



Finance and Capital Committee

Action Item III-B

February 26, 2026

**U-Pass Program Modernization:
Price and Eligibility Changes**



Board Document

OVERVIEW			
PRESENTATION NAME	U-Pass Program Modernization: Price and Eligibility Changes	DOCUMENT NO.	300097
ACTION OR INFORMATION	Action		
STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION PLAN GOAL	Service Excellence, and Financial and Organizational Efficiency		
RESOLUTION	Yes		
EXECUTIVE OWNER			
EXECUTIVE TEAM OWNER	Rickard, David B.		
D DEPARTMENT	Finance		
DOCUMENT INITIATOR	Kim, Jenny P.		
OTHER INFORMATION			
COMMITTEE	Finance and Capital Committee	COMMITTEE DATE	02/26/2026
PURPOSE/KEY HIGHLIGHTS	The U-Pass expansion and regional growth strategy advances our Strategic Transformation Plan goals of service excellence and financial and organizational efficiency. Staff will present and recommend approval of a new pricing model to expand eligibility to additional categories of students and introduce an opt-in option.		
DISCUSSION	U•Pass is currently a group-discounted transit pass, offering unlimited rides to full-time students at accredited colleges and universities during the academic year. The program is designed to offer discounted travel on Metrobus and Metrorail at \$1.00 a day while increasing access to the region. Today, U•Pass provides value to universities, students, and communities. Today’s program serves over 35,000 students and provided 4.6 million trips in FY2025. From inception, program eligibility has been limited to full-time students and has required mandatory enrollment;		

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part-time students have been categorically excluded. Staff proposes a new program structure to expand participation to new universities. Going forward, student eligibility will be defined by each participating university and an additional program option will be available to universities intended to modernize the program and grow participation.

The proposed models are highlighted below, outlining a tiered pricing structure and selective program enrollment as outlined in the attached presentation:

- **Universal Model:** Retains the base \$1.00 a day pricing model for 100% student participation. Pricing will be indexed to align with future Board approved fare increases.
- **New Opt-In Model:** The new option allows universities to choose an opt-in/opt-out program structure for \$1.75 a day, with a program enrollment minimum of 33 percent of the university's total student population.

Under the new program structure, universities can choose enrollment options suitable for each campus with differentiated pricing. This approach reduces enrollment barriers and extends the program to part-time students and community colleges to cover a broad range of academic curriculums. The new program would also tie future respective daily rates to Board-approved general fare increases for the succeeding academic year; to keep pace with inflation and preserve full fare ridership revenue.

If adopted, the new program would be implemented starting August 2026, during the Fall semester, to allow time for student engagement and outreach. The current U•Pass contract would also be amended to reflect new eligibility, pricing, and program criteria. As part of the implementation, Metro will engage with jurisdictional transit providers on revenue sharing agreements to promote seamless regional travel and transfer reciprocity.

Expanding the U•Pass program promotes seamless regional travel by allowing college students access to jobs, internships, community and discounted travel. With over 200,000 students located in frequent bus and rail service corridors, Metro expects to benefit from ridership growth as the program matures. Universities benefit by offering alternatives to campus parking and ridesharing. Joining the expanded U•Pass program will save universities money and improve transportation services by reducing the need for campus parking. Expanding the U•Pass program to more colleges and universities will



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	advance Metro's commitment to making public transportation convenient, accessible, and affordable across the region.
INTERESTED PARTIES	Colleges and universities in the Washington Metropolitan region; jurisdictional partner bus agencies.
RECOMMENDATION/NEXT STEPS	Adoption of the University Pass (U•Pass) Program expansion and regional growth strategy.
FUNDING IMPACT	As proposed, the program would support ridership growth. At this time, no topline budget impact is anticipated.

U-Pass Program Modernization: Price and Eligibility Changes



Presentation to the Finance & Capital Committee

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

February 26, 2026

Delivering Your Metro, the Way Forward

Focus
Today



Service Excellence

Deliver safe, reliable, convenient, accessible, and world-class service that customers can trust across all modes.

Objectives of Service Excellence Goal

- **Safety and Security**
- **Reliability**
- **Convenience**



Talented Teams

Attract, develop, and retain world-class talent where individuals feel valued, supported, and proud of their contribution.

