrics, a site selection framework, a shortlist of schools for the pilot period, and the design for Year One of the pilot. Since then, with Commission approval, Alameda CTC has successfully implemented and evaluated Years One and Two of the pilot and launched Year Three.

The STPP began at nine schools in four Alameda County school districts – Oakland Unified School District (USD), San Leandro USD, New Haven USD (Union City), and Livermore Valley Joint USD – and has since expanded to include Hayward USD, Newark USD, and Fremont USD. In this third and final year, the STPP is being implemented in 21 schools in these seven school districts across the county.

In February 2018, the Commission received an update on Year Two and approved parameters and schools for Year Three, the final year of the pilot program. At the same meeting, and as a result of the effective implementation and evaluation of the Affordable Student Transit Pass Pilot (STPP), the Alameda CTC Commission expressed support for continuation and expansion of the program beyond the pilot period, which ends July 31, 2019.

This memorandum includes a summary of the evaluation of Year Two of the STPP, an update on Year Three implementation, and a framework and recommendations for the continuation of the STPP beyond the three year pilot period including the following program components: program model, ridership demand/capacity considerations, cost structure, funding/fiscal sustainability, and governance and administration.

The recommendation seeks approval for a five year phased expansion, including Phase 1 in the 2019/20 school year, and the timing of future phases to be determined based on close monitoring of implementation of Phase 1. Staff will continue to evaluate the benefits and impacts of the program using a streamlined set of evaluation criteria. To develop these recommendations, staff has closely coordinated with transit agency staff and utilized lessons learned from implementation of the STPP, outcomes of the evaluation efforts to date, and lessons from peer programs.

Background

Overall Program Design

The Alameda CTC has undertaken the development, implementation, and evaluation of an Affordable Student Transit Pass Pilot (STPP) to assess student transportation needs in the county and develop an approach to meet those needs through implementation and testing of different student transit pass program models across Alameda County. This pilot program is identified in the 2014 Transportation Expenditure Plan (TEP) and is funded by Measure BB. The three-year STPP ends July 31, 2019.

The adopted program goals are:

- Reduce barriers to transportation access to and from schools
- Improve transportation options for middle and high school students in Alameda County
- Build support for transit in Alameda County
- Develop effective three-year pilot programs
- Create a basis for a countywide student transit pass program (funding permitting).

In the spring of 2016, the Commission approved a framework for evaluating the pilot program, a site selection framework, a shortlist of schools for the pilot period, and the design for Year One of the pilot. Since then, under direction of the Commission, Alameda CTC has successfully implemented and evaluated Years One and Two of the pilot and launched Year Three.

The pilot provides transit passes to students in selected schools for use on AC Transit, LAVTA Wheels, Union City Transit, and BART. The STPP is currently being implemented in 21 schools and seven school districts across the county. It began in four Alameda County school districts – Oakland Unified School District (USD), San Leandro USD, New Haven USD (Union City/ Hayward), and Livermore Valley Joint USD – spanning all of Alameda County’s planning areas. Since the first year, three additional districts have joined the program, Hayward USD, Newark USD, and Fremont USD.

Year Two Evaluation

The year two evaluation report reinforces findings from the Year One evaluation report that the program is fulfilling the goals it set out to accomplish by improving transportation access to school and broadening student options for travel in general, as well as building support for transit. Top-level findings include:

- Overall participation in the program more than doubled to over 6,600 students, representing nearly half of eligible students (Year One had just under 3,000 students, representing 36% of eligible students).
- During Year Two, the program facilitated nearly 900,000 transit boardings on the three bus operators. Based on available data, it appears that ridership generated by the STPP has supported growth and stabilization of transit ridership levels in several areas and to date there have been no reports of the pilot creating new over-crowding issues on buses.
- Participation and transit usage rates still vary throughout the county, generally correlated with financial need and transit availability.
- The program continues to support students' ability to participate in extra-curricular activities, including jobs, sports, and volunteer commitments.
- The STPP provides important financial support for families, over 60% of students reported that the savings provided by the pass was critical or helpful.
- School staff, families, and students have indicated that the transit pass is a critical tool in helping students who have attendance challenges and at risk families.
- The program model changes and administrative/implementation refinements implemented in Year Two were successful; they have simplified the program which has reduced administrative burden for all parties and increased access to the program for students and families.
- The addition of BART tickets to the program this year revealed demand for BART among participants; however significant challenges exist with pass format, administering ticket inventory, and unused fare value.

A summary of schools, models and participation in Year 2 is shown in Table 1. See Attachment A for the Executive Summary of the Year Two Evaluation Report which includes all key findings. The full evaluation report can be found here:

<https://www.alamedactc.org/studentpass>.

Table 1 Year Two Participation (July 2018)

| Planning Area | School District | Participating Schools | Program Model | Number of Eligible Students | Number of Participants | Year-End Participation Rate |
|---------------|----------------------------|---|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| North | Oakland USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Castlemont HS Fremont HS Frick MS McClymonds HS Westlake MS | Free/Universal | 2,706 | 2,543 | 94% |
| Central | San Leandro USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> San Leandro HS John Muir MS | Free/Universal | 3,609 | 1,787 | 50% |
| | Hayward USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hayward HS Bret Harte MS | Means-Based/Free | 1,598 | 497 | 31% |
| South | New Haven USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cesar Chavez MS James Logan HS | Means-Based/Free | 2,581 | 841 | 33% |
| East | Livermore Valley Joint USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> East Avenue MS Christensen MS Livermore HS Del Valle HS | Free/Universal | 3,416 | 960 | 28% |
| Total | 5 Districts | 15 schools | 2 models | 13,910 | 6,628 | 48% |

Pilot Program Budget

The three-year Affordable Student Transit Pass Program has a maximum budget of \$15 million to cover all costs associated with the program, including all costs related to transit passes, administration, staffing, direct costs, education and outreach to schools, and student travel training. With the expansion that is underway in Year Three, the program is already seeing a significant increase in participation compared to Year Two and expenditures in Year 3 are anticipated to be higher than previous years due to increased participation and requisite management of the passes. Any funds remaining at the end of the pilot period will be used to manage the development of the long-term program model and the transition between the pilot and a long-term program, and to apply for grants and other funding sources.

