

Campus Elections 2025

Measure # 82

Measure Title: Students for Empowerment and Accountability in Transportation Services (SEATS)

Author: Student Union Governance Board

Question:

Shall the undergraduate and graduate students of UCSC amend the current transit fee to *increase the accountability of TAPS (Transportation and Parking Services) to the student body?*

Reliable and safe transportation is a basic need. Students need to get to class on time, to get to finals, to go home at night, to shop for groceries. With over half of UCSC's [19,938 undergraduate and graduate students](#) living [off campus](#), accessible, reliable, and safe transportation is a non-negotiable for student success. However, the majority of UCSC students have expressed that UCSC's transportation system does not meet their needs. Campus wide opinion polls show strong student dissatisfaction with TAPS ([2023](#) & [2024](#)) and after a [2024 California Highway Patrol report](#) found the University of California failed to comply with state safety inspection requirements and determined its transit operations to be an "Imminent Danger to Public Safety," there was significant support for greater student oversight in the TAPS operations (2024).

In the [Regents Policy 2107: Undergraduate Educational Policy](#) the UC Board of Regents "affirms the historic commitment of the University of California to a basic educational policy of providing to undergraduates a broad general education, emphasizing humanistic values and intellectual breadth". Yet, this commitment continues to be undermined by UCSC's flawed transportation system, which compromises students' access to their education. UCSC students have a justified expectation to expect quality transportation services. Not only because it's a right and a commitment from their university, but also because UCSC students are already paying a premium for transportation services: \$174 per quarter, or \$522 over the course of an academic year. Putting that into perspective, UCSC students pay \$83 more a quarter than the next most expensive UC, totaling to \$250 more in transportation fees over the course of an academic year.

Students have made good faith efforts to communicate with TAPS since 2022. However, the university and TAPS administrators have failed to welcome or follow through on reasonable requests to improve services or provide relief for students. Therefore, the governing bodies of the Student Union Assembly (SUA), the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA), and the Student Union Governance Board (SUGB) propose an amendment to the transit fee to ensure university accountability to students. This amendment will:

- 1) Establish a student-led advocacy and watchdog commission on transportation and parking services, the VEST Commission (Voices for Empowerment and Safety in Transportation)
 - a) The VEST Commission shall be a student-majority, student-led commission that will invite the participation of faculty, staff and a representative chosen by TAPS drivers
 - b) The VEST Commission shall be empowered by the student body to evaluate TAPS

services and to advocate for:

- i) Improvements to transportation and parking services and;
 - ii) The reduction of costs borne by students, including but not limited to the price of parking tickets, permits, and fines.
- b) To support student voice and the success of the VEST Commission, the student body shall redirect 1.41% of the total transit fees paid by students (approximately \$142,000 in 2025 or \$2.53 quarterly in the AY 2025/2026) to the VEST Commission to support VEST operations
 - i) **SOAR/Student Media/Cultural Arts and Diversity (SOMeCA)** will provide administrative and fiduciary responsibility for VEST to allocate the funds on behalf of the commission.
 - ii) VEST will not be placed within TAPS organizationally and will not be reporting to TAPS.
 - iii) TAPS was directed to provide a budget analysis to student measure authors, regarding possible impacts of the redirection of funds. No budget analysis was provided. Instead, Executive Director for TAPS Dan Henderson provided a statement that the redirection of 1.4% of the transit fee would “result in service reductions and/or delays in purchasing replacement vehicles.”
 - iv) TAPS did confirm, however, that no current contractual obligations will be impacted by the redirection of funds.
- 2) Require the university/TAPS to provide budget transparency for fees students pay to TAPS, including:
 - a) Post a detailed and user-friendly budget on the university website that is updated quarterly, and;
 - b) Present the budget and answer questions at student-led townhalls, as organized by the student-led VEST Commission ([see here](#)), and;
- 3) Require the university/TAPS to work cooperatively and in good faith with the VEST Commission to improve TAPS services for students; good faith efforts include but are not limited to:
 - a) Providing the VEST Commission with budget and policy information quarterly and as requested;
 - b) Meeting with members of the commission a minimum of twice per quarter; c) Responding to commission communications and requests in a timely and complete manner;
 - c) Provide specific, respectful, and complete responses to VEST Commission recommendations regarding TAPS services and student needs;
 - d) Provide specific, respectful and complete responses to VEST Commission recommendations to follow up on innovations in transportation systems based on research by students and consultants.
- 4) Empower the VEST Commission to use approved campus methods for reducing the Student Transportation Fee.
 - a) By its own language the current transit fee (Measure 73) is scheduled to sunset at the end of Summer Quarter 2030 back to \$335/year. If the university and TAPS fail to

