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SunLine Transit Agency Kicks Off New Haul Pass Program Providing Free Rides for College Students on Monday, August 27th

10:30 am Ceremony to Launch Program at College of the Desert during First Day of Classes

(Thousand Palms, CA) SunLine Transit Agency will launch its new Haul Pass program providing free unlimited SunBus rides for students actively enrolled in College of the Desert (COD) Monday, August 27th. College of the Desert is the initial participating school partner in this program, and a ceremony launching the program will be held at College of the Desert on its first day of classes – August 27th at 10:30 am in the open-air theater just beyond the roundabout at the main entrance on Monterey Ave.

SunLine received a \$696,048 grant from California’s Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) that will fund a three-year program. The Haul Pass program will grow utilizing assistance from participating schools – beginning with this unprecedented collaboration with College of the Desert.

The Agency will cover 100% of the costs for year one. The goal is to partner with additional schools and build a program that becomes self-sustaining. The commitment made by local partners to help fund this initiative in the future will allow SunLine to re-program a portion of this LCTOP grant funding into other meaningful services for the community.

“Helping college students access campus activities, work and leisure destinations through SunLine’s transit network is an exciting addition to our service,” said Lauren Skiver, CEO/General Manager of SunLine Transit Agency. “SunLine is pleased to partner with our higher learning institutions to improve residents’ access to college and help remove barriers that prevent youth from obtaining a degree.”

“Transportation challenges have long been a hurdle for many of our students and prospective students,” said Becky Broughton, Chairwoman of the Desert Community College District. “Providing these free SunBus rides to our students will further provide them access to a higher education at our College of the Desert campuses across the Coachella Valley. I’m absolutely thrilled. This is a wonderful partnership and I’m excited to see it come to fruition.”

Transportation can be a real challenge for some valley residents seeking education and employment opportunities. This program will provide college students an expanded mobility option. The Agency hopes to see an increase in its ridership numbers, thereby helping local colleges and universities reduce their carbon footprint.

The Haul Pass program is scheduled to kick off this fall for College of the Desert students. To be eligible, students must be actively enrolled at COD. Students will utilize their active student ID card by swiping them through the SunBus card reader on the fare box. Should they require assistance, bus operators can help.

In addition to transportation to and from College of the Desert, the Haul Pass program allows students to use their active student ID cards to make unlimited local fixed route transit trips any day of the week as well as transfers on the SunBus. Free fare for college students excludes the SunDial paratransit service and the Commuter Link 220.

SunLine can assist with trip planning over the phone, or, the Agency also offers free group training as well as one-on-one travel training for anyone who is new to transit or needs assistance. Sunline's SunBus Tracker App, along with sunline.org, are other resources that can be helpful trip planners providing trip/route information.

For more information, call Customer Service at 760-343-3451.

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About SunLine Transit Agency

SunLine Transit Agency is a joint powers authority formed in 1977 to operate the Coachella Valley's public transportation system. Its fixed-route and paratransit vehicles travel more than 4 million miles per year, covering over 619 bus stops located throughout a 1,120 mile-service area, carrying approximately 4.82 million riders. SunLine offers fixed-route bus service and curb-to-curb paratransit for the mobility impaired. SunLine Services Group regulates three taxi franchises who provide taxi services throughout the valley. SunFuels alternative fueling stations offer compressed natural gas and hydrogen for SunLine and the public 24 hours a day, seven days a week.