

STA's New Bus Pass Program Earns an A+ from Community College Students

SPOKANE, WA – Spokane Transit's newest Universal Transit Access Pass program (UTAP) is receiving high marks from students and administrators alike at the Community Colleges of Spokane. In January, the first month of the program, more than 3,000 students attending Spokane Community College (SCC) and Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC) picked up their passes and took nearly 90,000 bus rides. That's an increase of 45% over the same month in 2013, and the college expects that number to grow.

The new program gives students unlimited access to STA's entire bus system during the quarters they are enrolled in either of the two community colleges.

"The new UTAP program is a great deal for students," said Timi Putney, a student at Spokane Community College. "The bus is so convenient and it's a great time to try it since we don't have to buy a bus pass."

This UTAP program is funded by a two-year federal grant awarded to STA.

"Some students will use the bus for most of their trips and some will use it the days they don't need a car," said E. Susan Meyer, STA Chief Executive Officer. "Either way there seems to be a lot of enthusiasm for this new program."

In addition to reducing the cost of transportation for students, administrators anticipate the program will help ease traffic congestion and free up space in college parking lots by decreasing the number of cars on the road.

"Numerous studies show that reliable transportation is one of many key components to community college students' academic success," said Lisa Hjaltalin, acting Chief Financial Officer for Community Colleges of Spokane. "The STA bus pass program at Spokane Community College and Spokane Falls Community College is making an important difference in more than 3,000 students' lives by giving them daily access to a convenient, dependable mode of transportation to school. We – and our students – couldn't be more appreciative."

Of the 11 million trips taken on STA buses in 2013, more than 1 million were UTAP rides.

The Community Colleges of Spokane UTAP program follows a similar model as the EWU Eagle Pass, the first STA pass program, and the WSU Spokane Cougar Card. There are similar pass programs for employees at the City of Spokane and Spokane County.

STA provides public transportation services through fixed route (bus), paratransit and vanpool. The agency employs more than 500 people and is overseen by a regional board of 10 members, comprised of nine elected officials representing Spokane County and the cities of Airway Heights, Cheney, Medical Lake, Millwood, Liberty Lake, Spokane and Spokane Valley, and a non-voting labor member. For more information about STA, please visit www.spokanetransit.com.