Objectives of Talented Teams Goal

- **Recruitment and Retention**
- **Learning and Development**
- **Customer Service Mindset**

Focus
Today



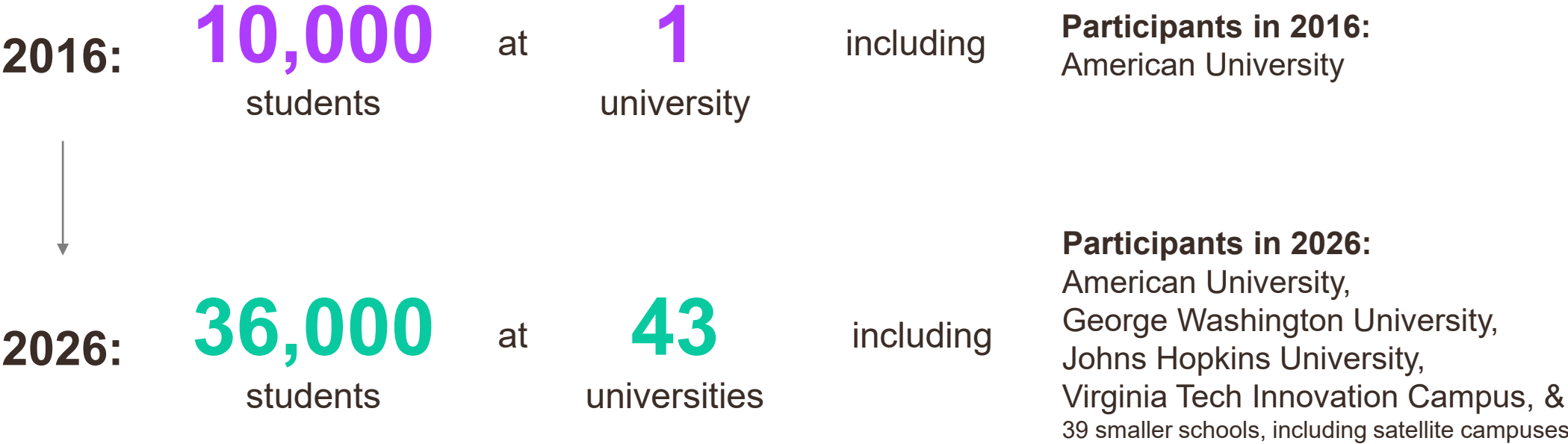
Financial & Organizational Efficiency

Steward public resources and efficiently allocate resources where they drive the most value, to ensure service delivery.

Objectives of Financial & Organizational Efficiency Goal

- **Financial Responsibility**
- **Organizational Efficiency**
- **Energy Management**

This year, U-Pass is celebrating its 10th anniversary



Today, U-Pass provides a significant discount and unlimited rides for participating students

Today's Daily Cost
for Participants:

\$1.00

per student per day



43
colleges and universities



36,000
participating students

VS

Equivalent Daily Cost
for Non-Participants:

\$7.20

per student per day*



20+
nonparticipant institutions



165,000+
nonparticipant students**

* Comparable cost is for Metro's \$216 Monthly Unlimited Pass.

** Based on Metro's estimate of potentially-eligible part-time and full-time students at campuses located near Metro transit facilities. The Washington region has 300,000 total post-secondary students, per a Consortium of Universities estimate.

To expand U-Pass further, some universities have identified a need for additional program flexibility



Program Goals

Grow student ridership to inspire lasting transit-use among next generation of transit customers.

- **Increase affordable transit access:** Expand the number of students participating in the U-Pass program
- **Build a regional travel product:** Enable easy expansion of U-Pass into a broader regional university travel product
- **Balance growth with financial stewardship:** Index to future fare increases through program design



Opportunities for Growth

To join the program, universities not yet participating in U-Pass have identified a need for additional program flexibility with an opt-in model.

- **Flexibility:** Some students need the flexibility to decide whether to participate
- **Frequent transit access:** Some schools have less access to frequent transit service

By providing this additional flexibility, Metro expects to enroll additional universities and students located nearby to Metro transit service.

Recommendation: Update the U-Pass program to provide two options. Each school can choose the **current universal model** or **new opt-in model**

Metro will provide a two-track program, allowing each school to choose between the current universal model or a new opt-in model with a lower minimum participation requirement:



Universal Model: \$1.00/student/day & 100% participation requirement*



Opt-In Model: \$1.75/student/day & 33% participation requirement*

Program Conditions:



Schools can allow part-time students, graduate students, and community college students to participate



Each school will determine the population of students eligible to participate in the U-Pass program



Metro will increase daily cost with future fare increases

* Based on the actual number of students eligible to participate in U-Pass each school year.

