

Offered by Councilor Jackson



CITY OF BOSTON FOR CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS PROVIDING FREE MBTA M7 COMBINED T/BUS PASSES TO ALL 9th, 10th, 11th, AND 12th GRADE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BOSTON

- WHEREAS, Access to a free quality education is the cornerstone of our democracy, and the essential path to social and economic security for all young people in the City of Boston;
- WHEREAS, The Boston Public Schools (BPS) must by law provide transportation to all qualifying students in parochial, private, and charter schools as well as in BPS, and do so in Kindergarten through 6th grade by providing yellow bus service, and combined T/bus passes to 7th through 12th grade students, and yellow bus service to all qualifying special education students;
- WHEREAS, The BPS limits access to BPS- or MBTA-provided transportation for all Boston students based on the student's walking distance to their school, where Kindergarten through 6th grade students receive yellow bus transportation if they are more than 1 mile away, and 7th and 8th graders receive a free 7-day monthly MBTA combined T/Bus pass, or "M7" pass, if they are more than 1.5 miles away, and 9th through 12th grade high school students if they are more than 2 miles away for the length of the 10-month school year;
- WHEREAS, Boston high school students who do not qualify for an M7 T/Bus pass receive a stored-value MBTA pass, or "S" pass, at no cost to BPS that allows them to use the T and buses at a reduced fare of 85 cents per ride that they and their families must pay for;
- WHEREAS, Boston high school students who receive an S pass must use the MBTA at least twice a day for 180 days of school a year, a minimum cost estimated at \$306 per student, and at least double that for families with two or more students;
- WHEREAS, There are currently 14,207 9th through 12th grade Boston students in BPS, parochial, private, and charter schools who receive M7 passes for the 2016/17 academic year;
- WHEREAS, There are currently 6,534 9th through 12th grade Boston students in BPS, parochial, private, and charter schools who receive S passes for the 2016/17 academic year;

WHEREAS, The Opportunity and Achievement Gap Policy adopted on July 15, 2016 by the School Committee of the Boston Public Schools calls for “dismantling structural barriers and providing greater access to opportunities” that explicitly includes equity of access to transportation;

WHEREAS, Many Boston high school students such as from BPS’ Boston Arts Academy and the Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers have required academic activities outside their school buildings, and BPS schools such as Boston Latin Academy make community service hours a graduation requirement, requiring S pass holders to use the MBTA for more than the requisite two journeys per day, costing them more than the minimum \$306 per year;

WHEREAS, Boston’s high school students participate in a myriad of extracurricular activities such as sports, academic clubs, community, and social activities, enabling them to become more rounded individuals who are better prepared for college, career, life, and citizenship;

WHEREAS, Many students, teachers, and families report each year that students with only an S pass are forced to withdraw from schools and programs that benefit them because they are unable to afford the cost of getting to school especially during the winter months;

WHEREAS, Many students, teachers, and families report each year that students who would otherwise receive only an S pass choose a school of lesser desirability that is further away rather than a more preferred one that’s closer to them only because they are able to receive an M7 pass;

WHEREAS, Many students, teachers, and families report each year that teachers buy multiple M7 passes at great financial cost to themselves for their students who only receive an S pass so that their students can attend school;

WHEREAS, In Boston’s high school students must graduate high school to be prepared for college, career, and citizenship, but in some cases are unable to do so because they cannot afford to travel to school;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED,

That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss granting free M7 T/bus passes to all high students in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades in the City of Boston. Those invited to provide perspective will include students, parents, teachers, representatives of Boston’s schools, the City of Boston, along with other interested parties.