

San Diego Transit and Shuttle Programs Hit Bump in the Road; Additional Funding Needed

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UC San Diego's highly successful campus shuttle and transit programs are in jeopardy of being cut back substantially due to a lack of funding. The university had expanded shuttle and public transit programs in recent years to reduce parking demand, traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Increased ridership and operating costs are forcing UC San Diego to seek new revenue sources for its free public transit and campus shuttle programs. In 2008-09, UC San Diego's shuttle and Bus Zone programs provided nearly 4.8 million passenger trips at a cost of nearly \$6.9 million, or about \$1.44 per passenger trip.

Most of the funding for transit programs comes from parking permit fees and parking citation revenues. Since costs of transit and shuttle programs are increasing while parking revenues are not, current funding sources will not sustain these programs. Without additional funding, services will be reduced.

"UC San Diego's efforts to provide sustainable transportation options have helped to reduce the percentage of single-occupant vehicles commuting to campus from 66% of all commuters in 2001 to 46% in 2009," said Brian d'Autremont, Director of UC San Diego Transportation Services.

"This promising trend supports the campus's goal of reducing the single-occupant vehicle rate to 39% by 2018 to further reduce its carbon footprint," he said. "Transit and shuttle programs are almost exclusively responsible for the shift from single-occupant vehicles to alternative transportation."

In 2008, UC San Diego's alternative transportation programs saved commuters over 2 million gallons of gasoline and offset an estimated 18,972 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions, which is the equivalent of taking 3,475 cars off the road for a year. Fifty-four percent of UC San Diego commuters use alternative transportation, which includes public transit, campus shuttles, bicycling, walking, carpooling and vanpooling, for their daily commute.

UC San Diego conducted interviews, focus groups and surveys during the 2008-09 academic year to gain a better understanding of the campus community's preferences regarding transit and shuttle services.

Results revealed high levels of user satisfaction and strong support for maintaining existing transit and shuttle programs. Participants generally supported implementation of user fees or a mandatory student fee to fund these alternatives.

"We have to take action in order to keep the shuttle system. I think the extra \$20 per quarter is worth keeping this fantastic transportation system for students," said Raaz Fares, a Revelle College student.

To maintain current service levels, the school's Transportation Policy Committee unanimously recommended pursuing a referendum for a sustainable transit fee to be paid by students as part of their quarterly registration

fees. The fee would start at \$20 per academic quarter, increasing \$5 each year until reaching \$40 per quarter in 2014.

If passed, a student ratepayer committee would be created to allocate revenues generated from the sustainable transit fee.

"A sustainable transportation fee referendum is necessary to move this campus forward in reducing our impact on climate change," said Chris Westling, one of the student supporters.

Several campus student sustainability organizations who support the fee are working together to place a referendum on the student body ballot. If the measure passes, fees could begin in the 2010-11 academic year.

"A quarterly fee for all students does not seem like a tremendous burden in light of all the services shuttles provide," said Kyle McCann, a Warren College student.

"Shuttle Operations is one of the best and well-run services offered to students at UCSD," said James Uvally, an Eleanor Roosevelt College student who enjoys the reduced traffic on campus.

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