Next Steps

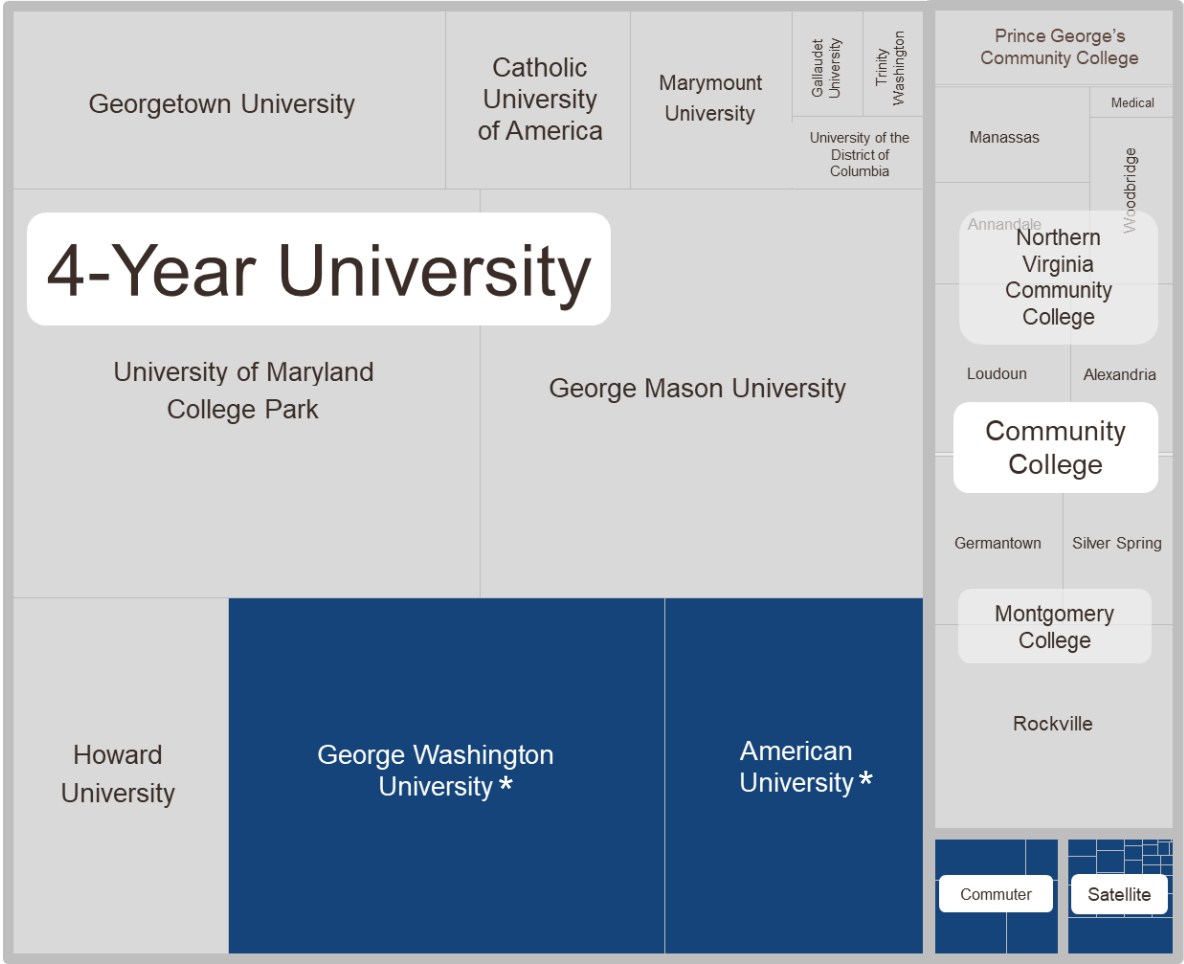
- **Staff recommends Board adoption of the proposed resolution**
- Continued outreach to universities not yet participating in the U-Pass program
- Launch new program for the 2026-2027 school year

