

U-Pass CT Program

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Issue

Explain the U-Pass CT program. This report updates OLR Report [2017-R-0272](#).

Summary

The [U-Pass CT](#) program provides free public transportation to eligible students enrolled at participating UConn campuses and Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) schools. The program is funded by a \$20 per-semester student fee, and students can use their passes for unlimited rides on most public bus and rail systems within the state. More information on the program can be found on [CT Rides](#) or on participating colleges' and universities' websites.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) created the program in 2017 using its administrative powers. Students at private colleges and universities are not currently eligible for the program. According to the commissioner, DOT does not have the power to extend the program to these students administratively. This session, the Transportation Committee introduced legislation that would enable DOT to expand the program to include private school students, but the legislature shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic before the committee took action on the bill.

Eligibility and Terms

Student Eligibility

The U-Pass is available to (1) full- and part-time graduate and undergraduate students at participating UConn campuses and (2) full- and part-time undergraduate students at participating CSCU campuses who are taking at least one class per semester on campus. According to [CT Rides](#),

the following colleges and universities were participating in the U-Pass program as of the Spring 2020 semester:

- Asnuntuck Community College, Enfield
- Capital Community College, Hartford
- Gateway Community College, New Haven
- Housatonic Community College, Bridgeport
- Manchester Community College, Manchester
- Middlesex Community College, Middletown
- Norwalk Community College, Norwalk
- Three Rivers Community College, Norwich
- Tunxis Community College, Farmington
- Central CT State University, New Britain
- Southern CT State University, New Haven
- Western CT State University, Danbury
- University of Connecticut, Avery Point
- University of Connecticut, Hartford
- University of Connecticut, School of Law
- University of Connecticut, Stamford
- University of Connecticut, Storrs
- University of Connecticut, Waterbury

Private Colleges and Universities. Currently, there are no private colleges or universities participating in the U-Pass program, although several institutions have expressed interest in doing so. According to the DOT commissioner, this is because he does not have the statutory authority to enter into contracts with private entities in exchange for compensation, which would be necessary to extend the U-Pass program to private institutions.

In the 2020 session, the Transportation Committee included a provision in the DOT omnibus bill which would have established the U-Pass program in statute and allowed the commissioner to extend the program to private colleges and universities ([SB 151](#), § 1). The bill was heard on February 24, 2020, and received support from several private institutions, but the committee did not act on it before the legislature shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cost

Each participating institution assesses a \$20 per semester student fee to fund the U-Pass program. The fee is considered an institutional charge and can be paid with financial aid. Students must pay the fee whether or not they obtain a U-Pass. Students obtain the passes directly from their college or university. Those who attend multiple participating schools are required to pay the fee only once, but they must provide proof of fee payment to their second school in order to get the charge waived.

Validity

A fall semester U-Pass is valid from August 1 to December 31, and a spring semester pass is valid from January 1 to July 31.

Using the U-Pass

Students can use their U-Pass for unlimited rides on most public bus and rail systems within the state (see “*Participating Transit Providers*” below) on weekdays and weekends, including holidays. Holders must show their student ID when they use the pass. (OLR report [2017-R-0273](#) illustrates where public colleges and universities are located in relation to local bus systems, CTfastrak, and Metro North routes.)

Participating Transit Providers

According to CT Rides, the following transit providers were participating in the U-Pass program as of the Spring 2020 semester:

- CTtransit statewide (including CTtransit Express and CTfastrak)
- Greater Bridgeport Transit
- Norwalk Transit
- Housatonic Area Regional Transit
- Milford Transit
- South East Area Transit
- Windham Region Transit District
- Magic Carpet (Enfield Transit)
- Northwestern CT Transit District
- 9 Town Transit (CT Valley Shore transit)
- Middletown Area Transit

- CTrail Hartford Line between New Haven and Springfield, MA (including Amtrak trains, except for the Vermonter)
- CTrail Shore Line East (except Amtrak trains)
- Metro North (valid for service up to the Connecticut state line; students traveling into New York must pay the fare from the state line to their destination in New York.)

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