
REPORT

TO: MEMBERS ADA Transit Subcommittee to the Transit & Parking Commission
FROM: Crystal Martin, Paratransit Program Manager
SUBJECT: METRO PARATRANSTI NO SHOW PLOCY PROPOSAL
DATE: 6/16/11

Why make changes to the No Show policy?

The policy hasn't been updated in some time and the reported no show rate is very small. However, the no show policy also addresses timely cancelations. Metro's cancelation rate is very high ranging from 16-18% of trips requested. Over 10% of the cancels come in on the day of service. Over time, Metro and its contractors have transitioned to pre-scheduling every ride for the next day as opposed to on demand dispatching like a taxi service. While providing more consistency in service, pre-scheduling also means that untimely cancelations have a much greater impact on the effectiveness of the service. We believe that if our customers are aware that Metro needs more time, they will notify Metro sooner if they would like to cancel a trip. We also believe that the consistency of an average of 10% of trips canceling on the day of service indicates that Metro is the back-up plan for some customer's transportation needs as opposed to relying on Metro.

Metro would institute a significant customer education campaign prior to applying any changes to the no show policy.

Why change to 90 minutes notice of cancelation instead of 30 minutes?

Increasing the notice for cancelations has the effect of giving Metro an opportunity to identify and re-directing a vehicle for more timely service. A requirement for more than 30 minutes notice is not unusual. The chart below compares Madison to peer systems.

Advance Cancel Requirements for Paratransit Service			
<i>WI Systems</i>	<i>Time Requirement</i>	<i>Madison Metro Peers</i>	<i>Time Requirement</i>
Madison	30 minutes	Berks Area Reading Transit Authority, PA	0 minutes
Appleton	60 minutes	Madison Metro	30 Minutes
Fondulac	60 minutes	Cumberland - Dauphin, Harrisburg CAT, PA	60 minutes
Oshkosh	60 minutes	City of Appleton - Valley Transit, WI	60 minutes
Racine	60 minutes	Greater Taunton - Attleboro RTA, MA	60 minutes
Stevens Point	60 minutes	Madison County Transit District, IL	60 minutes
Wausau	60 minutes	Lehigh and Northampton Transit Authority, PA	60 minutes
Green Bay	60 minutes	Capital Area Transportation Authority, MI	90 minutes
Manitowoc	60 minutes	Ben Franklin Transit, WA	120 minutes
La Crosse	60 minutes	Greater New Haven Transit District, CT	24 hours
Duluth	180 minutes		
Milwaukee	120 minutes		
Beloit	day prior		

- 30 Minutes is not enough time to get the information to drivers, especially contracted drivers which serve 80% of our trips, much less divert them to better serve waiting customers.
- Federal guidelines recommend notice of cancelation is the 'functional equivalent' of a no show. If the driver can't be diverted in time, the trip is a functional no show.
- Examples of situations that can delay the dispatcher from getting information out within 30 minutes: relaying info from Metro dispatch to contractor dispatch, then to the driver, giving lengthy directions, dealing with traffic and construction delays, responding to an accident, calling for people to meet the leave-attended rider, and making schedule adjustments.
- Metro Paratransit's cancelation rate has been high. 10-12% of our 17% cancelation rate represents same day cancels.
- All of our service is now pre-scheduled the day prior to service. Metro does not have any more on-demand providers that dispatch in real time, like a cab company. This has created greater stability and productivity in the schedules. It has helped our customer's daily service and helped control costs. It has also made advance notice of cancels more important in order to change the schedule.
- If Metro is not able to get the information to the contractor in time, Metro is charged by the contractor for a no show even if the customer is not penalized. Metro is being charged for not providing 30 minutes notice.
- There is no financial penalty to our customers for short notice of a cancelation or a no show. The consequences are based on cumulative patterns over the course of a month, not on a per instance basis.

Why not just state that the permissible no show scale is 12% of trips taken?

- Our policy should be specific and unambiguous for instances where suspension of access to transportation are involved.
- Inevitably, use of a percentage would require rounding to arrive at the whole number which will lead to confusion.
- Keep in mind that our current no show rate is 2.1% of trips taken. Metro doesn't anticipate a 10% no show rate resulting from this policy. Stating an allowable 12% implies that 12% is acceptable.

Why change the suspension of service schedule?

It is unnecessarily and overly punitive and threatening to customers.

- Almost all customers take care of any no show patterns after a warning letter or 1-day suspension.
- Customers that get to the point of a 3-day suspension tend not to be responsive and progress to the 7-day level. The 3-day suspension is not useful in changing a pattern of behavior.
- The 7-day suspension is a big deal and that is usually when anyone who actually gets to that point knuckles down and resolves the issue. Customers who are at a week suspension are willing to accept advice or request help.
- Metro does not apply the 30-day suspension. The one time it came up in the last 10 years, it was put in abeyance. There is no reason to have this category.