

PRESS RELEASE

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Teens release report, meet with MBTA General Manager to demand Youth Pass

Research shows that a youth pass fare category will improve youth outcomes and strengthen families and region

[JAMAICA PLAIN—Friday, June 10] Boston area teens from the Youth Way on the MBTA campaign will be presenting our demand for a Youth Pass to General Manager Richard Davey tonight at a banquet with 100 youth. The event releases our new report, *OpportuniT: Youth riders, the affordability crisis, and the Youth Pass solution*, highlighting the benefits a Youth Pass will bring to our families, communities and region.

After extensive research and testimony from youth who rely on the T, we are proposing a Youth Pass in the form of an unrestricted Monthly LinkPass available at Charlie Card machines for youth ages 12 to 21 for \$10 a month. Its creation will transform and increase youth riders' access to the MBTA, bridging the gap to education, employment, healthcare, and community involvement.

"I ride the T to get to work, and work is the path to my future. I need to afford it. I need a Youth Pass," said Tai Tang, 19, of Malden. Tang holds two jobs, helps support his sister, and is saving for college tuition.

Our research found that more than two-thirds of youth ages 12 to 21 ride the MBTA on a daily basis. Yet only half of these youth have access to a Student Link or Student Charlie Card and the rest pay full adult fares of up to \$2.00 per ride. In Boston, where more than one-third of children live below the poverty line, too many young people simply can't afford to ride the T.

"I have to make bimonthly visits to the doctor," said Eric Dejesus, 18, of West Roxbury, who was diagnosed with diabetes at the age of two. "To get there, I ride the 34 and the 39. When I don't have money for the T that day, I have to cancel and reschedule."

Young people rely on the MBTA to get to work, school, doctor's appointments and extracurricular activities. We need to remove the affordability barrier to build a stronger, brighter future for youth and our communities. The Youth Pass is an innovative solution that benefits us all. Public transportation reduces traffic congestion, air pollution and global warming, and is key part of our sustainable future in the Boston area. Investing in youth affordable access will improve young people's relationship with the T and build a lifelong ridership.

To fund the Youth Pass, we propose that the MBTA continues to work with colleges and universities in the Boston area to provide subsidized T passes to all university students. This university pass system

will provide undergraduates with increased opportunities for learning, reduce student driving and parking congestion in neighborhoods, and create approximately \$60 million in fixed revenue for the T. MIT already offers its students such a pass. With universities subsidizing their students' transportation, the T would have funds available to support the creation of a Youth Pass.

For the past four years, youth have been testifying to the MBTA and MassDOT about the need for increased access and affordability on the T. In 2009, then-Secretary of Transportation James Aloisi agreed to extend the cutoff time of the MBTA Student Monthly Pass and Student Charlie Card from 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. and to research the implementation of a new Youth Pass fare category. In 2010, our survey of more than 2,400 youth found a major crisis of affordability for young people and formed the basis for our report.

The Youth Riders Banquet will be held at Spontaneous Celebrations at 45 Danforth Street in Jamaica Plain from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. This caps off a week of action for the Youth Pass, where we collected hundreds of postcards of support from young people and delivered them to Secretary of Transportation Jeffrey Mullan.

Youth Way on the MBTA is a campaign for youth transit justice launched in June 2007. We are a youth-led partnership between the Boston-area Youth Organizing Project (BYOP) and two programs of Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE): The Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project (REEP) and the T Riders Union (TRU).

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