

From: [Ann Kovich](#)
To: [Larson, Aidan](#)
Subject: Fwd: Boston MA extends fare-free pilot thru June; Erie CO will provide fare-free micro-transit
Date: Thursday, February 26, 2026 12:41:56 PM

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Hi, Aidan. I can't tell if the TC email received this message, so I am forwarding. Please post it in Legistar under #1 for the next TC meeting.

Thanks,
Ann

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jon Becker** <jonbecker@aol.com>
Date: Thu, Feb 26, 2026 at 10:19 AM
Subject: Boston MA extends fare-free pilot thru June; Erie CO will provide fare-free micro-transit
To: allalders@cityofmadison.com <allalders@cityofmadison.com>, county_board_recipients@co.dane.wi.us <county_board_recipients@co.dane.wi.us>, Kathleen.Vincent@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Kathleen.Vincent@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Caroline.Gomez-Tom@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Caroline.Gomez-Tom@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Deanna.Alexander@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Deanna.Alexander@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Steve.Taylor@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Steve.Taylor@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Willie.Johnson@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Willie.Johnson@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Anne.Oconnor@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Anne.Oconnor@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Patti.Logsdon@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Patti.Logsdon@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Felesia.Martin@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Felesia.Martin@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Priscilla.CoggsJones@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Priscilla.CoggsJones@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Marcelia.Nicholson@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Marcelia.Nicholson@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Shawn.Rolland@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Shawn.Rolland@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Steven.Shea@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Steven.Shea@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Justin.Bielinski@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Justin.Bielinski@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Sequanna.Taylor@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Sequanna.Taylor@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Sheldon.Wasserman@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Sheldon.Wasserman@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Jack.Eckblad@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Jack.Eckblad@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, Sky.Capriolo@milwaukeecountywi.gov <Sky.Capriolo@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, JuanMiguel.Martinez@milwaukeecountywi.gov <JuanMiguel.Martinez@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, countyexec@milwaukeecountywi.gov <countyexec@milwaukeecountywi.gov>, mayor@milwaukee.gov <mayor@milwaukee.gov>
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Boston's eco-progressive Mayor Michelle Yu touts the huge increase in ridership and the reduced dwell times.

City of Boston extends fare-free pilot through June

The pilot, which was set to expire at the end of February, has helped grow MBTA ridership on routes 23, 28 and 29 faster than anywhere else in the system.

Feb. 23, 2026
3 min read

The city of Boston has extended its [fare-free transit program](#) on bus routes 23, 28 and 29 through the end of June. During the pilot, the city notes ridership has grown faster on those routes than anywhere else in the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) system while saving families money and improving bus speed and reliability. The program had previously been set to expire at the end of the month. The city says it is discussing the long-term future of the program with the MBTA.

The city notes that since the beginning of the fare free pilot, nearly 24,000 trips have been taken fare-free every weekday on Routes 23, 28 and 29. Ridership grew by 35% in the first year—more than double the MBTA system average—and these routes are now carrying 16% more riders than before the pandemic. All-door boarding has cut dwell times by about 20%.

"Fare-free bus service helps families, workers and businesses and also makes bus service faster and more reliable," said Boston Mayor Michelle Wu. "Carrying 16% more riders than before the pandemic and cutting dwell times by about 20% through all-door boarding, the buses have stayed on schedule even while carrying more passengers. We are extending this program through June, as we look to work with the MBTA to keep this going."

The city says that according to surveys, more than a quarter of riders save at least \$20 a month thanks to the pilot.

"Fare-free transit ensures more reliable, efficient transit for everyone," said city of Boston's Interim Chief of Streets Nick Gove. "It returns valuable time to our residents and provides more affordable options when choosing how to get around Boston. We thank the MBTA for their continued collaboration."

The city notes it has allocated about \$340,000 per month to reimburse the MBTA for the pilot, which is funded through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars. As the city uses its remaining ARPA dollars, it has projected costs relative to budget availability and is able to extend the program through June.

"Over the past few years, we've been pleased to be able to support the city of Boston's program offering free bus service on Routes 23, 28 and 29," said Massachusetts Department of Transportation Interim Secretary and MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng. "Since day one of the Healey-Driscoll Administration, not only have we been focused on ensuring safe, reliable and improved transit service but making it more accessible and affordable with our successful [Income-Eligible Reduced Fare program](#). Under the Income-Eligible program, nearly 36,000 people are paying significantly reduced fares across every mode of transit, including bus. Working with the city of Boston and all of our municipal partners, we are improving people's quality of life and making a real difference, building a more equitable and affordable transportation system network for all who depend on it."

<https://www.masstransitmag.com/technology/fare-collection/news/55359215/city-of-boston-city-of-boston-extends-fare-free-pilot-through-june>

Erie readies to roll out free transit service similar to Uber and Lyft

The town of Erie is gearing up to launch a new on-demand microtransit service — with an estimated time of launch in April — that will function similarly to ride-hailing apps such as Uber and Lyft.

By Julia King
Source Colorado Hometown Weekly (TNS)
Feb. 25, 2026
3 min read

The town of Erie is gearing up to launch a new on-demand microtransit service — with an estimated time of launch in April — that will function similarly to ride-hailing apps such as Uber and Lyft.

The service, dubbed the Erie Bee, will operate as a form of public transit "with the flexibility of a rideshare service," according to the town's description.

Free trip requests made through a smartphone app or by phone will be matched in real time, and vehicles will operate within a defined service zone rather than following fixed regional routes. Rides will typically be completed in less than 30 minutes, with pickups and drop-offs occurring within a block of a rider's requested location.

Several Denver metro communities already operate similar programs, including Ride Free Lafayette, Denver Connector, Lone Tree'sLink On-Demand and Broomfield FlexRide.

Town spokesperson Gabi Rae said Erie doesn't have data on the popularity of existing microtransit services in the town. But during recent public engagement events, Rae added, some residents expressed that transportation providers like Uber and Lyft do not offer sufficient service in Erie, and that wait times can be long. Service areas are expected to be addressed once a vendor is chosen.

Regional support

The Erie Bee is backed by grant funding from the Denver Regional Council of Governments, the region's metropolitan planning organization, and the RTD. The town received two grants for its first year of operations — one for \$450,000 and another for \$600,000 — according to Rae.

Erie was awarded more grant money from both agencies for the next three years, Rae added, and will continue applying annually to help fund future operations.

"It is anticipated that the Erie Bee will operate as long as possible," Rae said.

Initially, Erie will contract with a third-party vendor to operate the service. The vendor — which will be responsible for operational costs including vehicle ownership and maintenance, technology, data collection and hiring drivers — could be announced by the end of the month.

Ridership data will be collected and shared with RTD. Benchmarks have been established for the third month, sixth

month and one-year marks, Rae said. Performance metrics will include wait times, ride denials, total ridership and travel times.

The town anticipates ridership will grow through the first six months before leveling off.

Depending on ridership data, RTD could eventually operate either the Erie Bee or its own FlexRide service within Erie, though no decision has been made about that. Erie and RTD officials remain in "regular discussions" about improving transit service in town, Rae said.

The town of Erie is also partnering with RTD to reroute and expand the JUMP bus service, with plans to construct 20 new bus stops along the future route. The project is currently in the design phase, with construction anticipated in 2026.

[PA: Erie readies to roll out free transit service similar to Uber and Lyft](#)

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