



Public Meeting – Questions/Answers

Wednesday, July 21

1. **I'm concerned about the plans to eliminate passes if this is participated, are you going to eliminate passes?**

Essentially the passes would be replaced with this fare capping system. You would still get the benefit of buying a pass; you just wouldn't have to buy it up front. I'm sure there are some folks that would prefer the upfront cost. You will still be able to do that by loading that same balance onto the card. \$60 on the card and draw down over the course of the month.

2. **Fare Free Section: What do you mean by pass programs, "going lump sum"?**

Right now, all of the pass programs like UW students/faculty or MMSD are all based on a per-ride fee. We bill them a certain amount per ride. Nothing is confirmed and may not be even an option but one theoretical example is to convert from a per ride fee to a lump sum. That would help us potentially move towards a fare free system. Again, we are not recommending a fare free system and we don't need to move in that direction.

3. **How will passengers without fare be handled?**

Just like today, you need a fare to ride. Hopefully those that don't have the ability to pay right then, can apply for the low income program and pay after their trip when they are able to.

4. **Would an open system have a significant flat expense, meaning a higher per-user cost?**

There would be some credit card fees for sure but not any more significant than using your credit card to reload an account balance.

5. **Would existing pass partners who distribute NFC ID cards (e.g. the UW) be able to add existing cards' NFC data, or would they need to re-issue card after receiving an ID from Metro?**

I think our intent is to build a system around a type of cards they currently use so that we wouldn't need to distribute new cards. We hope that would be possible, until we actually have a vendor on board, we don't know for sure. There is also an option to have these NFC systems encoded into a small sticker to attach on the existing cards. There would still be some level of effort to distribute these stickers and have them attached. It would be less than having to print entirely new cards. If we cannot use the existing chips and cards.

6. **Isn't there an FTA requirement where transit agencies are required to accept cash?**

No, there's not. There is a requirement that we go through that's called a Title XI analysis. That ensures that any of these changes aren't hitting any of these populations inequitably. We



certainly would go through this and did go through some of that analysis already. There is not a specific requirement that cash is required onboard.

7. How would instructions for using this account-based system be delivered to the public?

We would prepare materials explaining this and have meetings once we have a system to demonstrate. Overall, this is not a switch we will flip; this will be a long-term transition. We expect this system and the old system to be in places at the same time to allow people to have that transition time and get familiar with the new system before they have to make the switch.

There will also be marketing and customer service staff available for trainings once this is rolled out.

8. For account card option what would registration requirements be? If ID is required to associate card with specific person it may be an issue for residents that struggle with getting an ID – like low-income and undocumented?

Yes, we thought about that. It is a bit of a quandary, in order to have this half fare program, we do need to register to an individual and need to demonstrate their income status. As far as what documentation would be provided or required, we don't anticipate it being a driver's license. We would need some method to tie that card to that person because they're also getting the benefit of being able to pay after the fact and as well as being half the fare. That is something we will have to work out, in terms of what the actual requirements will be for that application. We will try to make those barriers as small as possible and certainly for those who are undocumented make sure that there's no concerns from them of where that data might end up.

9. Is Metro Transit open to working with suppliers where the cost of implementing an account based system and related equipment is off set as a solution as a service based model?

I think that will come out through this RFP process. As we issue the RFP, we'll request proposals. Some vendors may propose various solutions, one may propose an entire solution where we just buy it and they walk away. Another may propose a solution where they are heavily involved and we pay them a subscription fee. That'll all come out through the RFP process.

10. Once the cash on board option is eliminated, will there be any option for an impromptu ride for folks from out of town or who don't usually ride the bus that wouldn't require the preplanning or pre buying a card at another location? If paying with a mobile app is the main option to do that, is there any way for someone without a phone to do an impromptu ride?

Most likely, no. That would be a unique situation. In that situation, yes there would be a limitation on what could be done. Certainly, there are people who make special please at different times right now, it's up to the discretion of our supervisors in that situation. In general no, if you don't have a card you can't get somewhere to get a card, don't have a smart phone then it would be a challenge to ride in that situation.



- 11. If we have another pandemic, a senior like me will use the bus less. I would stay home and use zoom and that sort of thing. I'd prefer to keep using the senior 10-ride card that I now use. Will that still be available?**

No, but in that case you could just load a balance to your card and it would draw it down as you used it. Essentially, it would operate as the same thing. You would pay for the same value for that 10-ride card, you'd get 10 rides out of it and you use it however you desire.

- 12. How will negative balances be collected?**

There would be a lower limit; the card would not be able to go below a certain amount. Those cards should be registered to an individual. If that individual decides to never use that card again, we would essentially write off that amount. We wouldn't send it to collections or anything. I do think that for the vast majority of people, the benefit of that half fare program will be justification enough to keep their account up-to-date and pay so that they can continue to ride.

- 13. Can others use card as long as card has money on it or is there a specific ID on card?**

The card would have a unique serial number and the balances would not expire. If for some reason the card were to be damaged, you could bring that card to our customer service, issue a new card, and make sure your balance carries over. That's probably even more important in the case where you lose your card, in that case if it's attached to your name, then they can issue you a new card with that balance still intact. It's not as if you were using a monthly pass and were to lose it, you're kind of out.

- 14. Can the City issue half-fare cards, which meet requirements to be used as voter ID?**

I don't know to be honest, most likely not. My understanding is the voter ID thing has to be a state issued ID with certain documentation requirements that we probably would not want to require.

