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Metro, L.A. Community College District Partner to Offer One of the Country's Largest Student Transit Pass Programs

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) and the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) have partnered to offer low-cost public transportation passes to nearly 30,000 college students at nine county community colleges, making it one of the largest such pass programs in the country.

Metro's Institution Pass program enables colleges to subsidize transit passes for their student body with the goal of providing affordable commuting solutions while encouraging public transit use. Passes will be distributed on new, reusable Metro TAP cards for the Spring 2009 Semester for the nominal fee of \$15 to LACCD full-time students enrolled in at least 12 units. The regular fare for non-participating college/vocational full-time students is \$36 per month. Over the six month semester period of January 1, 2009 through June 30, 2009, the program will save students \$200 over non-participating school pass prices – a significant savings that could help LACCD students offset other education-related expenses such as school supplies, textbooks and tuition.

LACCD's commitment of more than \$1 million to offset 90 percent of the cost of student transit passes is designed to encourage public transit as part of the community college district's overall "green" strategy.

Eligible campuses are Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles Trade Technical, Southwest College, Pierce College, Valley College, Mission College, East Los Angeles College, Harbor College and West Los Angeles College. Students can visit the administrative office of their campus to purchase the passes.

"This new program will enable students to help reduce traffic congestion as well as save themselves money on automobile-related expenses such as ownership, fuel and parking costs," said Los Angeles City Mayor and Metro Board Chair Antonio Villaraigosa. "It's a great opportunity for students to 'tap into education' by discovering transit in the hopes that they will continue taking transit regularly in the years to come."

The county's community colleges currently experience severe parking challenges as year-over-year student enrollments swell. Participating Institution Pass program campuses may be able to delay construction of new parking facilities by encouraging students to leave their cars at home and take transit to school. In the case of L.A. City College, for example, the Vermont/Santa Monica Metro Red Line Station is located at the corner of the campus. The pass also benefits communities by reducing student parking in surrounding neighborhoods.



Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Metro CEO Roger Snoble and Los Angeles Community College District launch low-cost transit pass program (iTAP) for LACCD students

"In these tough economic times, we are intensely committed to ensuring that our students have easy, affordable access to our campuses through a variety of transportation channels that are both eco-friendly and available where students live," said Dr. Marshall E. Drummond, chancellor of the L.A. Community College District. "Our partnership with Metro allows us to provide our students with affordable access to mass transit, giving them more opportunities to gain a first-rate education at LACCD schools. By addressing a parking shortfall from construction with a green alternative, I-TAP makes it easier to get to campus - even on a budget."

Metro's Institution Pass is valid on Metro buses and Metro Rail lines seven days a week. Students can use the transit access passes for all other transportation needs, including work, shopping or recreation. Because they are saving transportation costs, students may be encouraged to take additional college units and can invest the free travel time transit affords them to study or rest.

Metro has a number of TAP card programs that enable employers, institutions and the public to utilize the new Tap cards. Employers and institutions are offered group rate programs.

Metro Monthly and Weekly passes are available on TAP at over half of the Metro pass sales locations and TAP customers can enroll in balance protection to protect fare balances in the event of loss or theft. Reduced fare passes for seniors, disabled and students will be available in 2009. To use a TAP card, riders simply tap their card on the bus fare box or rail station validator. The machine automatically determines the validity of the pass in real time. TAP will be available at all Metro pass sales outlets early next year. TAP is also available online at www.taptogo.net.

Other campuses participating in Metro's Institution Pass program include UCLA and Rio Hondo College.

For additional information on the Institution Pass program, call 213-922-2811. For transit trip planning assistance over the phone, call 1-800-COMMUTE.

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Editors Note: "Metro" should be used when referring to this agency.

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