

1.963, A Sustainable Transportation Plan for MIT
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Session 7: U-Pass and Transit Subsidies

Characteristics of the Universal Pass (U-Pass)

- No one is able to opt out.
- Usually paid through student life fees
- King County has flex-pass for employees; usually employer subsidizes the whole thing, packaged with guaranteed ride home, etc.
- In Chicago, it's priced at 70 cents per student per day (all universities in Chicago are eligible)
- In most cases, costs are passed along to students.

Questions to consider:

- 1) What are passholders already doing?
- 2) Occasional usage by people without pass

From the transportation survey, non-passholders take an average of 2.25 trips per week.

There may be bias in terms of who answered, and how they reported – suspect these numbers are a little high. But passholders average around 10 trips (what you'd expect based on commute) so it's generally pretty accurate.

Bus passholders take a lot of subway trips – this occasional usage revenue needs to be considered.

Undergrads on campus spend an average of \$18/month on the T. This is a lot more usage/revenue than we expected.

Passes are subsidized about 50%, commuter rail only 35% because there's a cap on subsidy amount. But this is the biggest potential switch, the people who live in commuter rail zones and currently park.

But maybe we're getting most of the LinkPass people anyway, so there's a tradeoff between cost (projected at \$6.6 million with commuter rail, and \$4.9 million without) and potential effectiveness.

Further Discussion

Whatever price you set, some people will have to pay more.

Revenue from employees: if the number of leased parking spaces goes down, this frees up lots of revenue.

Half goes into the Employee Benefit pool, and half of that is recoverable immediately.

Could add the transportation charge to RA appointments, but still, student side is harder to recover.

It may be time to appeal to the administration in terms of sustainability, energy, etc.
Or start with employees and include students the following year?
Make all the benefit arguments strongly, not focusing on costs or recovery.

Including commuter rail – does that encourage people to move to the suburbs (and use cars for everything else)?