



Subject: USS Student Commuter Proposal 2024 Briefing

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The students of CUNY are aspiring minds pursuing a degree to improve their lives and contribute to their communities. They face many struggles during this endeavor that cause barriers to completing their degree on time, if at all. A few challenges students face to well-being include housing, food, tuition costs, mental health, and transportation. [The University Student Senate](#) of the City University of New York advocates for All CUNY students to get Free Unlimites Metrocards, starting with the **CUNY Student Commuter Grant Pilot Program**. We ask that the University (CUNY) include transportation benefits as a priority in strategic planning and city and state budget ask.

Grant recipients will receive transportation funding to travel to and from classes and other academic activities. Community Colleges have a total of 74,636 students at CUNY. This proposal considers a breakdown by student population to launch a pilot program that provides free MetroCards to students.

This pilot program recommendation is to give monthly MetroCards to students and not swipes for financial and logistical reasons. (supporting documents available).

#### General Criteria

- Metrocards valid for one academic semester (4 months) to be renewed before the beginning of each semester based on academic performance.
- Elligible students do not include ASAP recipients and students who utilize the Fair Fares program
- Students must be enrolled at CUNY and take at least 2 in-person classes.
- Each **commuter** student shall receive a monthly unlimited MetroCard
  - Only to be used by the student to whom it was assigned
  - For traveling only on days CUNY campuses are open per the [Academic calendar](#)
  - Valid for one school semester to be renewed

Additionally, eligible students may immediately use their student MetroCard at every subway, local bus, and Access-A-Ride. College Student Metrocards may be: Different from “regular” Metrocards sold to the public.

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#### Student Population



Vulnerable student groups may be considered when initially rolling out the program with added criteria based on their unique characteristics. The University Student Senate endorses any(or all) of these populations for the pilot program.

- Students with disabilities:
  - Registered with the [office of accessibility services](#)
  - Current data: Total student population of 10,128
  - Unlimited MetroCard for 4 months
  - Cost \$5,347,584
- Student Parents
  - Using the [Childcare Centers](#) at CUNY
  - Current Data: 1400 childcare seats available in CUNY
  - Unlimited MetroCard for 4 months
  - Cost \$739,200
- Students who were in the [foster care system](#)
  - Students in Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI)
  - Expend this service to unhoused students (unknown number)
  - Current Data estimate of foster care students within FYSI CUNY 150
  - Unlimited MetroCard for 4 months
  - Cost \$79,200
- [College discovery](#) students
  - Current Data 956 Students
  - Cost \$504,768
- International students with the [CUNY International Student Services Office](#)
  - Current Data: 6000 students total
  - On their last semester
  - In good academic standing
  - With an internship or research project
  - with a cost of \$3,168,000,

The cost may vary based on the number of students who meet all the criteria.

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### System Recommendations

1. The eligibility of students for this pilot should be monitored and managed through CUNY First in the form of An Application for Commuter Status
  - a. To be eligible Commuter/non-commuting status may be determined based on students' commute distance to campus and input into CUNYfirst. Currently, enrolled college students who commute may be eligible if they live more than 0.5 miles from campus. Exceptions can be made for



reasonable accessibility accommodations. Students enrolled in the Summer and Winter sessions may be eligible.

2. The University should establish the CUNY **Office of Transportation Services (OTS)** which would be incorporated inside the [Central Office of student affairs](#)
  - a. The CUNY OTS would ensure the success of the Student Commuter Pilot Program by fulfilling all necessary tasks such as: reporting, advising affiliated programs, cuny first accuracy etc
3. A grant fund may be established specifically for students' transportation needs. Funds will be transferred to the office of the treasury and the funding limits are set up by the budget and the student financial aid systems teams. Based on the commuter status input into Cunyfirst the Metrocards may be distributed by the OTS to the programs or to the students directly

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### Promoting a brighter future for New Yorkers

[USS CUNY](#) is advocating for programs and services that address non-tuition costs with commuting costs as the primary focus. Qualified students who attend public school in the NYC DOE receive a MetroCard. When they transfer to college they don't have access to commuter benefits and the student's economic status has not changed drastically. USS CUNY encourages State, City, and institutional partners to itemize a fund that would be accessible support for all CUNY students regardless of their eligibility for a program, citizenship status, or economic background.

The need to eliminate CUNY students' commuter costs would remove a barrier to entry to receive a high-quality education. The effects would remove stress from students consequently improving academic performance and momentum. The student would then be able to complete the desired degree and stay in New York to contribute to rebuilding the economy.

Yours in partnership,

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Center For an Urban Future, "OPPORTUNITY COSTS Nontuition financial barriers are derailing lowincome students' path to a college credential—and a shot at economic mobility" [JUNE 2021](https://nycfuture.org/pdf/CUF_OpportunityCosts_Final.pdf) [https://nycfuture.org/pdf/CUF\\_OpportunityCosts\\_Final.pdf](https://nycfuture.org/pdf/CUF_OpportunityCosts_Final.pdf)

Jonathan Bowles & Winston Fisher, et al.; AMNY, "Op-Ed  
Op-ed | The city should provide free MetroCards to CUNY students, October 16, 2023  
<https://www.amny.com/oped/op-ed-free-metrocards-for-cuny-students/>