

Testimony for Transit and Parking Commission - 11/7/12
Susan De Vos
610 N. Midvale Blvd.
Madison, WI 53705

Hello. For the record, I am Susan De Vos. Although I head a citizen group of bus advocates, I am here primarily as a Disabled User of Mainline rep on your ADA Transit Subcommittee. I'll let other Bus Advocates speak to our distress over the whole funding mess our public transit system finds itself in. I focus my remarks on the 31-day senior/disabled pass. Because, not wanting to show an over-inflated ego here, I think I was a major force behind its existence, and want it to stay affordable to people on fixed incomes. And, also as the one who initiated a motion on the subject that was inaccurately portrayed in a Memorandum you received, I wish to set the matter straight, provide some background, and make a suggestion.

First, the ADATS motion. As I initiated it and Bridget can corroborate, ADATS's motion did **not** refer to any dollar figure because it wanted to be germane whether a fare hike occurred or not. **It certainly did not endorse a hike.** Rather, we moved that the 31-day pass stay on a par with the cost of the Low Income pass. That cost could stay \$27.50.

Second, some background. The idea of the special pass has a long history but had to wait until Julie Maryott-Walsh retired and Sharon Persich took over before it became a reality. And then, since Metro was unsure that many people would use it, it started experimentally, for one year. Use hit the necessary number after only six months or so. So it became permanent, and the idea that it is fairly new is a distortion of what really went on. Then, **after** that pass was finally in place, Lisa felt that anyone with a low income should be eligible for the half-price pass, not just seniors and disabled people. So it would be ironic indeed for a low income pass to remain at half price while the pass for seniors and disabled people did not.

It also bears mentioning that Metro's attention to senior and disabled passenger fare in the past has demonstrated a mystifying ambivalence. For instance, in an outlined 2012 proposed fare increase, the cost of a ride on Paratransit would stay 12.5% **below** its legal limit of twice the regular cash fare. In contrast, the cash fare for a senior/disabled Mainline ride would stay the same but the cost of a senior/disabled 10-ride card would increase to either 13% or 20% **above** the cost of 10 cash fares. Now, the current proposal is for the 10-ride cards to be the same as 10 cash fares, for Paratransit rides to cost 11% **below** the legal limit, and for the Mainline pass to increase by over 45%. Why such flopping around?

Finally, a suggestion: Federal regulations now stipulate that the senior/disabled fare be half price at all times if a transit agency is to stay eligible for federal financial assistance. But they are silent on a 31-day pass. So one way to keep the pass low cost while moving those who could afford it to a higher-priced pass, would be to limit the viability of the senior/disabled pass to off peak hours. People who could afford it could migrate to a regular pass or pay an extra cash fare, while those who could not afford more could organize their travel to be at times when many buses need more passengers anyway. A possible win-win solution, I do not know if fare boxes could handle this time variance. My attempt to find out was not successful.