



April 24, 2018

The Honorable Richard Bloom
 Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 3
 State Capitol, Room 447
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT for \$50 million for discounted transit pass program for low-income students

Dear Assembly Budget Subcommittee Chair Richard Bloom,

We strongly support a statewide program to provide discounted student transit passes to low-income students at middle schools, high schools and public colleges and universities. We believe transportation is the one of the most important civil rights issues of our time because it determines whether we have affordable, reliable access to education, opportunity and jobs. It determines our cost of living—as the second highest household expense after the rent/mortgage. It affects air quality, public health and public safety. And it’s not a special interest but a common interest that affects us all. (See below.)

Providing discounted student transit passes would help address some of the current inequities in our transportation system by providing an alternative for students to the expense of owning, maintaining and parking a car. Sharp increases in rent and the cost of living over the past few years mean that many students now have to choose between buying a transit pass or buying lunch—and helped cause the number of homeless students to increase.

A student transit pass program is also key to “growing” transit riders and to cultivating a transit-oriented culture among young people: If riding transit is made easy and affordable for students to take to school and to work they are likely to begin making decisions about where to live and get a job based on the proximity of transit, which will in turn help promote the land use and development patterns that will support even greater transit use, and reductions in traffic and GHG emissions.

But these are only a few of the benefits. Listed below are just some of the other benefits not only for students but for all Californians:

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS: College is hard. Getting there shouldn’t make it harder. Student transit pass programs would benefit students and their families by:

- improving student access to education, jobs and opportunity
- lowering the cost of an education because students wouldn’t need to own, maintain, insure and park a car
- making it easier for students from disadvantaged communities—who often have to work at least part-time to pay for their education—to get to jobs.

BENEFITS FOR SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: Schools are big generators of traffic in cities. These programs would benefit colleges and universities because they:

- reduce the student drive-alone mode share
- reduce the need for schools to build expensive parking structures on campus when the land and money could be used for educational purposes instead
- reduce parking demand by 400 to 1,000 spaces per campus, according to a UCLA study

- can be partially funded by small increases in student registration fees; a UCLA study found that 54% to 94% of students approved referenda to increase student fees for passes (the average cost = \$30/student/year)

BENEFITS FOR TRANSIT AGENCIES: The UCLA study also found that universal student transit pass program reduce operating subsidies to transit agencies because they:

- increase total transit ridership without requiring new infrastructure
- fill empty seats on bus and rail lines
- result in improved transit service because of higher demand.

BENEFITS FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC: Everyone benefits because:

- of reduced traffic and car ownership
- of reduced parking demand
- of reduced air pollution and GHG emissions
- providing more options to driving will make California more sustainable
- an educated workforce will keep California economically competitive.

Moreover, transportation is a system and transit makes the entire system work more efficiently by providing people with other options for getting around and creating more room on the road for those who want or need to drive!

Sincerely,

Denny Zane

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Joshua Stark

State Policy Director, Transform (co-sponsor)

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