

Resolution # 71-02

**The Graduate and Professional Student Association
(GPSA)
The Pennsylvania State University**



of the 71st Assembly
April 28, 2021

Be it decided by the Assembly of Elected Delegates,

**Statement of Support for the BRIDGE Diversity Alliance
RIDEPass Discount Eligibility Issue**
(Decided: [Y / N / A])

1 **Nature of the Situation:**

2 The CATA bus system is one of the main modes of transportation in State College, as
3 CATA bus services allow students to commute within different parts of State College,
4 between different parts of State College and the Penn State Campus, and between towns
5 in Centre County. Currently, the Penn State Department of Transportation provides a
6 generous discount on RIDEPass (the CATA bus pass program) to graduate and
7 professional students to enable access to CATA bus services. Availing this discount
8 would allow graduate and professional students to purchase bus passes for \$21/month
9 — a significant reduction from the standard \$86/month price¹. However, only students
10 who live outside of a 0.75-mile distance from a Blue Loop or Red Link bus stop are eligible
11 for this discount¹. This would imply that ineligible students would have to pay a yearly
12 amount of \$1011 (equivalent to purchasing four 3-month passes from CATA), as
13 compared to the yearly amount of \$252 that eligible students pay².
14

¹ <https://transportation.psu.edu/ridepass-graduate-students>

² <https://catabus.com/catabus/fare-options-information/>

1 The BRIDGE Diversity Alliance, housed in the Department of Psychology of Penn State,
2 has recently learned that this clause placed on the eligibility of RIDEPass discounts
3 disproportionately affects international students/students of lower socioeconomic status
4 who cannot avail the discount because they live within 0.75 miles from a Blue Loop or
5 Red Link stop. While the presence of this condition is understandable if students commute
6 only to and from campus, graduate and professional students also rely on public
7 transportation for other daily needs, such as going to grocery stores, healthcare centers,
8 and retail stores. International graduate and professional students/students of lower
9 socioeconomic status are less likely to personally own cars, either due to issues of
10 affordability, procedural issues such as acquiring social security numbers and drivers'
11 licenses, or relatively shorter durations of stay that would negate the investment in a
12 personal vehicle. Such students would rely heavily on public transportation, and should
13 have the opportunity to avail the RIDEPass discount. Further, if ineligible students do
14 choose to make one-time trips rather than purchasing a pass directly from CATA, single-
15 trip bus fares require an exact change of \$2.20. Acquiring this exact change has been a
16 unique challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the national coin shortages, and
17 students might end up paying more if they do not have the exact fare with them³.

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19 Additionally, allowing all students to avail the RIDEPass discount would also aid in Penn
20 State's efforts in reducing the university's carbon footprint. Without access to public
21 transportation, ineligible students may rely on ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft.
22 However, the use of such ride-hailing services over mass transit contributes to both
23 pollution as well as on-road congestion⁴.

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25 To this end, the BRIDGE diversity alliance has drafted a letter to the Graduate School at
26 Penn State calling upon them to work with Penn State Transportation services to allow
27 all graduate and professional students to avail the RIDEPass discount. Such a policy
28 would boost the efficacy and well-being of graduate and professional students, while also
29 contributing to the reduction of the Penn State community's carbon footprint.

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31 **Recommended Course of Action:**
32 By adopting this resolution, the Graduate and Professional Student Association supports
33 the demands of the BRIDGE Diversity Alliance, and calls upon the Penn State
34 administration to modify its policy on eligibility of RIDEPass discounts to allow all graduate
35 and professional students to easily access CATA bus services.

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37 The letter from the BRIDGE Diversity Alliance can be found here:
38 [https://sites.psu.edu/bridgediversityalliance/ridepass-access-for-international-and-low-](https://sites.psu.edu/bridgediversityalliance/ridepass-access-for-international-and-low-income-students/)
39 [income-students/](https://sites.psu.edu/bridgediversityalliance/ridepass-access-for-international-and-low-income-students/)

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³ <https://www.federalreserve.gov/faqs/why-do-us-coins-seem-to-be-in-short-supply-coin-shortage.htm>

⁴ <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/ride-hailing-climate-risks>

Respectfully submitted,

Sandeep Krishnakumar
Speaker of the Assembly
Delegate, College of Engineering

President _____ Affirm Veto

The Graduate and Professional Student Association