



Update to Sacramento RydeFreeRT Program

Board Meeting

4.3.2025

Agenda Item No. 10.1

Presented by:

Chris Ralston, Assistant Superintendent, Facilities Support Services

Chris Flores, Chief of Staff, Sacramento Regional Transit District

SCUSD Core Value & Guiding Principle

CORE VALUE

We recognize that our system is inequitable by design and we vigilantly work to confront and interrupt inequities that exist to level the playing field and provide opportunities for everyone to learn, grow and reach their greatness.

SCUSD GUIDING PRINCIPLE

All students are given an equal opportunity to graduate with the greatest number of postsecondary choices from the widest array of options

Agenda

- **Overview of RydeFreeRT Program**
- **Review of Nehemiah Emerging Leaders Program (NELP) Efforts**
- **Possible Pathways for 2025-2026**
- **Costs Analysis for Sacramento City Unified**
- **Data Gathering and Marketing in Sacramento City Unified**

What is RydeFreeRT?

- Fare free transit for students (TK-12) and homeless youth living or attending school within SacRT's service boundary.
- First of its kind program in the nation when launched in 2019.
- Partner jurisdictions provide funding to offset fare revenue losses from students within their boundaries.
- SacRT received \$1.6m in annual funding to support the program.



RydeFreeRT

Students can Ride into the New School Year for **FREE** with RydeFreeRT



RYDE
Grades TK-12th
FREE RT

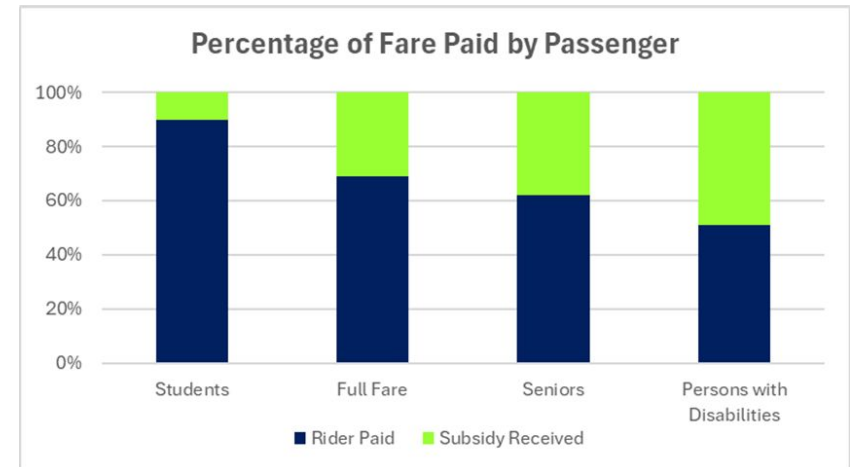
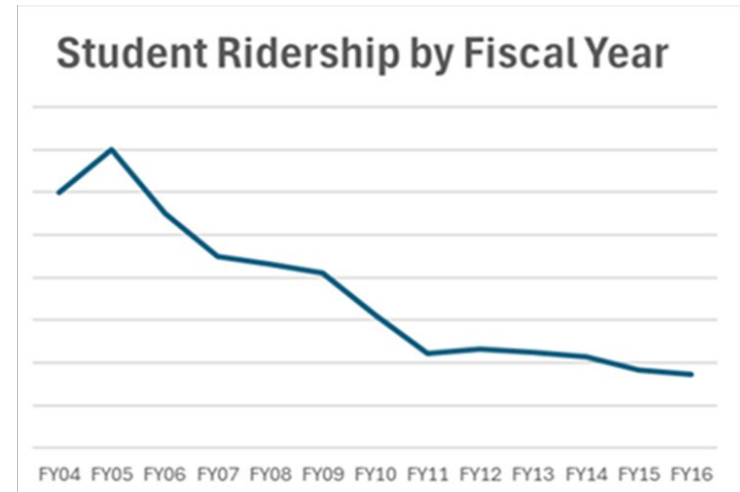
YOUTH
Ride Free **PASS**

Valid date: 6/1/2025 - 6/30/2026

Why RydeFreeRT?

