



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

James Meier 760.773.2589 (office)
760.848.8230 (cell)
Interim Director,
Community Relations,
College of the Desert

Norma Stevens
760.343.3456, Ext. 1613 (office)
Public Outreach Specialist,
SunLine Transit Agency

SunLine and College of the Desert Partner to Provide Free Rides for College Students

PALM DESERT, CA — SunLine Transit Agency and College of the Desert are partnering to provide current students with free unlimited SunBus rides as part of SunLine's new Haul Pass program.

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

SunLine 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 reprogram 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."

Becky Broughton, Chairwoman of the Desert Community College District, shared that enthusiasm.

"Transportation challenges have long been a hurdle for many of our students and prospective students," Broughton said. "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 Coachella Valley residents seeking education and employment opportunities. This program will provide college students an expanded mobility option. SunLine hopes to see an increase in its ridership numbers, thereby helping the valley reduce its carbon footprint.

The Haul Pass program is scheduled to kick off this fall for College of the Desert students. The fall semester begins Aug. 27.

To be eligible, students must be enrolled at College of the Desert. Students will use 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.org, along with the SunBus Tracker App, are other resources that can help provide trip/route information.

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

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.

About College of the Desert:

Established in 1958, College of the Desert (COD), located in Palm Desert, is an accredited community college serving eastern Riverside County, California. The College leads the region in providing quality, higher education, technical training and lifelong learning opportunities, in response to the dynamic needs of our diverse community. The College serves more than 15,000 each year and is the number one source of transfer students to California State University, San Bernardino's Palm Desert Campus. For more information, visit www.collegeofthedesert.edu.

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