

T Transportation Committee
For the Metropolitan Council meeting of April 27, 2011

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date Prepared: April 26, 2011

Subject: Authorization for Public Hearings on Potential Service and Fare Adjustments

Proposed Action:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize a series of public hearings on potential fare and service adjustments for transit and paratransit services operated and/or funded by the Metropolitan Council.

Summary of Committee Discussion / Questions:

John Levin, Metro Transit Director of Service Development, presented.

Council Member Munt asked if there would be a need for public hearings no matter what the outcome of the legislative session. Mr. Levin answered that the final determination on whether to proceed with hearings and the proposal to bring to the hearings would be based on the overall budget situation.

Council Member Munt asked if an hour will be enough time to hear from all those who attend the public hearings. Mr. Levin noted that we have reserved many of the meetings rooms for additional time in case there is a need to extend the meetings. General Manager Lamb also noted that there are other ways for the public to make comment, via phone, mail, and email.

Council Member Brimeyer commented that other budget issues, such as rising fuel costs and general inflation, may mean that we need have fare and service adjustments, and thus public hearings, even if there is not a reduction in funding from the legislature.

MTS Director McCarthy explained that the new biennium starts July 1st and that even with the current timeline for public hearings, the earliest time that service changes could take place is the end of the year. The longer we wait to decide on the fare and service adjustments, the less time we have to address a deficit. We do still have time to adjust the proposal for fare and service adjustments before they are brought forward to the public hearings.

Council Member Doan and Council Member Schreiber asked that the text of the Background section of the Business Item be revised to clarify that a budget shortfall is likely due to rising costs and variability in motor vehicle sales tax revenues.

Motion by Council Member Brimeyer, seconded by Council Member Munt and passed unanimously.

T Transportation Committee
Meeting date: April 25, 2011
Metropolitan Council Meeting: April 27, 2011

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date: April 21, 2011
Subject: Authorization for Public Hearings on Potential Service and Fare Adjustments
District(s), Member(s): All
Policy/Legal Reference: Public Accountability Policy 2-1, Public Hearings Procedure 2-1b; Transportation Service Changes and Restructuring 1-3a; Transit Fare Policy Changes 3-2-6, Implementing Procedure 3-2-6a
Staff Prepared/Presented: Brian Lamb, General Manager 612-349-7510
Arlene McCarthy, Director MTS, 651-602-1754
John Levin, Director Service Development, 612-349-7789
Ed Petrie, Director Finance, 612-349-7624
Gerri Sutton, Asst. Director Contracted Services, 651-602-1672
Division/Department: Metro Transit, Metropolitan Transportation Services

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council authorize a series of public hearings on potential fare and service adjustments for transit and paratransit services operated and/or funded by the Metropolitan Council.

Background

The last fare increase was in 2008. Rising fuel costs and variability in Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) receipts raise the prospect of a budget shortfall in the 2012-2013 biennium. State general fund levels are also uncertain. It may be necessary to adjust transit fares and/or service to address this shortfall. Public hearings are required to present the proposed fare and service adjustments to the public and receive comments. Public hearings are required by Federal Transit Administration guidelines and Metropolitan Council policy prior to taking action on potential fare adjustments or major service changes.

Rationale

Council policy requires authorization for public hearings 45 days before the hearings begin. State law requires public notice of the public hearings in the State Register 30 days before the hearings begin.

In order to maximize access to the public hearings, staff recommend that seven hearings be held, distributed geographically across the region, with both midday and evening times. The proposed public hearings locations, dates and times are shown on the attachment. In addition to providing comments at the hearings, the public will be invited to submit comments via telephone, fax, mail, e-mail and the Council website. The comment period will extend 10 days after the last public hearing.

Staff will bring forward a separate business item to approve the details of the proposal for fare and service adjustments. Once approved, this proposal will be published no less than 10 days before the first public hearing.

After the comment period closes, staff will share the comments with the Council and consider changes to the proposal for fare and service adjustments to address the comments. A recommendation for final action will then be brought to the Council.

Funding

The service adjustment proposal for the public hearings will include service adjustments for service operated by Metro Transit or contracted by the Metropolitan Council. The fare adjustment proposal for the public hearings will include fare adjustments for services operated by all regional transit providers participating in the regional fare structure. Funding to conduct public hearings will come from the Metropolitan Council transit operating budgets.

Known Support / Opposition

There is no known opposition to scheduling public hearings.