Introduction

Many transit agencies currently have student pass programs with colleges and universities. These programs have very different funding, fare and operating structures, and student demographics. Compiling information on these programs would be very useful for all transit agencies who are currently serving college student populations or who desire to serve these populations in the future.

Purposes

This synthesis reviews the current status of U-Pass programs at transit agencies and institutions to determine the program’s implementation, successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

Methodology

The investigators gathered information reported in this synthesis from three sources: 1) a literature review, 2) an on-line survey with responses from 21 of 25 locations with U-Pass programs, 3) and an in-depth study of five case examples representing a cross-section of programs balanced by system size and geography.

Map of the locations of the responding transit agencies

Major Findings

- Roles of Agencies, Institutions, and Students
- Program Design and Implementation
- Financing
- Financial aspects of the program
- Impacts

What is a U-Pass?

College Student Transit Pass Program, known as a U-Pass or unlimited access program, generally provides unlimited usage of buses (and trains, sometimes) by certain transit service providers at any time, anywhere and for any purpose for all students enrolled at the college or university. Faculty and staff are also covered in some cases.

Benefits of a U-Pass program shows as below:

To Students
- Reduced or free access to transit
- Rewards existing riders, attracts new ones
- Improved transit services designed to meet student needs
- Easier for students in residence to explore the area

To the agency
- Provides a stable source of income (U-Pass revenues)
- Higher ridership especially in poor-performing period
- Maximize the use of buses
- Develops life-long habits for students to take transit

To the Community
- Reduces traffic congestion
- Increases transit ridership
- Less illegal parking in residential areas around campus
- Increases transit frequency within the area

To the Institution
- Reduces existing and unmet parking demand
- Reduces future growth in parking demand
- Enables use of land for buildings or green space
- Increases “town-gown” integration

Expected Benefits for implement a U-Pass program

Future Research

- Employer-Based Transit Pass Programs.
- Use of Smart Card Data in Transit Planning.
- Long-Term Travel Habit