

September 28, 2012

To: Executive Board

Subject: **Mt. San Antonio College Student Ridership Pilot Program**

Recommendation

Authorize the Executive Director to implement a pilot program at an estimated cost of \$231,000 with Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. SAC) to promote student ridership to be funded through Foothill Transit's Measure R funding allocation.

Analysis

Foothill Transit currently has agreements with Rio Hondo Community College and Pasadena City College (PCC) that allow participating full-time students at both campuses to ride Foothill Transit's lines. Those agreements were initiated in 2007 and 2010, respectively, and incorporate slightly different terms as desired by and negotiated with the colleges.

The current GoRIO MOU stipulates that the college subsidize student ridership on Foothill Transit's service at the rate of \$17,500 for the 2012 - 2013 academic year. That subsidy rate is up from \$10,000 in the previous year and is based on ridership data available from Foothill Transit's fare collection system. The MOU will be revisited based on a thorough analysis of ridership during the coming year. Rio Hondo students voted on a transportation fee that funds the program which grants access to Foothill Transit's service to those full-time students who participate in the program. GoRIO ridership is estimated at approximately 30,000 boardings per year.

The current PCC MOU stipulates that the college subsidize student ridership on Foothill Transit's service at the rate of \$60,000 for the 2012 - 2013 academic year. PCC students who pay a fee of \$30 per semester are allowed to participate in the program. Ridership will be tracked throughout the academic year and a new MOU negotiated with the college for the 2013 - 2014 academic year. PCC ridership is estimated at approximately 65,000 per year.

The success of these programs with colleges that are on the perimeter of the Foothill Transit service area led to discussions over the past several months with representatives from Mt. SAC regarding implementation of a program to increase student ridership. A pilot program is currently being negotiated that would allow all Mt. SAC students to ride Foothill Transit's local lines and Silver Streak. Mt. SAC is centrally located within Foothill Transit's service area and the Mt. SAC pilot program that is being discussed would differ from the Rio Hondo and PCC programs in that all Mt. SAC students would be allowed to participate and have access to Foothill Transit's service.

During the year-long pilot, ridership statistics will be tracked and shared with the college so that an appropriate subsidy amount and revenue source can be identified.

There is currently no means of obtaining exact ridership by Mt. SAC students. Automatic passenger counts at the bus stops adjacent to the campus show an average of 1,757 daily boardings and alightings. Over the course of the college's academic year, this corresponds to ridership of approximately 220,000 per year. This figure does not include rides on other lines that these students are likely to take. Based on trends observed with the Rio Hondo and PCC programs, that additional ridership is estimated at 200,000 per year.

This pilot program is a marketing and ridership growth effort, allowing Foothill Transit and Mt. SAC the opportunity to collect valuable information on systemwide ridership that can be applied to other campuses within our service area. Student ridership programs across the country account for 11 percent of public transportation users, helping local colleges reduce campus congestion and university parking costs while improving regional safety and air quality around commuter campuses. Reaching out to students increases their probability of ridership as they enter the workforce, generating transit-positive commuters of the future. The projected cost of this program is \$231,000 and includes the fare revenue that would not be collected from students during the pilot period and the cost of marketing materials that will be developed to promote the program.

A one year pilot program is proposed. This would allow students to become more familiar with Foothill Transit's services and directly experience the benefits of using their student identification cards to access Foothill Transit buses. At the end of this one year pilot, a funding mechanism would need to be put in place so that Foothill Transit could recover the lost fare revenue. This would most likely occur via a student fee. The college would have the lead in identifying the appropriate mechanism to fund the program on an ongoing basis.

Over the past several years, members of the administrative team have also met with representatives of Citrus College and Cal Poly Pomona to discuss the possibility of implementing student ridership programs. Discussions continue with these institutions as we are able to present more reliable student ridership data now that Foothill Transit's new fareboxes and reporting system are capable of providing much more accurate and usable information.

Discussions are also currently underway with representatives of the Claremont University Consortium and the City of Claremont to determine the feasibility of a similar program for the University community. The challenge that will be faced with this program is the potential need to reroute at least one line so that it better serves the

campus community. The reroute is likely to result in an increase in operating cost on that line.

Budget Impact

A conservative estimate of the current fare revenue received from Mt. SAC students is \$191,000 per year. The cost of advertising and promoting the program is estimated at \$40,000. This one-year demonstration program to enhance ridership is eligible for funding through Foothill Transit's allocation of Los Angeles County Measure R funds.

Sincerely,



Felicia Friesema
Director of Marketing and Communications



Doran J. Barnes
Executive Director