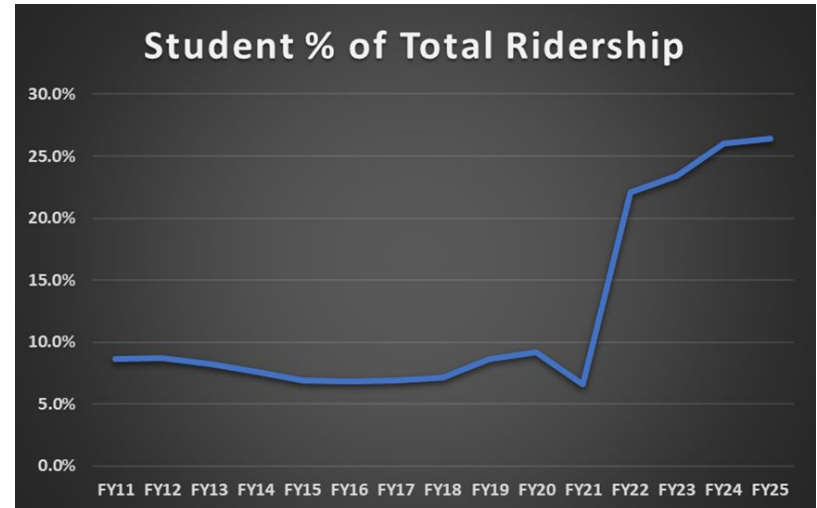
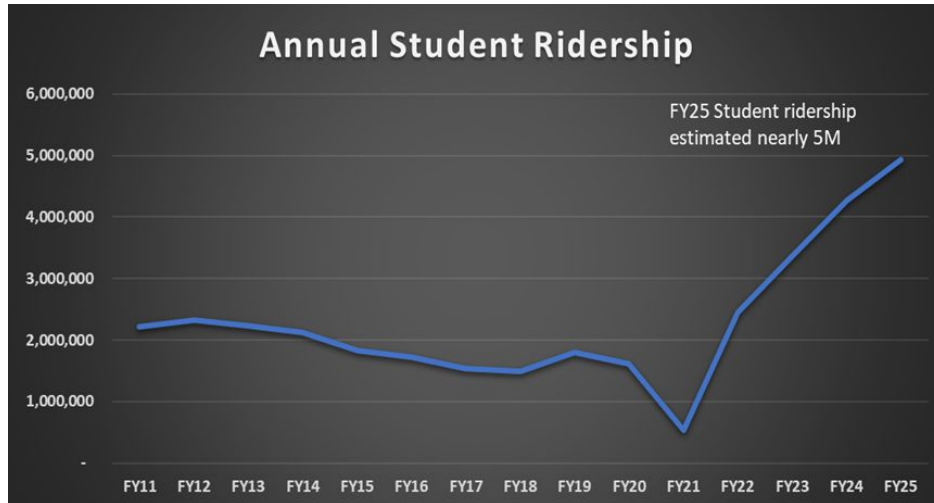
- 2017 ridership initiative identified students as an opportunity group for increased ridership.
- Student ridership declined by nearly 80% from 2005-2016.
- Title VI studies suggest that students are the lowest income fare category for SacRT.
- Students also received the lowest levels of financial assistance in terms of fare subsidies.

Conclusion: Additional subsidies were needed for students.



Student Ridership at SacRT

- Passenger boardings, including students, are recorded by bus operators and automated passengers counters (APC's).
- SacRT estimates FY 2025 student ridership will be nearly 5 million boardings across our entire network.
- Student boardings now make up over 25% of total boardings at SacRT.



Student Ridership at SCUSD

- SacRT staff investigated boardings where bus stops were directly located at SCUSD school sites.
- Data was limited to drop off/pickup times only and **does not include any necessary bus transfers or light rail trips.**
- SacRT found that boardings at these designated stops averaged nearly 2,800 per day for SCUSD.
- When compared to other school districts, SacRT found that SCUSD locations make up approximately 44% of the total boardings.
- SacRT's 200 series routes alone, a **specialized service for SCUSD schools**, carry nearly 900 passengers per day.

School District	Avg Daily Ridership (pickup/dropoff only)	% of Total
Sac City Unified School District	2,764	45%
Other Major School Districts*	3,416	55%
Grand Total	6,179	100%

*Includes EGUSD, TRUSD, NUSD, FCUSD, SJUSD



NELP's Efforts in Support of RydeFreeRT

- Who We Are
- Project Vision
- Project Outcomes (in-progress)
 - Data Collection and Findings
 - Funding Sustainability
 - Ridership Data
 - Engagement
 - Advisory Committee

Possible Future Pathways

Fully Funded by City

Fully Funded by City Measure L would continue to provide current level of funding at no cost to district or students

Repeat 24-25 Funding

- Fully Funded by SacRT and other public entities, not including City, will continue to provide current level of service at no cost to students
- District Cost for 24-25 is \$250,000

No Funding Provided

- No funding provided may end program; returning to student rates to use SacRT.
- Series 200 routes (~16) may end.

Cost Analysis for SCUSD

		SCUSD Costs	Impacted Students	Students Impact Results
1	City Measure L funds RydeFreeRT Program for Students	\$0	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students have access to program to get to/from school Students have access to transportation to get to/from employment in City Removes barriers for best attendance
2	SCUSD participates in funding share of RydeFreeRT program for students	\$250k	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students have access to program to get to/from school Students have access to transportation to get to/from employment in City Removes barriers for best attendance Highest return on investment for Board
3	No Funding Provided to Program by City or SCUSD/Other Public Entities	Unknown	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students must pay to use public transportation to get to/from school at student rate Barriers exist for students to get to class Series 200 Routes (SCUSD Specific ~16 routes) ended District Cost to hire 16 drivers and purchases 16 buses is valued at ~\$9.86 General Fund for 25-26/\$1.7

District Investment in SacRT routes

If district covers the 16 dedicated routes being provided by SacRT (Series 200):

- 16 additional driver FTEs required
 - \$1.76M annually
- 16 new district buses
 - \$8.1M Electric Buses

Total investment needed by July 1, 2025: \$9.86M - General Fund

This does not cover the costs of all students riding SacRT to get to school.

District Investment in SacRT passes

Current Student Passes provided at no cost to district students expire on June 30, 2025

If SCUSD purchased all students passes, General Fund contribution would be

- 36,813 students (Enrollment on January 17, 2025)
- Student RT pass = \$20/month or \$240/year

Total investment needed by July 1, 2025: \$8,835,120 - General Fund

Gathering Program Data

SCUSD will create process to collect information about student use and impact for 2025-2026:

- Marketing program better to Principals, Students, and Families for awareness by SCUSD
- Sign out passes to collect number of students using
- Student Surveys regarding use

Public Comment

Questions & Board Discussion