

# Transit Pass Program



The purpose of a transit pass program is to provide subsidized transit rides to improve mobility, accessibility and encourage transit use. The subsidized transit rides will be eligible for use on all transit services in San Mateo County. This fact is intended to provide examples of how such a program could be implemented using Alternative Congestion Relief

and Transportation Demand Management

(ACR/TDM) Program funding. Programs should be customized to meet the specific needs of your agency or locality.

## Who could be eligible for a Transit Program?

Individual programs could be structured based on the following eligibility options:

- **Open to all residents** – no validation needed
- **Residents of certain neighborhoods** (eg Equity Priority Area) – lease or utility bill
- **Low-income residents** – self-verification, proof of enrollment in EBT or other social service program, tax returns

## How can transit passes or funds be distributed?

**Clipper** is the Bay Area's all-in-one transit card payment medium for many transit agencies in the region. Purchasing bulk Clipper cards is a popular method to supplement a transit pass program and offer the most flexibility to riders.



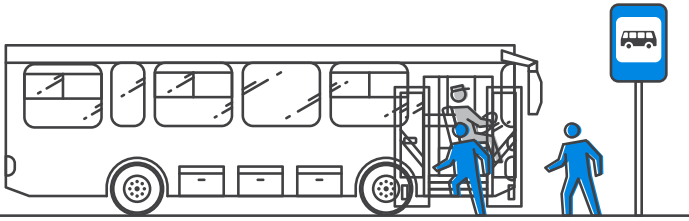
## Transit Passes for Targeted Communities

Transit Pass Programs are often aimed at specific communities or groups of people to assist those who may have economic hardships around their transportation options.

An example of a current program is the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Clipper START program. **Clipper START** is a pilot program that provides single-ride transit fare discounts for eligible low-income individuals in the San Francisco Bay Area. Many Bay Area transit agencies, including SamTrans, Caltrain and Muni, offer 50% discounts for each ride.

In addition to a transit pass program, cities and public agencies can encourage eligible San Mateo County residents to apply to the program.

## Clipper Pass Distribution Options



There are two main options for purchasing pre-paid Clipper cards:

1. institutional passes or
2. bulk pre-loaded Clipper cards.

**Institutional passes** are aimed at specific groups of people connected to a particular institution, such as a school or residential community. Institutional passes require significant program administration, as they are typically distributed on a month basis, and program enrollment needs to be continually monitored to order the correct number of passes each month. A monthly SamTrans pass costs \$66 and a monthly Caltrain pass varies for San Mateo County travelers between \$77-\$240 depending how far they travel.

**Bulk purchases of Clipper cards** with pre-loaded dollar amounts remove the specificity of the institutional passes and can be distributed according to an agency's pace. However, pre-loaded cards can only be reloaded through commuter checks if more than a one-time giveaway is included in a program. This may limit a card's longevity and adds program administration tasks if the pass program allows for reloading value onto existing cards. The maximum amount that can be pre-loaded on a Clipper Card is \$300.

## Case Study

### San Mateo US-101 JPA Equity Program

One San Mateo County transit pass program under development is coupled with the opening of the US-101 Express Lanes. The San Mateo County Express Lanes Joint Powers Authority (SMCEL-JPA) established an Equity program to accompany the US-101 Express Lanes project.

Through a partnership with Samaritan House, the SMCEL-JPA is providing the funds to purchase bulk amounts of Clipper cards with pre-loaded values and Samaritan House will be distributing the passes to its program participants who are eligible. Samaritan House is an approved San Mateo County Core Services Agency and will use approved participation in core services to confirm eligibility.

The pilot program will gather data and track metrics of program participants who receive the transit pass to better understand the characteristics of the recipients and to make adjustments to the program in future phases.

More information [here](#).

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