

notice of public hearing

Paratransit Service Changes

Wednesday, October 11 at 6 p.m.

Madison Central Library

201 W. Mifflin St.

Room 302 – Third Floor Conference Room

On Wednesday, October 11, Metro Transit and the City of Madison Transit and Parking Commission will hold a public hearing at 6 p.m. to discuss several proposed changes to Metro's paratransit service.

Background

In 2018, Metro Transit is expecting the loss of \$3.9 million in federal funding normally passed through by Dane County to help fund paratransit services.

For the last 20 years, Metro has used this funding to provide a human services level of paratransit transportation that is above and beyond what is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

With this funding no longer available, Metro will need to adjust its services to a level closer to what is required by the ADA.

Metro staff have been working on this issue for several years and are very aware of the challenges involved with this proposal and the individuals they affect.

Policymakers, paratransit advisors, and staff have put their best efforts forward to find solutions to this funding reduction. This proposal reflects what has been determined to be the best options available to address this complicated and sensitive issue.

Proposed Paratransit changes include:

- Fares for all paratransit rides increase to \$4.00 per trip. (Companions also required to pay \$4.00 fare. Personal Care Attendants continue to ride for free.)
- Cash fares only. Elimination of paratransit convenience tickets. (Except for agency contracted rides.)
- Transition to "curb-to-curb" service only. "Door-to-door" service becomes available only as necessary due to a disability. Each rider will be evaluated to make this determination.
- Elimination of "leave attended" ride options.



If approved, these proposed changes will be gradually rolled out in 2018 according to the following timeline:

- Fare increase to \$4.00 Thursday, February 1, 2018
- Cash fare/agency ticket only Sunday, June 3, 2018
- Elimination of "leave attended" service Sunday, June 3, 2018
- Service becomes primarily "curb-to-curb" Sunday, October 7, 2018

For more information, visit mymetrobus.com/publichearing. If you'd like a Metro staff person to visit your organization to explain these proposals in greater detail, call (608) 266-4466 or email mymetrobus@cityofmadison.com.

Give Feedback

Interested persons are encouraged to attend the public hearing to give feedback. Consideration will be given to views and comments expressed at the public hearing as well as to all written comments received.

Comments can be submitted at mymetrobus.com/feedback or emailed to mymetrobus@cityofmadison.com.

Written comments can be sent to:

Metro Transit Public Hearing Comments
1245 E. Washington Ave., Suite 201
Madison WI 53703

The Madison Central Library is accessible to people who use mobility aids and is equipped with assistive listening devices.

If you need an interpreter, translator, materials in alternate formats or other accommodations to access this service, activity or program, please contact Metro Transit at (608) 266-4904 at least three business days prior to the meeting.

Frequently Asked Questions

Funding Background

Why is this happening? Why is Metro changing its paratransit service?

Due to the implementation of Family Care in Dane County, approximately \$3.9 million in federal funding that normally was passed through from Dane County to Metro Transit for paratransit services is no longer available in this manner.

Metro and Dane County have partnered with this funding for the last 20 years to provide a premium level of paratransit service that is above and beyond what is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

With continued reductions in federal and state funding, Metro is not able to absorb this kind of revenue loss and continue to provide the same level of service.

Is this funding completely gone? Will there be no paratransit service?

No, the funding is not gone. Rather than being distributed directly to Metro, it is being allocated in a different way.

The State of Wisconsin is preparing for the implementation of Family Care, IRIS, and Family Care partnership programs in Dane County and utilizing Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) to directly administer service and funds for Family Care members.

These MCOs will make decisions on how to best and most efficiently utilize funding to provide personal services and transportation options to their clients.

What is Family Care?

Family Care is a program that has been in place in Wisconsin for nearly 20 years. The program is aimed at addressing the long-term care needs of seniors and adults with disabilities within their homes or community settings rather than costlier nursing homes.

Family Care, a national model in long-term care, was established in Wisconsin in 1998. By 2010, the program served nearly 29,000 members in 53 counties. The quick growth and popularity of the program led to a Legislative Audit Bureau review of cost-effectiveness and efficiencies, and an enrollment cap. Under the direction of Governor Scott Walker, DHS worked to develop solutions to help control costs, and in December 2011, Governor Walker lifted the caps on Family Care, allowing for expansion to northeast Wisconsin and Rock County.