Year Three Update

The third year of the pilot was successfully launched in August 2018. The STPP continues to test two successful program models – Free/Universal and Means-based/Free; no program model changes were made at any school between Years Two and Three. In Year Three, the STPP expanded to include six new schools and two new school districts, bringing the total to 21 schools in 7 school districts. As of October 2018, participation has

surpassed past years with nearly 11,000 participants, representing 57% of eligible students.

Table 2 shows a summary of Year Three participation as of October 2018. Alameda CTC updates school enrollment and FRPM tables annually which explains differences between Year 2 and 3 eligible students.

Table 2 Year Three Participation (October 2018)

| Planning Area | School District | Participating Schools | Program Model | Number of Eligible Students | Number of Participants | Participation Rate (Oct 2018) |
|---------------|----------------------------|---|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| North | Oakland USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frick MS • Westlake MS • Roosevelt MS • Castlemont HS • Fremont HS • McClymonds HS • Oakland HS | Free/ Universal | 5,112 | 4,824 | 94% |
| Central | San Leandro USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Leandro HS • John Muir MS | Free/ Universal | 3,578 | 2,285 | 64% |
| | Hayward USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hayward HS • Bret Harte MS | Means-Based/ Free | 1,558 | 653 | 42% |
| South | Newark USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newark JHS • Newark Memorial MS | Free/ Universal | 2,604 | 466 | 18% |
| | New Haven USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cesar Chavez MS • James Logan HS | Means-Based/ Free | 2,503 | 1,141 | 46% |
| | Fremont USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopkins MS • American HS | Means-Based/ Free | 485 | 147 | 30% |
| East | Livermore Valley Joint USD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Avenue MS • Christensen MS • Livermore HS • Del Valle HS | Free/ Universal | 3,174 | 1,410 | 44% |
| Total | 7 Districts | 21 schools | | 19,014 | 10,926 | 57% |

Expansion Plan

As a result of the effective implementation and evaluation of the STPP to date, in February 2018, the Commission expressed support for continuation and expansion of the program beyond the pilot period, which ends July 31, 2019. This resulted in development of the following for consideration in program expansion:

- Program model
- Ridership demand/capacity considerations
- Cost structure
- Governance and administration
- Funding/fiscal sustainability

This section outlines the overall principles and recommended plan for expansion of a student transit pass program in Alameda County.

Key Expansion Principles

- **Continue program in all currently participating schools:** Significant effort has been made during the pilot period to contract with school districts and get schools on-boarded to the program. It is important to ensure continuity of access for students who are already participating in the program. Therefore, it is recommended that the program continue in all currently participating schools.
- **Maintain financial need as a key criterion for expansion:** Need has been used as a key criteria for schools to qualify for the pilot. Continuation of this criteria for expansion is recommended in order to reach those districts with the highest need first, and expand to lower need districts over the proposed phased implementation timeframe.
- **Focus on students at schools with transit service:** Approximately 10-15% of middle and high schools in Alameda County do not have any transit service within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of the campus. Given the primary program goal of reducing barriers to transportation access *to and from schools*, it is recommended that this expansion focus on students at schools that are within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of fixed route transit service. Additional schools could be considered in the future, funding permitting.
- **District-based expansion:**
 - Based on lessons learned to date, it is recommended that the program expand by school district to all eligible schools with transit service in a district. Offering passes as some schools but not others in a district has been a necessity during the pilot period to test program models in different parts of the county with limited resources; however, it has caused some complaints and confusion from the school districts and families. In addition, incorporating all middle and high schools with transit service in a district at one time would enable students to transfer seamlessly between schools without having to lose the transit pass which has benefits for students and families. This also simplifies data and pass management, as students

transfer between schools during the school year it will reduce the need to activate and deactivate passes.

- To avoid confusion and administrative complexity, it is also recommended that only one program model be implemented in each school district, so that eligibility rules are comparable between schools in a single district. (See below for more on program model recommendations.)
- **Phase expansion:** The STPP has been successful to date based on phasing expansion gradually over time. Staff recommends implementation of a phased expansion beyond the pilot period. Gradual phasing of expansion has proven to have several benefits:
 - It allows the team (Alameda CTC and the transit agencies) to learn as we go and readily apply those lessons as we expand, making changes each year to streamline program administration and improve the customer experience for students and schools.
 - Limiting the number of new districts per year ensures that all Districts and schools are on-boarded successfully and seamlessly into the program. Each school district has a unique set of rules and policies. During the pilot significant time has been spent with each new district orienting them to the overall program and to the specific protocols we have in place (e.g. privacy, data management, pass database management) and, in some cases, adapting policies and protocols to meet district requirements.
 - Gradual expansion has allowed the Alameda CTC to closely track budget and ensure that we can follow through on all commitments. Participation rates in this program are difficult to predict, as every school has different demographic, land use, socioeconomic, and cultural conditions, all of which have the potential to impact pass uptake and usage. The program evaluation has allowed Alameda CTC to have a much better understanding of likely participation rates, but predictors of future student engagement and use of the program are limited. Alameda CTC wants to ensure that funding resources are sufficient as we expand to avoid ever needing to roll back the program once implemented. Transit pass prices also change over time which can greatly impact program cost.
 - The program recommends transitioning to youth Clipper cards during Phase 1 (standard Clipper cards were used during the pilot due to limitations of the Clipper system and pass products that were readily available to get the program up and running quickly). This card transition is a major undertaking and implementing the transition at existing schools, prior to incorporating large new school districts will allow the transition to happen more seamlessly. Ramp up efforts will ideally take place during Year 3 for current and returning participants. Costs are included in the recommendation to address this transition. More information on the Youth Clipper transition and staffing can be found later in this memo.

