



# Free Student Bus Pass Program

Update and Recommendations

Board Transportation Committee

May 14, 2018

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Department of Transportation

# Program Highlights

- **Nearly 1.4 M** student trips in less than 4 years
- Students represent **~6.5%** of total Fairfax Connector ridership
- Switched to **custom SmarTrip card (SY18-19)**
- Implemented **Metrobus Pilot at Justice HS**
  - **32,000 student trips** on Metrobus in less than 8 months
- Established **MOU with WMATA**
- **MOA negotiation in process** with Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)



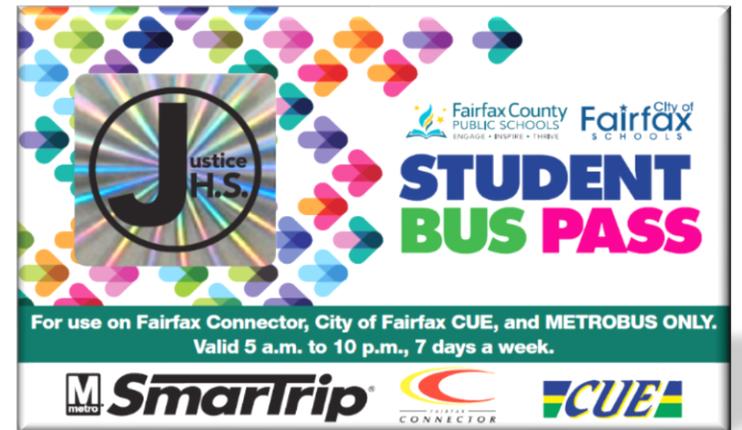
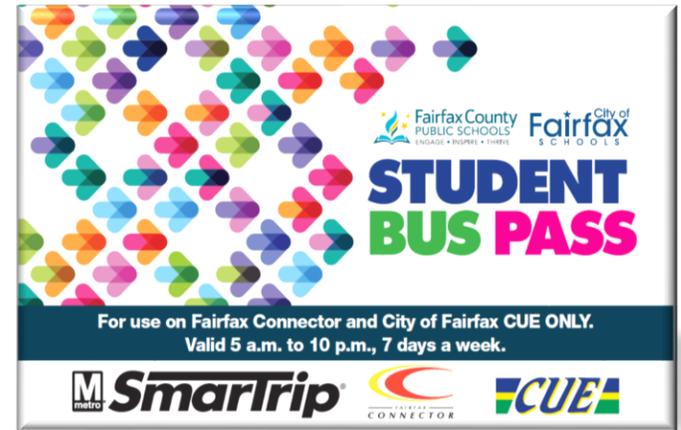
# SY18-19 Pass Distribution

- **14,200** passes distributed to schools;  
**8,500** passes in hands of students
  - 28 high schools (including Justice HS)
  - 2 alternative high schools
  - 23 middle schools
  - 6 secondary schools
  - 9 centers catering to students with special needs
- **Customized How-To Registration Guides created;**  
Distributed to all participating school outlets
- **On-site and phone training provided** to schools requesting support