- 15. Will the staff recommended fare collection option result in location tracking of all BRT/ Metro riders?**

No, it would allow us to track how many people are boarding at each location. It most likely would not have a detail tracking of each individual of where they rode, to and from. We do not want to have that level of data.

- 16. Concerned that elimination of passes result in higher costs for some regular riders – thoughts?**

With the fare capping solution, it essentially guarantees that you won't pay more than you would have with the pass. In that way, it's a benefit for everyone.



17. What is the city back up if smartphone is not functioning, the emergency?

For all the attention that mobile payments have received, people who are heavy users usually don't use them. Because of issues like what if the battery or anything else. We certainly encourage those users to use the tap card systems rather than the phones. For those that are occasional users, and want to use the phones instead of carrying around another card that is one option. If you are unable to load their phone, then you might not have access to that. If that person has access to a contactless credit card with a chip in it, that may be another option.

18. Weren't negative incidents up on vehicular and air transportation during the pandemic including those that collected fares? Isn't violence up on airplanes? Isn't violence up in general?

I'm obviously not an expert in all the other industries, but anecdotally from what I've seen in the news yes there were some issues with violence during the pandemic. I think in our case, we didn't actually see violence, it was more of a complaint based note that we added there. We didn't see any specific instances of violence on the bus.

19. Will senior/ disabled rates be retained?

I'm assuming it could be built into our after program as well.

20. I think seniors like myself could deal with cards as long as retail outlets would accept. Are you convinced that the replenishments could be done at retail outlets? I don't want to lose convenience of paying a dollar or 10-ride card.

That's the nice thing about having retailers they are based off the gift card system. We could even sign up new vendors or new retailers in key locations. It is a viable solution to make sure people have the ability to load those cards when they need to.

21. Will the 31 day rate be retained like the senior/disabled rate? Will all rates be retained?

They would be converted to a fare cap and you wouldn't pay more than the rate but you don't have to shell out the full amount at the beginning of the month.

22. Are the contactless cards a different technology than the mobile payment app?

It's using the same technology, so it's the NFC (near field communication) they are what's called "dumb" NFC chips that are embedded in plastic cards that is basically just a serial number that's the tap cards. Then there are smart ones that are connected to most phones that can be reprogrammed by the phone to emulate a tap card. They are the same technology but there slight differences.



23. Is Metro willing to integrate its mobile apps in order to provide full mobile integration to its passengers?

Yes, I think that's definitely a goal we'd seek to achieve. We can't guaranteed it'll happen on day one, but that would be something we'd work toward.

24. Will the card itself have cost? As in, will you have to pay a separate charge to obtain a card? If cards are lost do you plan to charge for replacing? Can you purchase cards themselves at retail locations similar to how we do it now?

So the way this is typically done, yes there is a cost of a card, that could be purchased at a retail store or ticket window, I think it's around \$1 to \$5 depending how other cities do it. The first card you register, it would be free. If you lose it, yes you would have to pay for a replacement. The card itself has a value, about \$2 per card to make and distribute.

25. Won't ridership go up with fares as well, requiring more funding for capacity and service?

I assume that questions is asking we'll need more service with a free fare service or with fare service. I think the research shows that just the simple switch from fare systems to free fares generates anywhere from 20 – 30 % or maybe even more additional ridership. That certainly would be a one-time step up in ridership that we could definitely need a lot more service to accommodate. Any growth in service overtime might be on the order of 1 or 2% a year so that could allow us to budget for and make certain adjustments, especially as our tax base and city continues to grow. Our growth in ridership is more likely going to come along side from our population, which will increase our tax base and would allow the city to contribute for funds to us to continue to operate that service.

26. Doesn't stating that a choice must be made between service and fare free transit a false dilemma since some systems have don't both?

The systems that have fare free right now in the US, they generated a much lower percentage from their total budget from fares before they started it than we do currently. I think Chapel Hill, North Carolina, they only got 8% of revenue from fares and then they were able to partner with University of North Carolina to fill that gap and contribute more money and continue to operate. 25% of our budget is coming for our fare revenues, that's a huge gap. We also don't have this big benefactor especially with the state, very much limiting what we can do in terms of revenue generation. Again, eliminating fares for us here would be a much bigger hole than its been for other cities and we have fewer new revenue sources to fill it with than other cities would. Again, on top of it, we already have capacity issues so adding a dozen people to every bus just isn't feasible so we would have to add more buses to do.



- 27. With cards, can you track both where individuals get off the bus as well as where board? That may be desirable for transit planning but how would we handle the privacy concerns raised by that?**

There is a way to track where get on the bus, I don't know that we would want to track that data. We are tracking where people generally get on the bus already, we have separate a system called automated passenger counter, a little laser detection beams at every door that counts when a person gets on or off the bus. So we have the data of where and when a person gets on or off at every stop or we will when our new technology system is fully rolled out without having to tie that to individual names or counts. With the fare systems, theoretically we could track where people would get on the bus, when they tap the card. I don't think we would want to but we would not have a way to track when they get off the bus because they aren't tapping their card when they do that. Even that dataset would be incomplete anyway even if we wanted to.

- 28. Will Metro consider replacing ticket vending machines to replace existing ones to help with the sales of tickets?**

We have the fareboxes on the buses, which is what we're planning to replace with this new system. I'm not aware of any vending machines that we currently have. Potentially in areas where we can't find good retailers in certain neighborhoods, in those cases we could put vending machines in those spots. Our primary goal would be to list some retailers to partner with rather than to put up those machines.