

Sponsorship of U-Pass Program

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1. Description of the VMT reduction programs, activities, or investments

In May 2016, the Metro Board approved a 2-year Universal Pass (U-Pass) Pilot Program for college, university and trade school students with the goal of creating a new generation of transit riders by making transit more accessible to college students. The program is a partnership with schools in Los Angeles (LA) County, where the schools distribute smart-chip stickers with radio-frequency identification (RFID) Transportation Access Pass (TAP) technology that turns the student ID card into a transit pass. Schools are billed for actual transit trips used for each quarter or semester pass session at the rate of \$0.75 per boarding.

The pilot period began in Fall 2016 and will end with Summer Session 2018. The pilot program produced over 3.9 million student boardings in the first 16 months of the program. During the pilot period, student participation increased 49% from 7,402 in Fall 2015 to 11,051 in Fall 2017, with over 22,000 semester passes sold at 12 participating schools. The program also includes a GradPass option to allow graduating U-Pass students to continue to purchase reduced fare for 12-months after graduation, and a discount for dual-enrolled high school students to purchase fare at the K-12 fare rate. In addition, Metro partners with several other LA County transit agencies who allow the U-Pass to be used as fare on their buses and reimburses those agencies directly for those boardings.

The Metro Board has already approved the U-Pass Program to become a permanent program effective Fall 2018. Currently, there are 14 schools in the U-Pass Program with 22 schools anticipated by Fall 2018. Additionally, over the next twelve (12) months, Metro will be working to include additional transit agencies in the reimbursement program, making the program more regional. There is also an ongoing discussion with Metro Bike Share to establish a U-Pass rate that can be added to the U-Pass either by the school or by the student.

Based on the information collected through the online registration surveys, 95% of the U-Pass participants are minorities and 75% of the participants are low-income, compared to all LA County residents who are 77% minority and 15.9% low income. None of the 14 current school partners, are able to fully subsidize the program, so all schools charge the students a cost to participate. Paying the cost of the pass for a full semester or quarter is still a significant barrier to students to participate in the program. Students often continue to pay the full cash fare of \$1.75 per boarding, which can add up to hundreds of dollars over the course of the school session, because they are unable to pay even for a monthly pass. Although, the U-Pass would save them money, they cannot afford the upfront payment. These students say that they are often choosing between riding transit and having money for lunch. A study by the California State University system in 2016, found that one in ten of their students are homeless and one in five doesn't have steady access to enough food (<https://presspage-production-content.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/1487/cohomelessstudy.pdf?10000>), and the Kresge Foundation believes that improving access to transportation is one of the pillars in building success in higher

education (<https://kresge.org/news/infographic-urban-higher-education-ecosystem-solution>). U-Pass data shows that schools that are able to subsidize the pass to reduce the cost for students, have participation numbers five to ten times higher than those that are unable to subsidize passes. The ability for a developer to subsidize the U-Pass Program in exchange for the VMT credits at the very low cost of \$0.16 per mile could substantially affect U-Pass participation and college graduation rates in the region.

2. Projected VMT reduction

Currently, the highest school participation is at the California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA), with 2,200 participants with 10 average boardings per student per week for over 1.14 million annual boardings (2,200 participants x 10 boardings per week x 52 weeks = 1,144,000 per year).

According to Metro's ridership data, the systemwide average trip distance per boarding is 4.73 miles. Based on that data, the estimated miles reduced for the program above would be 5.4 million annual miles (1,144,000 annual boardings multiplied by 4.73 miles per boarding = 5,411,120 miles per year). There are 77 colleges, universities and trade schools in Los Angeles County who could potentially participate in the U-Pass program.

3. Evidentiary basis for the projected reduction, such as results of prior efforts or published research

Each U-Pass participant must pre-register online for the program. Based on the actual participant data, the average student trip distance, cost per mile, average trips per pass period, and total VMT could all be calculated individually by school or as an average across the county, depending on how the program is administered.

4. Payment or other exchange or inducement required to execute the VMT reduction project or program. If there is a difference between the cost of the project vs. the exchange price – e.g., because the project already has partial funding – this is worth knowing.

Metro's systemwide average trip distance per boarding is 4.73 miles. Based on that data, the estimated cost per mile reduced under the U-Pass Program would be \$0.16 per mile (\$0.75 per boarding divided by 4.73 miles = 0.158). VMT exchange sponsorships could be used to sponsor all or part of the cost of a U-Pass Program at a specific school, or investments could be made into a countywide grant program to assist schools who could not otherwise afford to subsidize the program.

5. Identification of the entity or type of entity the presenter believes or speculates would be interested in buying or providing some other form of exchange for this VMT mitigation.

Any developer with a project located adjacent to a college, university, or trade schools might be interested in supporting a U-Pass program at a school, or the school itself could use VMT mitigation requirements to invest in their own student programs and reduce traffic around their campus.