This report provides an analysis of the first year of the University of Washington's U-PASS program. The U-PASS is a flexible package of transportation benefits that allows students, faculty, and staff to choose from a variety of commuting options at a greatly reduced price.

Metro and the University of Washington conducted a joint study in 1989 in response to the need to improve University District air quality, lessen congestion, decrease the demand for campus parking, and improve transit service while encouraging the use of commute alternatives. The joint effort resulted in the U-PASS program, one of the most comprehensive transportation management programs of its kind in the nation.

The U-PASS benefits the entire University population of 50,000 either directly, by providing flexible transportation options, or indirectly, by reducing traffic congestion and parking demand and improving air quality. Those who choose to participate pay a low fee ($20 per quarter for students, $27 for faculty and staff) for a U-PASS sticker, which is affixed to the back of their University identification card. This one pass gives access to all elements of the program:

- Metro and Community Transit
- Free carpool parking
- Free vanpool fares
- Night Ride shuttle
- Ridematch
- Bicycle facilities
- Merchant discounts
- Reimbursed Ride Home
- Discount daily parking passes

Program Goals

The U-PASS was designed with a number of goals in mind: 1) to provide better transportation services to University commuters; 2) to decrease the number of vehicle trips and in turn the need to replace lost parking with new parking facilities; 3) to achieve a 75 percent U-PASS participation rate; and 4) to mitigate potential traffic impacts of University growth.

Funding

The total U-PASS budget during the three-year demonstration period (October 1991 to September 1994) is approximately $18 million. Income from pass sales covers 40 percent of the U-PASS budget. The parking system revenue funds an

U-Pass Funding Sources

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User Fees</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parking Fees</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other UW Sources</td>
<td>30%</td>
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additional 30 percent. To achieve this funding level from the parking system, parking permit fees (which include a complementary U-PASS) were increased from $24 to $40 per month for faculty and staff, and student daily pay parking rose from $0.75 to $1.50. The remaining 30 percent of the program is subsidized by the University using a variety of funding sources. In addition, the Washington State Legislature supported the U-PASS program with $800,000 for one-time capital improvements during the 1991-93 biennium. These funds are being used for the following:

- Roadway improvements for buses
- Passholder safety improvements
- Parking improvements for carpools
- Bicycle facilities improvements

**U-PASS Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of the U-PASS program can be measured by participation rates, changes in vehicle trips, and changes in people's choice of commute mode.

**Participation**

During the 1991-92 academic year, U-PASS participation averaged 32,600, with a high of 37,000 in the fall of 1991. The campuswide average participation rate of 72 percent during the first year comes close to the program goal of 75 percent.

**Vehicle Trips**

The number of vehicles coming to campus during morning rush hours (7-9 A.M.) decreased 15 percent, from 7,800 before the U-PASS to 6,630 afterward. Trips leaving campus in the peak afternoon hours (3-6 P.M.) decreased by almost 9 percent. Similar before and after traffic counts taken in the spring of 1991 and 1992 showed even greater reductions in trips to and from campus. This indicates that participants maintained their new travel habits.

In October 1991, the City surveyed vehicles crossing a 14-point cordon surrounding the University District to determine if they had a University destination. This survey will be conducted every other year to determine the University's compliance with conditions of its recently adopted General Physical Development Plan. The count showed that only 31 percent of the 37,000 morning peak-period vehicle trips and 29 percent of the 61,400
evening peak-period vehicle trips were University related. Unfortunately, no pre-U-PASS University District traffic counts are available, but it has been estimated that morning peak-period traffic has been reduced by almost 1,800 vehicles since the start of the U-PASS.

**Mode Choice**

The most dramatic shifts in commute modes occurred with single-occupancy-vehicle commuters and bus riders. Before the U-PASS, the dominant commute mode was driving alone (33 percent), followed by transit at 21 percent. Since the U-PASS began, the numbers have switched: 33 percent of campus commuters come by bus, and only 23 percent drive alone. The number of students driving alone has dropped by almost half, from 26 percent to 14 percent of the student population. At the same time, the percentage of students commuting by transit has risen from 21 to 35.

**Results by Program Element**

The results of individual U-PASS program elements are discussed below.

