

CityBus Unlimited Rides (UR Free) Youth Program

October 25, 2022



Santa Rosa
CityBus

What is the Unlimited Rides-Youth (UR Free) Program?



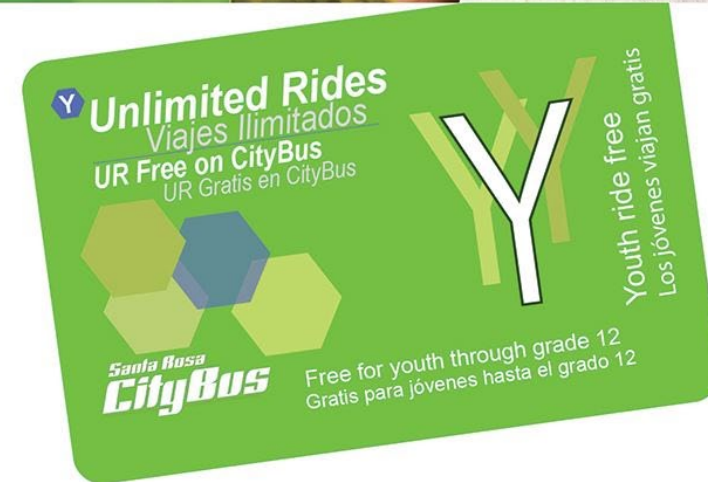
- Fare-free program for youth initiated July 2021 as 18-month pilot to support transit ridership and community economic recovery
- Anticipated benefits:
 - Increased transit ridership
 - Reduced household expenses for families
 - Improved school attendance
 - Increasing transit's profile within the community
 - Improving transportation equity
- Collaboration with schools, seven school districts and youth advocates

How does the UR Free Program work?

- For Youth grades TK-12:
 - Ride CityBus free anywhere/anytime CityBus operates
 - Youth grades 9-12 show student ID when boarding the bus
 - Youth grades 8 and under identify their grade level to the driver, no ID required
 - Youth grades 9-12 without a student ID may acquire a UR Free pass
- Lost fare revenue reimbursed by BAAQMD Transportation Fund for Clean Air grant

