

I am here, on behalf of myself and my constituents, to oppose the fare increase on two grounds. **First**, the process by which this fare increase was proposed and could be approved does not respect the significant interests of Metro Transit's contracted services partners, including the Cities of Fitchburg, Middleton, and Verona, the Town of Madison, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Madison Metropolitan School District, and Madison College. **Second**, increasing fares for Metro Transit is a response to an across-the-board 5% budget cut applied equally to every department of the City of Madison. How to invest public money for various uses in City government should be a policy choice for the Common Council, not a simplistic numerical goal, and Metro Transit deserved more public support, not less.

Governance

Contracted services partners pay the proportional cost of running the system, less the fare revenue attributed to each route they fund. So a fare change in Madison's budget affects all the other partners. I am fully aware of the complexities of charging different fares on different routes and in different municipalities. I do not propose that each partner set its own rates (beyond the current option to charge no fares, as the University does on certain routes). Rather I urge fares to be set in a collaborative manner that takes into account the policy goals of each of the partners, not just Madison's.

Transit service changes take time, and budget changes from the cost to continue existing service cannot be implemented between budget approval in November and the beginning of most partners' fiscal year in January. In addition to planning routes and funding and the formal process of public hearings and approval by city bodies, staff and equipment must be allocated, schedules must be updated and published on the Web, at stops, and in the Ride Guide. New boarding pads, shelters, and curb ramps may be needed. Changes are needed outside city government, too. In the case of extreme service reductions, residents must purchase private automobiles and arrange for parking, or even move to new homes. As a result, it often takes until July or September to implement changes approved in or required by the November budget process. This delay causes further problems building structural deficits (for service increases) or surpluses (for reductions) into partners' budgets by taxing for four- or six-month changes over the entire year.

I propose that this and future fare and service changes be negotiated among Madison and the Metro Transit contracted service partners from January through August, then approved in the fall with our budgets and implemented effective the following January. The Madison Mayor and Common Council, and the policymakers for the partners, should closely monitor and guide the process so that they are prepared to fully fund the plan at budget time. I further oppose any changes to the current fare schedule at this time until contracted service partners can be formally consulted.

I've put before the Fitchburg Common Council a budget amendment to cover the higher cost to Fitchburg of continuing the current fare schedule, but that proposal will not be considered by Fitchburg's Transportation and Transit Commission until tomorrow night, and by the Council later this month. CSOS will not discuss it until tomorrow afternoon. It is very difficult for other entities to react quickly enough to dramatic changes like this proposed fare increase.

Investment Policy

The Madison Mayor gave budget guidance to City departments to submit proposals for 5% less than the cost to continue current service. This is reasonable for budget guidance to City departments, which is followed by policy decisions on which city expenditures will have the greatest value to citizens. It is not, however, reasonable for a final budget. A government budget should reflect the values of citizens, and determined and implemented by the Common Council. While I cannot tell you the relative value to Madison's citizens of a dollar spent in each department, I can guaranty that it is not identical for each department. Indeed, it varies widely. To confine every department to a separate fiscal silo and impose the same cut on each is to substitute a simplistic numerical goal for judgment and leadership!

This committee is well aware that Metro Transit was named the best transit system in the country in one of only three size categories in 2012, and broke a decades-old ridership record. I note it here for the public watching. At the press event to accept the award, Mayor Soglin argued that public transit benefits extend far beyond convenient, cost-effective transportation for riders. Even those who don't ride benefit from cleaner air, a healthier population, better urban form, higher productivity, less congestion on roads, lower parking demand, and other positive externalities. The Mayor stated that a persuasive argument could be made for providing public transit free of fares, simply for its external benefits! Yet in this same year, he proposes to raise fares by one eighth, for no better reason than to apply the same level of cuts to every city department.

Fares should not be increased. Instead, Council appropriations to Metro Transit should be increased to cover the higher cost of proposed service increases. Indeed, a strong argument can be made to roll fares back to the \$1.50 adult cash fare level. Only the portion of the revenue from the fare increase for increasing service needs to be covered, about a third of it. Metro Transit revenue should not be used for filling holes in other parts of the City of Madison budget.

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