



City of Philadelphia

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

Legislation Text

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Calling on The School District of Philadelphia to expand SEPTA Student Fare Passes to all students for usage at all times, and regardless of their residential distance from schools.

WHEREAS, With almost 200,000 students enrolled in the School District of Philadelphia (SDP), the City of Philadelphia has one of the largest school districts in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia offers a wide range of Out-of-School Time (OST) programs and initiatives to support students after school hours, including 90 programs run by Philadelphia Parks and Recreation; and the Literacy Enrichment Afterschool Program (LEAP), a free, drop-in, after school program offered at 54 Library locations across the City. Furthermore, many older students hold jobs, and do community service activities, outside the home and often outside their own neighborhood or the neighborhood of their schools; and

WHEREAS, A growing body of research into the critical development phase of adolescence, roughly defined as young people aged 12-25, identifies that this period requires support and opportunity for exploration and identity formation, which necessarily includes the ability to move throughout the City safely; and

WHEREAS, School Districts in Pennsylvania are given the ability to appropriate funds towards mass transit agencies for student transportation, but only for transportation authorized by existing pupil transportation guidelines; and

WHEREAS, As currently allowable under PA State Code 1949 on Pupil Transportation, school districts may provide free transportation to students who live over 1.5 miles away from school, or if they would need to walk on what PennDOT deems as a hazard route. Within the SEPTA service area, Students in grades 7 through 12 who live 1.5 miles or farther from school are generally eligible for free Student Fare Cards through their school; and

WHEREAS, For School District of Philadelphia students, SEPTA Student Fare Cards can be used only for travel to and from school with a limit of no more than 8 taps per day, during the hours of 5:30am and 8:00pm; and

WHEREAS, While state laws limit student passes by time and/or location throughout the country, other municipalities have found creative ways to appropriate funds to expand transit ridership to more students and for longer hours. For example, New York City now offers four free trips to students any hour on any day, Washington D.C. offers universally free fares to students anywhere within the district, and Denver offers free fares for all youth ages 19 & under with a school ID; and

WHEREAS, Student ridership is a significant contributor to SEPTA's overall revenue. In 2019 alone, SEPTA provided over 60 million rides to K-12 students according to the SEPTA Annual Service Plan; and

WHEREAS, Programs to provide free, 24/7 transit passes to adult and college student riders have proven very effective at increasing usage of SEPTA and normalizing regularly taking and paying for SEPTA transit. 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. Expanding the number of users of SEPTA Key Advantage transit passes is a proven way of growing SEPTA ridership; and

WHEREAS, Given the developmental opportunities for youth, the need to support students in riding safely and under compliance with SEPTA rules and regulations, and revenue potential for SEPTA, it would be of tremendous benefit to students to expand SEPTA student fares; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby calls on the School District of Philadelphia to expand SEPTA Student Fare Passes to all students for usage at all times, and regardless of their residential distance from schools.