

T Transportation Committee

Meeting date: October 12, 2009

Metropolitan Council meeting: October 28, 2009

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date:	October 5, 2009
Subject:	Transit Link Fare Recommendation
District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Transit Fare Policy Changes 3-2-6 and Procedures 3-2-6a
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Arlene McCarthy, Director – MTS, (651-602-1754) Gerri Sutton, Asst. Director – MTS, (651-602-1672) John Harper, Sup. Contracted Transit Services (651-602-1744) Sheila Williams, Project Administrator (651-602-1709)
Division/Department:	Metropolitan Transportation Services (MTS)

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve the recommended fare proposal for Transit Link dial-a-ride service per attachment A.

Background

- On February 25, 2009, the Council directed staff to form a Coordination Advisory Committee (CAC), made up of county and Council staff, to develop and implement a new regional dial-a-ride program. The CAC formed a fare subcommittee to analyze the current fare structure and recommend changes to the Council. The CAC recommended a regional dial-a-ride fare structure proposed for public hearing purposes and was approved by the Council on July 22, 2009.
- FTA guidelines and Metropolitan Council policy require that fare adjustments be reviewed through a public hearing process prior to adoption.
- Public notice of the hearings was published in the State Register and other media outlets 30 days before the first public hearing.
- The public comment period opened July 23, 2009 and closed on September 24, 2009. Seven public hearings were held September 8-18, 2009. Comments were also accepted via comment cards, email and voice mail.
- Though the public comment period was set to receive comments on the fare proposal, most of the comments submitted related to the proposed changes to the program. A total of 71 comments were collected – 24 were fare-related and 47 were not.
- A few comments supported the fare structure stating that the distance based concept makes sense and that the fare needs to compensate for the cost of service.
- Most fare-related comments expressed concern for seniors and persons on fixed incomes.

Rationale

The recommended fare structure recognizes that dial-a-ride trips have a higher average subsidy per trip than fixed route trips. A higher fare is recommended for longer trips given the incrementally higher cost of those trips. A group trip discount is recommended to share with the riders the operating efficiencies gained by providing group trips. The new fare structure will be phased in with the implementation of new service contracts between January 1, 2010 and June 30, 2010.

Funding

All fares collected on the new regional dial-a-ride service will be reinvested in the program. The financial impact of this fare structure is not known because current programs employ widely varying fare policies and the demand for service under the restructured program is not fully known.

Known Support / Opposition

See Public Comments Summary

Public Comments Summary

Metropolitan Council REPORT OF PUBLIC OUTREACH			
Dial-a-Ride Fares Hearings Public Comment Period		September 8-18, 2009 July through September 2009	
PUBLIC HEARINGS			
Place	Attendance	Speakers	Represented
Brooklyn Park	3	0	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mature Voices Minnesota 2. DARTS 3. Salvation Army 4. Metro Area Agency on Aging 5. First Transit 6. Augustana/Park Ridge (Burnsville) 7. Lifeworks 8. 5 Cities Transportation 9. PRISM 10. New Options 11. MRCI/Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative 12. River Gables (Chaska) 13. Norwood Young America Senior Advisory Committee 14. Chanhassen Senior Commission
Maplewood	9	1	
West. St. Paul	11	0	
Anoka	0	0	
Shakopee	20	3	
Minnetonka	5	0	
Stillwater	1	1	
Summary			
<p>The Council voted in July to approve operating parameters for dial-a-ride transit service (TransitLink) and to authorize public hearings for proposed fares for the restructured service. Though the public comment period was set to receive comments on the fare proposal, most of the comments submitted related to the proposed changes to the program. A total of 71 comments were collected – 24 were fare-related and 47 were not.</p> <p>Council staff planned and facilitated seven public hearings regarding the proposed dial-a-ride service fares throughout the metropolitan area. A number of commenters confused the dial-a-ride service with Metro Mobility, which is unaffected by the restructuring effort.</p>			

A wide range of fares – between \$1 and \$8 one way – is currently charged by dial-a-ride providers. A significant number of comments noted that the new fare structure would save them money. Other fare-related comments recommended a separate fare, with discounts, for seniors who use the service.

Themes

1. Support for Fares

- Distance-based fares make sense.
- We don't mind paying the fare. Fares need to compensate for the service.
- Proposed fare structure, with free transfers, is reasonable.
- Considering the cost of owning a car, your fares are extremely reasonable.

2. Concern for Seniors/Others on Fixed Incomes

- You should have a senior price. Please consider a group rate.
- For lower paid workers and seniors \$9 a round trip is a hardship.
- The proposed fare will limit trips for seniors/substantially decrease riders.
- The proposed fare of \$2.25 for one way trips less than 10 miles compared to the previous \$3.00 round trip fare, is a 66% price increase for local service. We are requesting that you consider special fares for senior citizens with a 3-mile or less fee included.
- I work for the Salvation Army. There are families that come every day that would use the dial-a-ride service that would pay an extra \$40 or more each month.
- We are on set incomes. Please do not raise prices.
- Please keep rates reasonable low [sic] to accommodate our low cash flow.

3. Support for Change

- The new dial-a-ride proposal is great.
- I agree and welcome the Council's initiative to correct the current busing system in place for dial-a-ride. This will be no easy task.
- We love this new proposal, please proceed.

4. Concern that Service Will Be Reduced

- At this time, I have not heard if we will have any type of transport available. I am a social worker for the hospital in Hastings and have many concerns if there is no low cost transportation available.
- Why are you singling out dial-a-ride for restructure? They are the best bus group there is and we have used others. We are not happy and extremely upset with the Met Council.
- There are challenges with families on the ¼ mile and ½ mile rule. It is a challenge to move folks from homes and the workforce center.
- Very, very unfair what you are doing to seniors and the elderly. Leave the system alone.

5. Concerns that Vendors/Service Will Change

- I think it's unfair to take the TRAC (Hastings) bus off.
- The TRAC service has been very good, always on time, and drivers are helpful. I really depend on TRAC to return from work.
- Midwest Paratransit Services is the company that operates our dial-a-ride in Edina. It is run very efficiently. It is a big help to get to my part-time job. I don't know what I would do without it.
- The drivers at HSI are excellent people. I would hate to lose HSI to federal cut backs.

**Regional Dial-a-Ride
Proposed Fare Structure for Public Hearing Purposes**

	<u>**Trip Distance</u>	<u>General Public Riders*</u>	<u>Group Discounts</u>	
			<u>Paid Fares Threshold</u>	<u>Fare</u>
Tier 1	Up to 10 miles	\$2.25	4+	Free return ride
Tier 2	>10 – 20 miles	\$4.50	3+	\$2.25/each
Tier 3	>20 miles	\$6.75	3+	\$4.50/each

* ADA certified riders capped at \$4.50 per one-way trip

** Trip distance is calculated on a point to point or straight line basis.

- Counties can establish “Routine Runs” between specific cities on specified days and at specified times and charge \$2.25 per passenger.
- Transfers: dial-a-ride to dial-a-ride – fare is based on full trip distance. Originating provider collects fee and transfer is free.
- Sponsored trips (third party payment) may be booked in advance of the reservation window and fares are not restricted to the regional fare policy rates.
- Children 5 years old and under ride free with paying adult (up to 4 children per adult).