

Meeting with Metro Staff (3 AUG 2021 ~ 4-5p)
CRANES/MABA Summary
FINAL v.16AUG21

Metro Attendees: Justin Stuehrenberg (Metro manager), Mick Rusch (Metro public relations), Jennifer Schiller (Metro Finance Manager)

MABA/CRANES Attendees: Susan De Vos, Nick DeMarsh, Jon Becker

1. Staff takes the position that, because the Fare Free Transit Feasibility Study (FFTFS) section of the Metro Fare Options Study (MFOS) was unable to identify a politically practical way to mitigate fare revenue loss, the question of meeting international standards is moot. CRANES/MABA pointed out that the USA standards for FFTFS, delayed by pandemic, are still in development (the National Academies of Science/Engineering/Medicine "Evaluation Framework for Fare-free Public Transportation" is due out in June 2022).

Justin Stuehrenberg comment 16AUG2021: As you mention the standards aren't even out yet. Our discussion didn't center around adherence to the standards because they don't exist.

Jon Becker response 16AUG2021: The USA standards will be available next June, as we reported at the meeting, and cited as yet another reason to delay a fare options decision and purchase of fare collection equipment. But international standards for such studies do exist, and Metro's study fell consequentially short of those, especially on the social benefits and equity fronts (e.g., there was no survey of drivers, who worldwide have favored FFT; this outcome should not be assumed here, but its relevance, especially given driver recruitment/retention issues in Madison, was why we asked Metro to include such a survey in their study, along with a rider survey). Even considering USA practices for such studies, Metro did not do an economic impact analysis (e.g., as was done for Kansas City, using IMPLAN software).

2. There was no survey of corporations or other non-residential entities regarding potential support for underwriting FFT (as in Missoula MT).
3. There was no survey of municipalities regarding potential support for an inter-municipal or countywide Transit Utility Fee (TUF), as is used in Corvallis OR. Madison's mayor explored a countywide TUF with the County Executive, but got nowhere. CRANES/MABA suggested that a TUF could be approved if the voting population experienced improved service, because of FFT, and wanted more of it.
4. Metro staff was unable to provide a rationale for use of the city's Urban Forestry Special Charge as a TUF analysis proxy, rather than a transportation-based method such as that used in Corvallis OR (Institute of Traffic Engineers trip generation model, based on type of business and average number of vehicle 'trips' that property type generates). It is therefore unknown if Metro's proxy is accurate or- if a Forestry-based TUF were instituted- defensible in court.
5. There was no economic impact analysis (incl. social cost/benefit), as was done in Kansas City MO (using IMPLAN software).

[Pts. 2-5] JS comment 16AUG2021: As we mentioned in the meeting, there is no limit to the amount of study that could be done. We can't continue to devote more and more staff resources to studies for which there is not a plausible outcome.

[Pts. 2-5] JB response 16AUG2021: Fare free is indeed plausible, as Metro's own study confirms. It however requires imagination and political leadership, not just replacement funding of fare revenues. But even on the narrow basis of fare revenue mitigation, the study comes up short (e.g., by using a questionable assessment proxy with an inadequate geographical base to estimate potential Transit Utility Fee revenue, failing to fully identify externalized costs, etc.).

6. Staff seem to view enhanced service and FFT as a binary choice (i.e., service **vs.** FFT). Even if the Pressley/Markey *Freedom to Move* law (or other federal funding providing direct-to-municipality funding for Fare Free Transit pilots) emerges, if staff had a choice they would prioritize enhanced service. Staff

has not had much public input advocating for FFT, but seemed unaware that this lack of input may be due to the dearth of information provided to the community by Metro. Media coverage about staff's premature stance recommending against FFT likely also is a factor in tamping down public input.

JS comment 16AUG2021: the issue is that we've heard from many people that they desire more and/or better transit service. You are the only person we've heard pushing the fare free desire. So, we feel that if given additional funding, improving service would better meet the needs of the community than eliminating fares.

JB response 16AUG2021: [Pro-FFT advocacy since 2012 in the South Central WI region has been organizational, from CRANES](#), a coalition with several partner organizations having thousands of members. I'm the vice-president of the CRANES Board of Directors, and merely lead for this phase of FFT advocacy. As mentioned at the AUG 3 meeting, it should not be expected by Metro that CRANES create a public engagement effort for the fare options study. This is especially so given the foreshortened timeframe that staff created by delaying its report to May 2021 from November 2020, then jamming public input meetings into the summer months. As opposed to the JWA route redesign project, Metro did no public engagement for the fare options project; rather it did modest public outreach (through a couple media interviews and a couple ad placements), entirely focused on fare collection options. Conversely, both by the biased design of the study and by its formal stance against the FFT before public input, Metro staff worked actively to eliminate serious consideration of the FFT option.