Program Model

Two program models have proven successful during the pilot: a Free/Universal model where every student at a school has access to a free pass at schools with high shares of students with high financial need, and a Means-based/Free model where low-income students have access to a free pass, using the income eligibility framework used to qualify for free/reduced price meals (FRPM). Each model has pros and cons:

- The Free/Universal model has the advantage of maximizing student access and exposure to transit, regardless of income level, potentially attracting more new transit riders, but it allows participation by families who may not need the subsidy, and has a higher cost overall as more students are eligible to participate.
- The Means-based/Free model ensures that limited resources are directed to those students/families with the greatest need, but limits the program's ability to expose all students to the benefits of the program. In addition, at schools where a very high number of students qualify for FRPM, a means-based program may not make sense if it only excludes a very small portion of students.

Other considerations in selecting a program model are:

- Transit service capacity: In some areas of the county, routes serving schools are already heavily impacted, with buses at school bell times already at or over capacity.
- Lessons learned from peer programs: All other programs in the Bay Area and many others nationwide are income-based. The Marin Transit Youth Pass Program started as a Free/Universal program and scaled back to a means-based program due to capacity impacts.
- Cost: As described above, there is still uncertainty as to participation rates in different schools/district and therefore what the total program cost would be. Means-based programs are one way to limit costs.

Given all these considerations, staff recommends a largely Means-based/Free program except for those school districts with very high FRPM percentages. For initial phases, staff recommends that districts where 75% or more of students overall are eligible for FRPM would qualify for a Free/Universal program, while all other Districts would qualify for a Means-based/Free program. Exceptions can be made where significant transit service capacity exists and budgetary impacts can be mitigated in consultation with the transit agency. Table 3 summarizes the criteria for program expansion.

Table 3 Summary of Criteria for Expansion

| Criteria | Definition |
|--|--|
| Income/Need | The percent of students who qualify for Free and Reduced Priced Meals (FRPM) |
| Program Model | Free/Universal model in districts with $\geq 75\%$ FRPM on average district-wide Means-based/Free model in all other districts |
| Transit Service | Schools must be within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of a bus route |
| Existing Transit Service Capacity | Discussions with transit agencies affected expansion plan to ensure that STPP does not overburden already at/over-capacity routes |
| Ease of Inclusion | Continue program at all currently participating schools and expand to full district in participating districts that have very few additional qualifying middle or high schools |
| Geographic Representation | Districts in every planning area will be included each year |

Recommended Phasing

Staff recommends an expansion plan that will incorporate all qualifying schools in Alameda County within two to four years and a list of districts for a Phase 1 expansion to take place during the 2019/20 school year. This will allow staff to continue to closely monitor participation rates, transit capacity issues, and costs as the program expands and come back to the Commission during the 2019/20 school year to get approval for Phase 2.

There are 19 school districts in Alameda County, sixteen of which qualify to participate in the program based on having at least one middle or high school with transit service within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of campus.¹ At the end of the phased expansion, over 130 schools and approximately 85,000 students will have access to the program. Alameda CTC staff closely coordinated with participating STPP transit agencies, including LAVTA, Union City Transit, AC Transit to identify school districts and schools to be included Phase 1 to mitigate capacity and administrative impacts. BART is addressed in the following section.

¹ Albany USD, Sunol Glen USD, and Mountain House USD do not qualify due to no middle or high school with transit service within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of campus.

Phase 1

The Phase 1 expansion is described below and shown in Table 4; this is based on the expansion criteria outlined above and balances geographic equity across planning areas. Participating schools in each District will be confirmed in consultation with school district staff and transit agency staff.

Expand to all schools in the following currently participating districts:

