

Transportation Alternatives Board (TAB) 2005-06 Recommendations

July 6, 2006

From: Mark Frickel, Chairman, Transportation Alternatives Board, UCSB
To: Henry Yang, Chancellor, UCSB

Re: TAB Summary of Recommendations for 2006-2007

Dear Chancellor Yang,

The Transportation Alternatives Board (TAB) has recently voted on recommendations regarding specific program changes for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for 2006-2007. This memo is divided into the following sections:

- I. Immediate Objectives
- II. Specific Program Changes
- III. Other Recommendations from the Chair

TAP is currently facing a budget crisis. News of a budget shortfall reached the Board in the middle part of the Spring 2006 quarter, forcing the Board to re-prioritize its objectives. The shortfall is mainly due to rising program costs (e.g. fuel costs, high subsidies, and compliance with UCOP mandates) as well as restructuring within Transportation and Parking Services (TPS).

Although reserve funding is available to carry out TAP's program services for 2006-2007, there is a high degree of uncertainty about how TAP will function thereafter. In an effort to offset costs, the Board has worked with TAP to design reasonable proposals which lower program subsidies and/or increase user fees. However, to be effective, the program must rely on external sources of revenue, and this is why **we unanimously recommend that UCSB install a reliable funding mechanism, as outlined in Part I Section 1. Without adequate funding, the current level of services will diminish and UCSB's commitment to sustainability will be compromised.** Moreover, the goals laid out by UCOP's *Policy on Green Building Design, Clean Energy Standards, and Sustainable Transportation Practices* in January 2006 may not be met.

Part I. Immediate Objectives

We would like to focus your attention on the major issues facing the Transportation Alternatives Program. We feel that these concerns are very serious in nature and require immediate attention:

1. New Funding Sources

TAB's greatest concern is the funding model which UCSB has adopted for supporting TAP. UCSB is the only UC campus which funds its alternative transportation program solely through parking citation revenues (i.e. from Fines and Forfeitures). Every other UC campus commits proceeds from parking permit sales or a combination of permit sales and citation revenue. Having a reliable source of funding is necessary in securing the success of any program. Currently, there is no such "guaranteed" funding.

We recommend that, like every other UC campus, UCSB should use revenue from parking permit sales as a funding source for alternative transportation. There is an inherent logic in that persons driving single occupancy vehicles to campus -- which cause greater impacts on facilities, traffic, human health and the environment -- should offset these impacts by helping to fund commuting practices which have fewer negative externalities. By helping to fund alternative transportation, they would be supporting services which benefit them indirectly by reducing externalities and which may already benefit them directly if they use TAP services. Given the rising costs of fuel, we expect that enrollment in TAP will continue to increase, and therefore funding must continue to increase as well. **We estimate that a \$1 to \$4 increase in the monthly price of parking permits would generate enough revenue to significantly assist TAP in its program services, depending on the scale of services desired.**

It is unlikely that there will be a single source of funding, and we recommend that UCSB explore grant funding in addition to the funding sources mentioned above. In conclusion, this is the single-most important objective for TAP in 2006-2007 and every year thereafter until an appropriate funding structure is institutionalized.

2. Vanpool Program Issues: Social Equity, Recruitment, and Guaranteed Funding

The UCOP has recently mandated that UC campuses which use 15-passenger vans must switch to other sized vans due to the higher rollover rates of 15-passenger vans (and thus the increased risk to passenger safety). The switch will result in an increase in program costs. Fuel costs have been rising rapidly, compounding the issue. Meanwhile, vanpool rider fares have remained frozen and thus subsidies to TAP's vanpool program have increased dramatically in order match rising costs.

TAB understands that it is unrealistic to continue to increase subsidies at the present rate, but would like impress on the Chancellor the very important issue of social equity¹. Many of the vanpool riders are UCSB staff in the lower income brackets. Vanpool riders have expressed their concern that UCSB is discriminating against persons who commute long distances when instead UCSB should be rewarding them for electing to use alternative transportation *en masse*.

