

BART Higher Education Fare Discount Program

November 2021

The **BART Higher Education Fare Discount Program (HEDP)** offers fare discounts to students at colleges and universities. San Francisco State University (SFSU) is the first program participant, and SFSU students and administration worked with BART to develop the SFSU program, which is the model for other schools. For each new school wishing to participate in the HEDP, BART works with students (usually represented by their student association) and school administration to develop a school-specific program.

The following sections provide an overview of the HEDP.

These principles have guided HEDP development:

- Replicability to other schools in BART service area
- Revenue neutral to BART
- Data available for analyzing tripmaking
- Flexibility in changing discount amount
- Minimized potential for fraudulent use

The BART fare discount is a percentage amount off of the regular fare. For example, if the regular fare is \$3.30, and the discount is 50%, then the student would pay a discounted fare of \$1.65. BART's distance-based fares are calculated for each trip between the system's 50 stations, which results in 190 unique fares. As there are a great number of unique fares, the discount is offered per trip at the fare gate rather than offering up to 190 price-point passes. Buses can offer unlimited ride passes because buses charge one flat fare, and thus riders can buy a single price-point pass for travel throughout the bus system.

The basic parameters of the HEDP are as follows:

- Students use a Clipper smart card specially designed for their school to get the BART fare discount.
- The school-specific Clipper card also serves as a student's ID.
- The amount of the discount and which BART trips get the discount are determined by each school's students and staff.
 - For example, SFSU students and staff initially decided that the SFSU Clipper card would give a 25% discount effective August 2017 on trips to/from the BART Daly City Station during the fall and spring semesters. Effective March 1, 2019, SFSU increased the amount of the discount to 50% for trips to/from the BART Daly City Station.
- The school reimburses BART for the difference between the regular fare and the discounted fare paid by the student, so the program is revenue neutral to BART.
- Funds to reimburse BART for the discount can come from a variety of sources including student fees, the school itself, or outside funding (e.g., grant funding).
 - For example, SFSU students voted to pay a \$45 monthly student transit fee:
 - \$31 to SF Muni for its Class Pass for unlimited rides in San Francisco
 - \$12 to create a fund to pay for the BART 25% discount
 - \$2 to SFSU for administrative costs
- The discount amount can be changed at the school's direction as funding becomes available.

How long it takes to get a student discount program up and running will vary by school. For example, some schools may wish to have a referendum for students to vote on and that takes time to develop (SFSU Associated Students did extensive outreach to the student body about their program), while other schools may have funds available in hand to pay for the program.

Once the program has been finalized, then legal agreements are required between BART and the school, and the school and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, which oversees the Clipper program. These agreements must be signed before the required Clipper programming can begin.

Programming takes approximately nine months from the time the agreements are signed. In 2017, the approximate one-time cost estimate of the Clipper programming was \$70,000, and BART's one-time implementation cost estimate was approximately \$20,000. In the case of SFSU, these costs were covered by grant funding SFSU secured from the San Francisco County Transportation Authority as part of its Transportation Fund for Clean Air grant program. As an example, the SFSU project timeline to implementation was about 15 months, which includes program parameter development, student referendum development and voting, legal agreement finalization, BART Board approval, MTC Commission approval, Clipper programming, and Clipper card procurement.

To learn if your school could participate in the HEDP, please contact your school student association and/or school administration. For additional questions regarding the HEDP, please contact lrattet@bart.gov.