



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

RESOLUTION NO. 240712

Introduced September 5, 2024

Councilmember Young

RESOLUTION

Calling on universities in the City of Philadelphia to adopt the SEPTA Key Advantage UPass Program for all of their students.

WHEREAS, With roughly 120,000 college and university students enrolled within City limits, the City of Philadelphia is one of the largest college towns in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia region is home to approximately 115 post-secondary schools educating nearly 300,000 students, a higher per capita student population than even Greater Boston; and

WHEREAS, In August 2023, SEPTA began offering UPass as part of its Key Advantage program, allowing colleges and universities to provide a monthly All-Access Anywhere Pass to participating college students. This program allows for full time college students actively enrolled in partner institutions to ride SEPTA at no cost to them throughout the academic year; and

WHEREAS, In August 2023, Swarthmore College became the first higher education institute to be enrolled in this program to enhance the living and learning experiences of their students; and

WHEREAS, Data from SEPTA shows the resounding success of the program: 89 percent of Swarthmore students have used the pass at least once, with most usage occurring on weekends for recreational purposes despite service slowing down, and not just to go to class or work; and

WHEREAS, These numbers aren't surprising as SEPTA Key Advantage has been very effective at boosting ridership on a transit system that needs it, with 95,000 participants across 55 partner organizations, including the City of Philadelphia itself. Expanding the number of employer and university enrollments into SEPTA Key Advantage and UPass is a proven way of growing SEPTA ridership; and

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WHEREAS, According to agency data, riders who have been offered SEPTA Key Advantage passes take SEPTA an average of 13 percent more than they did before enrolling; and

WHEREAS, A year after Swarthmore adopted the program, Bryn Mawr College became the second higher education institute to enroll in this program providing 1,500 students with free access to SEPTA services; and

WHEREAS, Drexel University, which used to but no longer offers SEPTA Key Advantage for their faculty and staff as of August 2024, currently offers UPass available for their doctoral students, but as of August 2024, there are currently no colleges or universities located within the City of Philadelphia that have enrolled their entire student bodies in SEPTA UPass; and

WHEREAS, According to Census data, the lowest car ownership rates in the City of Philadelphia are in the areas with large universities: University City and the neighborhoods surrounding Temple University; and

WHEREAS, Temple University is the largest university in the City of Philadelphia with over 20,000 full time degree seeking students with the majority of students commuting; and

WHEREAS, According to a 2022 Temple University transportation survey, 86 percent of Temple students are commuters, and 38 percent of students rely on SEPTA while only 32 percent drive to campus in densely populated North Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Temple currently offers 10% off semesterly transit passes with a lump sum payment up front that 20 percent of Temple University students are unable to obtain, especially after factoring in books, materials, and classes. Estimates have shown 43 percent of Temple students surveyed did not know such a program existed when first informed about it; and

WHEREAS, A not insignificant number of Temple students engage in fare evasion at subway stations. While the city continues to explore options to combat fare evasion, it should offer incentives for students to legally utilize the transit options available to them; and

WHEREAS, Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore Colleges are served by just one Regional Rail station each, and a handful of SEPTA bus lines, making the potential for utilization of SEPTA stations by City university students served by multiple bus, subway, trolley and Regional Rail stations immense; and

WHEREAS, Given the rising cost of college tuition, books, housing, activities, and other features of college life, City universities adopting the SEPTA Key Advantage UPass for their students would be a tremendous benefit to local college students, the City's streets, local neighborhoods, and SEPTA's finances; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby calls on universities in the City of Philadelphia to adopt the SEPTA Key Advantage UPass Program for all of their students.