Marginal increases in vanpool fares have a disproportionate impact on riders when compared to marginal increases in the price of a parking permit or a bus pass. Simply put, vanpool riders on average feel the effects of fee increases more so than single occupancy vehicle drivers or bus riders. **TAB recommends dedicated funding to the vanpool program in order to minimize costs to some of UCSB's lowest paid personnel.**

There are other issues at stake as well: affordable housing, faculty and staff recruitment, and regional air quality are but a few. For example, affordable alternative transportation has been used as a recruiting tool for prospective employees who can not afford to live in areas near UCSB. **Increasing vanpool fares may have the unfortunate consequence of deterring future staff and faculty members from seeking employment at UCSB. However, TAB has been forced to recommend an increase in fares in order to pay for the program. This circles back to our main issue: the need for guaranteed funding.**

3. Representation

Chairman

¹ UCSB vanpools have been operating for over two decades and form an integral part of the University's alternative transportation structure. Indeed, vanpools are the most well-established group of TAP members, and have expressed on numerous occasions their desire to keep the program running.

(A faculty slot is opening up on the Board. Dr. Stephen Gross will be leaving TAB.)

The Board recommends that a ladder faculty member be nominated for the position of Chairman of TAB. We expect that a vocal, tenured, and respected faculty member would help elevate alternative transportation issues to a campus-wide audience. Ideally, the nominee would be a person who is familiar with administration and department heads, and who is ambitious yet collaborative. Ideally, the nominee would seek to hold the position for multiple years, thus orchestrating long-term plans.

Vanpool Representative

In early Spring of 2006, the Board sent a memo to the Chancellor's Office requesting the addition of a tenth member to TAB. The Board specifically asked that a vanpool representative be added in order to a) improve relations between the Board and vanpool riders, and b) create a collaborative environment working towards long-term solutions. The vanpool rep would serve on TAB's Vanpool Subcommittee, providing a critical missing link between the Board and the vanpool riders (currently, no Board members are vanpool riders). The Board wishes to be as transparent and input-oriented as possible, and **we would like to request again that a vanpool rider be placed on the Board. We specifically nominate Jennifer S. Earl, whom already serves as the *de facto* vanpool representative.**

Part II. Specific Program Changes

The following are recommendations which have been voted on and approved by the Board. These recommendations are the result of many hours of research, calculations, and discussion. We strongly request approval of these changes.

1. Vanpool Fare – Single Fare [Passed 5-1]

Currently, vanpool riders' fares are based on distance to campus. The lowest and highest fares are approximately 5% lower and higher, respectively, than the average fare. However, **TAB recommends that each rider pay the average fare instead of a distance based fare** because a) this is the model used by regional transit systems in the area, b) a single fare system frees administrative resources, and c) the difference in fares is not outstanding enough to warrant an objection.

2. Vanpool Fare Increase - Option B [Passed 4-3]

Vanpool subsidy levels have reached all time highs because of increased costs related to providing the service and the UCOP mandate to move to vans other than the 15-passenger vans. **The Transportation Alternatives Board proposes that all full time vanpool fares increase to a minimum of \$125 per person per month effective 9/1/06.** This increase is based upon the increase in cost in fuel for 2005-2006 plus inflation². TAB proposes that fare adjustments be conducted each quarter to contain cost overruns and limit subsidy levels in the future.

See Part III Section 3 for exceptions.

3. Bus Program Changes [Passed 5-2]

The current bus pass program provides free bus to faculty and staff.

² Based on the Consumer Price Index

The free MTD bus pass for faculty and staff created approximately \$120,000 per year in costs. To limit these costs, **TAB proposes to sell 30-day bus passes to UCSB Faculty and Staff at half-price, preferably using pre-tax payroll deduction.** It is estimated that this change will bring cost down to approximately \$40,000 per year.

4. Rail Program Changes [Passed 5-1]

TAP has already changed the pick-up service from the Amtrak station in Goleta from a UCSB shuttle service to a taxi pick-up. Currently, riders must be on a list comprised of TAP members who have surrendered their parking permit and who have indicated Rail as their primary commuter mode.

