

ITEM F.2.

Benishek-Clark, Anne

From: Kamp, Charles
Sent: Tuesday, December 09, 2008 8:13 AM
To: Benishek-Clark, Anne; Carl Durocher
Subject: FW: Bus fare increase -- Additional thoughts

Anne - could you provide copies for the TPC today? Thanks.

Chuck

From: lisasubeck@sbcglobal.net [mailto:lisasubeck@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Monday, December 08, 2008 10:05 PM
To: Kamp, Charles
Cc: Sanborn, Jed; Solomon, Brian; Webber, Robbie; ALL ALDERS; Mayor
Subject: Bus fare increase -- Additional thoughts

Mr. Kamp,
Please forward the following to TPC members.
Thanks,
--Lisa

TPC Members,

Prior to the public hearing, I forwarded you a low-income fare proposal as an alternative to the two fare increase options currently before the TPC. Should you opt not to enact a low-income fare class similar to that outlined in my proposal, I have a few other thoughts and suggestions to mitigate the impact of a fare increase on Madison's lowest income residents who depend upon the bus as a primary mode of transportation.

1. Should you choose to enact a fare increase without a full complement of low-income fares, allow low-income individuals to purchase monthly passes at the same fare rate as seniors and disabled individuals.

- One of the biggest concerns about the large increase to cash fares is that the cash fare is used disproportionately by low-income individuals who can't come up with the full cost of a monthly pass all at once. Offering this reduced rate on monthly passes would likely make many of these individuals better able to take advantage of the monthly option and mitigate some of the impact of the cash fare increase.
- Low-income individuals who work part-time would be more likely to use a monthly pass than cash fare because the discount would be substantial enough to make it worthwhile even for those dependent on the bus for less employment related rides. This could offer additional mobility for these individuals (as well as those riding to and from work more frequently) for important non-work related trips. This increased mobility would provide critical opportunities for low-income individuals to spend time with friends or family, run errands, get to grocery stores or food pantries, etc. For those dependent on transit, the extra cost associated with increased cash fares may prevent them from taking part in these activities as they work to stretch their transportation budgets. A reduced cost monthly pass option could allow them to continue using transit for these activities.

- These monthly passes would only be available at Metro Sales Outlets so only staff at the sales outlets would need to check eligibility through the presentation of a food stamp card by those purchasing a pass. This eliminates the need for drivers to ask for food stamp cards as proof of eligibility (simplifying the process vs. my full low-income fare proposal).
- This option still allows access to a broader cross-section of Madison's low-income workforce than simply increasing the tickets distributed by social service agencies, as many low-income individuals are not connected with these agencies if not receiving other services. Individuals who do not have needs for other services from social service agencies could easily still purchase these lower cost monthly passes.

2. Consider offering a bulk discount for non-profit social service agencies who provide free bus tickets and passes to low-income individuals.

- Agencies such as the one I work for provide a limited amount of transportation assistance in the form of bus tickets and passes for our low-income clients struggling with transportation costs. As costs increase, this further erodes our ability to provide this critical but very limited resource.
- Last year, the homeless service agencies alone spent over \$240,000 on bus tickets and passes not including those purchased through Transit for Jobs. This is money that could be spent on subsidized housing, case management, or a multitude of other things if it were not needed for bus fare to get clients to and from work and other critical life activities. Discounted tickets and passes would free up at least some of these funds for other uses.
- While this would be helpful, it is a bandaid approach that is not nearly as beneficial as a longer term approach such as creating a low-income fare discount for all low-income riders.

At the Public Hearing, some TPC members asked about whether any other cities offer a low-income fare structure. While my knowledge of other transit systems is limited, I did do a little internet research to find the answer to this question. **There are other systems offering discounts for low-income riders including:**

- Columbia, Missouri -- I can't find a lot written about their program outside of the limited information available on the city's website. It appears they offer a low-income discount on various passes including 25-ride and 30-day passes but not on cash fare (called the "half fare FAST PASS"). They have an application people must complete to be eligible for the fares. It does not indicate what verification is required and includes a self-declaration. To qualify, one must receive TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, WIC, LIHEAP, or meet income guidelines at or below 185% of Federal Poverty Limits. Related links: [Low Income Fare Application](#) and [Fare Structure](#).
- Tuscon, Arizona (SunTran) -- Discounted fares are offered for individuals at or below approximately 125% of the Federal Poverty Guideline. Individuals must apply at the city's special services office for an ID card verifying the individual is low-income and must pay \$1.50 for the card which is valid for one year. Proof of income is required to obtain the card. The card qualifies the individual for "Economy Fares". The Economy Fare offers an approximately 60% discount on cash fare, 10 ride passes, and monthly passes. Related links: [Low Income Fare Guidelines](#) and [Fare Information](#).
- Charleston, South Carolina (CARTA) -- Discounted fares are available on the cash fare for individuals qualifying as low-income as verified by what appears to be an outside agency similar to our Job Center in Dane County. Individuals who qualify are issued an ID card entitling them to the reduced fare. This reduced fare offers a 60% discount for low-income

individuals, while seniors get a slightly smaller discount and disabled people get a slightly larger discount than those qualifying as low-income. To be eligible for reduced fares, one must be low-income (not defined on website), receive TANF, be homeless, receive SSI, unemployment, or disability income, or participate in other state specific programs. Related Links : [Trident \(card qualifications\)](#) and [Fare Structure](#).

- Bend, Oregon (Bend Area Transit) -- While discounts directly to riders are not available for low income individuals, they offer a 50% discount on all fare media to non-profit agencies who distribute bus tickets and passes to low-income individuals. Each non-profit agency is restricted to purchasing no more than \$350/month worth of discounted fares. Related Links: [Fare Information](#) and [Fare Policy \(See pg. 3\)](#).
- Iowa City, Iowa -- Discounted monthly passes are offered for low-income individuals. The website does not specify the eligibility criteria. Related Link: [Fare Info](#).
- San Francisco, California -- Discounts are offered on monthly bus passes for qualified low-income individuals. The monthly "Lifeline Pass" is offered at a 33% discount vs. regular monthly passes. To qualify, one must receive some sort of public assistance including food stamps, earned income tax credit, energy assistance or other locally specific public assistance. Proof of eligibility is required, and passes must be purchased at the local human services office. Related Links: [Lifeline Eligibility Criteria](#) and [Fare Info](#).

There are other local transit authorities offering such discounts, as well, but this should give you some ideas of how other areas deal with the challenge of serving low-income transit dependent riders.

Again, I urge you to consider the proposal I forwarded you previously or one or more of the above options to mitigate the impact of any fare increase on Madison's lowest income individuals and families.

Thanks again,
Lisa Subeck
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