



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 27, 2012

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR EMANUEL, CTA AND CPS ANNOUNCE FREE FARE CARD PILOT PROGRAM

*Pilot Program Grew Out of Idea Presented to Mayor By Chicago Youth Commission;
Students at Five Different High Schools Will Participate In the Program*

CHICAGO - Mayor Emanuel today announced a new Free Fare Card Pilot program for students in five Chicago public high schools. The Mayor was joined by CTA President Forrest Claypool and Chicago Board of Education Vice President Jesse Ruiz to make the announcement, which is another step the City is taking to support Chicago's students and ensure they are able to get to school on time and take advantage of the new full school day every day this year.

"This pilot was generated by our students, for our students, and serves as a reminder that when we focus on what our children need, we find solutions," said Mayor Emanuel. "In addition to the existing reduced CTA fare program for CPS students, this pilot program will help get our young people to school on time, so they can take advantage of more time in the classroom with our teachers every day of the school year."

The free fare card pilot program will allow 500 CPS students to ride public transportation for free. Currently, all CPS students are eligible to apply for a Student Riding Permit, which provides them with reduced fares on CTA buses and trains from 5:30AM to 8:30PM on schooldays.

"Getting our students to class on time each and every day of the school year is our priority, and many of our students rely on public transportation to travel between school and home," said CPS CEO Jean-Claude Brizard. "This pilot helps ensure our students can take advantage of the new full school day."

Last week, the CTA and CPS partnered to extend reduced CTA fares for CPS students by an additional 30 minutes each day for the full school day, ensuring that students won't need to choose between taking advantage of the reduced fare and participating in after-school sports or clubs. And



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

just this morning, CTA announced its first multi-year sponsor for its “First Day, Free Rides” program, which provides free CTA bus and train rides for CPS students to and from school on the first day of school for the majority of students, this year September 4, 2012.

"CTA is proud to continue to partner with community leaders and the Chicago Public Schools to help children access the full education they need to excel," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "For many families and students the school day starts not when the bell rings, but when our bus and train doors open. This pilot program will make it even easier for students to get to and from school so they can spend more time in the classroom."

This pilot program grew out of an idea presented to the Mayor by the Mikva Challenge Mayoral Youth Commission, a group of 25 Chicago high school and college students who meet with the Mayor on a regular basis to present new ideas and provide the Mayor with a youth-oriented perspective of the challenges facing the city. The entire cost of the pilot program is being funded by Chicago-area philanthropist Wendy Abrams. This pilot program represents an investment of \$50,000, divided evenly across 5 schools, and the University of Chicago's Network for College Success will evaluate the pilot program's effectiveness in impacting student attendance, at no cost of the city. Additional funds to extend the pilot will be identified upon review of the first semester's evaluation.

Five schools have been selected for the CTA Free Fare Card Pilot:

- Clemente (1147 N. Western Avenue, in West Town)
- Richards (5009 S. Laflin Street, in New City)
- Sullivan (6631 N. Bosworth Avenue, in Rogers Park)
- TEAM Englewood (6201 S. Stewart Avenue, in Englewood)
- Wells (936 N. Ashland Avenue, in West Town)

Each school has more than 90% of students receiving free/reduced lunch, a high percentage of student commuters, and invested school principals who are willing to implement the program.

Initiatives like this pilot that are aimed at getting students to school affordably and effectively has had profound positive impacts in the past. Wells High School, where the pilot program was announced, created the Transportation Incentive Program (TIP) to provide students with free CTA fares for their commute to and from school last year. To participate, students signed a contract stating that they would not be absent more than five times per quarter, that they would not be tardy more than six times, and that they would not have any disciplinary violations. If students did



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

not meet the terms of the contract, they were no longer eligible for the program and no longer received free fare cards.

TIP participants had an average daily attendance of 85%, three percent higher than the school's current average. TIP participants showed a 31% increase in their yearly attendance average, and they were 12% more likely to go to school every day.

The program begins for the 500 students immediately. Principals at each school will work to identify students for the pilot program.

#