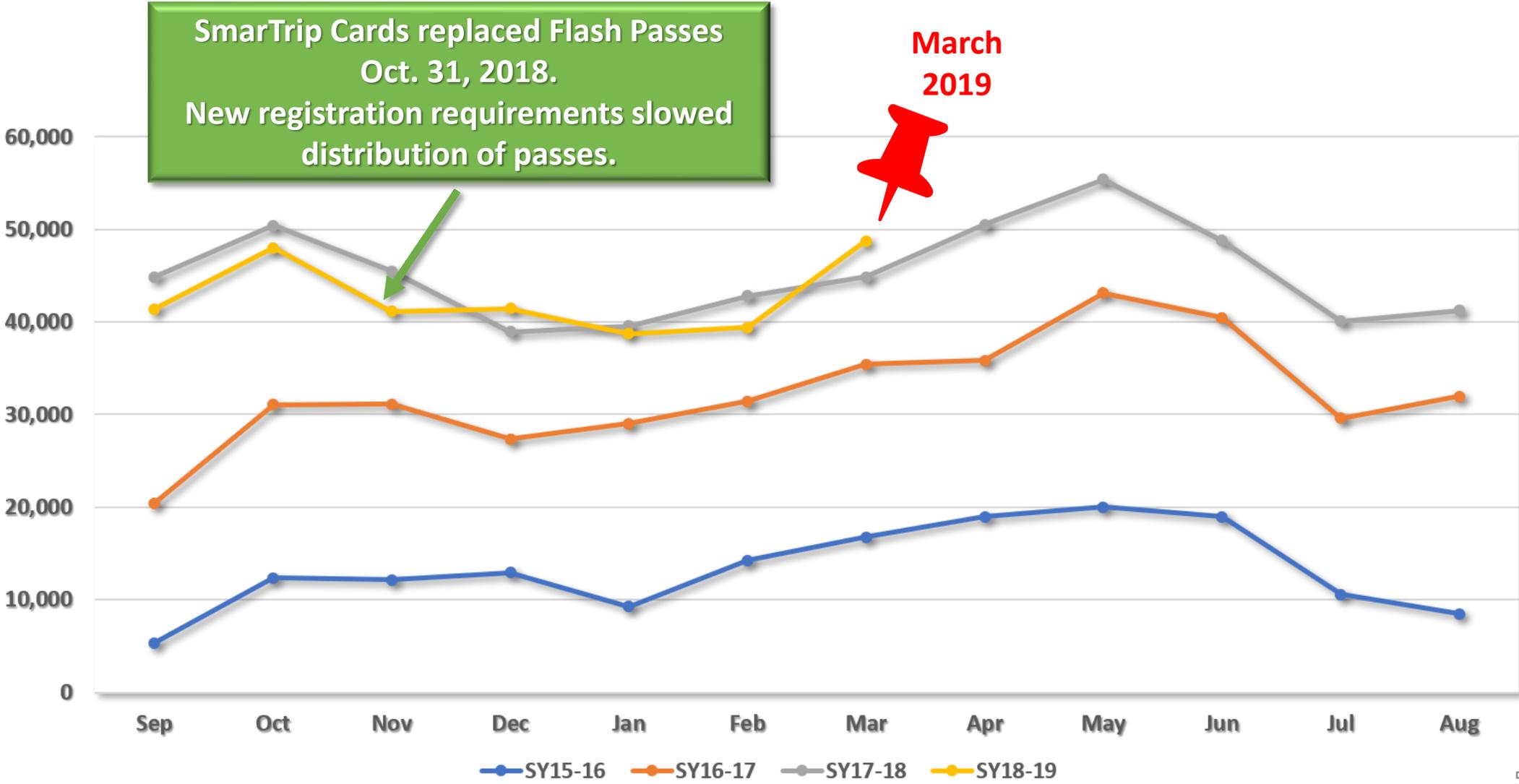


# Advantages of New SmarTrip cards

- Passes **used over multiple years** by students
- FCPS staff **can view card activity** in use at any time
- FCPS administration **can disable cards** at any time
  - If lost or stolen
  - To avoid misuse
  - Replace cards easily
- Passes **consistent with regional fare media**



# Year-over-Year Fairfax Connector Student Ridership



# Justice HS Metrobus Pilot

- **35%** of Justice HS students have a Metrobus enabled Student Bus pass
- **32,000 trips in less than 8 months**  
*(averaging 3,500 – 4,000 trips per month)*
- **Students are following the rules** and riding the approved routes *(in Virginia)*
- Completed **online survey of students** in March 2019





# Justice HS Metrobus Pilot – Survey of Students

- **365** students (*17% of Justice HS student pop.*) took an online survey in March 2019
- Survey was provided in English and Spanish
- **70%** had never ridden Metrobus to/from school before the Free Student Bus Pass
- **55%** can take Metrobus as alternative if they miss school bus

