

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: YURI KOSLEN, TRANSIT PLANNER  
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT  
SUBJECT: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH SONOMA  
COUNTY JUNIOR COLLEGE DISTRICT AND SCJCD  
ASSOCIATED STUDENTS FOR CITYBUS UNLIMITED ACCESS  
PASS PROGRAM FOR SANTA ROSA JUNIOR COLLEGE  
STUDENTS

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Transportation and Public Works Department that the Council, by resolution, approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Sonoma County Junior College District (SCJCD) and the SCJCD Associated Students, establishing the CityBus Unlimited Pass Program for Santa Rosa Junior College students through June 30, 2020.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sonoma County Junior College District approached the City of Santa Rosa with a pilot program to provide Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) students with an unlimited number of transit rides for the fall 2017 semester. With Council approval, a “pilot” program was initiated on September 20, 2017, and extended twice through December 30, 2018. The Transportation and Public Works Department is returning to Council to report on the success of this “pilot” program and seek implementation of an 18-month MOU with four-one-year options to renew the program.

BACKGROUND

The City of Santa Rosa has heard from the community about the benefits of providing “free fares” to college students. The students of the SCJCD recognized the importance of transit services and elected to use revenue generated from the Student Transportation Fee (STF), which passed in spring 2017 to seek agreements with the transit providers within Sonoma County (Sonoma County Transit, Petaluma and Santa Rosa CityBus) to provide an unlimited transit ridership program. The pilot program allows SRJC students to use CityBus by showing a SRJC I.D. thru the end of December 2018.

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Prior to the implementation of this program, CityBus staff estimated weekly ridership at over 4,000 riders per week. City staff expect the maturation of the program to take up to two years, which is consistent with similar college/transit programs. Ridership has steadily increased from an average of 2,500 riders per week during the fall 2017 semester to an average of 3,500 rides per week during the spring 2018 semester to a current average of 4,500 riders per week during the fall 2018 semester.

The original concern with this unlimited ridership program related to whether the funds generated by the SCJCD Student Transportation Fee were sufficient to cover the costs of the program (in terms of lost fare revenue). To date, the SCJCD Student Transportation Fee has proven adequate to cover the program cost for the fall 2017, spring 2018 and summer 2018 semesters and is on-track to fully cover program costs for the fall 2018 semester.

During the summer, SRJC staff convened the three Sonoma County fixed-route bus transit providers (CityBus, Sonoma County Transit and Petaluma Transit). SRJC has an agreement with all three operators and is managing a campus marketing message of "any line any time." During this meeting all three operators discussed the successes of providing unlimited ridership.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On September 19, 2017, the City Council reviewed and authorized the launch of the Unlimited Access Pass pilot program for the fall 2017.

On December 19, 2017, the City Council reviewed and authorized the extension of the Unlimited Access Pass pilot program through June 30, 2018.

On June 5, 2018, the City Council reviewed and authorized the extension of the Unlimited Access Pass pilot program through December 31, 2018.

ANALYSIS

Transit Division staff had initially estimated that the pilot unlimited pass program would generate between \$60,000 - \$75,000 in fare revenue per fall/spring semester. Even with the success of the program, the ridership during the fall 2017 semester resulted in \$31,500 worth of rides, spring 2018 semester result in about \$54,000 worth of rides, summer 2018 resulted in about \$16,000 worth of rides. We expect fall 2018 to result in about \$62,000 worth of rides. These expenses are fully covered by the current MOU and Amendment with the SCJCD through December 31, 2018.

The proposed MOU would initiate a new agreement, moving the program out of its pilot phase and extend this benefit to the SRJC students through June 2020. The SCJCD has agreed to provide \$194,000 (\$59,000 for spring 2019, fall 2019 and spring 2020 and \$17,000 for summer 2019) through June 2020. Additionally, the SCJCD is agreeing to increase the reimbursement to the City of Santa Rosa to \$.84 per ride starting on January 1, 2019 (from September 2017-June 30, 2018 the SRJC paid \$.77 per ride and from July 1, 2018 – December 31, 2018 the SRJC paid \$.83 per ride). It is

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possible that due to a combination of increasing ridership and increasing the per rider rate to \$.84, the Transit Division's lost revenue may exceed the available SCJCD Student Transportation Fee funds by up to an estimated \$25,000. .

A stipulation from the pilot agreement that will continue is that CityBus may be awarded additional funding from the Student Transportation Fee if CityBus ridership exceeds the available funds.

The SRJC and the Transit Division will continue to analyze this program and evaluate its outcomes.

FISCAL IMPACT

This 18-month MOU will provide \$194,000 in revenue to the Transit Division. Based on the success of the fall 2017, spring 2018, summer 2018 and fall 2018 semesters, Transit Division staff expect that STF funds will be sufficient to cover lost fare revenue through. However, it is possible that due to a combination of increasing ridership and the increased per rider reimbursement rate to \$.84, the City's lost revenue may exceed the available SCJCD Student Transportation Fee funds by up to an estimated \$25,000 during this period. The SCJCD and the City will work in good faith to pursue a remedy for any lost revenue. This MOU will have no impact on the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Resolution/Exhibit A (Memorandum of Understanding with Sonoma County Junior College District)

CONTACT

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