Appendix

U-Pass Participants (2025 – 2026)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. American University | 22. Ohio University - Scripps College of Communication |
| 2. Arizona State University | 23. Southern University of New York (SUNY) - Brockport |
| 3. Bay Atlantic University | 24. Stanford University |
| 4. Baylor University | 25. Syracuse University - Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs |
| 5. Boston University | 26. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology |
| 6. Brown University | 27. The George Washington University |
| 7. Carnegie Mellon University - Heinz College | 28. The Ohio State University - John Glenn College of Public Affairs |
| 8. Carnegie Mellon University - Institute for Strategy & Technology | 29. United Methodist College Washington Consortium Capitol Hill (CHIP) |
| 9. College of The Holy Cross - Washington Semester Program | 30. University of Alabama - School of Social Work |
| 10. College of William and Mary - Washington Center | 31. University of California - Washington Program (UCDC) |
| 11. Divine Mercy University | 32. University of Colorado |
| 12. Georgia Institute of Technology | 33. University of Georgia Washington Semester |
| 13. Hamilton College | 34. University of Kentucky |
| 14. James Madison University - Washington Semester | 35. University of Pennsylvania |
| 15. Johns Hopkins University - Advanced Academic Programs | 36. University of Southern California - DC |
| 16. Johns Hopkins University - School of Advanced International Studies | 37. University of Texas - Dallas - The Archer Center |
| 17. Johns Hopkins University - Carey School of Business | 38. University of Wisconsin |
| 18. Loyola University | 39. Virginia Tech (Innovation Campus) |
| 19. Lutheran College - Washington Semester | 40. Wake Forest University |
| 20. Marquette University - Les Aspin Center for Government | 41. Washington Internship Institute |
| 21. Northwestern University | |

Current pricing structure has limited U-Pass to 18% of total addressable market



U-Pass offered, by number of full-time students attending

18%

of the 200,000 post-secondary students in the DMV are enrolled in U-Pass.**

0%

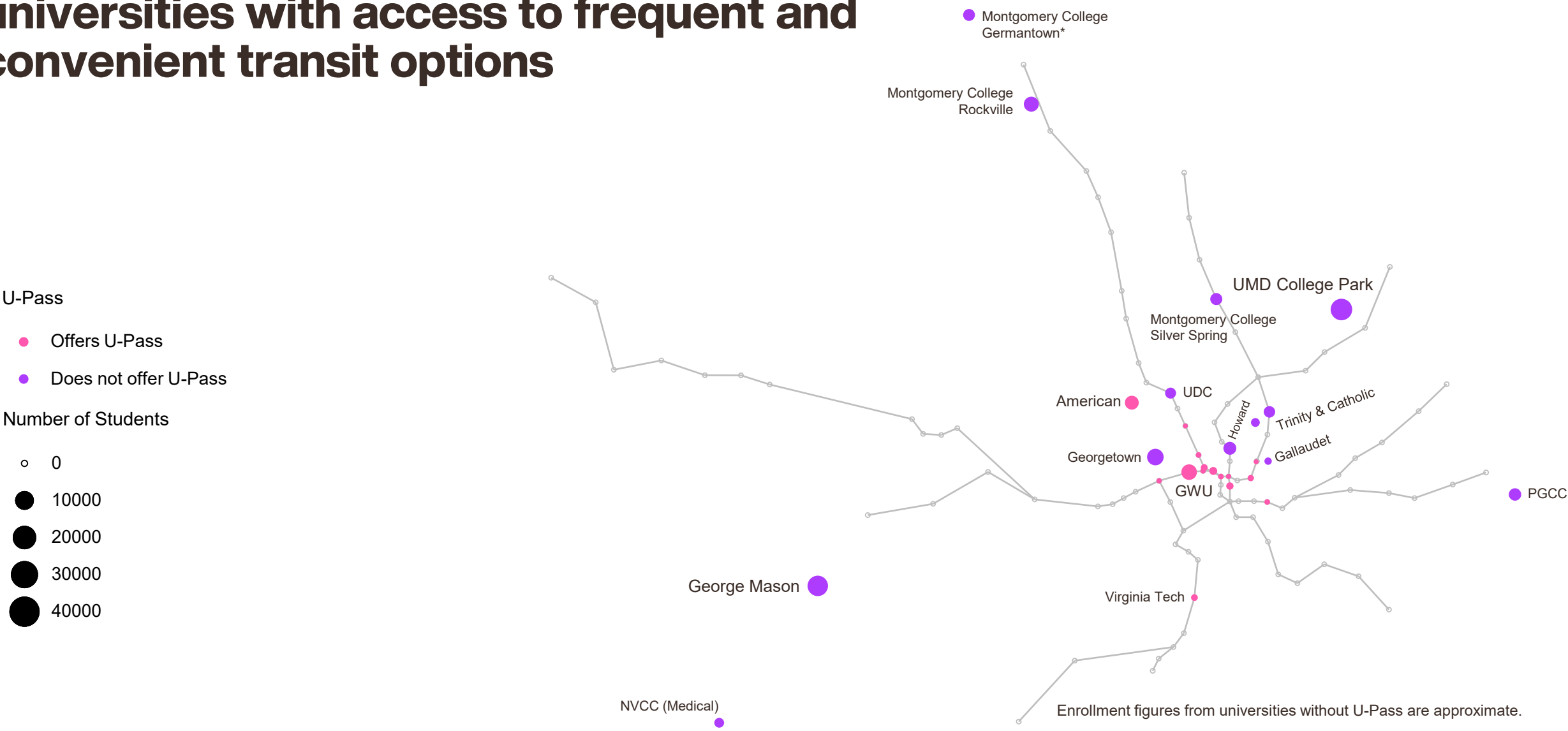
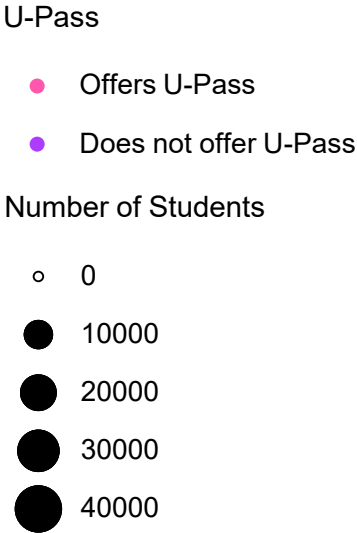
of the 60,000 part-time post-secondary students in the DMV are eligible to participate in the U-Pass program, including 9,000 at institutions that offer U-Pass.**

