Student Senate Subsidy Reduces Price of Bus Passes, Debate Over Parking Ramp Continues

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At the beginning of the fall semester, bus passes for students at Metropolitan State University were more expensive than last year. Recently, however, Metro’s Student Senate voted to reinstate bus subsidies for this year.

The approved covers $50 per bus pass, up to a total of $50,000. That is, bus passes will be $50 cheaper than they were at the beginning of the semester. Moreover, Metro’s administration might subsidize another $25 per pass, according to Student Senate President Amber Hamm. She said the Senate is waiting for an official response from the administration regarding their subsidy.

Many students have already purchased passes at a higher price this semester. Student Senate has proposed that these student be reimbursed. Hamm said this aspect of the proposal has not yet been approved.

“This is a good thing,” said Alex Johnson, a part time student at Metro. Johnson takes the bus from Lauderdale to get to the Saint Paul and Midway campuses. “Passes are always a lot of money. Any help to pay is always good.”

“We try to keep it around $100 that students have to pay,” said Brian Wermerskirchen, Vice President of Student Senate. Typically, Metro Transit increases the cost of passes every year, but the general idea for Senate and Metro State is to take the cost on. “A lot of students really needed bus pass to be subsidized,” said Hamm. “We had quite a few emails and students coming up to us to tell us they needed that subsidy because of the increased parking fee.”

Once the administration give their official reply to the proposal, students who already purchased bus passes may have the option to receive reimbursement. For those students who haven’t bought a pass yet, purchases can be made at the Gateway Student Services on campus.

One issue important to bus riders, bikers and those who walk to school is the potential for an opt-out option for the parking ramp fees.

“There’s ongoing discussion about it right now,” said Wermerskirchen. “It’s something that we have a little bit of time to make a decision because we can’t change anything for this year. It can’t be changed this year because it has to go through the system office; our hands are pretty tied for what we are able to do this year.”

Allowing some student to opt out of the fee may lead to complications, as costs for the parking ramp are fixed. If costs go down for one group, they go up for another. Student Senate committees are in place to discuss the issue in the upcoming year, so students have an opportunity to bring their comments and questions to the Senate.

“It’s all being heard,” said Wemerskirchen. “We understand what a lot of people are going through; we’re paying it, too. … If [students] have questions, if they want to know more and hear the other voices in the conversation, reach out. Let’s have a conversation.”