In July of 2016, DHS announced plans to expand Family Care statewide and eliminate the wait list for those in need of these services in the remaining seven counties.

Over time, Family Care has expanded to more counties throughout Wisconsin. Dane County is one of the few remaining counties without Family Care.*

*Source: Wisconsin Department of Human Services Website

Will MCOs provide this funding to Metro Transit for paratransit services? Can Metro work with these MCOs?

Metro does not know how MCOs will spend this money. Staff have started meeting with MCO representatives to discuss transportation issues and funding. It's anticipated that Metro will be utilized to provide some transportation services to MCO clients. However, this will not account for the same amount of revenue/funding Metro has received in the past.

Unfortunately, Metro cannot predict or control the pace or final outcome of these conversations. The only thing Metro can control is the level of its paratransit service offered and the price of its fares.

Metro staff will work with MCOs to help ensure that riders have smooth transitions to any new transportation arrangement.

How was this proposal determined?

In the Fall of 2016, Metro's oversight committee, the Madison Transit and Parking Commission (TPC), created an Ad Hoc Metro Paratransit Medicaid Waiver Funding and Policy Review Committee to examine the impacts of this funding shift due to Family Care.

This committee was made up of TPC members, city alders, Metro staff, and paratransit riders.

Meeting regularly for the past year, this committee was charged with formulating policy recommendations as to the level of paratransit services Metro would be able to provide and the fare it would need to charge after this anticipated loss of funding.

The committee reviewed current and ADA required service levels, identified Metro services that exceeded ADA minimums, developed likely scenarios of how the MCOs might interact with Metro, and identified possible financial and ridership impact scenarios.

Through the process, this committee created a toolbox of possible fare and service change options that Metro could utilize to address the impact of the \$3.9 million reduction in funding.

The committee forwarded its recommendations to the TPC on Wednesday, July 12. The TPC approved Metro using these ideas in developing its 2018 operating budget.

The committee's full report and detailed recommendations can be found at mymetrobus.com/publichearing.

What is Metro's Paratransit Budget?

Metro's annual paratransit operating budget is approximately \$9.4 million.

What is Metro's overall budget?

Metro Transit's overall annual operating budget is approximately \$56 million.

Why can't Metro cover this revenue loss with money from its overall budget?

What about your contingency fund?

Considering more than \$50 million in infrastructure needs to address overcrowding and other fixed-route operational issues, the expected reduction in paratransit funding is too much for Metro to absorb.

Metro only maintains a reserve level of \$2 million, and it is ultimately the Madison Common Council's decision on how this is used.

Will there be cuts to fixed routes?

No. Metro is not proposing any cuts to fixed-route service. Staff believe the proposed paratransit service changes are the most appropriate way to address Family Care implementation.

Can we apply for other grants to get this money?

No. Grants are not typically used for ongoing operating budget issues. They are more usually used for one-time capital purchases.

Are there other options? Isn't there another place to trim the budget that doesn't affect those with disabilities and special needs?

Metro staff have been working on this issue for several years and are very aware of the challenges involved with these decisions and the individuals they affect.

Policymakers, advisors, and staff have put their best efforts forward to find solutions to this funding reduction.

This proposal reflects what was determined to be the best options available to address this complicated and sensitive issue.

I'm on the Dane County Legacy Waiver Service Program. What should I do?

Clients in this program should contact the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Dane County with any questions about the transition to Family Care, IRIS and Family Care partnership programs in 2018.

Toll Free Phone: (855) 417-6892

Local: (608) 240-7400

Email: ADRC@countyofdane.com

Address: 2865 N. Sherman Ave.
Northside Town Center
Madison, WI 53704

What will happen to me if I'm not a Dane County MA Waiver client and/or am not involved with an MCO?

You can still utilize Metro services as you've done in the past. However, Metro's service is expected to operate on a more basic ADA level as a result of this change in funding.

When will this happen? Will it happen all at once?

These are complex changes that can't be done overnight. Staff have looked at how other agencies have implemented these changes and plan to roll these changes out gradually throughout the year in 2018.

Whose fault is this? Who can I complain to?

This isn't anyone's fault. This resulted from modifications on a state level to how funding is allocated. These modifications were made a number of years ago and are now finally being implemented in Dane County.

Metro staff are doing their best to help manage this change.

General Service

Will my rides be reduced or canceled? What is the process?

