

YOU CAN GET WITH THIS...



OR YOU CAN GET WITH THAT.



**“We want to keep students, who may commit minor infractions, out of the courtroom and in the classroom.”**

*– LAUSD Superintendent John Deasy*

FREE **LA** METRO PASS

TRANSPORTATION

*IS AN EDUCATIONAL*

**RIGHT**



A Report Issued by the L.A. County Student Attendance Task Force's

**FREE METRO PASS CAMPAIGN Work Group**

November 27, 2012

## GOALS FOR THE FREE METRO PASS CAMPAIGN

**Short Term:** 1. Outreach to build toward a powerful coalition for free student transportation. 2. Educate communities and public officials throughout the county on transportation barriers and their impact on student attendance and achievement. 3. Address current bureaucratic/structural challenges for schools and districts in accessing Metro cards. 4. Release comprehensive report on committee's findings and recommendations.

**Mid Term:** 1. Pilot free transportation program in one or two communities to demonstrate impact. The Committee will identify possible funds to implement a pilot program. 2. Ensure free Metro passes for everyone coming home from lock-ups.

**Long Term:** Free Metro Passes for all students K-College.

## WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR:

The preliminary data we have received from the Los Angeles County Sheriffs' Department documents 7,622 citations issued to youth under the age of 18

on the Metro system in 2011, and 4,696 citations to date in 2012. The most common tickets are issued for fare evasion but also include citations for eating, smoking, noise, littering, vandalism and possession of vandalism tools. The Youth Justice Coalition (YJC) has submitted a Public Records Act request for a further breakdown of fare evasion (and other)

citations on public transportation, as well as arrests, detention costs and penalties associated with those citations by age, race, gender, department and zip code.

**“Students belong in classrooms and not in the juvenile and criminal justice system.”**

– LA County Sheriff Lee Baca

## WHAT'S THE IMPACT ON INDIVIDUAL YOUTH?

1. Luis Penado was accused by Sheriffs of fare evasion and possession of a fraudulent Metro pass and was hand-cuffed and transported to school where school officials confirmed that both his Metro pass and his school ID were, in fact, legitimate. At that time, sheriffs issued Penado a truancy ticket for being late to school.

2. Malik Shabazz was cited for fare evasion when he was riding the Green line to get to his high school. He did not have the \$250 needed to pay the ticket. Several months later, he was eating a Snickers bar on the stairs leading up to the Blue line Metro platform at Watts' Rosa Parks Station, when he was stopped by the Sheriffs for eating on the Metro. When they ran his name, a warrant came up for the original ticket. He was arrested and spent five days in County Jail before being arraigned in court. Recent reports indicate that a growing number of both youth and adults in Los Angeles are forced – because of financial hardship – to “erase” their fines through incarceration – a costly option for taxpayers.

3. Ronisha Butterfield was on her way to high school when the Sheriffs accused her of fare evasion, cited, and confiscated both her Metro pass and school ID. Her school had to spend an additional \$5 to issue her a new Metro pass, as well as an additional \$24 to activate it for the month. In addition, a school staff had to accompany Ronisha to Compton Court in order to challenge the citation. In order to get a date before the judge, the court required Ronisha to pay the \$190 “bail” on the ticket. Had the school not been at court, Ronisha would not have had the money, and therefore would have been denied her Constitutional right to challenge the ticket. The court dismissed all charges, but to date the court has not refunded the \$190 to the school staff.

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323-327-1259 / [freelanow@yahoo.com](mailto:freelanow@yahoo.com)

## WHAT'S THE IMPACT ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS?

Financially strapped school districts spend significant funds on student transportation that could be redirected toward educational services. The LAUSD alone spends upwards of \$500,000 a year on transportation for homeless and special needs youth. Even a small high school operated by the Youth Justice Coalition must raise \$20,000 a year for student transportation.

## WHAT'S THE IMPACT ON PUBLIC SAFETY?

Law enforcement, courts and Probation offices throughout the county spend costly resources "policing" fare evasion and other minor infractions on public transportation, further diverting their attention from either preventing or intervening to address more serious harm.

## WHAT WE HAVE WON SO FAR

City and county law enforcement have been increasingly pressured by: 1. Students who were subject to tickets up to \$250, arrest and incarceration for fare evasion, as well as unpaid tickets that became warrants; 2. The closing of the juvenile traffic court that made prosecution more difficult; and an increasing awareness on the part of school and law enforcement officials regarding the crisis of school push-out and the resulting school-to-jail track.