7. None of the three staffers have had training in The Natural Step (a sustainability planning approach that uses *back-casting*: <https://www.cityofmadison.com/sustainability/naturalstep/>; back-casting is different from the trends-based planning that is often used for transportation project, with *forecasting*). There was no consideration of developing a "Best" transit scenario (e.g., including both service enhancements and FFT), then providing options for how sustainable funding for that scenario could be achieved, for consideration by the public.
8. Staff was aware of the equity-based challenges to pre-boarding fare collection, including the finding in Cleveland that racial profiling in fare enforcement violated passengers' constitutional rights. Cleveland was forced to increase travel times of riders by confirming riders' proof of payment as passengers boarded the BRT, rendering a major element of the BRT (pre-boarding fare collection) useless, reducing the benefit of the BRT, and making the investment in bus pass purchase equipment at BRT stations a useless expense [<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2017/11/02/cleveland-police-enforcement-of-transit-proof-of-payment-ruled-unconstitutional/>]. Metro's fare options report does not account for all costs of cash collection, financial or otherwise (enforcement, delays, etc.). See also: See farebox PowerPoint presentation by Dave Eveland (metro staff, retired) to MABA last February: <http://www.busadvocates.org/articles/madisonmetro/eveland2020.pdf>

Justin Stuehrenberg comment 16AUG2021: We actually didn't discuss Cleveland in detail. The issue there was not that profiling was occurring, it was that police were conducting the searches without probable cause. The court actually ruled that the inspections could continue if done using civilian inspectors. And the fare study we conducted does include the cost of fare collection.

Jon Becker response 16AUG2021: Regarding Cleveland, no response; the link to the Streets Blog article was provided so that TPPB members and the public could understand for themselves the significance of that situation for Madison transit fare collection. Regarding "the cost of fare collection": The Metro fare options study does not appear to include fare enforcement costs, nor other second order costs, such as those that are consequent from reduced driver recruitment/retention, etc.

9. There has not been consideration by the mayor of a referendum on transit funding options (sales tax, TUF, etc.). Information was shared by MABA/CRANES about obstacles to engaging bus riders as voters:
a) Access to voter ID centers, especially on the west side (<https://madisoncommons.org/2021/03/31/the-bus-stops-here-voter-id-requirement-hurts-transit-dependent-voters/>);
b) non-local voter registration for some riders who are post-secondary students;

c) Un-documented persons; d) Low income persons; e) Persons with multiple jobs, or shift conflicts; etc.

10. Metro staff reported that, due to high demand for fare collection machines, a large lead time is required for the RFP, so they are aiming to release by the end of 2021. Staff confirmed that the contract will include an exit clause, though with a penalty, should a decision to go FFT be made before BRT implementation in 2024. There was discussion about how high demand might reduce/eliminate any exit penalty.

Pre-meeting communications (from Mick Rusch)

Authors of MFOS:

- E. Anderson, Data & Innovation Manager
- Ryan Pennington, Budget Policy Analyst
- Sally Hu, Data & Innovation Intern
- Annie Zheng, Data & Innovation Intern
- Mick Rusch, Metro Marketing and Customer Services Manager
- Jessy Stammer, General Marketing Supervisor

The Urban Forestry Special Charge was used to make assumptions to calculate the potential Transit Utility Fee. The City's [website](#) has information on that charge including a table with customer type, number of customers, and % of street frontage. Those numbers were used to determine the transportation utility fee needed to cover fare-free revenue losses. All customer types (commercial, government, multi-family, residential, storm water) went into the calculation. The report gives the estimated charge for residential.

Post-meeting communications (from Mick Rusch)

E. Anderson, the City's Data & Innovation Manager, authored the "Lessons Learned" section of the fare study (p12); for that section's paragraph on pandemic fare-free incidents, E. Anderson interviewed Metro Operations Manager Chris Mikkelson, who was not identified in the report.

CRANES/MABA requested a summary of the pro-service enhancement requests from the JWA route re-design study. Mick was unable to provide this info prior to leaving AUG. 6. Since he is now away for two weeks, the same request has been made to Melissa Huggins, Urban Assets, local liaison for JWA (cc-ing Metro staff).