work in good faith, the VEST Commission may propose that the transit fee return to \$335/year per student by a vote of the student body.

- 5) Should Measure 73 sunset, this measure including the requirement of the redirection of 1.4% of student transportation fees, will apply to the total remaining transit fee.

Summary points

- Amends previous transit fee measures: Measure 73 (enacted in 2019), Measure 24 (enacted in 2006), and Measure 1 (enacted in 2002), which all together authorize the current transit fee.
- No additional costs for students and no change to Return-to-Aid.
- Establishes a mechanism for student, staff, and faculty feedback and watch over Transportation and Parking Services, by the VEST Commission.
- Redirects 1.41% of the total transit fee (\$2.53 quarterly in the AY 2025/2026) to fund the VEST Commission.
- TAPS will provide updates and active communication on loading zone reinstatement promised by TAPS as of the TAPS town hall 2023-2024 academic year.
- Implementation of amendment begins July 1, 2025.
- This amendment is sponsored for undergraduates on the ballot by resolution of the Student Union Assembly, for graduate students by the Graduate Student Association
- The Student Fee Advisory Committee (SFAC) supports this fee amendment because it supports increased student involvement with TAPS and seeks to create a healthy and sustainable relationship with TAPS.
- Student consultation method: Authorship and consultation has been made with the Student Union Governance Board (SUGB), the Student Union Assembly (SUA), the Graduate Student Association (GSA), the 10 college governments, the Big 5 organizations, Student Media Council, Engaging Education, and the Cultural Arts and Diversity Board of Directors.

Background information

UCSC students currently pay the [highest transit fee of any UC campus](#); \$522/year per student or over \$10 million collectively per year. The current transit fee, Measure 73, raises this fee yearly; over the course of an academic year, the transit fee will cost \$573 annually by 2029.

Despite this steep price, students have expressed their dissatisfaction with transit and parking services. Campuswide opinion polls found that of the students who voted: • In 2023, 92% of student voters agreed or strongly agreed that TAPS needs to do a better job providing parking and bus/shuttle services for students, and;

- In 2023, 91% of student voters agreed or strongly agreed that TAPS should be more responsive to students and hold an annual, accessible forum, and;
- In 2023, 93% of student voters agreed or strongly agreed that TAPS needs to disclose their total income publicly, including a detailed account of how funds are being spent, and;
- In 2024, 95% of student voters said they would support a measure allowing students to

- participate in the governance of this fee, and;
- In 2024, 96% of student voters said they would support a measure that gave students the power to hold TAPS accountable to student concerns and needs.

Student discontent with TAPS's operations is supported by a number of factors:

- On November 13, 2023, a campus shuttle caught fire. On December 12, 2023, a campus shuttle hit a stonewall, leading to the [death of the driver and injuring 5 students](#).
- A 2024 [California Highway Patrol report](#) found the University of California failed to comply with state safety inspection requirements, and the university's operations were determined to be an "Imminent Danger to Public Safety".
- Following this, CAL/OSHA issued [a penalty](#) to UCSC citing a failure to ensure all LOOPS had functioning brakes and well-maintained equipment.
- Campus shuttle service is often reduced or suspended with little to no notice.
- A lack of safe and reliable campus transit services has caused students to take their personal vehicles to campus to get to class on time, with many students receiving parking tickets because there is also a lack of parking spaces.
- In the case of Measure 1 (2002), TAPS increased fees to provide on-demand Night Owl service which has been suspended since 2018 - yet, the fee increase still remains in force.
- In Measure 24 (2006), TAPS specifically asked students to raise the fees for the "acquisition of new transit vehicles," in addition to maintaining transit operations and ridership on the Metro. Measure 73 similarly promised to replace TAPS's aging fleet - and yet, [TAPS is still using aging buses with 40% of buses being over 30 years old](#).
- TAPS has a history of threatening to cut on-campus transportation services if students do not agree to pay increased fees (see [Measure A](#), [Measure 24](#) Pro Statement, [Measure 73](#).)
- At the 2024 SUA Town Hall following the Dec. 12th crash, TAPS confirmed that budgets would be transparent and available to the public and that they would work with students to reinstate needed loading zones. Currently, the loading zones have not been reinstated as of Spring 2025. And as for the [budget](#), the [budgets](#) that have been posted have a history of being out of date making them irrelevant for student involvement in operations.