**On Monday, September 10, 2012** the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Los Angeles School Police **announced implementation of a Transit Juvenile Diversion Program** with the stated goal of "keeping

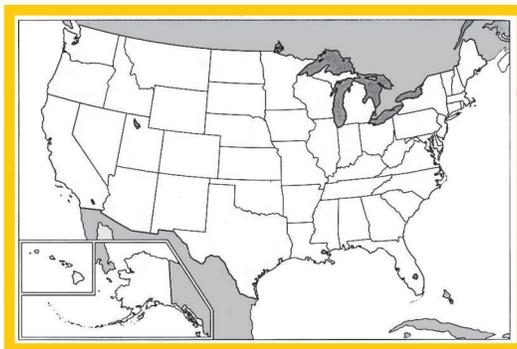
juvenile students who ride the Metro buses and trains out of the criminal justice system in the event they are cited for minor infractions." and keep them in school.

The *Transit Juvenile Diversion Program* provides a school-based diversion for deputy sheriffs and police officers to address violations by students traveling on Metro and Municipal public transportation, such as "smoking, eating, loud noises, littering and fare evasion."

The Youth Justice Coalition will advertise the new policy to youth and community members, monitor implementation of the policy by law enforcement, and provide community oversight in the development of the diversion program – including promoting the voices of students and their families, as well as an expansion of the policy to cover older students (above age 17).

## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM OTHER REGIONS OF THE U.S.

**Boston:** All Boston students, K-12 have access to a free pass for use on all buses and trains during the hours directly before, during and after school as long as they live two or more miles away from their school. A broad coalition led by youth organizations across Boston is pushing for passes to cover transportation full time.



**New York City:** Since 1948, all NYC students have had access to reduced fare or free bus and subway transportation, from 5:30am to 8:30pm on school days. In addition, youth serving organizations have access to free transportation passes seven

days a week, year around for groups of youth – regardless of whether or not they are in school - to use public transportation to access services, travel to and from youth programs and participate in field trips. A broad-based coalition recently mobilized tens of

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thousands of youth and their families to protect NYC students' long-held right to transportation. From 1948 through 1995, the costs were covered entirely by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) – in other words subsidized by other riders. Since 1995, the City and State of New York have provided 45 million dollars each toward the students passes each year. Over 500,000 students use free or half-fare passes each year.

**Oakland:** In 2005 environmental and youth rights groups were successful in implementing a pilot program for free student transportation for low-income youth. The reduced fare pass costs \$15 a month – as compared to \$24 a month in L.A.. This November, Oakland had a tax measure on the ballot that was barely defeated. If passed, it would have provided free transportation to low-income students throughout Alameda County.

### **ADDITIONAL DATA WE ARE COLLECTING:**

The Work Group is collecting additional data in order to produce a final report that will include: 1. Mapping L.A. City and County to determine which groups care

about or are working on transit justice; 2. Tracking attendance rates in schools/districts where transportation is a priority; 3. Assessing police and court costs associated with ticketing, arrests and prosecution associated with fare evasion; 4. Measuring how increased access to transportation can support school districts' goals regarding attendance; 5. The history of traffic courts and their closure to inform the proposed move to create "transit courts;" 6. the number of reduced fare student Metro passes and reduced fare college passes purchased from the L.A. County Metropolitan Transportation Authority; 7. A survey of 2,000 students to measure the impact public transportation access has on their ability to attend school, the difficulties students and their families face in paying for student transportation, the criminalization of students for fare evasion, the impact of this criminalization on youth relationships with law enforcement and their families, and the cost of police enforcement efforts as compared to fees collected; and 8. A report on the costs incurred by school districts in providing transportation for students. We will also seek similar data from DCFS for foster care youth and from community and faith based organizations that provide transportation to their members.

**IT'S 2012. FEW STUDENTS LIVE CLOSE ENOUGH TO SCHOOL TO WALK, SCHOOL DISTRICTS CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO MAINTAIN LARGE SCHOOL BUS CONTRACTS, AND DID WE REALLY EVER HAVE ANYONE IN OUR FAMILIES WHO WALKED 15 MILES, BAREFOOT, IN THE SNOW TO GET TO SCHOOL?**



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