

Ofelia San Pedro, Deputy Superintendent
Business Operations

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF EMPLOYEE TRANSPORTATION BENEFITS AND RIDESHARE PROGRAM IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MIAMI-DADE TRANSIT AND SOUTH FLORIDA COMMUTER SERVICES

COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, EFFICIENCY & GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

At the School Board Meeting of April 18, 2006, Agenda Item B-7 from Board Member Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman requested that the School Board authorize the Superintendent to evaluate the implementation of employee transportation benefits and rideshare programs in partnership with Miami-Dade Transit (MDT) and South Florida Commuter Services (SFCS), a regional commuter assistance program funded by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and report back to the School Board at the July 12, 2006 meeting. This agenda item is designed to provide the School Board an update on the implementation of these programs, including a tentative schedule of activities to support the implementation.

Over the past two months, representatives from MDT, SFCS, and various offices from the district including the Office of Risk and Benefits Management, Department of Transportation, Payroll, and Information Technology Services (ITS) have met to address the following topics:

- Design and implementation of an online transportation survey specifically created for district employees to evaluate employees' transportation needs
- Creation of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Employee Transportation Benefits and Rideshare Program, including monthly payroll deduction for MDT Monthly Metropass and MDT Monthly Parking Permits on a pre-tax basis, pursuant to the provisions of Internal Revenue Code (IRC) 132, including discounts from normal pricing for the Metropass along with a monthly parking permit at a flat rate which alleviates the regular daily charge
- Roll out of this multi-faceted transit program to employees, beginning with "Transit Days" co-hosted by MDT and SFCS at downtown locations, with subsequent roll outs across the county as school resumes for the 2006-2007 academic year to capture the 10-month employees

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School Board employees who participate in this program will enjoy the ability to have their MDT Metropass and parking permits purchased through payroll deduction (pre-tax) up to the \$105 monthly maximum dictated by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) under IRC 132. Staff's recommendation is to offer the program on a voluntary basis to employees at their own cost, enabling them to take advantage of the negotiated discounts, which are as follows:

	<u>Full Price</u>	<u>Discounted Price</u>
MDT Monthly Metropass	\$75	\$65
MDT Parking Permit	\$4 Daily Charge	\$6.25 Monthly

Miami-Dade Transit has agreed to distribute monthly transit and parking passes directly to participant's homes through a third-party mail house under contract with the county, rather than having the district pick them up and distribute to participants monthly through the worksites. The only cost to the district for this service will be the cost of postage. The budget for this will be dependent upon utilization, and will be brought back to the Board for authorization once an estimate is available.

Staff is also recommending that the Tri-Rail passes be made available to district employees at a cost of \$60 per month, compared with the regular price of \$80/month. Currently, interested employees may complete the Tri-Rail application and mail it directly to them. This will entitle them to a discount card which can be used to purchase the discounted tickets at any Tri-Rail station. Staff will continue to work to incorporate the Tri-Rail passes into the pre-tax, monthly payroll deduction basis.

An Emergency Ride Home Program is provided by SFCS for all eligible commuters in the tri-county area who use an "alternative mode" of transportation at least three times per week. This program provides up to six free taxi vouchers to be used by employees for emergency purposes 24/7 to all commuters registered in the SFCS database.

As part of the collaborative effort on this initiative, SFCS asked the district to advertise the 2nd Annual Commuter Challenge on May 18, 2006. All commuters in South Florida were asked to say no to high gas prices by leaving their car at home and choosing to carpool, vanpool, ride county transit or Tri-Rail, or even bike or walk to work. The business with the largest number of participating employees would receive \$1,000 worth of transportation benefits such as transit passes, SunPasses, or bicycle racks.

Although the information was only placed on the district's website May 12, 2006, Miami-Dade County Public Schools won the employer challenge prize of \$1,000 due to the great response from district employees. Staff is recommending that the \$1,000 be used to begin funding the postage expenses for transit passes mailed from MDT.

Staff is requesting authorization to move forward with the implementation of a strategic transit initiative with Miami-Dade Transit and South Florida Commuter Services. The one aspect of the program which will be implemented subsequent to the initial implementation of the Metropass and Tri-Rail tickets will be the Van Pooling and

Rideshare programs offered through South Florida Commuter Services. The information gathered from the transportation survey will be critical to determine which employees may benefit from ridesharing and Van Pooling, based upon what parts of South Florida they live and work.

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida:

1. direct the Superintendent of Schools to move forward with implementation of an Employee Transportation Benefits and Rideshare Program on a voluntary basis for interested employees including implementation of the Miami-Dade Transit (MDT) Monthly Metropass (\$65) and parking permits (\$6.25) to be offered on a pre-tax, monthly payroll deduction basis;
2. direct the Superintendent to implement the Tri-Rail discount program on a voluntary basis for interested personnel to complete Tri-Rail applications to take advantage of the negotiated discount (\$60) and pay for their passes directly at Tri-Rail stations and work to incorporate it into the pre-tax, monthly payroll deduction basis;
3. authorize the Superintendent to distribute, in conjunction with SFCS, a customized online transportation survey to district employees regarding their transportation needs early in September following the beginning of the 2006-2007 academic year;
4. explore the possibilities of implementing the South Florida Commuter Service's Ridesharing and Van Pooling programs, as appropriate, subject to information received in response to the transportation survey; and
5. use the Commuter Challenge prize of \$1,000 as a beginning budget to cover postage expenses for employees who elect to purchase the MDT Metropass and Parking Permit, until a budget is established.

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