

CITY OF MADISON TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

ACTION ITEM DETAIL - JUNE 24, 2020

ACTION TITLE: Approval to Resume Fare Collection

PRESENTED BY: Metro Transit, Justin Stuehrenberg

ACTION SUMMARY

Metro is seeking authority to resume front door boarding and fare collection to pre-COVID levels once protective measures requested by the Teamsters are in place. This is inclusive of both fixed route and paratransit. Metro is also seeking to pro-rate the cost of the Summer Youth Pass to the proportion of the summer in which fares are being collected, or eliminate them altogether.

BACKGROUND

In March 2020, Metro suspended fare collection and required rear-door entry due to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to minimize the exposure of bus drivers to passengers. Since that time, ridership on the system has begun to increase as Dane County entered phase 1 and now phase 2 of the reopening plan. Also, the University of Wisconsin has indicated that they will reopen in some capacity in August of 2020, signaling a significant expected increase in ridership.

Also due to the pandemic, expected tax revenues to the City of Madison and partner entities, as well as fare revenues, have dropped. Because of this, Metro's financial outlook is unknown but likely to be worse than prior to the pandemic. The Federal CARES Act is providing some relief in the short term, but that likely will not address longer term impacts.

DISCUSSION

Given the lost revenues and the anticipated increase in ridership, Metro is requesting to resume front door boarding on fixed route and fare collection on both fixed route and paratransit. Metro has worked closely with the driver's union, the Teamsters, and with Dane County public health to determine what protective measures are most appropriate to minimize exposure of drivers. That coordination resulted in three requests: (1) Masks for drivers to distribute to passengers that aren't wearing one but would be willing to, (2) sanitizing wipes that would allow drivers to disinfect high contact surfaces, and (3) a Plexiglas shield to provide some additional protection between the driver and the aisle. Metro has agreed to all three requests.

At this time, Metro expects to be complete with installing the Plexiglas shields sometime between mid-July and mid-August. We have already received a sufficient number of masks from the Federal Transit Administration and are currently placing the orders for wipes.

Metro is requesting TC approval to resume front door boarding and fare collection upon completion of these requests, at a date yet undetermined.

In addition, Summer Youth Passes have not been sold because no fares have been collected. Metro is requesting authorization to resume selling or distributing those passes at a reduced cost once fare collection resumes. This cost would be a pro-rated share of the summer that fares are being collected. In the event that the portion of the summer in which fares will be collected is less than 1 month, Metro would be allowed to distribute the passes free of charge or to continue to allow students to ride free without a pass if it is determined that would substantively reduce the administrative burden of pass distribution.