

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: September 22, 2008

Council meeting September 24, 2008

ADVISORY INFORMATION	
Date:	September 16, 2008
Subject:	Forest Lake & Columbus Express Service Demonstration Fare
District(s), Member(s):	11 – Georgie Hilker; 12 – Sherry Broecker
Policy/Legal Reference:	Transit Fare Policy Changes 3-2-6 and Procedure 3-2-6a
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Arlene McCarthy, Director MTS (651-602-1754) Gerri Sutton, Asst. Dir. Contracted Transit Services (651-602-1672)
Division/Department:	Metropolitan Transportation Services (MTS)

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council endorse increasing the regular route fare for the Forest Lake and Columbus to Minneapolis express fare to \$4.75 effective October 1, 2008 on a demonstration basis for up to one year.

Background

Route 288 express service from Forest Lake and Columbus to downtown Minneapolis was launched by the Council in January 2008 to help mitigate impacts of the I-35W bridge collapse. It was funded with emergency transit dollars from the U.S. Dept. of Transportation that will expire with the bridge opening on September 18.

The service is comprised of five express trips each weekday morning and afternoon. Ridership on the service has been strong with standing loads regularly occurring on some trips. A regional express fare of \$2.75 has been charged on the service to date.

Forest Lake and Columbus are not part of the Transit Taxing District. Council past practice has been to not provide regular route service in areas that do not pay the transit capital levy.

Council approval is not required for a demonstration fare; however, given the circumstances with many project partners, staff is seeking Council endorsement of this demonstration fare.

Rationale

The Route 288 33-mile one-way trip distance is comparable to the 30-mile Route 888 Northstar Commuter Coach operated by a private provider under contract to NCDA between Elk River and downtown Minneapolis. This long-distance service has had a \$1.75 fare surcharge since its inception. With the regional fare increase effective October 1, the Route 888 fare will be \$4.75.

Funding

Council staff is working with the counties of Anoka, Washington and Chisago to fund the estimated \$180,000 subsidy for the remainder of 2008. Approximately half of the riders reside in Chisago County. The Council is also working with the counties regarding longer-term funding and with Columbus and Forest Lake regarding paying the transit capital levy.

Known Support / Opposition

Anoka County, Chisago County, Forest Lake and Columbus support the \$4.75 fare. Washington County is expected to take a position on the fare at its September 23 board meeting.