

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: YURI KOSLEN, TRANSIT PLANNER
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: SANTA ROSA JUNIOR COLLEGE PILOT PROGRAM TO
PROVIDE AN UNLIMITED ACCESS PASS TO STUDENTS FOR
THE FALL 2017 SEMESTER
AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Transportation and Public Works Department that the Council, by resolution, approve a Memorandum of Understanding with Santa Rosa Junior College and SCJCD Associate Students under which CityBus will implement a pilot program, allowing all Santa Rosa Junior College students to board CityBus an unlimited number of times for the fall 2017 semester which cost will be offset by a minimum of \$50,000 from Santa Rosa Junior College.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Santa Rosa Junior College 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 remainder of the fall 2017 semester and the SRJC would pay a minimum \$50,000 to the City of Santa Rosa.

The Transportation and Public Works Department will return to Council to report on the fall 2017 PILOT program and will bring to Council any continuance of the program beyond fall 2017.

BACKGROUND

The City of Santa Rosa has heard from the community about the benefits of providing “free fares” to college students. The cost of this type of program has not been feasible to fund out of Transit Division budget alone.

Recently, the Students of the Sonoma County Junior College District (SCJCD), recognizing the importance of transit services, elected to use revenue generated from the Student Transportation Fee (STF) passed in spring 2017 to enter into an unlimited transit ridership program with the transit providers within Sonoma County (Sonoma

County Transit, Petaluma and Santa Rosa CityBus). The program would allow the SRJC students to ride for an unlimited number of times during the remainder of the fall 2017 semester (until January 16, 2018).

With the start of the SRJC fall 2017 semester on August 21st, the SRJC has purchased 31-day passes on CityBus to ensure their students have access to CityBus services for the month.

In addition to the environmental benefits, this program directly impacts the College's ability to provide access to educational services for some of the county's most economically disadvantaged students. The program aims to reduce parking demand at the SRJC, increase students' access to the campuses, help recruit and retain students, reduce the overall cost of attending the SRJC, increase ridership on CityBus, and utilize the new Mendocino Avenue 15-minute frequency provided by CityBus. Unlimited Access Pass programs have been very successful by both anecdotal accounts provided by students and empirical data provided by community colleges and universities across California. For the past three years, the SRJC and Sonoma County Transit have proven the benefits of their unlimited access program for SRJC students.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

n/a

ANALYSIS

CityBus estimates fall 2017 SRJC ridership to be 95,000-115,000 rides based on the SRJC student population and percentage of students that take the "bus" to and from classes. CityBus' average fare for FY 16/17 was \$0.77. This means that the estimated cost to the City of Santa Rosa to provide the Unlimited Access Pass program to the SRJC student body for the remainder of the fall 2017 semester is expected to be between \$60,000 - \$75,000, of which a minimum \$50,000 is being paid for by the SRJC Student Transportation Fee.

The term of this agreement, to be approved by both parties, will expire on January 16, 2018 or be amended prior to this date. As part of this PILOT program the SRJC will convene all transit operators participating in the STF funded program during the fall 2017 semester to ensure SRJC student ridership is being tracked consistently among operators. The SRJC will also track, analyze and share with the City of Santa Rosa the fall 2017 data for the number of registered students, number of students that received SRJC student ID cards, number of students that dropped out but received an ID card and other statistics that provide a better understanding of the impacts the student ID card disbursement has on this PILOT program.

Based on STF revenue and ridership for all participating transit operators, the SRJC and CityBus will analyze this PILOT program and determine its success. Depending on ridership numbers of all transit agencies being paid out of the STF funds and the actual

STF revenue for fall 2017, CityBus may be awarded additional funding if ridership exceeds 65,000 rides on CityBus during the fall semester. If CityBus provides less than 65,000 rides during the fall 2017 semester, then the remainder of the rides (at the dollar amount of \$0.77/ride) will be credited to the SRJC ridership for the spring 2018 semester. Once the STF funding and CityBus ridership is better understood it is the intention of CityBus and the SRJC to develop a multi-year agreement that details funding participation by both parties.

The Transportation and Public Works Department has conferred with the Finance Department to ensure that the estimated financial and ridership impacts are sound.

FISCAL IMPACT

If staff's ridership estimates are correct, the PILOT program could result in \$10,000 - \$25,000 in lost fare revenue. Staff proposes to incorporate additional costs of the PILOT program within the existing operating budget. Staff will utilize loan funds approved by Council should the PILOT program's operating costs exceed the budget allocation.

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/Memorandum of Understanding

CONTACT

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