



# STUDENT METROCARD POLICY REPORT

ASSEMBLY MEMBER  
HARVEY EPSTEIN'S 74TH  
DISTRICT YOUTH COUNCIL  
COALITION FOR  
STUDENT TRANSIT JUSTICE

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## **OVERVIEW:**

1. Create a universal MetroCard for grades 7-12 that is valid from to 5:00 am - 10:30 pm seven-days-a-week, with three rides on weekdays and two rides on weekends.
2. Uphold and clarify student transportation rights in addition to creating a clear definition of what a “school-related activity” is.
3. Modify written policy statements on MetroCard use.

Assembly Member Harvey Epstein and the 74th Assembly District Youth Council, in partnership with the Coalition for Student Transit Justice, are fighting to expand access to transportation for pupils across New York City. We are dedicated to dismantling unjust transit policy because we recognize that the stringent regulations placed on student MetroCards preserve circumstances of racial and socioeconomic inequality. We understand access to transportation as a foundational element that informs a child’s future just as access to housing or education does. Providing equitable transportation to students is vital to providing equal opportunity for all, vital to school integration, and vital to the well-being of hundreds of thousands of students.

In May of 2019, education and transit officials approved and implemented our proposal to replace all half-fare bus-passes with a full-fare MetroCard. As of September of 2019, nearly one out of every six public-school students are provided with additional transportation coverage they previously did not receive. This victory has established a strong groundwork to eliminate other restrictions on student transit. We are now campaigning to (1) introduce a universal MetroCard for grades 7-12 with 5:00 am - 10:30 pm time-limits and additional coverage for weekend transportation, (2) uphold and clarify given student transportation rights, and (3) modify written policy statements on MetroCard misuse.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Create a universal MetroCard for grades 7-12 that is valid from to 5:00 am - 10:30 pm seven-days-a-week, with three rides on weekdays and two rides on weekends.**

Currently, student passes are only valid from 5:30 am - 8:30 pm, leaving the most at-risk students stranded with no transportation late at night. Many extracurricular activities end later than 8:30 pm, especially art and athletic events. In a survey of 881 New York City students, 73.2% responded that they take part in afterschool activities that require use of public transit after 8:30 pm. The time restraints placed on student MetroCards limit opportunity, particularly for students with longer commutes. Evan is a ninth-grader who lives in Queens and commutes an hour to an hour and a half to his school, Bard High School Early College Manhattan. He shared that, *“I would join a club at BHSEC (Bard High School Early College) Manhattan, but I might have to commute after 8:30(pm), so I don’t participate in any (in-school) extracurricular activities.”*

The 5:30 am restrictions also pose issues, especially for students who have multiple transfers, long commutes, and/or eat breakfast at school. Daniela is a freshman at Dominican Academy. She is involved in a variety of extracurricular activities that require her to use public transportation during times when her student pass is not valid. Regarding her transportation in the mornings, Daniela stated, *“I need to get to school earlier on the days where I have before-school clubs... I usually have to pay the regular MTA subway fare, because it’s too early in the day to use my Student MetroCard. I get up earlier than normal two times a week... that comes close to \$216 (per year), ONLY on my way TO school.”* Extending the time-limits placed on pupil transportation to 5:00 am -10:30 pm will increase access to opportunity, reduce economic hardship for students and their families, and comes at no financial cost to city education or transit departments.

Student transit is limited by stringent time restraints during the week, but not provided at all during the weekend. All students living further than 0.5 miles away from their schools are granted three rides on public transit on weekdays, covering transportation to school, an after-school activity, and home. This consideration for transportation to extracurriculars must be extended to the weekends by issuing all New York City students two additional MetroCard swipes on Saturday and Sunday. Taking part in out-of-school activities is an important and meaningful element of being a student; it is wrong to expect pupils to pay for transit to and from these activities on their own dime. Leanne, a senior at

Pelham Lab High School, explained, *“The time limits... prevent me from working or engaging in things fully on the weekends. I’m not just a student Monday–Friday.”* All students, no matter the distance they live from their school, must be provided coverage for weekend transportation.

There are currently 15 types of student transit passes, each with different functionality constraints. Creating a universal student MetroCard with extended time-limits and additional weekend transportation will not only expand access to opportunity and ease the financial burden of transportation, but will also reduce the workload of education and transit administrators by simplifying production and distribution. Make New York City accessible to all students by introducing a single MetroCard for pupils in grades 7-12 covering three swipes on weekdays and two swipes on weekends with universal time constraints of 5:00 am - 10:30 pm.

**2. Uphold and clarify student transportation rights in addition to clearly defining what a “school-approved activity” is.**

While it is an [official right](#) for pupils to be provided with *“An additional two-trip MetroCard when requested for school-approved activities,”* no guidelines exist to define what constitutes as a *“school-approved activity,”* leaving arbitrary case-by-case judgment to decide when student transportation will be covered. Students residing within 0.5 miles of their school receive no transit for any activities not *“school-approved,”* which imposes large limitations on their access to opportunity and involvement in extracurricular activities. Regardless of this statute, countless students involved in school-related extracurriculars that require an abundance of practice and travel outside of school, PSAL athletics, and musical theater, in particular, are left to pay for full transportation to many of their activities out of pocket, especially on weekends. Isabella is in 11th grade at Brooklyn Technical High School and shared that, *“The track team requires me to go to meets on the weekend as well as sometimes after school. Multiple times we have not received the 2-trip MetroCard our school is supposed to provide for our meets. Additionally, I have had to leave my house to get to these meets so early our 2-trip MetroCards don't even work.”* The vast majority of public-schools are inadequately resourced, unable to support, and unaware of the two-trip MetroCard policy.

All middle and high school students should be notified of the two-trip MetroCard policy in writing at the beginning of each semester. The MTA and DOE must uphold their commitment to providing two-trip MetroCards for students and in doing so, they must expand and clarify the regulations

on how two-trip cards are administered. “*School-approved activities*” must include all in-school clubs and programs in addition to student employment, work-study, internship, and volunteer opportunities. If a school collects a permission slip or liability waiver for an activity that requires pupils to travel individually and/or no group subway certificate is provided, every student should be supplied with a two-trip pass. Transportation must also be covered for non-school-related activities that provide students with work experience or community service. Similar to how community service hours are granted, two-trip MetroCards must be issued upon submission of a completed transportation request form signed by the student’s advisor or employer.

### **3. Modify written policy statements on MetroCard misuse.**

The most recently published [Student MetroCard Brochure](#) describes criminally punitive actions that can be taken against the misuse of a student MetroCard. Stating, “*If you attempt to use your Student MetroCard on days when your school is closed, it will be confiscated and you will be issued a penalty with a summons of \$100*” There are countless restrictions placed on student MetroCards, yet they are still functional during school vacations and national holidays. Confiscation of the student MetroCard also impedes on the student’s transportation to school when reopened. This brochure further explains, “*Your school, a police officer or transit personnel can take away your Student MetroCard if they find out you’re letting somebody else use it. You MUST also present them with your Student MetroCard upon their request. They can also confiscate your card if you alter it, damage it on purpose, or use it in any other way than the way it’s supposed to be used. You could be subject to arrest and/or a \$100 fine for improper use of your Student MetroCard.*” These two punitive actions are largely unknown and inadequately communicated to students. While they may not be heavily enforced, they allow for the possibility of wrong and subjective apprehension and should both be repealed immediately. These provisions must be rewritten to educate students and families on the use of pupil MetroCards and must offer a restorative response to MetroCard misuse rather than punishment.