

Metro studies college passes

Metro is looking at offering discounted transit passes for students at 12 major colleges in the Washington, D.C., area.

Metro currently offers discounts to elementary and secondary school students in the District of Columbia and senior citizens.

Metro staff needs to calculate the costs of giving discounts to the 129,706 students who attend those schools. Staff recommended Thursday that Metro start a pilot program for full-time students who attend the University of Maryland, American University, Marymount University, Catholic University, Georgetown University, Howard University, the University of the District of Columbia, George Washington University, George Mason University, Trinity College, Southeastern University and Gallaudet University.

But several board members indicated an interest in extending the program to part-time students since most of them live off campus.

Board members asked for better figures on how many of the students ride the trains and buses, and also asked for a study on whether such a program could reduce pollution.

Several plans proposed so far would cost students anywhere from \$75 to \$635 a year. The question now is how much Metro should subsidize the cost and if students should have part of the expense added to their tuition bills — whether they use Metro or not.

Board members asked staff to develop a range of proposals that would ultimately need approval from the universities.

Metro Board Chairman Chris Zimmerman, who represents Arlington, said more student use of public transit could help ease parking problems and reduce pollution.

— STAFF REPORT