

# Transportation: Second only to Housing Costs

## Eco Pass Program Increases Discretionary Income to Families

Comments gathered through the Eco Pass survey conducted by PMZ<sup>3</sup> Research indicated that having a free Eco Pass saves residents money:

*"...if it wasn't for Eco Pass, my kids may not be able to attend school functions. The cost would come out of our pocket."*

*"Without Eco Pass I couldn't get to work – I'd have to buy a monthly pass, which I may not be able to do."*

*"We love it! It's a life saver. My daughter goes to school on it. I try to save money by using to go to the store and run weekend errands – it cuts down on gas costs. It's very good. Just imagine \$22.00 a month, for 12 months – I can't afford that."*



*EL PASEO STUDIOS at Hamilton and Campbell Avenue in San Jose*

First Community Housing Corp. (FCH) is committed to making a positive impact on our community by building high-quality, eco-friendly, affordable housing developments and offering resident services that meet the needs of those who earn less than the area's median income. FCH is noted for its commitment to using green building products, for building close to public transportation, and for providing educational opportunities and free Eco Passes to our residents. Our residents have said the Eco Pass is the kind of benefit and convenience that makes them glad they live where they live.

"Many planning departments offer a 5-10% parking reduction for location near transit and an annual Eco Pass program. An urban structured parking space can cost from \$22,000 to \$40,000 per space. Saving the construction cost of two parking spaces pays for our entire Eco Pass program."

Jeff Oberdorfer, AIA,  
Executive Director, FCH



**Jeff Oberdorfer, AIA, LEED AP**  
Executive Director

**First Community Housing**  
2 North Second Street, Suite 1250  
San Jose, CA 95113

T 408-291-8650 x 19  
W [www.firsthousing.org](http://www.firsthousing.org)



## TRANSPORTATION

# First Community Housing Residential Eco Pass Program



*A Craig Gardens resident boards the bus*



*A Family at Murphy Ranch gets their photos taken for Eco Pass*

### FCH PROJECT OVERVIEW

**RESIDENTIAL ECO PASS** allows a user unlimited rides on VTA Bus and Light Rail in Santa Clara County. The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) sells Eco Passes at a deep discount to housing developments like condominiums, apartments, townhouses, and neighborhood and community associations in order to increase ridership and expose people to public transit.

**REDUCING TRAFFIC** First Community Housing (FCH) is a non-profit affordable housing developer that strategically locates its developments near public transit and was one of the first to offer **free** Eco Passes to their residents to encourage a reduction in dependence upon private cars, which helps reduce pollution and traffic congestion.

**REDUCING PARKING NEEDS** By locating our developments adjacent to transit and providing free, annual Eco Passes to tenants, we have reduced the parking requirements at each of our properties as well as reducing car trips.



*First Community Housing provides all tenants of their developments with a VTA Eco Pass, allowing them to travel throughout the community.*

# VTA Eco Pass Program Overview

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, known as VTA, is an independent special district that manages the public transit system in Santa Clara County. Formerly part of Santa Clara County Administration, VTA is also responsible for specific highway improvements and regional congestion management. It is developing the Valley-wide light rail system and works with partner transit agencies to run Caltrain, Dumbarton Express, Highway 17 Express, Altamont Commuter Express and Capitol Corridor Intercity Rail.

Residents in a residential community of 25 units or more can get an Eco Pass, a benefit once reserved for employees of major Silicon Valley companies. Residential Eco Pass is a photo ID validated with an annual sticker that allows a user unlimited rides on VTA Bus, Light Rail and Paratransit services, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For more information, please see: [www.vta.org/ecopass/ecopass\\_resi/ecoresi.html](http://www.vta.org/ecopass/ecopass_resi/ecoresi.html)

## How Much Does Transportation Cost California's Low-Income Households?

Among low-income California households that use private vehicles, expenditures related to those vehicles consumed about 19 percent of their household budgets compared to 16 percent for higher-income households. Some low-income households had very high vehicle expenditures; 10 percent of low-income households devoted 35 percent or more of their budgets to private vehicles.

**Source:**  
*Transportation Spending by Low-Income California Households: Lessons for the San Francisco Bay Area*, Lorien Rice, Public Policy Institute of California

## FIRST COMMUNITY HOUSING: Green Builder is Largest Promoter of Residential Eco Pass in Santa Clara County

"Residential Eco Pass has grown to include 20 residential communities throughout Santa Clara County, and 10 of these communities belong to **First Community Housing**. With Residential Eco Pass, First Community Housing is providing an attractive value-added amenity by helping to reduce residents' annual transportation costs."

The **Valley Transportation Authority**

First Community Housing EcoPass Report as of January 2006			
Property	Type of Housing	Passes Provided	Total Cost at \$30 each
Guadalupe Apts	Family	31	\$930
Paula Apts	Family	27	\$810
Troy Apts	Family	37	\$1,110
Los Esteros	Family	465	\$13,950
Creekview Inn	SRO	24	\$720
Orchard Gardens	Rehab	65	\$1,950
Craig Gardens	Senior	90	\$2,700
Betty Ann Gardens	Family	80	\$2,400
Murphy Ranch	Family	120	\$3,600
El Paseo Studios	SRO	98	\$2,940
		<b>1037</b>	<b>\$31,110</b>

## FCH's Eco Pass Program Influences Car Ownership

A recent survey conducted by PMZ<sup>3</sup> Research to study the effectiveness of FCH's Eco Pass Program has shown that Eco Pass usage:

- **REDUCES NUMBER OF CARS** 22% of survey respondents indicated that Eco Pass usage has reduced the number of cars used in their household. This translates into approximately:
  - 176 fewer cars at FCH properties
  - 105,396 fewer gallons of gas consumed annually
  - 1,075,039 fewer grams of reactive organic gases (ROG) emitted annually
  - 1,981,445 fewer grams of oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emitted annually [Note: ROG and NOx are the primary ingredients of smog.]
- **PROVIDES NEEDED TRANSPORTATION** For many residents public transportation is their primary mode of transportation and 64% of respondents indicated they use their Eco Pass four or more times a week.
- **REDUCES PARKING DEMAND** FCH has found through experience and resident surveys that Eco Passes substantially reduce on site parking and automotive trips.
- **REDUCES CARS ON-SITE** FCH gives preference to tenants who do not own vehicles.

Our Survey Asked:	Yes
Do you or a member of your household, currently use Eco Pass?	61%
Has Eco Pass allowed your household to adjust or change your transportation needs?	56%

## FCH Residents Talk About Eco Pass:

*A resident of one of FCH's senior apartments notes, "My wife uses [the Eco Pass] everyday. It allows my wife the opportunity to get around."*

*"We rely on Eco Pass to get us around. It's a big help, especially to me because I am disabled."*

*"We use the bus everyday – it's our primary transportation. Without Eco Pass I couldn't get to work – I'd have to buy a monthly pass, which I may not be able to do."*

*"Because of my high medical bills during some months, I'm able to get out without any costs. Some people cannot get out, but the Eco Pass changes all that – plus, I'm able to get exercise."*

*"I have a walker, which the bus picks up. Without the Eco Pass, I couldn't go anywhere. I'm able to go to lunch, or the park...it's wonderful."*

*"I don't need a car. It lets me get out. I live on Social Security. I really can't afford a car – that's why I like public transportation."*

**How has the Eco Pass improved quality of life for you or a member of your household?**

It is our primary transportation	25.8%
Assists with our finances/budget	19.3%
It is convenient	19.3%
Allows me to attend school (delivers me to school)	17.7%
We are able to use when our vehicle is not operable	6.4%
Delivers me to work/employment	4.8%