Centering Student Voices to Meet Student Needs

After reviewing the state of TAPS and past communications with university administrators, the Student Union Assembly (SUA), the Graduate Student Association (GSA), and the Student Union Governance Board (SUGB) have concluded that students deserve immediate relief from University decisions that have made transit systems on campus unreliable and placed additional financial burdens on students. Further, because students know what students need and the university/TAPS have not shown the ability to be responsive to student voices, the SUA, GSA, and SUGB find that the student body must have a mechanism to hold the university/TAPS accountable to meet students' needs, now and in the future. This amendment establishes this mechanism and requires immediate changes to specific elements of transportation and parking services.

Immediate Relief for Students

Recognizing that the current state of transit and parking fees place multiple burdens on students, the University must institute changes that provide immediate relief to ensure this is the case, this referendum will enact the following changes in accordance with the timeline below:

- TAPS ensures communication with VEST on updates and what active plans are in place including but not limited to loop service improvements, TAPS transit accessibility, user tracking, loading zones, and the Santa Cruz Metro board seat.
- TAPS will work with VEST to provide and continue discussing all previously promised transportation upgrades from events such as the TAPS town hall from the 2023-2024 academic year.

TAPS Accountability to Students

Basic student services—such as transportation, parking, housing, and dining—must be based on understanding students’ day-to-day experiences. Currently, the university administration does not have an effective mechanism for a timely and thorough gathering of student experiences concerning transportation services before making decisions or establishing policies that impact students’ lives.

This amendment establishes a student-led commission on transportation and parking services that will be charged with gathering input on student experiences and proposals for improved transportation and parking services paid for by all previous and future Transportation Fees that derive from Compulsory Campus-Based Student Fees. The VEST Commission shall:

- 1) Design and produce effective surveys, town halls, and/or meetings to identify student needs and ideas for quality and safe transportation and parking services, and;
- 2) Develop ideas for the improvement of transportation and parking services, including parking ticket rates and permit prices, based on student, staff, and faculty feedback, student staff and consultant research, and information provided by TAPS, and;
- 3) Explore ways to reduce the cost of transportation services, particularly costs charged to students, and;
- 4) Hire and direct student staff and consultant(s) to provide expertise in transportation and parking, budget management, policy development, and alternative transit systems, and;
- 5) Respond to constituent communications, maintain communication with university administration, post progress reports and an annual evaluation of transportation and parking services by the student body, staff, and faculty, and;
- 6) Be the primary consultative body for university administration with regard to policy or the implementation of changes in transportation services, including involvement with contract negotiations with SCMTD, and;
- 7) Determine if the university and TAPS have not made a good faith effort to abide by the requirements codified in this referendum and, if so, VEST will use approved campus methods for reducing the Student Transportation Fee.