- **Hayward Unified School District (HUSD):** In HUSD, 70% of students qualify for FRPM, the fourth highest in the county. There are five middle schools, seven high schools and one combined school in HUSD with transit service, two of these schools are already participating in the pilot. Staff recommends expanding to all qualifying schools in Hayward USD under a Means-based/Free model in Phase 1 (up to 13 new schools).
- **Newark Unified School District (NUSD):** In NUSD, 49% of students qualify for FRPM. There is one middle school, one high school, and two small continuation/alternative high schools in NUSD with transit service, two of these schools are already participating in the pilot. Staff recommends expanding to all qualifying schools in Newark USD under a Means-based/Free model in Phase 1; this will require changing from the current Free/Universal model (up to 2 new schools).
- **New Haven Unified School District (NHUSD):** In NHUSD, 48% of students qualify for FRPM. There are two middle schools, one high school, and three small alternative/independent learning academies in NHUSD with transit service; two of these schools are already participating in the pilot. Staff recommends expanding to all qualifying schools in New Haven USD under a Means-based/Free model in Phase 1 (up to 4 new schools).
- **San Leandro Unified School District (SLUSD):** In SLUSD, 63% of students qualify FRPM. There are two middle schools and two high schools with transit service, two of these schools are already participating in the pilot. Staff recommends expanding to all qualifying schools in San Leandro USD under a Means-based/Free model in Phase I; this will require changing from the current Free/Universal model (up to 2 new schools).
- **Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District (LVJUSD):** In LVJUSD 21% of students qualify for FRPM; it is the lowest income district in the Tri-Valley. There are two middle schools, three high schools and one combined alternative school in LVJUSD that qualify, four of which are already participating in the pilot. LAVTA has spare capacity on the routes in Livermore and is interested in generating more ridership. LAVTA is willing to continue an eco-pass model to be adjusted over time based on usage rates. Staff recommends expanding to all qualifying schools in LVJUSD under a Free/Universal model in Phase 1 (up to 2 new schools).

Expand to some new schools in the following currently participating district:

- **Oakland Unified School District (OUSD):** In OUSD, 77% of students qualify for FRPM, second highest in the county. OUSD is the largest district in Alameda County with 53 middle and high schools, most of which have transit service. Seven OUSD schools are already participating in the pilot. Staff recommends continuing expansion to new OUSD schools, but to phase the expansion over multiple years due to the large number of schools in the district. Currently participating schools and up to ten new schools served by transit with over 90% of students who qualify for FRPM are recommended for inclusion in Phase 1 (up to 10 new schools).

Continue at currently participating schools in the following districts:

- **Alameda Unified School District (AUSD):** The City of Alameda started a free bus pass program at Island High School during the 2017/18 school year. Island High is a small continuation high school with 52% of students qualifying for FRPM. Staff recommends incorporating this school into the program so that only one transit pass program exists countywide and to allow this small program to take advantage of youth Clipper cards and other benefits offered by the countywide program. Staff recommends transitioning this program to a Means-based/Free model. (up to 1 new school)
- **Fremont Unified School District (FUSD):** Due to a low overall percentage of students qualifying for FRPM at 15%, staff recommends continuing the program at the current participating schools during Phase 1, and expanding to other Fremont USD schools in future phases. Continuing a Means-based/Free model is recommended for Fremont USD. (zero new schools)

Expand to these new districts:

- **Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE):** In ACOE, 80% of students qualify for FRPM, the highest in the county. There is one middle school, two high schools, and a combined school in ACOE. Staff recommends expanding to all qualifying schools in ACOE under a Free/Universal model in Phase 1 (up to 4 new schools).
- **Emery Unified School District (EUSD):** In EUSD, 76% of students qualify for FRPM, the third highest in the county. There is one middle and high school in Emeryville. Staff recommends expanding to all qualifying schools in EUSD under a Free/Universal model in Phase 1 (up to 2 new schools).

A summary of the Phase I expansion plan is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Phase I Expansion Plan

| Planning Area | School District | Program Model | Existing vs. New Schools | MS vs. HS | # Qualifying Schools | # Students Enrolled 2017/18 | Average District MS/HS FRPM % |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| North | Alameda USD | Means-Based/ Free* | 1 new/existing (current city program) | 1 HS | 1 | 128 | 34% |
| | Emery USD | Free/Universal | 2 new | 1 HS, 1 combo | 2 | 347 | 76% |
| | Oakland USD | Free/Universal | 7 existing & 10 new | 6 HS, 8 MS, 3 combo | 17 | 8,174 | 77% |
| Central | Hayward USD | Means-Based/ Free | 2 existing & 11 new | 7 HS, 5 MS, 1 combo | 13 | 9,581 | 70% |
| | San Leandro USD | Means-Based/Free* | 2 existing & 2 new | 2 HS, 2 MS | 4 | 4,674 | 63% |
| South | Fremont USD | Means-Based/ Free | 2 existing | 1 HS, 1 MS | 2 | 3,319 | 20% |
| | New Haven USD | Means-Based/ Free | 2 existing & 4 new | 3 HS, 2 MS, 1 combo | 6 | 6,748 | 48% |
| | Newark USD | Means-Based/ Free* | 2 existing & 2 new | 3 HS, 1 MS | 4 | 2,731 | 49% |
| East | Livermore USD | Free/Universal | 4 existing & 2 new | 3 HS, 2 MS, 1 combo | 6 | 5,469 | 21% |
| North & Central | Alameda County Office of Education | Free/Universal | 4 new | 2 HS, 1 MS, 1 combo | 4 | 794 | 80% |
| Subtotal | 10 Districts | | 21 existing & 38 new | 29 HS, 22 MS, 8 combo | 59 | 41,965 | |

*Transition from Free/Universal

Phase 2

A list of districts to be included in Phase 2 is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Phase 2 Expansion Districts

| Planning Area | School District | Program Model | Existing vs. New District | Average District MS/HS FRPM % |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| North | Alameda USD | Means-Based/Free | Existing District | 34% |
| | Berkeley USD | Means-Based/Free | New District | 37% |
| | Oakland USD | Free/Universal | Existing District | 77% |
| | Piedmont City USD | Means-Based/Free | New District | 2% |
| Central | Castro Valley USD | Means-Based/Free | New District | 24% |
| | San Lorenzo USD | Means-Based/Free | New District | 64% |
| South | Fremont USD | Means-Based/Free | Existing District | 20% |
| East | Dublin USD | Means-Based/Free | New District | 11% |
| | Pleasanton USD | Means-Based/Free | New District | 9% |
| Subtotal | 9 Districts | | 6 New Districts | |

Transition to Youth Clipper Cards

The STPP currently uses adult Clipper cards loaded with an institutional pass product. Staff recommends transitioning to a youth Clipper card which would allow students to access youth discounted fares if they use the card on other transit agencies. All three transit agencies concur that transitioning all cards to youth Clipper cards will be advantageous and feasible, however this card transition will be a major undertaking for Phase 1 of the program.

