

Graduate Student Petition - Addressing Student Parking/Transportation Rates at Boston University Medical Campus, October 19, 2020

We kindly ask that you revisit the recent “discounted” rate offered for graduate student parking. Considering many students’ research studies necessitate weekend trips, the rate of \$12/day is tantamount to \$360/month, which is double the monthly rates and cost-prohibitive for graduate students. While the city of Boston and Boston University have a synergized public transportation system, it does not cater to all students, and in the face of the COVID pandemic, poses an infection risk. Therefore, it is with the utmost respect that we urge you to review the discounted price offered for graduate student parking bearing in mind the restrictive costs of life in Boston and our limited means as graduate students.

We seek to remind the parking authority of the severely restricted income levels all BUMC students face, especially in comparison to faculty and staff who are offered the same monthly rates. As of now the cost of monthly parking ranges between 12.3-18.5% of a student’s monthly stipend, for those in eligible programs. Additionally, BUMC students’ cost of attendance (COA) dictated by the University does not realistically account for the cost of transportation (GMS Student COA: https://www.bumc.bu.edu/osfs/cost-of-attendance_bot/graduate-medical-sciences/). The current COA for such students does not appropriate enough funds for students to park at University Parking Garages, let alone the cost of additional transportation expenses such as the cost of public transportation, gas, insurance etc. Presently, GMS students are allotted up to \$1260 for transportation in the 2020-2021 school year, which equates to \$157.50/month. This cost only accounts for 87% of the current monthly garage rates. A reduction in the monthly and daily rate of student parking would greatly ease the financial burden students endure.

In comparative practices, Harvard University has empathized with student financial hardships and the added stress associated with COVID-19 by implementing a relief plan for their parking services. At Harvard, daily rates are as low as \$10/day, and parking garage rates as low as \$35/month (see Harvard Rates: <https://www.transportation.harvard.edu/covidparking>).

Although the BU shuttle remains a transportation option for students living walking distance from the shuttle route, instances of improper mask wearing persist, despite student reports. Likewise, shuttles represent particularly small and enclosed spaces which are unable to accommodate their typical capacities of pre-pandemic life, even with the increased circulation schedules. We feel that relegating students to this transportation option in the face of inflated priced on-campus parking is inequitable and works against our shared interest of controlling the spread of COVID-19. What’s more, a fair student discount will further enable research progress without the burden of cost on an already restricted budget and reduce emotional strain.

Boston University has been vigilant in their criteria for testing students for COVID-19 and submitting daily symptom surveys to control its spread. However, we believe that responsible and financially feasible transportation should be considered a part of this effort. Specifically, to avoid the exorbitant housing costs of Boston, more students are choosing to live outside the city. Now these students must rely on private transportation to reduce their exposure to, and limit the spread of COVID-19. The need for fair student parking costs is not only financially paramount but also the responsible and public health-conscientious approach.

To conclude, we implore you to revisit the student parking rates as we reiterate the need for safe and affordable ways to continue our research in the midst of an unprecedented global pandemic. We strongly urge you to offer your students discounted parking rates of \$9/day, an amount equivalent to the monthly rate of parking in the 610 Albany St. Garage, and \$100/month to accommodate the Transportation COA as outlined by Boston University. Ultimately, the safest and most effective way to keep the BUMC community healthy and keep research progressing at a steady state is to offer safe and financially viable parking options for students, and not just faculty.

Sincerely,
Boston University Graduate Students