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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## DR. GEORGE J. MCKENNA III LAUNCHES FIRST-OF-ITS KIND STUDENT TRANSIT PASS PROGRAM IN LAUSD SCHOOLS

*Metro Board Director Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker Joins Announcement of Unique Partnership Between LAUSD & LA Metro at Manual Arts High School in the South LA Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z)*

**Los Angeles, Calif.** – Los Angeles Unified School Board Member Dr. George McKenna today launched the first-ever “any line, any time” transit pass program with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) for K-12 students in LAUSD. This pilot program will fund free transit passes for a full year for the entire Junior class at Manual Arts High School in South Los Angeles to ride any Metro line and nine other municipal transit bus operators in L.A. County. The pilot won a competitive grant from the Just Transit Project of The 11th Hour Project of The Schmidt Family Foundation.

INSERT QUOTE FROM DR. MCKENNA

“This pilot is an innovative collaboration that will benefit the students, the school district, and the overall community by providing free transportation for these young people while they focus on getting an education,” said Metro Board Chair and City of Inglewood Mayor James T. Butts.

“Metro looks forward to seeing the results of the pilot, and potentially expanding the program in the future.”

Low-income students and their parents face many challenges when pursuing an education, and the cost of transportation—including gas, insurance, parking, maintenance—is one of the biggest obstacles. As a result, too many students cannot finish their education due to absenteeism and tardiness, leading to fewer job opportunities for these students later in life. [Recent evidence](#) demonstrates that providing low-income residents assistance with transportation costs is an effective tool for reducing poverty.

“This program helps eliminate a barrier to these students' academic success and beyond, enabling them to navigate our ever-changing world,” said Metro Board Director Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker, who was appointed to the Board by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. “By offering better access to education and opportunity without having to worry about cost, we are empowering these students to focus on what is most important: learning and growing.”

This unique pilot program seeks a solution to the challenges faced by low-income households in the Federally-designated South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z). This partnership came together as part of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by 55 organizations working to revitalize South L.A. by providing residents with better mobility and more job opportunities.

“The South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone is proud to partner with MOVE LA, LA Promise Fund, the City of Los Angeles and LAUSD on this critical pilot program to eliminate unnecessary barriers to academic success,” said SLATE-Z Executive Director Effie Turnbull Sanders.

Metro TAP card stickers are attached directly to LAUSD student ID cards, giving them a convenient option to ride on Metro and nine other public transit agencies for free anywhere throughout L.A. County. The passes are being distributed at the Manual Arts High School College Center, an on-campus resource center for students run by the LA Promise Fund.

“High school success is predicated on a number of factors and one of the basic elements is safe transit from home to school and back,” said Veronica Melvin, CEO of LA Promise Fund. “We’re grateful to be working with Slate-Z, LA Metro, Move LA and LAUSD to facilitate safe and secure commutes for our Manual Arts students.”

SLATE-Z partners will be tracking outcomes of the pilot throughout the year including absenteeism, tardiness, fare evasion tickets, access to education and job opportunities, and miles traveled on public transit to understand the benefits of this transit pass model. A study by the [LA County Department of Public Health](#) found that securing free transit passes for all students from preschool to college could result in: 1) L.A. County households saving a total of \$750,000 per year in fines for fare evasion and \$2.5 million per year on student transit passes; 2) students receiving more instructional time; 3) schools receiving an additional \$125,000 each year for every one percent decrease in unexcused absences and 4) fewer vehicle emissions resulting in healthier families and communities.

“We are excited about the potential for this transit pass program to create a model for equal access and upward mobility for low-income public school students in Los Angeles,” said Move LA Deputy Director Eli Lipmen. “We believe this program will inspire the next generation of transit riders, reduce transportation emissions and traffic, and create better job opportunities, more access to education and help increase graduation rates.”

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### **About Los Angeles Unified**

*Second largest in the nation, the Los Angeles Unified School District enrolls more than 600,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade at 1,386 schools. Los Angeles Unified covers 710 square miles, and includes Los Angeles, as well as all or parts of 31 smaller municipalities, plus several unincorporated sections of Los Angeles County.*

### **About Metro**

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is building the most ambitious transportation infrastructure program in the United States and is working to greatly improve mobility through its [Vision 2028 Plan](#). Metro is the lead transportation planning and funding agency for L.A. County and carries about 1.2 million boardings daily on a fleet of 2,200 low-emission buses and six rail lines.

### **About SLATE-Z**

Established in 2014 and led by Los Angeles Trade Technical College, the South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z) is a historic and diverse partnership of more than 70 public, private, and community-based organizations working to move residents to economic opportunity. As a place-based initiative, SLATE-Z is home to nearly 198,000 residents in parts of Vernon Central, South Park, Florence, Exposition Park, Vermont Square, Leimert Park, and a small portion of the Baldwin Hills/Crenshaw neighborhoods. The name “Transit Empowerment Zone” was chosen out of a desire to capitalize on the compelling opportunities that ongoing public transit expansion bring for neighborhood revitalization, and for connecting residents to education and economic opportunities.

### **About LA Promise Fund**

The LA Promise Fund is an education nonprofit that brings high-value opportunities to students in underserved communities so that they can transform their lives, families and communities. Working through a network of high-performing, community-based schools and a portfolio of programs that reach students throughout LA County, the LA Promise Fund creates vibrant community hubs and partnerships that foster motivated, engaged, and directed students poised for academic, professional, and personal success.

## **About Move LA**

Move LA is a coalition-building nonprofit project of Community Partners. Move LA is lauded around the country for our remarkable success catalyzing the transformation of Los Angeles County, a region known for its car-culture, air pollution and daunting traffic congestion, into a national leader in the creation of robust public transit and other transportation options that serve diverse needs, especially the needs of low-income people. Move LA instigated the transformational Measure R and M campaigns in Los Angeles County that won \$120 billion for investments in public transit and built the coalition in support of Measure H on funding for homelessness services in LA County.