Due to offering a high level of discount across all agencies, youth Clipper cards require verification of date of birth on the application form. Alameda CTC will work closely with our consultant team staff, who have established relationships with each school, and the transit agencies and schools to make this transition.

Joint Pass Product

During Year Two of the STPP students in NHUSD had access to a single Clipper card that allowed access to both Union City Transit and AC Transit. Analysis of ridership data shows that 70% of students in NHUSD are using their cards on both agencies. In order to continue to provide access to both transit systems for these students would require development of a joint pass product. Staff is continuing to explore the feasibility of this product with both transit agencies and Clipper/Cubic.

BART Tickets

With the transition to youth Clipper cards, all students will have access to a 50% discount on BART. BART youth ticket options are distinct from all other pass types being used in the pilot because they have a fixed monetary value rather than a period of validity in which there is no limit on rides. Given the different nature of BART passes and limitations of the Clipper system, Alameda CTC did a limited test of BART tickets during the pilot using youth Orange tickets rather than Clipper cards.

Alameda CTC consulted with BART staff to explore options for the post-pilot period and several constraints became apparent. After the pilot period, orange tickets will no longer be available. In order to continue to have BART as a part of the pilot, a BART pass would have to be loaded onto a Clipper card. Currently BART does not have any pass products (all other participating agencies use a pass product).

At this time, staff does not recommend any additional BART value to be offered, given the limitations of BART fare structure and Clipper system and that, by virtue of having a youth Clipper card, all students will have access to a 50% discount on all BART fares. Staff can continue to track usage of BART on the STPP Clipper cards and new options may be available as part of the next generation of Clipper "2.0". This recommendation aligns with best practices from other peer programs in the Bay Area, none of which include regional rail systems (e.g. BART or SMART).

Travel Training and Marketing

General marketing of the program to get students to sign up will continue to be done by Alameda CTC, transit agencies, and schools. During the pilot period, travel training at middle schools has been successful and well-received. Bringing a bus onto campus has been an effective and popular strategy, however, this approach is labor intensive and requires paying an operator and vehicle for each event. LAVTA may take over the travel training in East County. Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) will continue to conduct limited travel training in the county, allocating training to schools based on budget availability and SR2S program resource allocation policies.

Program Evaluation

Goals

Five goals were adopted for the pilot program and they have served as strong guideposts for pilot implementation and evaluation. Two of these goals were for the pilot period only. Alameda CTC recommends continuing the three primary goals for the post-pilot period and adding a new fourth goal to guide program evaluation:

- 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.
- Implement cost effective program

Evaluation Framework

Alameda CTC will continue to conduct evaluation of the program through the expansion period. The recommended evaluation framework for the STPP beyond the pilot period will utilize a more streamlined and focused set of evaluation criteria based on lessons learned during the pilot period evaluation. The recommended metrics below assess key impacts of the program on students, transit agencies, and school districts and gauge the program's success against its adopted goals based on readily available data sources. Table 6 shows the recommended indicators, rationale and data sources for each indicator. Evaluation will continue to occur annually for the first three years of the program and will include recommendations for program improvements. Evaluation frequency will be revisited at that time.

Table 6 STPP Evaluation Framework

| | Evaluation Criteria | Rationale | Metric | Data Source | Primary Goals Met |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| 1 | Participation Rate | To determine the level of uptake of the passes by students | Percent of eligible students who opt to participate | California Department of Education; Participation master list | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove barriers • Increase options |
| 2 | Pass Usage | To determine how often students use their passes | Total number of rides taken; Number of rides divided by number of participants (by month, annual) | Clipper data; Participation master list | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase options • Build support for transit |
| 3 | Transit Ridership and Capacity | To determine the pass program impact on transit agency ridership and capacity | Total trips taken using student passes compared to overall ridership and total youth ridership (by year and trends); changes in boardings at stops by schools; route capacity before/after program implementation | Transit agency ridership and capacity data; Clipper data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build support for transit |
| 4 | Program Costs incl. admin./overhead costs | To understand the overall cost-benefit ratio of the pass program and the efficiency of program administration | Overall program costs; costs on a per participant basis; administrative costs as percentage of overall program costs | Financial information collected through invoices submitted to Alameda CTC; Alameda CTC staff costs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Cost Effective Program |

Program Staffing

Alameda CTC recommends a more streamlined staffing structure for Phase 1 compared to the three-year pilot based on lessons learned to maximize efficiency of program administration and focus resources on student passes. Alameda CTC will pay for transit agency direct implementation expenses including staff time as outlined below. Administration and overhead for Phase 1 will not exceed 5-8% of total program budget to align with best practices - peer program research yielded that administrative and management overhead for peer programs ranges from 3-11% with known inefficiencies at the high end of the range.

