



**DATE:** July 22, 2021

**TO:** Transportation Advisory Commission

**FROM:** Laura Rubio-Cornejo, Director of Transportation

**SUBJECT: INFORMATION ITEM – Update on Transportation for Youth by Pasadena Transit**

**BACKGROUND:**

Pasadena Transit provides a network of routes that focus on serving key Pasadena destinations, including area schools, business districts; the six Metro L Line (Gold) stations in Pasadena, as well as the regional transit network; community centers; large employers and employment corridors; recreation areas; and other key destinations in Pasadena. The system also connects residential neighborhoods to the business districts and major trip generators. Pasadena Transit serves all Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) high schools, including John Muir High School, Pasadena High School, Marshall Fundamental Secondary School, Blair High School and Rose City High School. Below is a table of the PUSD high schools and the Pasadena Transit routes that connect to them. Pasadena Transit also serves a number of public middle schools as well as private high schools.

<b>PUSD High School</b>	<b>Pasadena Transit Rt Connections</b>
Blair	20 & 51/52
John Muir	31/32
Marshall	31/32 & 40
Pasadena High School	31/32 & 40
Rose City High School	10 & 20

Youth transportation is a key component of Pasadena Transit, which accounts for approximately 250,000 youth boardings annually. In order to keep up with the school year demand, Pasadena Transit increases service in line with the school bell schedule. Youth transportation needs are a high priority during the service planning, operations management, communications and outreach efforts.

When school is in session, youth ridership makes up approximately 22% of Pasadena Transit ridership. This figure decreases to approximately 10% during the summer when the regular school year is not in session. Given the role Pasadena Transit plays in ensuring school-aged transit users have transportation to school, youth transportation

needs are a high priority during the service planning, operations management, communications and outreach efforts.

### Youth and Bus Operations

Much of the youth ridership increase that takes place during the school year happens in brief windows of time during the day; either leading up to the start of the school day or just after school ends. During these times, buses may reach or exceed capacity, meaning all seats are occupied and one-third of the passengers in the bus are standing. During this time, buses are no longer able to pick up passengers because there is no more room on the bus. In order to optimize passenger capacity on the existing service and limit wait times for youth, staff has conducted specific ridership analyses of each PUSD high school that resulted in scheduling routes at specific times to meet the ridership demand for each school as best as possible.

In an effort to reduce overcrowding, service is added on the Pasadena Transit routes that serve PUSD high schools. This targeted service increase helps meet demand during the school peak periods. Prior to the COVID “safer at home” order, high schools along Route 20 and Route 31/32, in particular, had targeted bus service to meet the youth demand by increasing bus frequencies during the morning and afternoon peak times and by trying to serve bus stops near the schools 7 to 10 minutes before and after the school day bell schedules.

As PUSD began planning to resume in person classes for the 2020/2021 school year, DOT staff reached out to PUSD regarding their bell schedule in order to program additional buses to help facilitate social distancing. Staff will continue to monitor fluctuations in the PUSD schedules and ridership trends, and where possible make adjustments to meet demand.

For many years, staff has also worked with PUSD to encourage use of the public transit system. This effort has included coordination with PUSD to support organized and chaperoned group public transit trips on Pasadena Transit to key destinations that are coordinated along its existing bus routes during off peak times, serving the groups at regular bus stops, and often at no cost to the riders or the organizers.

### Youth Fares and Passes

The Pasadena Transit Youth fare category for children in Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade is \$0.50 versus the Regular fare of \$0.75. In 2019, following the completion of the Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) and a tremendous amount of feedback received by youth, a new 30-day pass for Youth riders was introduced at a discounted rate of only \$10. The Regular fare 30-day pass is offered at \$15 for unlimited rides.

During the SRTP process, an analysis was conducted to evaluate the cost of providing free Pasadena Transit service to youth. Currently the Youth fare category makes up about 19% of the system’s revenue. The analysis concluded that if the youth fare were waived the system would experience a 33% increase in ridership demand while

simultaneously experiencing a decrease in revenue. In order to implement a sustainable free or significantly reduced fare, funding would need to be identified to address the revenue gap and support the additional service required to meet the increase in demand.

Pasadena Transit currently provides a number of passes in which the passenger has a significantly reduced or free fare. Most of these programs provide fare reimbursement to Pasadena Transit for any boardings that occur with these passes. Included within the reduced fare portfolio are college passes with ArtCenter and Caltech. For school-aged youth, in addition to the discounted Pasadena Transit 30-day pass that is available, Pasadena Transit joined the Metro Low Income Fare is Easy (LIFE) program that provides free passes or rides on Pasadena Transit for low income families. Staff has also worked with PUSD's Blair High School International Academy that provides a specialized subsidized program to students whose primary language is not English and have been in the United States twelve months or less. Staff continues to work with various partners and actively monitor grants to work towards being able to support additional free and reduced pass programs including working with Metro on the Fareless System Initiative.

### Looking Ahead

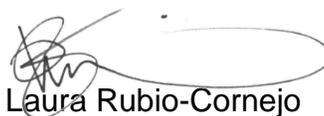
Staff will remain engaged in efforts to continue to identify a means of supporting lower or no-cost fares to youth riders, including staying engaged with Metro and other operators in the region as their FSI pilot process is implemented.

As the community continues to transition away from the pandemic per public health conditions, Pasadena Transit remains vigilant in its efforts to prioritize the public transit options for youth riders. A service change is already in place for early August to help provide as seamless of a transition as possible for PUSD's in person teaching.

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