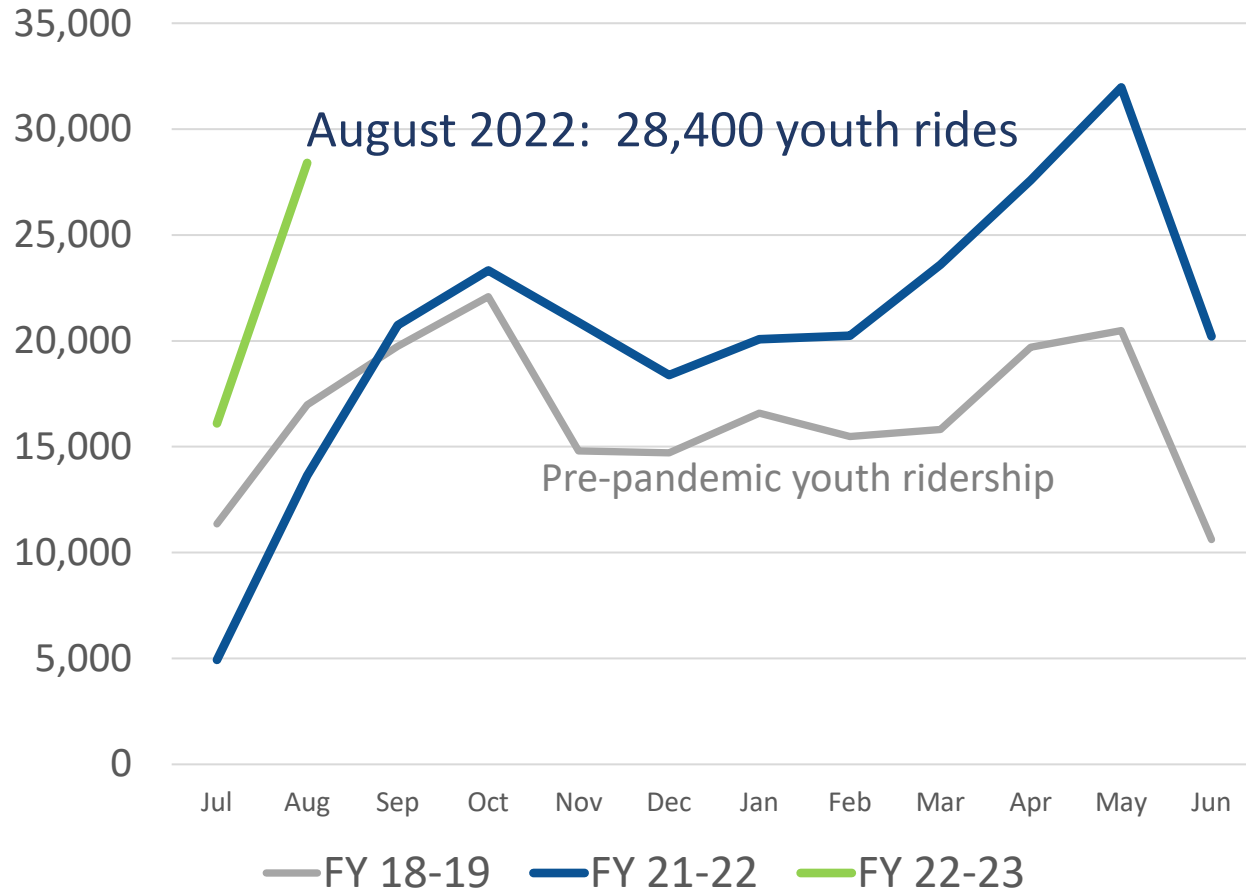


Santa Rosa
CityBus



BAY AREA
AIR QUALITY
MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT

UR Free Youth Ridership



- Youth ridership exceeded pre-pandemic levels in month 3 of the UR Free Program
- Over the past six months youth ridership is averaging over 150% of the pre-pandemic level

Youth Survey Results

245,262

Rides FY 21/22

747

Total Survey Responses

588 in English
159 in Spanish

Before & Now

- 26%** Never rode before it was free
- 34%** Now ride 5 or more days a week
- 31%** Will ride more if their route has more trips

Respondents

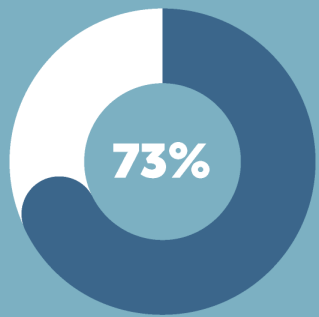
73%

High School

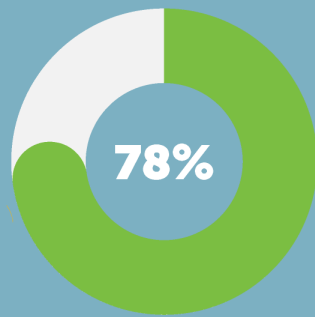
20%

Middle School

How the program helps



"Improved my attendance"



"Reduced my car trips"

34% use the bus "daily"

5 or more days a week

50% use the bus for trips

to places other than school.



Youth Voices

"If the bus wasn't free I don't know how to get to school or see my family."

"It's great, it helps a lot when my parents can't get me."

"I am a teen mom and I appreciate this program very deeply...It allows me to still continue school. It increases my motivation to go and makes things a lot easier."

"Keep the buses free, kids need it. I need it, times are hard and the bus helps me get to school."



Thank you for letting
US Kids Ride FREE!
Thank you for having nice
bus drivers.
Thank you for dropping us off at the
library so we didn't have to walk.

Proposed Next Steps

- **Short-term:** Extend CityBus UR Free Pilot Program for six months, from January 1, 2023 to June 30, 2023, using approximately \$135,000 in additional Transportation Fund for Clean Air grant funds
- **Longer-term:** Identify a path to make the program permanent, with potential expansion to other transit operators
 - Joint multi-operator application to the Sonoma County Climate Resiliency Fund for two-year pilot program in FY 24 and FY 25
 - Potential future use of Go Sonoma sales tax funds beginning FY 26 to continue the program, subject to SCTA Board approval

Sonoma Co. Climate Resiliency Fund (CRF) Proposal

- Climate Resiliency Fund established in 2021 by Sonoma County Board of Supervisors using PG&E Settlement Funds
- Through SCTA Future of Transit process, joint proposal for two-year pilot providing free transit for youth on CityBus, Sonoma County Transit, and Petaluma Transit beginning July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025
 - New component enabling an adult chaperone to ride free with youth for first three weeks of each semester
 - CRF funds may serve as a “bridge” to potential future Measure DD/Go Sonoma funds to continue the program
- \$907,000 requested to fund a projected 1.3 million free youth rides over two years
- CityBus proposes committing \$150,000 in TFCA funds as match, along with marketing costs



Other Funding Considerations

- Regional TFCFA and State Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) funds can fund fare-free programs
 - Funding from both programs currently in use to provide local match for federal electric bus grants
- Measure DD/Go Sonoma sales tax measure allocates 2% of revenue to fare-free transit programs beginning FY 25
- New funding partnerships may become available based on success of the program
- If CRF proposal unsuccessful, staff will evaluate options to continue to fund program and return to Council

Recommendation

It is recommended by the Transportation and Public Works Department that the Council, by resolution,

- 1) Extend the Unlimited Rides – Youth (UR Free) pilot program for TK-12th grade youth through June 30, 2023, and
- 2) Approve City participation in a countywide unlimited rides for youth program for two-year period, beginning July 1, 2023, if awarded funding from the Sonoma County Climate Resiliency Fund.

QUESTIONS?