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Photos by Gayle Anderson



Metro Speaks volunteer Rosemarie Ordenes, who works in Mail Services, displays oversized TAP card to familiarize seniors with the card that will replace their current Metro ID card.

## Boyle Heights Seniors learn to 'TAP' into Metro System

[MORE>](#) Metro's TAP Cards to Replace Paper Day Passes Beginning March 15

By LAURA KLOTH  
*myMetro.net*

As they prepared to eat pasta and play bingo, some 80 seniors at the Boyle Heights Senior Center on March 6 listened attentively to a Spanish-language presentation about the transition to the regional TAP program presented by Metro Speaks, Metro speakers bureau managed by Community Relations Manager Helen Ortiz Gilstrap.

Ortiz Gilstrap began her discussion as Systems Project Manager Vanessa Smith projected PowerPoint slides on a large stage curtain detailing the important points about program.

"We're here to explain the change that will be occurring with your Metro senior bus passes," said Ortiz Gilstrap.



Vanessa Smith, Helen Ortiz Gilstrap and Rosemarie Ordenes prepare to begin meeting.

As she discussed the program in detail, some of the seniors watched the slides while others studied the application distributed by Rosemarie Ordenes, a Metro Speaks volunteer, who was also on hand to help inform the seniors about TAP.

The seniors learned that beginning March 15, Metro paper day passes would be sold only on TAP cards. Seniors who want to continue riding Metro at the senior discounted rate would need to complete an application for a Metro senior TAP card, which will replace their current yellow Metro senior ID card.

As part of the application process, the seniors were told, they would have to provide a copy of their California identification card, a driver's license or a passport, along with a passport size photo.



Vanessa Smith and Helen Ortiz Gilstrap answer a senior's question about registration.

"Please don't send in your original ID," Ortiz Gilstrap told the group, "And don't forget to sign your application."

During the transition, seniors would be able to get a temporary TAP card to purchase a day pass from Metro bus operators through April 11. Seniors

would be able to use the temporary card beginning March 15 through June 30, and afterward, seniors who want the discount fare would be expected to have their permanent TAP card.

As she fielded questions, Ordenes said some seniors were happy to hear that they could replace their pass if their card were lost or stolen.

"They love it," she said. "They feel more secure because if they lose the card ... they could get their TAP card replaced."

Smith said the seniors would get the cards replaced for \$5 with their remaining pass product replaced for free.

So far, Metro has processed more than 15,000 senior applications with only a few delays. Smith said some of the applications have been incomplete or do not contain the proper sized photo or the applicant isn't 62, which is Metro's required age to receive a senior discount.

With some 80,000 applications anticipated, Smith said, Metro is actively working to get the word out. "The seniors are really getting on board with this," she added.

Senior Paulina Velazquez listened attentively and afterward smiled, noting that she had already applied. "I think I'm going to get my new card in about four or five weeks," she said.

Her friend, Raul Guillen, 63, said he was happy to get the information, because he was a little confused about how the TAP cards would work.

Lizet Olmos, program coordinator of the Pico Rivera Senior Center, said she wanted to listen to the presentation to prepare seniors at her center for the changes. Metro Speaks volunteers are expected to be at the Pico Rivera center on April 28.



Helen Ortiz Gilstrap visits each table to field individual questions.



Seniors Raul Guillen and Paulina Velazquez are anxious to trade in their senior ID card for the new TAP card.



Vanessa Smith runs the PowerPoint for information-hungry seniors.