Business Item

Transportation Committee

Committee meeting date: October 26, 2026 **For the Metropolitan Council:** November 18, 2026

Business Item: 2026-140

University of Minnesota Universal Pass Renewals for 26R008 Staff & Faculty and 26R009 Students

District(s), member(s): All

Policy/legal reference: Income/Grants Policy FM 15-1

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Division/department: Metro Transit

Proposed action

That the Metropolitan Council authorizes the Regional Administrator to:

Negotiate, enter into, and execute the renewal Universal Pass agreements for 26R008 Staff and Faculty and 26R009 Students, with the University of Minnesota for the period of December 1, 2026 – July 31, 2030.

Background

The Metropolitan Council (via. Metro Transit) partners with the University of Minnesota to provide Universal Pass to eligible students, staff and faculty. The Universal Pass program provides unlimited ride passes to eligible riders and is valid for unlimited rides on all regional bus and light rail services. The renewal agreements continue the long-standing partnership between Metro Transit and the University of Minnesota by providing affordable, unlimited transit access for students while supporting increased transit ridership, reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, and promoting equitable access to education, employment, and campus activities.

The renewal terms of for Universal Pass agreements 26R008 Staff and Faculty and 26R009 Students are for the period of November 1, 2026 – July 31, 2030, and will serve approximately 41,000 students and 19,000 staff and faculty. The agreements are estimated to generate $15.3M in revenue for students and $3.2M for staff and faculty for the life of the agreement, with an annual ridership review.

The University of Minnesota's Universal Pass renewal agreements will exceed the $2,000,000 revenue threshold established in Income/Grants Policy FM-15-1.

Rationale

Council Policy FM 15-1 requires Council approval on income agreements exceeding $2M.

Execution of the Universal Pass agreements will continue to provide affordable quality transit service to students, staff and faculty of the University of Minnesota during a time when congestion is growing, fuel price concerns are strong and environmental sensitivity is high.

Thrive lens analysis

On Feb. 12, 2025, the Council adopted Imagine 2050, which builds on policy direction in Thrive MSP 2040. Under the Thrive lens, programs such as the Universal Pass expand transit access for University of Minnesota students, staff, and faculty while advancing the outcomes of Equity and Prosperity. By providing unlimited transit rides, the program offers a reliable transportation option that helps reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips and improves access to campus, particularly for those who may otherwise face transportation barriers. The Universal Pass also demonstrates the Metropolitan Council's and the University of Minnesota's shared commitment to the efficient and effective stewardship of public financial resources.

Funding

These are revenue agreements; no funding is required. Revenue agreements will be included in the annual Metro Transit Operating Budget.

Small business inclusion

These are revenue agreements for Bus and Light Rail Operations.