Over time, administration of the program will become more streamlined as processes become more efficient and the program becomes a known ongoing operational program rather than a new and evolving pilot. Alameda CTC has effectuated efficiencies have already occurred over the three years of the pilot. Phase 1 will still require significant staff time to manage the youth Clipper card transition and the on-boarding of new districts. In addition, the beginning of each school year will always require extra effort for contracting, marketing/education, distribution and collection of registration forms, data entry, card creation and distribution, and troubleshooting.

Phase 1 will be a transitional phase. Key roles and responsibilities are outlined below. During Phase 1, Alameda CTC and the consultant team will still be engaged to assist transit agencies to build relationships with school districts and manage the transition. It may take a few years for staffing levels to stabilize. Alameda CTC will continue to track and report to the Commission on staffing requirements and keep staffing/administrative/overhead costs to 5-8% of total costs in order to maximize resources available for student transit pass costs.

Staffing Plan

The recommended staffing plan for the post-pilot period is as follows (staffing costs are included in the cost section):

- **Alameda CTC:** Responsible for program oversight, management of expansion plan and phasing, program evaluation, funding, SR2S coordination and travel training, assistance with school district coordination and communication.
 - **Consultant:** Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates will continue support through Phase 1 to facilitate activities necessary to transition from the pilot to expansion Phase 1 and assist with school coordination and communication.
- **Transit agencies:** Responsible for contracting with school districts; collecting and processing registration forms; creating and distributing cards; managing card replacements; ongoing card and database management; serving as liaison with Clipper/Cubic, providing Clipper and transit agency data for program evaluation to Alameda CTC.

- **AC Transit:** Given the size of the agency and the number of passes administered (anticipated to be over 90% of total passes), AC Transit will need additional staff capacity to manage this program.
- **LAVTA and Union City Transit:** Both agencies have indicated that they can handle the administration of Phase 1 in house with existing staff resources. For equity, Alameda CTC will pay limited direct staff implementation expenses.
- **School Districts:** School districts to enter into agreement with transit agencies to allow designated district and/or school staff to be authorized to collect youth Clipper card applications and verify date of birth for students who chose to enroll. Agreement will also include privacy protection standards for the collection, handling, storage, and transmittal of student data.
- **Schools:** Promote program, distribute and collect youth Clipper card registration forms from students, verify date of birth per district agreement, and transmit applications to AC Transit.

Expansion Cost and Funding

The cost estimates for the five-year expansion period are based on data collected during the implementation of Years One and Two, their respective evaluation reports, discussions with transit agency staff, and an analysis of funding resources available.

Transit Agency Payment Structures

During the pilot period, Alameda CTC is utilizing a different payment structure with each participating transit agency, including paying per participant at the current monthly youth pass price (AC Transit), paying per ride (Union City Transit) and using an eco-pass model with a fixed price for universal eligibility (LAVTA).

Based on analysis of data from Years One and Two and negotiations with transit agencies, for the post-pilot period staff recommends a pay per ride model for all agencies. This payment structure keeps the transit agencies whole by paying for every ride taken by an STPP student, while not paying for passes that are not being utilized (on average just under half of passes aren't used each month with variations by district). LAVTA staff is open to continuing an eco-pass model in Livermore if there is agreement on a fair and data-based pricing structure that reflects actual usage; staff will continue to work with LAVTA to negotiate this.

Reserve fund

Based on data collected to date, the STPP has not caused overcrowding issues. Staff will continue to monitor transit service capacity and overcrowding during the expansion phases. Based on discussions with transit agencies, staff recommends establishing an operating reserve to protect against sudden surges in ridership if it can be determined that it is directly caused by the STPP. This will be a fund to be used for a short term

period only to allow transit agencies to respond and reallocate service accordingly. Key principles for the reserve fund are:

- The funding will only be released when certain thresholds are met, including:
 - Specific overcrowding threshold will be determined in consultation with transit agency based on data that is available and will not include historic overcrowding.
 - Overcrowding issue is sustained over at least 3 months.
 - Impacts must be documented and proven to be attributable to the Student Transit Pass Program using route/stop ridership data and data from Alameda CTC funded Student Transit Pass Clipper cards.
- Service impacts must not be pre-existing or exogenous, such as services where agency is already experiencing overcrowding.
- Funding will sunset each year on June 30th.
- Transit agency must define approach to absorb new ridership into existing service capacity before May 31st of the school year.
- Funding must be approved by Alameda CTC Commission.
- Maximum of \$500,000 per year for all agencies.

Table 7 STPP Program Expansion Cost-Estimate

| Cost Category | Phase I (2019/20) | Future Phases (4 years) | Total |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| AC Transit passes | \$3,300,000 | \$29,384,000 | \$32,684,000 |
| LAVTA transit passes | \$313,000 | \$2,180,000 | \$2,493,000 |
| Union City Transit passes | \$150,000 | \$600,000 | \$750,000 |
| Alameda CTC staff | \$50,000 | \$200,000 | \$250,000 |
| Transit agency staffing maximum, 5% of transit pass costs | \$190,000 | \$1,610,000 | \$1,800,000 |
| Other direct costs (e.g. shipping, reports, printing), 1% of transit pass costs | \$40,000 | \$330,000 | \$370,000 |
| Reserve fund* | \$500,000 | \$2,000,000* | \$2,500,000 |
| Contingency | | | \$153,000 |
| Total | \$4,243,000 | \$35,104,000 | \$41,000,000 |

*Maximum amount available in any given year is \$500,000.

