# Philadelphia Receives $578,340 Grant to Extend Zero Fare Transportation Program



Philadelphia has secured a $578,340 grant from the William Penn Foundation to continue supporting its Zero Fare free transportation pilot program, initiated in August 2023. The program, which provides 25,000 low-income residents with free, unlimited SEPTA Key cards, will be funded through at least June 2025. The William Penn Foundation's grant will enable thorough evaluation of the program’s impact on participants, in partnership with Georgetown University's Better Government Lab and the Urban Institute.

Nicola Mammes, the Zero Fare Program Director, explained that the evaluation will focus on various outcomes such as employment, earnings, well-being, health, housing stability, and financial stability. The initiative, introduced by former Mayor Jim Kenney and supported by current Mayor Cherelle L. Parker, aims to facilitate better access to city resources, including healthcare, social services, and job training programs.

The majority of participants were selected through a lottery system, with eligibility determined by low-income status. To include individuals not eligible for city benefits, such as low-income immigrants and refugees, partnering community organizations helped select one in every ten participants.

One such organization, Puentes de Salud, which serves Latinx immigrants in Philadelphia and Delaware County, has reported profound benefits for its members. Mariana Argüelles, Health and Wellness Director at Puentes, emphasized the significant financial and logistical relief provided by the free transportation, aiding families in accessing education, work, medical appointments, and community events.

Orfelina Feliz Payne, the Executive Director of Puentes, noted that the increased accessibility to transportation has facilitated better compliance with medical care, particularly for chronic conditions and maternal health.

As the program develops, Payne and Argüelles expressed optimism about its potential expansion to meet the extensive demand for free public transportation within their community.