

\*\*\*MEDIA ALERT\*\*\*

For immediate release: March 2, 2016

HART gives Students a Break this Spring

Innovative STAY-cation Program Means Free Rides Beginning March 1 through June 10!

Hillsborough County middle and high school students can enjoy their independence, save cash, and "go green" on HART buses this spring by riding HART for FREE when they present a valid school ID. Starting March 1 through June 10, the STAY-cation program provides youth 18 and under unlimited bus riding on any HART Local, Limited Express, MetroRapid or In-Towner, as well as HARTFlex services.

Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART), Hillsborough County Public Schools and the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners have partnered to offer this program. The partnership, championed by Commissioner Kevin Beckner, is designed to encourage more students to take advantage of public transportation and get in the habit of using transit instead of driving. "Hillsborough County is a car-centric culture, and most of us rely on an automobile for primary transportation needs," said Kevin Beckner, Hillsborough County Commissioner and HART board member. "We have to change that mindset, and the best way to do that is with our youth. "

"This collaborative program will give younger riders the key to their independence and is designed to be a tool to help them get to school, afterschool activities and work," said Katharine Eagan, HART CEO. "The program offers freedom to parents, too, who typically get tasked with chauffeur duty during the school year. Learning to use public transportation is a skill that will serve students well throughout their lives."

"This partnership with HART and the BOCC opens the doors for our students to have transportation for after-school jobs, participate in athletic events or clubs after school, and to enjoy the great amenities in our area," said Superintendent Jeff Eakins, Hillsborough County Public Schools.

HART has given 347,620 free trips to students in the past six years of the program, for which it partners with Hillsborough County Public Schools and the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners.

From malls and movies, to local attractions, jobs, and schools, HART Takes You There.

At the same time, young people experience the thrill, self-confidence, and mature independence of not having to depend on grown-ups to provide their transportation. Plus HART has a cool high-tech downloadable Smart phone app, [OneBusAway](#), and the [Google Trip Planner](#) to make mapping trips a breeze.

Transportation leaders hope that students will become accustomed to riding transit while in school, those habits will carry on when making decisions about how to get to work or social events.

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