




Office of Deputy Mayor Jennifer C. Niles

John A. Wilson Building | 1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 307 | Washington, DC 20004

TO: LEA Leaders
FROM: Jennie Niles, Deputy Mayor for Education 
DATE: July 5, 2016
RE: 1) Kids Ride Free Program Improvements for SY2016-17;
2) LEA enrollment data needed by July 29, 2016

Purpose of this Memorandum

Kids Ride Free is a huge benefit for public school students and families by increasing educational opportunities, decreasing the burden for students getting to school on time, and saving families critical dollars. This memorandum provides information about improvements to the Kids Ride Free program for SY2016-17 and the need for LEAs submit school enrollment data by July 29 to ensure students' DC One Cards are activated for Kids Ride Free before the first day of school.

Background

As part of Mayor Bowser's efforts to create Pathways to the Middle Class for DC residents, the District expanded the Kids Ride Free program to include rail for SY2015-16. The program has succeeded in increasing transportation options available to students to get to and from school and school-related activities safely and efficiently. Students are taking over 700,000 trips per month on bus and rail and nearly a third of our students rely on the Kids Ride Free Program. However, the District is aware that the current program processes are not working for all students and families. In response, DME, DDOT and OCTO are collaborating with WMATA to implement changes to address these barriers. Changes include improvements to the program enrollment and transit pass distribution processes, as well as streamlining the rail and bus programs to reduce the major cause of SmarTrip card negative balances which have prevented many students from accessing their benefit. On June 9, WMATA's Finance Committee approved the following changes, and the full WMATA board will vote on it at their July 2016 meeting.

Program Improvements

There are three major changes to the program that will improve Kids Ride Free for SY2016-17.

- **Removal of the time-of-day and day-of-week restrictions on bus.** Recognizing that school-related activities extend beyond the existing program parameters, DDOT and WMATA are moving to remove the time-of-day and day-of-week restrictions on the bus program. This will make the bus program consistent with the rail program and remove the primary sources of negative balances on students' passes. *Pending DDOT regulation changes and full WMATA Board approval at July 2016 meeting.*
- **Implement automatic program enrollment for eligible students with DC One Cards.** Students will no longer need to enroll online. Once their information is correctly uploaded to SLED at OSSE, students will be automatically enrolled by data transfer from





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OSSE to OCTO and WMATA. Students will activate their benefit by tapping their DC One Card at a fare gate or box. *Pending passage of BSA and full WMATA Board approval at July 2016 meeting.*

- **Provide more information for students via the DC One Card web portal.** While students no longer will be required to enroll in the program online, the DC One Card portal will be enhanced to provide students with information about the status of their transit benefit. *Pending approval of other program changes (see above).*

LEA Responsibilities

Schools are critical partners to the success of this program. As the District seeks to implement the above improvements, LEA assistance with the following actions is necessary:

- **Ensure that school enrollment data are complete and accurate as early as possible.**
A major component of the verification process for this program is ensuring students are enrolled in a DC Public School or public charter school. Therefore, in order for eligible students to receive their transit passes prior to the start of school, school enrollment data must be as complete as possible in OSSE's SLED. Beginning July 29th, OSSE will send nightly enrollment feeds to OCTO. Name, DOB, and address (including city and state) must be complete because OCTO relies on these data fields to inform WMATA who should receive the transit passes. Eligible students cannot receive their transit benefits until their complete data are in SLED.
- **Identify primary and backup DC One Card ID Administrators at every LEA.**
DDOT and OCTO rely on ID Administrators to issue eligible students their DC One Cards. There is a spike in demand on ID Administrators' attention at the start of school when students are requesting new or replacement DC One Cards. Please ensure each school has a trained primary and back up ID Administrator identified. For questions or concerns regarding DC One Card ID Administration, contact DDOT at 202-673-1740 or school.transit@dc.gov.
- **Communicate with your school communities about the Kids Ride Free Program.**
This summer, DME and DDOT will be working together to develop materials and implement a plan to communicate with students, parents, and schools about the program and how they can access the benefits for SY2016-17. The success of Kids Ride Free depends on your efforts to share this information with your school communities. Flyers in multiple languages will be available in late July and the DME and DDOT websites will offer updated information.

