

T Transportation Committee
 Meeting date: February 14, 2011
 Metropolitan Council Meeting: February 23, 2011

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date: February 8, 2011
Subject: Approval of Highway Bus Rapid Transit Station-to-Station Fare Collection Method
District(s), Member(s): Dist 5–Bowles, Dist 6–Leppik, Dist 7–Meeks, Dist 8–Wittsack, Dist 15–Wolter, Dist 16–Wulff
Policy/Legal Reference: None
Staff Prepared/Presented: Brian Lamb, General Manager, Metro Transit (612-349-7510)
 Arlene McCarthy, Director, MTS (651-602-1754)
 Ed Petrie, Director of Finance –Metro Transit (612-349-7624)
 Tom Randall, Senior Manager Revenue Operations, Metro Transit (612-349-7364)
 Cole Hiniker, Planner, MTS (651-602-1748)
Division/Department: Transportation Division

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve the Highway Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station-to-Station transitway service fare collection method recommendation of multiple door boarding with on-board fare collection via GoTo readers at all doors, a farebox at the front of the bus and supplemental on-board fare inspection.

Background

As part of the Regional Transitway Guidelines process, the Fare Collection Systems Technical Committee worked to develop guidance that will assist in answering questions about how regional transitway system fares should be collected. The transit fare collection is presently seamlessly transferrable between modes and providers in the region. But to date, decisions on transitway fare collection methods have been made on a corridor-by-corridor basis. The I-35W BRT and Cedar Avenue BRT corridors are being developed by separate organizations (Metro Transit leading I-35W, Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority leading Cedar Avenue), with station-to-station services scheduled to begin in both corridors in 2012. With the region now branding light rail transit and highway BRT station-to-station service as one system, the region is faced with challenges and opportunities to implement fare collection methods that continue to be convenient for customers but demonstrate the unity and unique identity of the transitway system.

Separate, but resulting from Transitway Guidelines development discussions, Council staff are proposing a fare collection method recommendation that establishes the operational approach for Highway BRT station-to-station service in the region. The approval of this recommendation will allow Metro Transit and Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority to move forward with vehicle and fare collection system procurements for I-35W and Cedar Avenue in advance of the scheduled 2012 openings. The approval will also allow the guidelines effort to continue developing guidelines that apply to fare collection systems as well as vehicles and stations.

Rationale

- Council action is needed because this is a regional transit operating decision of system-wide importance, separate from the Transitway Guidelines process. Fare collection has significant capital and operating cost implications that impact future year budgets for both the Metropolitan Council and the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB). The Highway BRT fare collection method recommendation will provide seamless, flexible, and effective fare collection on the region's transitway system. This recommendation will allow the region to realize potential travel time benefits and efficiently target enforcement efforts.
- This action will unite Highway bus rapid transit (BRT) station-to-station services in the region even though Metro Transit is leading development of I-35W BRT and Dakota County is leading development of Cedar Avenue BRT.
- This action will contribute to the transit customer's ability to clearly distinguish BRT from existing local or express bus service. This recommendation does not apply to express bus or local, connecting public transit services in light rail transit (LRT) or BRT corridors.
- This action will contribute to the transit customer's ability to recognize LRT and Highway BRT station-to-station services as premium services that will operate similarly. This recognition is important because the roles of these services should be defined and clearly communicated to the public prior to implementing BRT and expanding LRT beyond one corridor.

Funding

There is no direct funding required for this action. Capital costs are expected to be funded by the respective corridor projects. It is anticipated that operating funding, net of passenger revenues collected, for Highway BRT station-to-station services will be shared equally by the Metropolitan Council and CTIB. Staff estimates that the incremental annual operating cost (above regular bus fare collection methods) for the recommended station-to-station system maybe between \$200,000 and \$300,000 per BRT corridor, primarily for the supplemental fare inspection.

Known Support / Opposition

The Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) initially voiced opposition to the recommendation. In response to CTIB concerns, the Metropolitan Council and CTIB have agreed to add two ticket vending machines at the 155th Street/Apple Valley Transit Station on the Cedar Avenue BRT line. With this change, there is no known opposition to the recommendation and the recommendation has been vetted through the CTIB and the Transitway Guidelines Advisory Committee. The Transitway Guidelines Advisory Committee includes representation from the CTIB, Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), Suburban Transit Association (STA), and Metropolitan Council. The following process was used to develop and vet the final recommendation:

Transitway Guidelines Advisory Committee	Information & discussion at meeting	October 25, 2010
Fare Collection Systems Technical Committee	Information Email	October 27, 2010
Met Council Transportation Committee	Information & discussion at meeting	November 8, 2010

CTIB	Information & discussion at meeting	November 17, 2010
Transitway Guidelines Advisory Committee	Discussion at Meeting	November 22, 2010
CTIB	Votes to support recommendation that includes revision to include two ticket vending machines at 155 th /Apple Valley Transit Station	December 15, 2010
CTIB	Follow-up discussion to CTIB Motion	January 19, 2011
Transitway Guidelines Advisory Committee	Vote to Support Recommendation with Revision	February 7, 2011

While there is no known opposition to the recommendation, MVTA and staff from Metro Transit have raised operational questions that will be addressed as part of upcoming service planning including how the region will fund the annual operating cost, and how the recommendation will be implemented on Highway BRT station-to-station service trips leaving downtown Minneapolis where “pay leave” is now the standard approach.