

# CityBus Unlimited Rides (UR Free) Youth Program

October 25, 2022



**Santa Rosa**  
**CityBus**

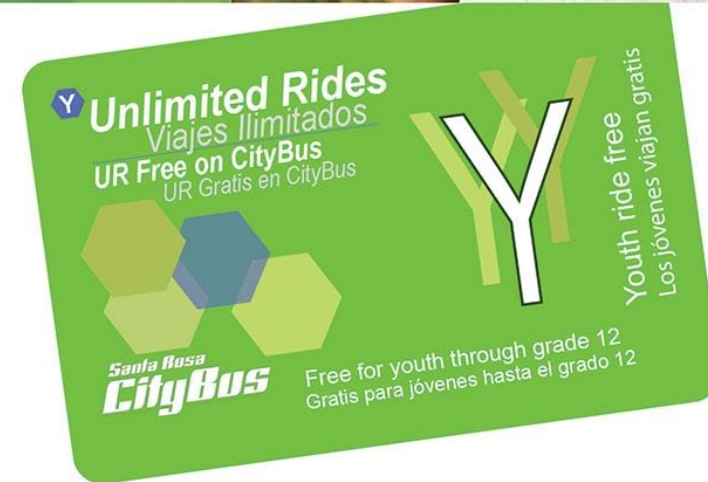
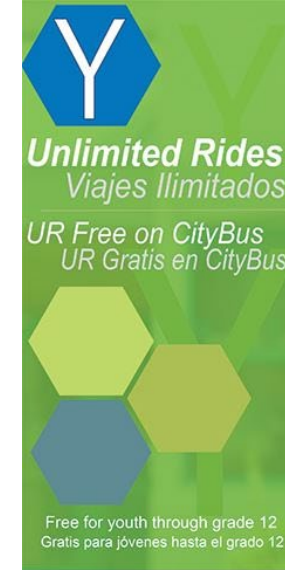
# What is the Unlimited Rides-Youth (UR Free) Program?



- 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

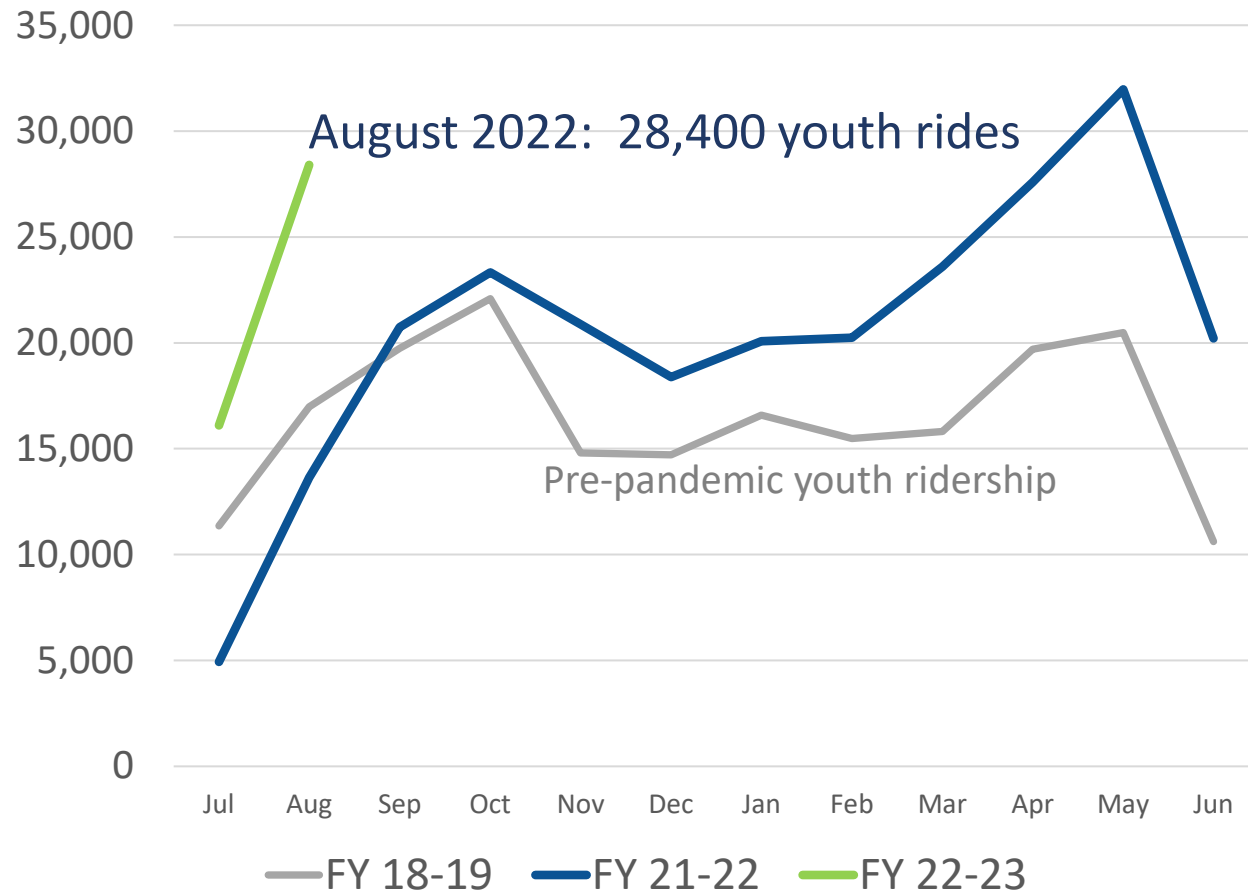
# How does the UR Free Program work?

- 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



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

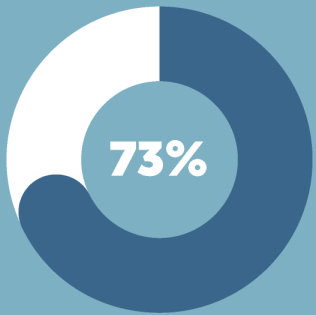
**73%**

High School

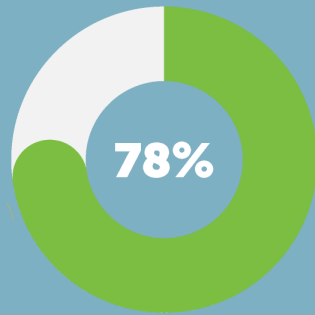
**20%**

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 don'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 TFCA 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?