TAB recommends a 50% taxi fare subsidy to rail commuters who have indicated Rail as their primary commuter mode but have not surrendered their parking permit. This benefit will be restricted to commuters who live outside a 20-mile radius from UCSB.

5. Car-share Vehicle Leasing [Passed 5-0]

Car-share vehicle is currently used by TAP members free of charge. **TAB proposes that car-share services be outsourced in the future to the third party vendor, Flexcar.** TAP members would be charged \$5 per hour for the first 4 hours of use per month, discounted from Flexcar's standard rate of \$10 per hour. Charging fees will limit overuse by some TAP members and reduce TAP's costs of offering car-share on campus.

6. Number of Car Share Vehicles To Be Leased [Option 2 receives majority vote]

Two vehicles per year will be leased from Flexcar.

Part III. Other Recommendations from the Chair

The following is a list of recommendations that were not voted on, but which were given serious attention by the Board and which should be considered as priorities:

1. Pay As You Go Parking

TAB recommends that UCSB adopt a "pay as you go" parking scheme. The current scheme does not promote efficiency, equality, or even common sense. The cost of 5 daily parking passes is approximately the same cost as a monthly permit. In many cases, this makes daily passes an uneconomical choice for persons who wish to drive less. Heavy users pay the same rate as light or moderate users, and the convenience of relatively cheap parking creates a disincentive to use alternative transportation. **We strongly encourage the adoption of a pay as you go scheme, and specifically encourage a 20 cent per hour fee for commuters who use In Vehicle Parking Meters.**

2. Campus-wide Commuter Research Survey

Surveys have been conducted by various campus and regional organizations regarding commuter patterns of behavior of UCSB students, faculty, and staff. Part of TAB's mission is to serve UCSB community members fairly and in a cost-effective manner. Setting aside funds for TAP to collect this information and **conduct its own surveys** is a necessary factor for TAB in following through with its mission.

3. Higher Subsidies for Qualified Vanpool Riders

While the Board has approved an increase in vanpool fares, the Board hesitates to apply this fare to all riders. **TAB would like to see those persons who are in the lower income brackets be able to apply for protection against full fare increases.** Eligibility and fare reductions should be determined in consultation with vanpool riders.

4. Bicycle Facility Infrastructure

The bicycle is the most utilized form of transportation to UCSB. Bicycle facilities such as bike paths and lockers must be maintained in proper condition and added as demand increases. **We strongly encourage funds for planned expansion and maintenance.**

5. Alternative Fuels and Vehicles

The switch to smaller vans allows an excellent opportunity for UCSB to demonstrate its commitment to sustainable practices. **We strongly recommend that diesel of flex-fuel vans be purchased** and that the appropriate alternative fuel (e.g. biodiesel, ethanol) be used in the highest proportions possible.

Conclusion

It has been a privilege to serve on the Transportation Alternatives Board, and I believe the Board and the Transportation Alternatives Program it oversees both provide an important campus service. It is my firm belief that the current funding model and high level of subsidies cannot coexist, but that a healthy level of subsidies must remain in order to carry out efficient, reliable, and socially equitable program services. *Getting people out of cars is hard enough; sending mixed signals only makes the job harder.* Once again, I strongly recommend that UCSB follow suit with the other UC schools and commit a portion of proceeds from parking permit sales towards the Transportation Alternatives Program.

Acknowledgements

TAB would like to acknowledge the staff of Transportation Alternatives Program, Transportation and Parking Services, and Facilities Maintenance for their endless assistance, as well the input and interest of other UCSB departments, faculty, staff, and students. We would like to thank community members such as Ralph Fertig of the Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition (SBCC), Scott Spaulding of Traffic Solutions, a service provided by the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), local businesses such as the Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District (MTD), and other groups involved in addressing the alternative transportation needs of UCSB and the surrounding area. We would also like to thank the UCSB Ratepayers Board for their interest in promoting alternative transportation on campus. We look forward to working closely with them in the future.

Sincerely,
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TAB Chairman 2005-2006

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