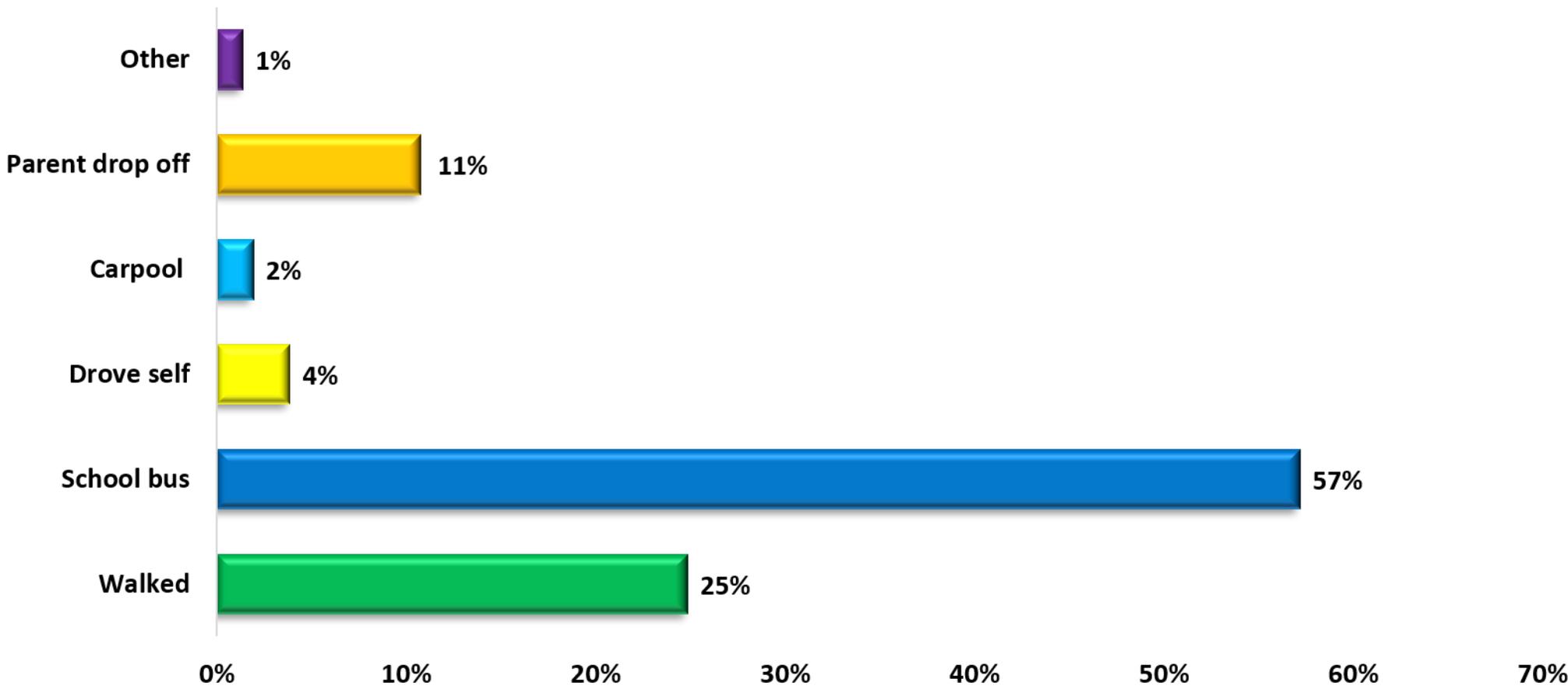


# Justice HS Metrobus Pilot – Survey of Students

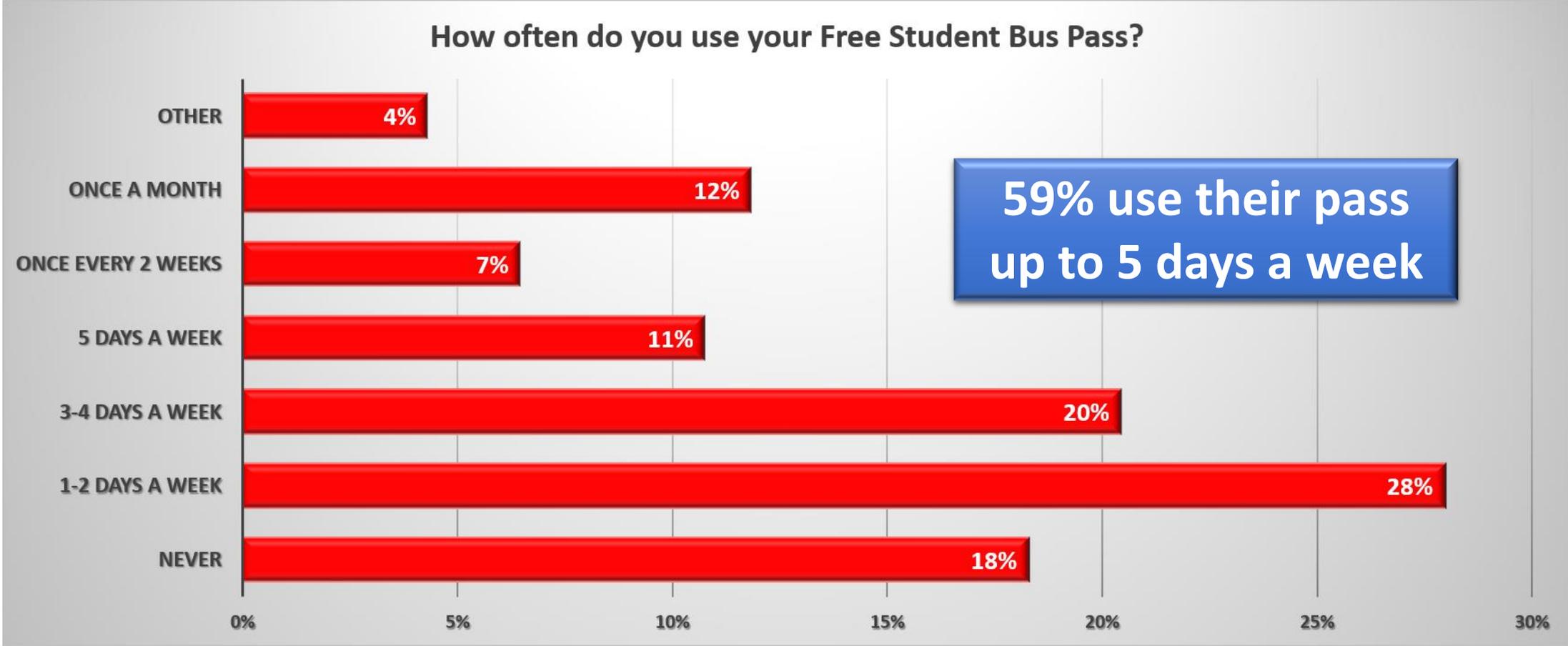
- **52%** said they would NOT ride Metrobus unless free
- **75%** use a smartphone app to access bus info
- **Over 60%** want access to more Metrobus routes and extended hours
  - Students have jobs that require them to work later than 10 PM
  - Students have employment in Washington, D.C. (restaurants/retail); Income supports their family
  - Students would like Metrorail added



