



Legislation Text

File #: 2022-0921, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Transportation and Public Works - Transit

Staff Name and Phone Number: Johannes J. Hoevertsz, 707-565-2231

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Approval of Memoranda of Understanding for the Subsidized Transit Fare Program for College Students in Fiscal Years 2022-23 and 2023-24

Recommended Action:

- A) Authorize the Chair to execute the Memoranda of Understanding with the Sonoma County Junior College District (SRJC) for the continuation of the college student free fare program with a SRJC contribution maximum of \$237,666 through June 30, 2024, and County General Fund funding contribution not to exceed \$47,533.
- B) Authorize the Chair to execute the Memoranda of Understanding with Sonoma State University (SSU) for the continuation of the college student free fare program, with SSU contribution maximum of \$47,376 through June 30, 2024, and County General Fund funding contribution not to exceed \$ 9,475.

Executive Summary:

This item provides an update on the status of the Subsidized Transit Fare Program for Sonoma County College Students and recommends that the Board approve Memoranda of Understanding with SRJC and SSU to continue to program through fiscal year 2023-24.

Discussion:

Since 2015, the County of Sonoma has financially supported free use of Sonoma County Transit through the Subsidized Fare Program for College Students. During the program's first year, all costs of the program were covered by County general funds. In December 2018, the Board approved the most recent agreement with SRJC and SSU, effective January 1, 2019 through June 30, 2022. In July 2020, the colleges provided 62.5% of the program's cost, up from 60% from the January 1 through June 30, 2019 period.

From early 2020 to the present, the impact of COVID-19, shelter in place and remote learning at both colleges has severely impacted ridership. In calendar year 2019, SRJC's ridership under this program was 113,217 while SSU's ridership was 23,601.

In 2020, the combined ridership dropped to 22,825 and in 2021 it again dropped to 11,257.

As both transit ridership and college attendance recovers, a two-year term is recommended for each MOU. The proposed agreements fund college student ridership up to approximately 80% of 2019's pre-pandemic levels for FY 2022-23. For FY 2023-24, a 5% increase over FY 2022-23 is projected. In early 2024, working with

the two colleges, staff will propose an updated program that reflects current ridership trends.

Under the agreements, contributions from SRJC and SSU total \$285,042. The County's share is up to \$57,008, and Sonoma County Transit will cover any fares above this amount should ridership exceed contributions from SRJC, SSU, and the County, using either non-General Fund sources or separate, otherwise-budgeted funds (or some combination thereof). Unlike the 2018 agreement, contributions from the colleges will be used to fund the program first. If they are exhausted, then the County's contribution will be claimed.

If claimed at 100%, the County's portion of the program subsidy represents a 17% decrease from the 37.5% of program costs established in the 2018 agreement. As in the past, the County's contribution is based on actual trips taken.

It should be noted that Sonoma County Transit has also been collaborating with Santa Rosa CityBus and Petaluma Transit to develop a coordinated fare-free pilot program for all youth riders and has submitted a funding request for that project through Round 2 of the Sonoma County Climate Resilience Fund (CRF). The coordinated fare-free youth program was developed in response to feedback on Sonoma County Transit's initial request for Round 1 CRF funding.

The Subsidized Transit Fare program for College Students (this action) compliments the CRF request and the requested continuation of the local route 28 & 32 fare-free program that are independent funding requests that complement each other in their implementation.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Prior Board Actions:

12/11/18 No. 46- Board approved funding to continue the College Student Subsidized Fare program from January 1, 2019 through June 30, 2022 in the amount of \$329,243 (County share) and Authorized the Chair to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma State University in the amounts of \$444,455 and \$80,765, respectively to support the multi-year program.

12/12/17 No. 30- Board approved funding to continue the College Student Subsidized Fare Program from January 1 - December 31, 2019 in an amount up to \$110,247 and authorized the Chair to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with SRJC and SSU in the amounts of \$111,308 and \$23,438, respectively to support the 2018 program. Approve the use of Contingency funds in the amount of \$55,124 to fund the College Student Subsidized Fare Program and \$17,897 to fund the permanent Veterans Subsidized Fare Program from January through June, 2018.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 22-23 Adopted	FY 23-24 Projected	FY 24-25 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$166,854	\$175,196	
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$166,854	\$175,196	

Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF	\$27,809	\$29,199	
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	\$139,045	\$145,997	
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$166,854	\$175,196	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The proposed Memoranda of Understanding would decrease the County’s share of the fares from the 2018 agreement. SCJCD and SSU will pay first up to the amount as set in the respective MOUs, and then the County will pay for the remainder of the fares up to the \$28,323 for FY 2022-2023 and \$29,739 for FY 2023-24. Sonoma County Transit will separately cover any fares above this amount, anticipated at \$27,809 in FY 2022-23 and \$29,199 in FY 2023-24, should ridership exceed the stated contributions from SRJC, SSU, and the County. Revenues from SCJCD and SSU were included in the FY 2022-23 Transit Adopted Budget. The expense was included in the FY 2022-23 Non-Departmental Adopted Budget.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None.

Attachments:

- SSU Memorandum of Understanding
- SCJCD Memorandum of Understanding

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

None.