STPP Funding

Throughout the pilot period, Alameda CTC staff has engaged in dialogue, advocacy and grant application efforts at the regional and state levels to identify additional funding sources for this program. Staff efforts have included:

- CTC Executive meetings to seek approvals for program eligibility in SB1 programs
- State legislative member coordination highlighting program benefits and need to fund program, including cap and trade funding opportunities
- MTC coordination and advocacy for program eligibility for regional funds, including means-based program
- Air District coordination for funding, including application to the Pilot Trip Reduction Program which was deemed ineligible
- Support for several state bills related to student transit, including AB 17 and AB 2304 sponsored by Assemblyman Holden, neither of which advanced

Identified funding for the program includes:

- Remaining Measure BB pilot program funding: Any remaining funds from the \$15,000,000 at the end of the pilot period will be utilized for expansion of the program.
- STA funding: In April 2018, Commission approved Resolution 18-004 to establish a State Transit Assistance (STA) County Block Grant Program and a funding distribution formula for Alameda County, including the annual funding distribution for FY 2018-19. The approved funding distribution formula allocates 50% of STA funding to the Student Transit Pass program. An alternative will be proposed at meeting if Proposition 6 passes.

Fiscal Impact: There is no fiscal impact at this time. Programming actions based on the Work Plan approval will be included in the next Comprehensive Investment Plan (CIP).

Attachment:

- A. Year Two Evaluation Report Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

In 2014, Alameda County taxpayers approved the Measure BB transportation sales tax which included an Affordable Student Transit Pass Pilot (STPP) to improve access to schools and increase transit use among middle and high school students. In 2016, Alameda CTC launched a three-year pilot program to test and evaluate different program models across different geographies with the aim of identifying successful models for future program implementation.

The STPP seeks to accomplish the following goals:

- 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
- Create a basis for a countywide student transit pass program (funding permitting)

The overall timeline for STPP development, implementation, and evaluation is shown below.

Figure 1 Timeline for STPP Development, Implementation, and Evaluation



The 2017-18 school year represents the second year of the pilot, referred to as Year Two. Year Two of the STPP was designed to respond to lessons learned from Year One of the pilot. During Year Two, two program models were implemented across five school districts and fifteen schools, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Summary of Year Two Program Models and Participation (2017-18 Year-End)

| School District | Participating Schools | Program Model | Number of Eligible Students | Number of Participants | Year-End Participation Rate |
|---|---|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Castlemont HS ▪ Fremont HS ▪ Frick MS ▪ McClymonds HS ▪ Westlake MS | Free/ Universal | 2,706 | 2,543 | 94% |
| San Leandro Unified School District (SLUSD) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ San Leandro HS ▪ John Muir MS | Free/ Universal | 3,609 | 1,787 | 50% |
| Hayward Unified School District (HUSD) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hayward HS ▪ Bret Harte MS | Free/ Means-Based | 1,598 | 497 | 31% |
| New Haven Unified School District (NHUSD) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cesar Chavez MS ▪ James Logan HS | Free/ Means-Based | 2,581 | 841 | 33% |
| Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District (LVJUSD) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ East Avenue MS ▪ Christensen MS ▪ Livermore HS ▪ Del Valle HS | Free/ Universal | 3,416 | 960 | 28% |
| 5 Districts | 15 schools | 2 models | 13,910 | 6,628 | 48% |

Summary of Key Findings

Program Participation and Transit Ridership

Compared to Year One, overall STPP participation increased from 36 percent to 48 percent of all eligible students. Between Year One and Year Two, the total number of eligible students increased by 70 percent (8,168 to 13,910) while the number of participants more than doubled (from 2,928 to 6,628, 126 percent increase). While a higher share of students are signing up to participate, students are not using the pass as regularly in Year Two; average bus boardings per participant declined, from 17 trips per month to ten trips per month overall. This change is particularly noticeable in the school districts that changed models between Year 1 and Year 2 from a discounted to a free program model, which may indicate more occasional riders taking advantage of the pass or students trying transit for the first time.

Participation rates increased significantly in districts where the pilot model was simplified (New Haven USD and Livermore USD). The STPP was significantly simplified between Years One and Two. Program models being tested were reduced from four to two, all passes were valid for the full year, all passes were free, and all grades were eligible at all participating schools. Where programs were significantly simplified, participation increased; in NHUSD participation rose from 9 percent to 33 percent and in LVJUSD participation rose from 3 percent to 28 percent.

Oakland USD participants used their transit pass more than students in any other school district. During the school year, Oakland USD participants took an average of 19 bus trips per month, which is almost twice as many trips as the next highest district, New Haven USD, where participants took an average of 11 trips per month.

High school participants reported riding the bus more often than middle school participants, and they reported broader benefits of the transit pass than middle school participants. In the student survey, a larger share of high school students reported that they miss fewer days of school since obtaining their transit pass than their middle school counterparts. High school participants also indicated that they are using the pass more and for more diverse activities.

Financial need correlates to students' participation and bus usage. Higher levels of financial need are correlated with higher participation rates and higher bus usage (average bus boardings per participant per month). There is some evidence that the amount and quality of transit service may also be related to the rate at which students participate in the STPP and ride the bus, and qualitative factors may also contribute to differences in outcomes, including factors such as variation in land use type, density, and demographics in different areas of Alameda County.

In New Haven USD, where all participants received passes for both AC Transit and Union City Transit in Year Two, nearly 70 percent of participants used both transit operators. This indicates appetite for a multi-agency pass; however, complications exist in addressing a single pass for two agencies with different fare products.