Metro is still developing how changes will be rolled out. Riders are encouraged to contact the (ADRC) of Dane County with any questions about their ability to enter its programs.

Elimination of "leave attended" service and the transition to "curb to curb" service will not be implemented until June of next year.

Metro riders will be contacted with further details as they become available.

Will you limit my rides on where I can and can't go?

Rides will be provided as according to ADA requirements. Destinations within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of Metro's core fixed-route service area will continue to be eligible for paratransit service.

Will this change eligibility qualifications?

Will it be more difficult to receive service?

No. Eligibility will continue to be based on whether a disability prevents the use of Metro's fixed-route service. The process of determining eligibility will not be changed.

This makes it more difficult for me to travel.

How am I supposed to get to my job, shopping, and other destinations?

If you are not able to utilize Metro's proposed level of paratransit service, staff encourage you to contact the ADRC of Dane County to see if you're eligible to enter one of their programs that might better meet your needs.

If you've been a Dane County Medicaid waiver client, you will be able to discuss transportation options during your Enrollment Choice Counseling with the ADRC. These meetings are scheduled to begin in October.

What's going to happen to UW campus rides?

The changes described in this document will apply to all paratransit rides.

What if I don't like the MCOs?

And I just want to continue to book rides with Metro?

You can continue to book rides directly with Metro.

However, Metro's fare and service levels will apply.

Fares

Why are you increasing the fare to \$4.00?

The expected reduction in funding accounts for 41% of Metro's total paratransit budget. Adjustments need to be made to offset this large anticipated decrease in revenue.

The ADA allows transit systems to maintain a paratransit fare that is twice as much as its fixed-route fare. Metro's fixed-route adult fare is \$2.00.

Can my personal care attendant still ride for free?

The ADA allows for personal care attendants (PCAs) to ride for free. A PCA is defined as someone designated or employed specifically to help an eligible individual meet their personal needs. Metro staff will work with riders to determine which individuals are eligible PCAs.

Can my companion still ride?

Yes, you still may bring a companion on your ride. If your companion is not your PCA, they will be charged the \$4.00 fare.

What if I can't pay in cash?

Metro has been reviewing how other transit systems have handled the implementation of Family Care and has found that a cash-only system is the best way to handle this service transition.

It has been Metro's experience, as well as other transit systems across the state, that the availability of convenience tickets and passes provide a disincentive for human service agencies to cost share with Metro and even allows for the ability to avoid cost sharing.

Metro staff have concerns about not having convenience tickets available. However, it is felt that this is something that needs to be done in order to best manage this major shift in business operations.

This issue will be closely monitored during the transition process and may be revisited at a later date.

If you are not able to handle cash to pay your fare, you are encouraged to contact the (ADRC) of Dane County to see if you're eligible for other programs that might better meet your needs.

What if it's not logistically possible for my organization to give cash fares to all of our paratransit rider clients?

Metro encourages your organization to contact Metro Transit for details on becoming a partner agency. The use of agency tickets may be an option once an agency agreement is in place.

How does this address Metro's funding issue?

Eliminating tickets self-identifies individuals that may need a higher form of specialized transportation that Metro is no longer able to provide.

Riders that may need this higher level of service are encouraged to work with their MCO to identify who the most appropriate service provider might be that can best meet their needs.

Curb-to-curb Service

What if I really need door-to-door service?

Metro's curb-to-curb service will be rolled out during the course of 2018.

A Metro staff person will evaluate each currently active rider to see if there is a medical or other specialized need for door-to-door service.

Door-to-door service will continue to be provided to those that have been evaluated as requiring this type of service.

Is there a possibility that a driver will just stop and leave me at the curb?

After the door-to-door rider evaluations have been completed, Metro will give notice to all of its passengers as to the official start date of curb-to-curb service.

In the event there is an unsafe or other out-of-the-ordinary situation, drivers will have the discretion to assist the passenger to a safe or appropriate location as the situation warrants.

Once the situation has been resolved, Metro staff will follow up with the passenger and/or caregiver to discuss the correct procedures for using curb-to-curb service.

Leave Attended Service

What if I or one of my clients really need "leave attended" service?

A PCA may accompany a paratransit eligible rider at no additional fare.

If leave attended service is an absolute requirement of the ride, passengers/caregivers are encouraged to contact the (ADRC) of Dane County to see what programs might best meet the rider's transportation needs.