

Ross Valley Yellow Bus Program – Closing the Gap for Families in Need



Program Description: Marin Transit's Yellow Bus program provides students the opportunity to ride to and from school on a bus that's been specifically designed for student transportation operated by drivers trained to service this population. Program partners include the Town of San Anselmo, the Town of Fairfax, the Ross Valley School District, and the County of Marin.

Program Goals/Benefits: Two priority goals of the program - safe transportation for our kids and reducing traffic congestion! The program is in its fourth year and services White Hill Middle School, Hidden Valley Elementary School, and Ross Valley Charter School. It provides bus service right outside the school, trained drivers, text alerts to parents, and a student-based ridership. Approximately 63% of White Hill students have a bus pass, literally removing close to 2000 car trips a day off crowded Sir Francis Drake!

Program Oversight: The Ross Valley Yellow Bus Transportation Services Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement (JEPA) went into effect January 2019. The members of the JEPA formed a joint committee including the Town of San Anselmo, Town of Fairfax, County of Marin, and Ross Valley School District to provide enhanced public oversight and transparency for the yellow bus program. The joint committee provides policy guidance and advice to Marin Transit.

Program Funding: The program has been subsidized by funding received from several key stakeholders including the County of Marin, Town of San Anselmo, Town of Fairfax and Measure AA funds distributed by Marin Transit. Without these contributions, the cost of a bus pass would nearly double. The remaining costs of the program are funded through pass sales and other fees. Despite multiple funding sources, however, pass prices have risen to \$485 for a one-way pass or \$970 for round trip. For students that qualify for free and reduced, the one-way pass is \$242 or \$485 for round trip.

Troubling Trend: Over the past four years, at White Hill Middle School (the biggest user of the yellow bus program), participation from the students who are eligible for free or reduced one-way passes has plummeted from 85% to just 15% (only 13 students out of 87 in school year 2019/2020). In addition, Ross Valley Charter has 20 potential users and no participants; Hidden Valley has 26 potential users and 3 participants.

Among the 3 schools, of the 133 students eligible for free and reduced passes, only 16 students are participating.

While there are also opportunities for a free Youth Transit Pass (which allows these students to ride on Marin Transit buses), only 19 applications were received this school year. The fact is most of the eligible students are not accessing equitable transportation as compared to their classmates.

Closing the Gap: By raising approximately \$64,500 a year, the yellow bus program can offer free (or close to free) passes to economically disadvantaged families in our district, thus providing equal opportunities for all students AND getting more cars off the road. This fundraising model has been implemented in the Reed Union School District as well as College of Marin. Ross Valley School District and Ross Valley Charter are in the process of submitting for grant funding to cover roughly half that cost (up to \$30,000).

A committed stakeholder group has formed to raise the additional amount of **\$34,500** through a community-wide campaign targeted to businesses concerned about traffic congestion and well-being/equity for all our youth.



Closing the Yellow Bus Gap Sponsorship Opportunities



Categories: Construction, Real Estate, Food/Grocery, Insurance, Sports/Fitness/Health, Specialty Retail

Donation Amounts:

- \$5000 for three years
- \$2500 for three years
- \$1000 for three years

Why Sponsor:

Supporting those who need it most – giving back to our community!

- Potential elements of recognition package (tailored per donation level): Shout out/logo/link on [Yellow Bus website](#), sponsor signage at Marin Transit kiosk at Hub, sponsor signage at White Hill Middle School, sponsor signage in Towns of San Anselmo and Fairfax, sponsor mention and logos included in communication sent to all families purchasing bus passes in August (approx. 500 students), shout out/logo/link in White Hill school e-news and ability to include 2 communications per quarter
- Opportunity for sponsors to do co-marketing

Timing/Next Steps:

- Commitments needed by end of April 2020 (3-year commitment needed to provide sustainable free or reduced pricing)
- Funds to go to San Anselmo Community Foundation (and tax deductible)

2/20/2020