**SOV Permits/ Parking Utilization**

Within the first year of the U-PASS program, the number of people with drive-alone parking permits decreased 17 percent, and parking lot utilization has decreased over 14 percent (from 91 percent utilization pre-U-PASS to 78 percent post-U-PASS). The east-campus student lots, which used to fill daily, showed the biggest reduction in usage, going from almost 100 percent utilization to just over 70 percent. This is the first time in recent memory that these parking lots have not filled.
Transit Ridership

Metro and Community Transit have both reported ridership increases of over 20 percent on weekday routes coming to the University District. In addition, Metro has determined that UW student, faculty, and staff ridership has increased 35 percent systemwide since the start of the U-PASS. Since September 1991, Metro has added 44,000 annual hours of service to University routes. In February 1993, Metro will add another 7,000 annual hours. Community Transit has added almost 2,000 annual hours and has expanded park and ride lot capacity to accommodate the increase in transit commuters. The amount of service hours that Metro and Community Transit have added is based on contracts with the University. Nowhere else in either transit system have so many hours been added in the last year.

Transit Ridership
Up 20%

Carpools/Vanpools

Since the start of the U-PASS program, the number of carpool permits are up 21 percent, while the number of carpool participants are up 17 percent. After only nine months, the number of vanpools increased from eight to 20, with almost 200 riders participating.

Ridematch

Commuters looking for others with whom to share the ride have expanded the ridematch database from 850 names prior to the U-PASS to 1,500 names after U-PASS implementation (a 76 percent increase). Students receive ridematch applications quarterly with their registration confirmation; faculty and staff receive applications several times a year, although anyone can sign up at any time.

The Night Ride

The Night Ride is an evening van service that picks up students, faculty, and staff on campus and delivers them to their destinations in nearby neighborhoods. This new U-PASS service carried over 2,600 riders during its first nine months of operation—an average of 145 passengers per night or 24 riders per hour.

Bicycling

Bicycling is an important part of the U-PASS program. To address the needs of bicyclists, an advisory committee comprised of faculty, staff, and
Reimbursed Ride Home

Over the first ten months of the U-PASS, an average of 15 faculty and staff per month used the Reimbursed Ride Home, an emergency taxi service for those who find themselves unexpectedly stranded on campus. The University pays for 90 percent of the taxi ride up to 50 miles per quarter. The average number of miles traveled was eight, and the average fare (not including tip) was just under $12. The number of passengers represents just 0.4 percent of faculty/staff U-PASS holders. Although the program is infrequently used, 35 percent of the faculty and staff with a U-PASS consider it an important feature.

Discount Daily Parking Passes

Discount daily parking passes are available to U-PASS participants for $1.25 each and allow those who usually leave their cars at home to drive alone up to twice a week without paying full parking rates ($4.50 per day). Non-U-PASS participants can also purchase these passes but pay the full rate of $2.25 each. Sales of the passes have nearly doubled, from an average of 5,640 per month before the U-PASS to 10,730 after the program began.

Parking-Space Guarantee

To encourage parking permit holders to give up their permits in favor of the U-PASS commute, the Parking Division will hold their lot assignment for up to six months while they try out their alternatives. To date, only a handful of employees have requested their parking space back.

Information and Marketing

To introduce the new program to the campus and to encourage high participation rates, an information and marketing program was established. A family of brochures was developed, and nine campus commuter centers were created. The Transportation
Office hosts several transportation fairs over the year. New students and employees receive program materials at orientation sessions or by mail. Program brochures, two newsletters and seasonal fliers are mailed and/or stocked at commuter centers. Advertisements and articles in campus papers keep the program in the public eye on campus.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To track the effectiveness of the new U-PASS program, a monitoring and evaluation system was put into place. This includes annual traffic surveys, an annual mode choice survey, a biennial telephone survey conducted jointly with Metro, and monthly monitoring of each U-PASS element.

Program Satisfaction

Results of the telephone survey show that the U-PASS satisfaction rate is high, even among those on campus who do not have a U-PASS. Ninety-two percent of U-PASS holders and 65 percent of non-U-PASS holders are somewhat or very satisfied with the program.

Awards

In its first year, the U-PASS won two awards. In March 1992 the Bullitt Foundation's Oil Smart program awarded the U-PASS a medal for being an outstanding overall transportation program. In September 1992, the Association for Commuter Transportation, a national group of 1,800 individuals and organizations committed to exploring commute issues, awarded the U-PASS program its highest honor, a leadership award.

Comments

The Transportation Office welcomes comments on the U-PASS program. Letters should be addressed to the Transportation Office, FJ-08, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195—or call (206) 543-0450.