Offers U-Pass



* Does not include part-time students not currently eligible for U-Pass.
** Based on Metro's estimate of potentially-eligible part-time and full-time students at campuses located near Metro transit facilities.

U-Pass is most widely adopted by universities with access to frequent and convenient transit options



SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF REVISED UNIVERSITY PASS PROGRAM FARES AND RULES

RESOLUTION
OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE
WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, Section 60 of the WMATA Compact requires approval from the Board of Directors to establish new fares and fees; and

WHEREAS, In Resolution 2016-14, the Board of Directors established a University Pass (U•Pass) pilot program and authorized staff to enter into a pilot agreement with interested universities; and

WHEREAS, In Resolutions 2016-24, 2017-16, and 2018-15 the Board of Directors expanded the U•Pass program and made it permanent; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors desires to update and revise the delegated authority given to the General Manager and Chief Executive Officer in Resolution 2018-15 to expand the U•Pass program and obtain sponsorships for the program;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, That Resolutions 2016-14, 2016-24, 2017-16, and 2018-15 are rescinded in their entirety; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors authorizes the General Manager and Chief Executive Officer or his designee to establish and manage the Universal U•Pass Program and Opt In U•Pass Program consistent with the respective terms and conditions set forth in Attachment A hereto; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the General Manager and Chief Executive Officer and Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, or their designees, are authorized to negotiate and execute agreements with universities for participation in the U•Pass Programs consistent with this Resolution, but may not make structural changes to the U•Pass Programs without prior approval of the Board of Directors; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Resolution shall not affect contracts currently in force through the duration of the 2025-2026 school year; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That in order to ensure the continuity of the U•Pass Programs, this Resolution shall be effective immediately.

Reviewed as to form and legal sufficiency,

/s/

Patricia Y. Lee
Executive Vice President, Chief Legal Officer,
and General Counsel

WMATA File Structure No.:
9.12.9 Tariff (WMATA Fare Structure)

PROPOSED

ATTACHMENT A

	Universal U•Pass Program	Opt In U•Pass Program
Minimum Participation Requirement of Eligible Students	100%	33%
Minimum cost to participating university per enrolled student per day	\$1.00	\$1.75

Under both the Universal U•Pass Program and the Opt In U•Pass Program each participating university shall define a population of enrolled students eligible to participate, with the consent of the WMATA Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer or his designee.

When applicable, the daily cost to each participating university shall increase by no less than the percentage increase of the weekday base fare on Metrorail following a fare increase, rounded up to the nearest five (5) cents, unless explicitly waived by the WMATA Board of Directors.

Passes may be issued for durations as may be established and revised by the WMATA Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer or his designee. Passes shall be valid for use on any trip on Metrorail and Metrobus but may not be used on MetroAccess.

Participating students shall pay the non-rider rate at parking facilities.