

T Transportation Committee

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of June 22, 2011

Date June 14, 2011
Prepared:
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; and
- Authorize the Chair to reschedule the public hearings in the event that a final state budget agreement makes different timing more appropriate.

Summary of Committee Discussion / Questions:

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

Council Member Duininck asked if we would hold the public meetings even if the budget were resolved with a smaller overall shortfall. Mr. Levin responded that the decision to hold the public meetings would depend on the unfolding budget discussion, and that while it was likely we would hold public meetings if there was a significant budget shortfall, the decision to hold or not hold the public meetings had not been made.

Council Member Schreiber asked when and how staff would advertise the public hearings. Mr. Levin responded that State Law requires 30 days public notice of hearing. Staff will meet that notice deadline as well as advertising the public hearings to our riders and the general public through a wide variety of means, including on the bus, on our website, in newspapers, in the State Register and elsewhere.

Councilmember Brimeyer commented that he felt the Council should hold public hearings for fare and service adjustments with or without the prospect of a budget shortfall, with alternative scenarios presented depending on the level of shortfall. Mr. Petrie responded that past Council practice has been to maintain a fare recovery ratio above 28.5 percent and to consider a fare increase when the fare recovery falls below that level. Ms. McCarthy clarified that this was for regular route service fare recovery.

Council Member Munt expressed her concern about the impacts of service reductions and encouraged staff to conduct the hearings and to advertise them.

Council Member Commers encouraged council members to consider this issue in the broader context of the value of transit to the region.

Council Member Elkins asked about the status of the discussion of planning for a state shutdown. Ms. McCarthy responded Chair Haigh and Regional Administrator Born have been working with the administration on this issue, but there are still more questions than answers.

Council Member Brimeyer said he had heard that Mn/DOT would not administer federal funds in the event of state shutdown and that this would cause the Central Corridor project to shut down. Ms. McCarthy noted that Mn/DOT is a state agency and that the Central Corridor project does have several staff on loan from Mn/DOT. Mn/DOT has been sending general communication on a potential shutdown, but nothing specific to the Central Corridor project.

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

T Transportation Committee

Meeting date: June 13, 2011

Metropolitan Council Meeting: June 22, 2011

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date:	June 2, 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
Division/Department:	Metro Transit, Metropolitan Transportation Services

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Background

While the final state budget is still unresolved, the potential remains that a combination of changes to general fund appropriations, rising fuel costs, and/or Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) receipts below forecast would result in a budget shortfall for transit operations in the 2012-2013 biennium. 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 provide members of the public the opportunity to provide input. Public hearings are required by Federal Transit Administration guidelines and Metropolitan Council policy prior to implementing fare increases or major service changes.

Without a final state budget, staff is preparing service and fare adjustment proposals to respond to a worst-case-scenario budget situation. This scenario is based on the proposal for a \$109 million reduction in general funding for transit operations for the 2012-2013 biennium, which would result in a significant budget shortfall and require far more significant service and fare adjustments than have been made the past. Public meetings may be held in advance of the public hearings to inform the public of the potential scale of the fare and service adjustments and to receive input from the public on the principles that should be applied to planning for the adjustments.

If the final state budget offers an improved budget outlook, staff would need time to prepare revised proposals to match the new budget. This may in turn require that the public hearings be rescheduled at later dates.

Rationale

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

In order to maximize access to the public hearings, staff recommend that several 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, the Council will consider changes to the proposal for fare and service adjustments to address the comments submitted by the public. A recommendation for final action will then be brought to the Council.

Council policy and state law do not provide specific requirements for notice or content of public meetings. If public meetings are held in advance of the public hearings, the Regional Administrator, working with the Chair, will determine dates, times and locations of the meetings

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 meetings and public hearings will come from the Metropolitan Council transit operating budgets.

Known Support / Opposition

There is no known opposition to scheduling public meetings or public hearings.

Planned Public Hearings for Potential Service and Fare Adjustments

August 2011

DRAFT - Updated 6/8/11 - Subject to Change

Monday, Aug. 8 – 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Bloomington Civic Plaza, Council Chambers
1800 W. Old Shakopee Road, **Bloomington**
Served by Routes 535, 539

Tuesday, Aug. 9 – 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Hopkins Center for the Arts
111 Main Street, **Hopkins**
Served by Routes 12, 615, 664

Wednesday, Aug. 10 – Noon to 1 p.m.
Minneapolis Central Library, Doty Board Room
300 Nicollet Mall, **Minneapolis**
Served by many transit routes

Thursday, Aug. 11 – 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Maplewood Library, Large Meeting Room
3025 Southlawn Drive, **Maplewood**
Served by Routes 64, 80, 219, 223

Monday, Aug. 15 – 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Brookdale Library, Large Meeting Room
6125 Shingle Creek Pkwy., **Brooklyn Center**
Served by Route 722

Tuesday, Aug. 16 – 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Metro Transit Offices – Chambers
560 - 6th Avenue North, **Minneapolis**
Served by routes 5, 19, 22 & 55 (Hiawatha LRT)

Thursday, Aug. 18 – Noon to 1 p.m.
Metropolitan Council Offices – Chambers
390 North Robert Street, **Saint Paul**
Served by many transit routes

Public comment period: July 5 through Aug. 29

Members of the public can comment by contacting the Regional Data Center at 390 N. Robert Street, St. Paul 55101 or

- data.center@metro council.org
- Comment Line **651-602-1500**
- Telephone 651-602-1140
- TTY **651-291-0904**
- Fax 651-602-1464