

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON FARE INCREASE

Notice of Public Hearing

Metro Transit – Proposed Increase to Fares
Wednesday, November 7 at 6 PM

Madison City County Building, RM 201
(Madison City Council Chambers)

210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

On Wednesday, November 7, Metro Transit and the City of Madison Transit and Parking Commission will hold a public hearing at 6 PM to discuss proposed increases to all Metro fare items. This fare increase is being proposed to go into effect on Tuesday, January 1.

The following are commonly asked questions that have been asked regarding the proposed increase in fares. If you have a question not included here, please email mymetrobus@cityofmadison.com.

When is this fare increase going to go into effect?

January 1, 2013

Why is Metro considering raising fares?

Every City of Madison agency was asked for a 5 percent tax levy reduction. After considerable review, Metro staff determined that the only way to meet that reduction was to reduce service expenses or add revenue. Considering Metro's record ridership levels and overcrowding of buses, it was determined that decreasing service was not a viable option. As a result, this fare increase was proposed to meet the 5 percent tax levy reduction.

How much revenue is this fare increase expected to generate?

\$686,600

Is Metro expecting to lose ridership due to this fare increase?

Metro is expecting a smaller growth in ridership (.9 percent increase) in the first year of the fare increase. Though this is still a smaller growth percentage in previous year, Metro still expects it will be an increase which would be another record ridership year.

Is this due to a reduction in state or federal funding?

For a complete description of funding issues that related to the City of Madison requesting this 5% tax levy reduction, see Mayor Soglin's 2013 Operating Budget Message.

I've heard that there are proposals to adjust money in the budget so that a fare increase is not necessary. Does Metro support this?

As a department of the City of Madison, Metro Transit should be a partner in helping with the City's budget challenges. As noted earlier, all departments were required to help in this process by submitting budgets that reduced the tax levy by 5%.

Deciding on the right fare level is an important policy issue that will be discussed by the City of Madison Common Council and the Madison Transit and Parking Commission. Metro asks all citizens to also weigh in by attending its public hearing in November or by filling out this online feedback form.

Why is there such a large increase to the senior/disabled 31-day pass?

In addition to trying to address budget shortfalls, Metro is also trying to address an untended revenue loss experienced since the pass was first implemented back in 2007.

As according to federal requirements, Metro has offered a half price cash fare to senior/disabled riders. Federal requirements state that this half price fare must be offered during off-peak service. Metro goes above and beyond this requirement by offering this half price fare during all service times.

Through the years, Metro has also offered a senior/disabled a 10-pack of rides (at same cost of cash fare rides), which offers a more convenient fare option (paper tickets or a magnetic card) than carrying cash.

Leading up to 2007, Metro had been receiving requests to extend this level of convenience by offering a senior/disabled monthly pass that was similar to the regular 31-day pass. This pass, which was priced as half off the regular pass, offered unlimited rides during a 31-day time period. For frequent riders, this pass format offered an even deeper discount for senior/disabled rides that goes above and beyond the half-off cash fare that is federally required.

Since 2007, there has been a significant shift from people using 10-ride card convenience tickets to the unlimited ride pass. So much so, that Metro estimates it is losing approximately \$68,000 a year due to the pricing of this individual pass.

It is never the desire of Metro staff to raise rates. But, in this case, this pass offered a deep discount that was not intended and is now causing a substantial revenue loss each year. This increase is geared at correcting this net revenue loss.

If the fare increase is approved, this pass will still offer a \$35% discount off of Metro's regular 31-day pass. Other options to consider are to pay the cash fare when riding at \$1.10 (slightly more than half off the regular fare) or a 10-ride convenience card for \$11.25.

Why is the discounted off-peak fare being discontinued for paratransit riders?

The purpose of the discounted fare was to encourage riders to shift their trips to off-peak hours, where there was less demand for space on the paratransit vehicles. While some riders have shifted to take advantage of the reduced fare, there was less movement than anticipated and adds a layer of difficulty to paratransit travel. 48% of all paratransit trips are made during the peak. 4% of peak cash fares are managed by the fare incentive while 50% of peak trips are managed by negotiating trip times.

Metro proposes eliminating the dual fare, and going to a single \$4 fare for all rides.

What are other options to a fare increase?

The only other option staff can identify is cuts in service. Considering overcrowding of buses, Metro staff feels the fare increase (though difficult) is the better option.

I've heard about service expansions. Does this fare increase, pay for these service expansions?

In addition to Metro submitting its 5% reduction to the tax levy, it also submitted a supplementary request for needed service expansions. This request was approved and added to the budget.

It may appear that this fare increase directly funds these service expansions, but that is not entirely the case. Eliminating these service expansions would not necessarily eliminate the need for a fare increase.

A summary of this supplemental request is as follows:

Route 18

Route 18, which provides connector service between the West and South Transfer Points and serves Allied Drive, has chronic scheduling problems, leading to on-time performance and transfer issues for this very important corridor. The proposal would extend route 16, an hourly route that currently operates as a connector between the East and South Transfer Points, to extend further to the West Transfer Point. This extension would pick up some of route 18's current service area and shorten travel time, thereby relieving much of the pressure on that route. A partial offset to the cost would be to reduce the frequency on route 40 from half-hourly to hourly, as part of its service area would be covered by the extended route 16.

Owl Creek Service

Extension of Metro service to this neighborhood would address ongoing social equity issues. This is a geographically isolated neighborhood where many residents have no good access to shopping, schools or jobs. The proposal would be to operate an extension of route 11 during weekday peak periods, providing half hour frequencies, for school trips and work commutes. In addition, all-new hourly service on weekends would link the neighborhood to the rest of the city from 7:00 a.m. until 10 p.m.

University Avenue Corridor

Due to overcrowding on this busy corridor, additional route 2 buses would be inserted to provide 15-minute frequency between the West Transfer Point and Capitol Square when the UW is in session. Because of this extensive increase in service, there would be some offsetting savings by reducing service on routes 9, 10, and 33. The corridors served by these routes will continue to be served by existing routes.

Are these the final service enhancement proposals?

No. A separate public hearing will be held in February or March of 2013 to discuss final proposals. Proposals would then need to be approved by the Madison Transit and Parking Commission.

The low-income pass rate is increasing. Are there plans to increase the number of low-income passes available for purchase?

At this time, there are no plans to increase the number of low-income passes beyond the 300 that are available each month.

I don't agree with this increase, what can I do?

Please attend a public hearing in front of the Madison Transit and Parking Commission on Wednesday, November 7 at 6 PM. (Location: Madison City County Building, RM 201 (Madison City Council Chambers. 210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.)

You can also give feedback by filling out this online form or sending written comments to: Metro Transit Public Hearing Comments, 1245 E. Washington Ave., Suite 201, Madison WI 53703 or email to mymetrobus@cityofmadison.com.