



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 10, 2003

BUS PASS SUPPORTERS GEAR UP FOR AC TRANSIT BUDGET HEARING

Pilot Program Faces Possible Termination Due to Budget Cuts

What: AC Transit Budget Hearings
Where: Scottish Rite Center
1547 Lakeside Drive, Oakland, CA
When: Wednesday, June 11, 2003
3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

East Bay, California... Students, youth leaders, faith leaders, and elected officials from Hayward to Richmond are urging AC Transit Board of Directors to save the Free and Reduced-Fare Youth Bus Pass Program. The AC Transit Board of Directors is scheduled hear from the public on **June 11, 2003** about proposed service changes for the transit agency, including eliminating the popular bus pass program.

Youth based organizations are angry and frustrated with the proposed changes and promise to mobilize students, turning them out to the hearing.

Last year, Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia, Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, and former Assemblywoman Dion Aroner successfully lobbied AC Transit to implement the bus pass program which qualifies middle and high school students in the AC Transit service area to a free annual bus pass if they also qualify for free/reduced school lunches. The program also lowered the agency's 31-day student pass from \$27 a month to \$15.

According to AC Transit, about 25,000 free annual passes have been handed out to students so far.

The program is funded by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), AC Transit, Congestion Management Agency, Contra Costa County Social Services, Alameda County Social Services, Contra Costa Transportation Authority, Kaiser Permanente, The Women's Foundation, and State Street California Foundation.

Initially, AC Transit Board of Directors voted to support the program for two-years, allowing time UC Berkeley researchers to study whether the lack of affordable public transit is a barrier for low-income students getting to school.

In response to budget cuts, AC Transit staff is recommending a new proposal, under which low-income students would no longer receive bus passes. Instead, AC Transit would create a new fare structure allowing all students to pay \$10 for a 15-day pass (\$20 a month).

"We promised the students and the community to continue this program for two-years," said Supervisor Gioia. "We need to keep that promise and make sure the program remains the same."

Because of limitations of AC Transit's ability to rally community support and to attract private sector funding, supporters of the Bus Pass Program have created the *Youth Transportation Coaliton* in an effort to develop long-term strategy of public support and funding for the Free and Reduced-Fare Youth Bus Pass Program.

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