The addition of BART tickets to the program this year revealed demand for BART among participants, but significant challenges exist with pass format, administering ticket inventory, and unused fare value. In Year Two, participating high school students within the BART service area could receive a free \$50 BART ticket. Almost 40 percent of eligible high school students requested a BART ticket, however nearly a third of those who requested tickets have not used them. As of the end of July 2018, 56 percent of the BART fare value distributed in Year Two has not been used. Most BART rides on STPP tickets occurred within Alameda County, and the Year Two student survey indicated that nearly 50 percent of participants who ride BART access BART stations by bus.

Findings Related to Students and Families

Though the impact of the STPP on attendance rates is inconclusive at the school-wide level, the pass is critical in overcoming individual attendance issues. Many factors affect school-wide statistics on attendance and chronic absenteeism (e.g. flu seasons, lack of family support systems, etc.); there is no observable direct correlation between the availability of the student transit pass and attendance. However, some participants reported missing fewer days of school since obtaining their transit pass, and anecdotally, school staff, families, and students have indicated that the transit pass is a critical tool in helping students who have attendance challenges and at-risk families.

The STPP supports students' ability to participate in extra-curricular activities. While students use their transit passes mostly for travel to and from school, students also report using the pass to attend a variety of other activities including their sports games, jobs, and volunteer commitments.

The STPP continues to help families overcome cost barriers for accessing school. As in Year One, about 60 percent of Year Two participants who responded to the student survey said that the cost savings from the transit pass is "critical" or "helpful" to them and their families. Participants also reported that the cost savings of the BART ticket was a benefit; 70 percent of participants who received a BART ticket reported that associated savings was "critical" or "helpful."

Participants continue to report positive perceptions of transit. Over 70 percent of participants in each Year Two school district report that they feel safe on the bus and that transit meets their needs. This is a slight decline from Year One levels, but could be attributable to having more younger students in the program this year or because of changes in the participant profile due to increased participation.

Families express interest in the program regardless of income level. At schools with a Free/Means-based program, students and families that do not currently qualify for the program expressed interest in having a pass, suggesting that a transit pass is helpful for many families at all income levels.

Administration, Cost and Implementation

Simplifications to the program in Year Two reduced the burden on school site administrators, but the program still requires time, especially at the start of the school year, and challenges arise when institutional knowledge is lost due to staff turnover.

School site administrators appreciate simplified processes that reduced the time needed to administer the program. However, school staff report that the STPP workload can be substantial at the beginning of the year when the bulk of program enrollment occurs and that there is a learning curve for new site administrators when institutional knowledge is lost due to staff turnover.

Consolidating passes onto one Clipper Card reduced the administrative burden between Year One and Year Two, but the addition of BART Orange tickets added complexity. Overall the administration of the program was much more streamlined in Year Two, especially at schools that participated in Year One. However, there were many new administrative complexities and challenges with adding BART tickets to the program in Year Two, including that paper tickets are harder to track and cannot be replaced, and that no BART period pass is available. In addition, BART has discontinued the Orange ticket and it will not be available post-pilot, which poses additional challenges for continuation of this program component.

Feedback Highlights

Over the course of Year Two, the project team collected feedback about the STPP from students, school site administrators, and staff at each participating school district and transit operator. The following representative quotes highlight major themes from the second year of the pilot.

“Anecdotally yes, the attendance is improving. Especially for the kids with first period tardies.”

—School site administrator from Hayward USD

“The stories that are the most touching are the ones where the student has had some trauma... where they are trying to escape their home life because their parents aren’t able to provide reliable options for them. Those kids take the initiative, and they are making it on their own because of the bus pass. They come and they try hard, and you see their grades improve so much when their attendance improves. They don’t take it for granted.”

—Parent and family coordinator from San Leandro USD

“A lot of our juniors and seniors who have the card have been able to use it for work. They can leave school and not have to worry about getting a ride. They know exactly what time they have to leave, and they know they are going to get to work on time, and they have a way to get home, so it’s allowed them to work and get that experience.”

—School site administrator from Oakland USD

"I talked to a family today, and it was a significant part of deciding where her child is going to school. She checked and said, 'Okay, the program is here, here, and here.' So it does impact school choice."

—School site administrator from Oakland USD

"I never took the bus before, once I got the transit pass I do take it. My family encouraged me to take the pass. It has given me a little more independence."

—Focus group participant from San Leandro USD

"Hard to connect attendance to one aspect or program... I do believe it has a positive supportive impact on attendance even if you can't prove it with data."

—School district contact from Livermore Valley JUSD

"Before I had the Clipper card – I used to pay cash – now I have money for emergencies."

—Focus group participant from New Haven USD

"We have a lot of after-school clubs, and most of our kids who participate use the pass."

—School site administrator from New Haven USD

"[There was] a lot more knowledge this year. Kids were telling their friends. I can tell the students are receptive about it."

—School site administrator from Livermore Valley JUSD

Road Ahead

Year Three Program Design and the Road Ahead

The program design for Year Three is based on lessons learned to date, program evaluation, available budget, and accounts for student need and geographic equity in pilot implementation. The same two program models (Free/Universal and Free/Mean-Based) are continuing to be implemented and assessed in Year Three. Six new schools and two new school districts are participating in the program, bringing the total to 21 schools in seven school districts.

The STPP has been, and will continue to be, an opportunity to assess program models and approaches that work well and aspects that need improvement. Key factors for success are strong school support – site administrators and supportive staff members that are dedicated to the effort – simple program models, and streamlined administrative processes.