# Justice HS Metrobus Pilot: Traveling to school LAST YEAR (SY2017-2018)

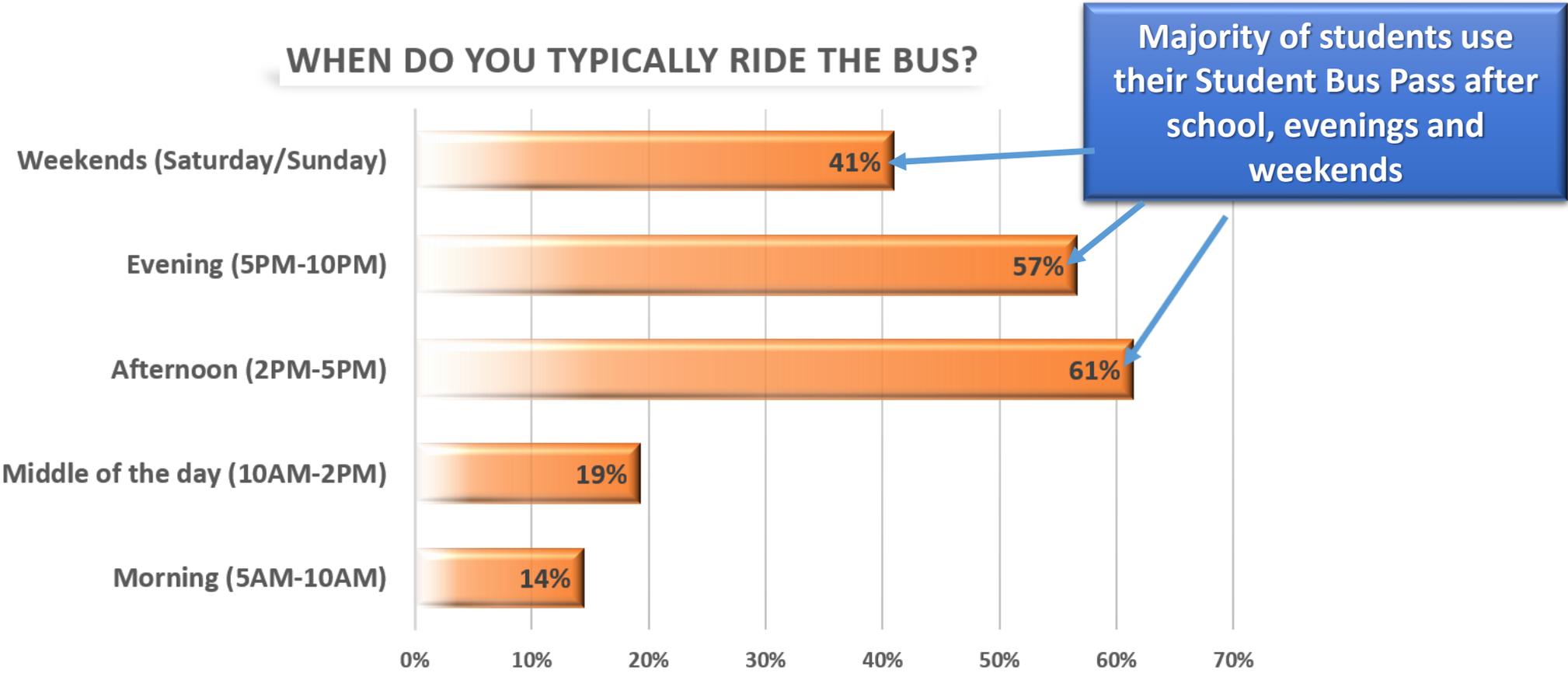


# Justice HS Metrobus Pilot: How often do you use your pass?



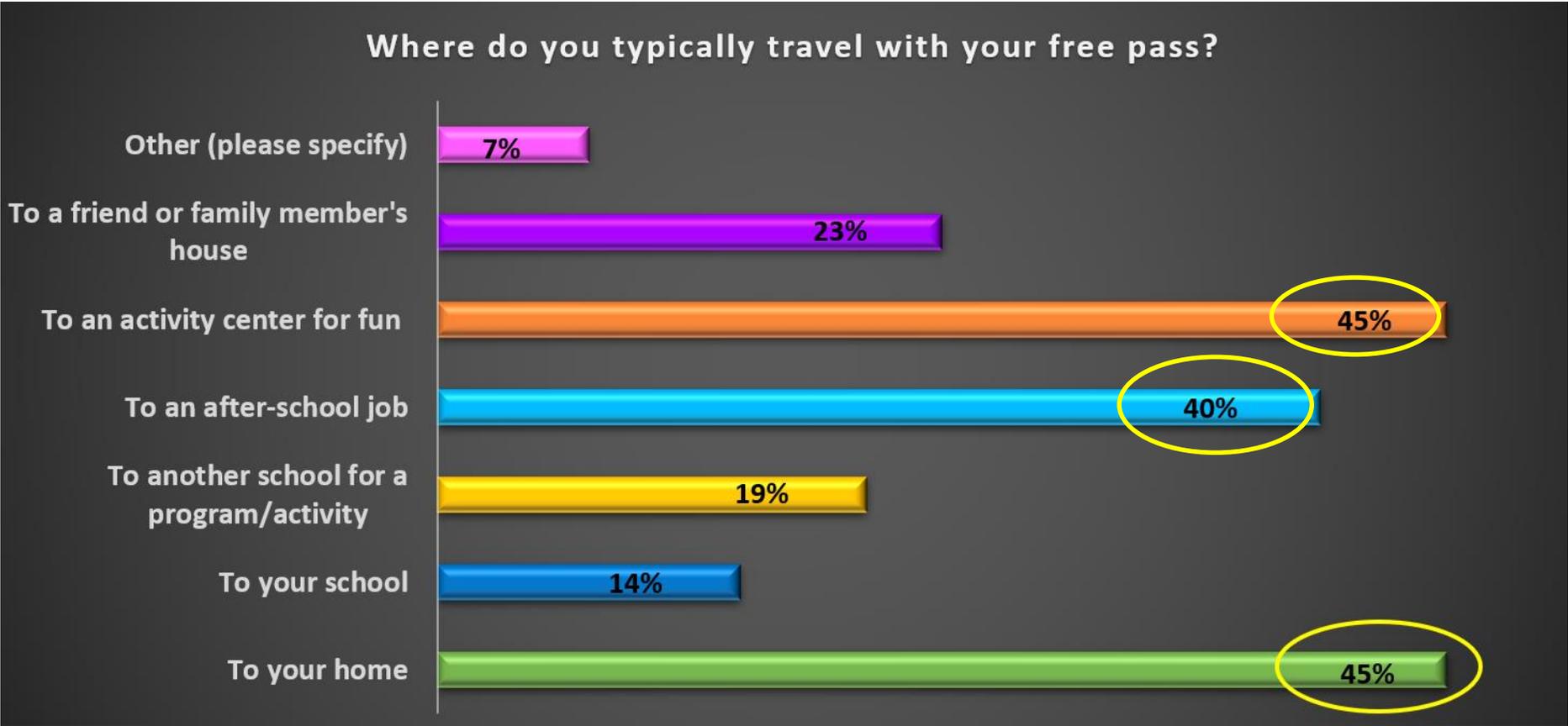
# Justice HS Metrobus Pilot: When do you ride?

*Students were allowed multiple responses*



# Justice HS Metrobus Pilot: Where do you go?

*Students were allowed multiple responses*



# Justice HS Metrobus Pilot: Perspectives

**Maria Eck**

Principal, Justice High School

**Carlos Pineda-Lopez**

Junior (11<sup>th</sup> grade), Justice High School



# Recommendations

- Continue to monitor the SmarTrip card implementation across all schools
- Renew MOU with WMATA to continue Justice HS Metrobus Pilot for SY19-20
- Finalize MOA with FCPS
- Continue program hours and Virginia only restrictions in place.



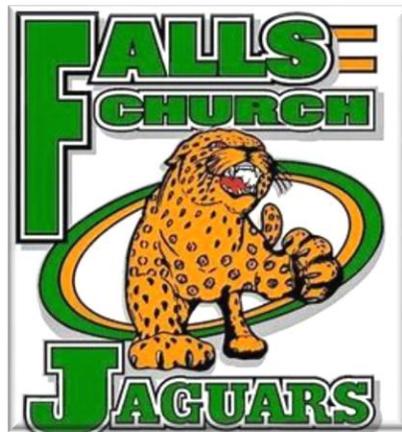
# Recommendations (Continued)

- Three High Schools (*in addition to Justice HS*) served only by Metrobus
- Limited participation in the Free Bus Pass program due to limited Fairfax Connector service
- Review possible expansion of Metrobus pilot to Annandale, Marshall or Falls Church High Schools in SY 2020-2021

Marshall High School



Falls Church High School



Annandale High School



# Insights

- **Creates and fosters community**
  - Two Herndon MS Students aided stranded senior citizen in wheelchair
- **Encourages citizenship and participation in local government/transit planning**
  - South Lakes HS student acting as a voice for student interests; Participating in working group for Silver Line Phase II Bus Route Optimization
- **Reduces congestion**
  - 1.4 million fewer car trips taken by teens (2.8 million trip reduction- in two-way car trips)
- **Creates long term transit riders**
  - Reduces mystery about riding the bus; creates loyalty to system
- **Creates opportunity**
  - “Pebble in the pond” ripple effect – we have no idea where the impact of this program leads in terms of future opportunity for students



# Discussion