TAPS holds Transit Fee funds in trust for students, and has a responsibility to operate in student’s interest. Thus, the University and administrators for TAPS (and its successors-in-interest) shall

support and be collaborative partners in the work of the VEST Commission and shall:

- 1) Meet and confer with the VEST Commission and demonstrate a good faith effort to address student feedback and recommendations to improve transportation and parking services, and;
- 2) Provide the VEST Commission with access to all budgets, documents, and information relevant to a full review of transportation and parking services, and;
- 3) Submit a budget report quarterly to the VEST Commission; said budget will include a full accounting of all Compulsory Campus-Based Student Fees under its control, and; 4) Provide a quarterly safety report, and ridership data concerning transportation services funded by Compulsory Campus-Based Student Fees to include a status of all fleet vehicles, status of compliance with inspection cycles, status of compliance with required certifications of drivers and other staff, and the maintenance of alternative transportation systems under TAPS, including but not limited to the Disability Van Service and Safe Ride Vehicles, and;
 - a) Participate in quarterly or a minimum of two Public Forums per year as organized by the VEST Commission to provide updates to the student body and to receive public comments about the student experience concerning transportation services funded by Compulsory Campus-Based Student Fees, and;
 - b) Submit to the VEST Commission for their review and feedback before the implementation of any plans to do the following:
 - i) To reclassify designated parking on campus, or;
 - ii) To increase permit costs, parking rates and parking fines, or;
 - iii) To change policies of enforcement.
- 4) Submit to the VEST Commission for their review and feedback any proposed language to be submitted to the ballot to establish any new Transportation Fees through the Compulsory Campus-Based Student Fee referendum procedure, and;
- 5) Demonstrate a good faith effort to abide by the requirements of this referendum by affirmatively taking steps to conform its administration of student fees to abide by both the spirit and letter of this ballot initiative. Examples of such efforts are (but not limited to):
 - a) Provide the VEST Commission with all information requested and/or required for the commission's operations in a timely manner;
 - b) Participate actively and cooperatively in student forum(s) organized by the VEST Commission;
 - c) Incorporate student feedback into how transportation services are delivered to students on campus;
 - d) Provide timely responses to communication;
 - e) Consider and incorporate any new developments in transportation that may be identified by research of student staff and consultants (as appropriate).

Because working with University services is time consuming and students' priority is their

education, 1.41% (approximately \$142,000 in 2025) of the existing Transportation Fee (and all future Transportation Fees derived from Compulsory Campus-Based Student Fees) shall be redirected to support the operations of the VEST Commission each year. Operating expenses include:

- Outreach to the student body, including the design and implementation of surveys, organizing town halls and other events and meetings, producing social media and websites to make the work of the VEST Commission accessible and user friendly, and;
- Stipends for student commissioners serving on the VEST Commission, and; ● Compensation for student staff, consultants, and career staff providing direct support to the VEST Commission, and;
- Operating costs, including standard office technology and equipment, printing, campus fees (e.g., ITS), and office supplies.

The VEST Commission will invite participation as follows:

- 1)
 - a) 2 students from the Student Union Assembly
 - b) 1 student from the Graduate Student Association
 - c) 2 students from Registered Student Organizations under SOMeCA
 - d) 1 student from the Student Union Governance Board
 - e) 1 student from the Disability Resource Center
 - f) 1 faculty from the Academic Senate
 - g) 1 staff from staff governing bodies (Staff Advisory Board, Teamsters Local 2010 Clerical Employees, UC/UPTE Technical Employees)
- 2) Governed by democratic governing principles and processes:
 - a) Documented in the the VEST Commission's bylaws
 - b) The process for representatives to be nominated and/or appointed to the VEST
 - c) Commission shall be codified within the VEST Commission's bylaws d)Members shall receive orientation and training when appointed

Severability: Should any portion of this amendment be determined to conflict with federal law, state law, University of California policy or collective bargaining agreements, that portion shall be stricken and the rest shall remain in force.

Endorsements

- Student Union Assembly
- Graduate Student Association
- Asian Pacific Islander Student Alliance (APISA)
- Black Student Union (BSU)
- Bayanihan

- Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlan (MEChA)
- Student Alliance of North American Indians (SANAI)
- College 9 Senate
- John R. Lewis Senate
- Kresge Parliament
- Merrill Student Government
- Oakes Senate
- Porter Senate
- Rachel Carson Council
- Stevenson Student Council
- Student Media Council (SMC)
- Engaging Education (e²)
- Cultural Arts and Diversity Board (CAD)
- Inter-Greek Council (IGC)