Referenda Information

Short Title: University MBTA Pass (U-Pass) Program

Question Type: Resolution of the Student Body

Introductory Clauses:

Whereas, Northeastern students are currently paying too much to access the MBTA. A monthly pass costs students $75, adding up to $300 per semester. The University does provide a limited amount of discounted passes, but with only an 11% discount, these students are still paying $267 per month. The cost of transportation prohibits many students from taking full advantage of all that Boston has to offer and forces some students to rule out potential co-ops and off-campus housing. When students have to decide whether an internship downtown is cost-effective considering the price of a T pass, their opportunity to fully participate in the college experience is constrained. Students could use the entire city as a classroom, take advantage of the unique cultural resources, build relationships with their peers at the numerous academic institutions around Boston, and connect with career-advancing jobs and internships.

Increased use of public transportation by college students will benefit the MBTA by providing additional revenue, while incentivizing the MBTA to improve its current services to/from university campuses. Students who spend more time off campus will contribute more to Boston’s economy. Additionally, the University Pass Program would subsidize the Youth Pass Program, which offers discounted T passes to high school students. This program has the potential to improve high school attendance rates, and supporting this program through participation in the U-Pass Program would improve Northeastern’s relationship with surrounding communities.

Furthermore, based on the 2014 Budget Priorities Survey results (see attachment), the U-Pass Program would significantly increase usage of the T by students both in class and on co-op. It is also notable that 7% of co-op students who took the survey indicated that they would switch from driving to using public transportation to get to work, showing the positive environmental effects of the program. The benefits of convenience and greater access to the city and employment opportunities and external benefits make it clear that the Northeastern should participate in the University Pass Program.

Operative Clauses:

NU Huskies for Alternative Transportation urges the Administration to participate in the University Pass Program. After entering into agreements with the MBTA, students would be able to get a monthly T pass for half the cost of a LinkPass. The pass will either be offered to undergraduates, or both undergraduate and graduate students. The chips traditionally used to give riders access to T entry points could be
embedded in students’ college ID cards. See the attached document for examples of potential program structures. The cost of the program would be split between the university and the MBTA, which would offer a bulk purchasing discount of 50%, with the cost to students to be negotiated.