

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: 2025 Summer Youth Ride Free Promotion Recap

FROM: David Mark, Director of Customer Experience

DATE: September 22, 2025

Action Requested

Informational only.

Background:

The Summer Youth Ride Free (SYRF) promotion ran from May 30 – August 31, 2025. The initiative supports choice ridership and public transit trial by youth over the summer school break leading up to the 2025/26 school year. The supporting media campaign ran from May 15 – August 24, 2025.

For the second consecutive year Wheels offered a fare free period for youth during the summer months when students are out of school. With Try Transit to School discontinued for 2025, SYRF was extended to the end of August to accommodate two weeks of free ridership at the start of the school year. Contra Costa County agencies offered similar fare free youth programs this year with County Connection, Tri Delta Transit, and WestCAT collaborating with LAVTA on media relations.

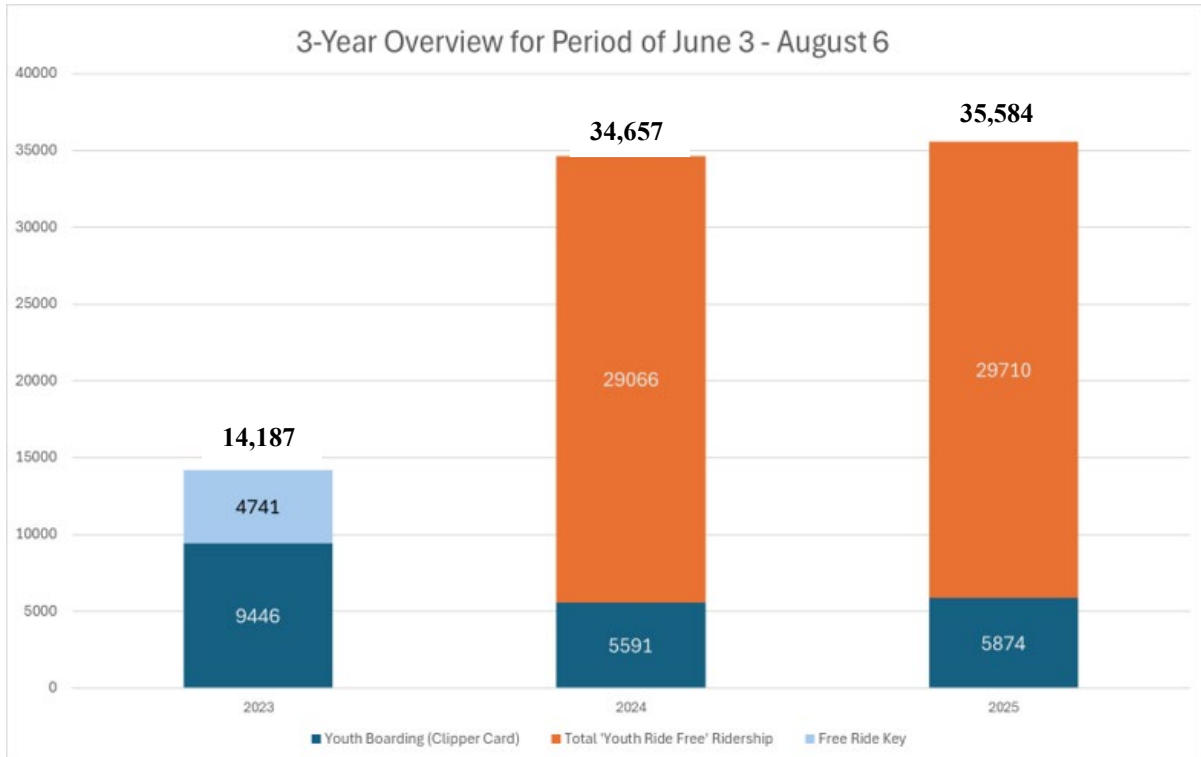
Discussion:

The promotion continued its objective of increasing student summer “choice” ridership. Multiple media platforms were used to communicate the promotion to both student and parent audiences across traditional and digital channels. The offer and advertising proved effective as ridership and website traffic increased substantially over the promotional period.

Results:

Ridership data was collected via the GFI Farebox. When a youth rider boarded the bus, operators were instructed to press the D Key. It should be noted that often operators pressed the D (courtesy/free) key instead of the B (promotional) key. For comparison purposes, LAVTA is combining data from both keys in this analysis.

Website traffic for the period June 1 – August 15 was 24,000 users, a 19% increase from year prior. Total sessions were 48,000, an increase of 33% for the same period.



2025 summer youth ridership of 35,584 aligned with 2024 results of 34,657 riders, representing a large average increase of 248% (20,934 riders) when compared to the baseline of 2023 total summer youth ridership. A 10-week period was used to facilitate consistent year-over-year comparisons, accounting for different school start dates and the promotional period extension to end of August.

It should be noted that this program results in a small loss of fare revenue due to Alameda County Student Transit Pass Program (STPP) cardholders not being required to tap Clipper cards. This annual forgone fare revenue is estimated at \$4,227 for the overview period.

Staff intend to continue the program in 2026 but will be evaluating costs to find efficiencies as the program now has broad community awareness. Staff will also collaborate with the Contra Costa County operators to share media opportunities and better understand the efficacy of their programs.

Recommendations

None - This is an informational item.