

Priorities Committee Meeting_Jan29_2019

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE
Mobility Bus Fare Parity Update
Report Purpose

To provide Priorities Committee with an update on the Mobility Bus fare parity, the increases in trip requests to date, the challenges it is presenting, and the mitigations being taken to address those challenges.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 1 - Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents.

Goal 6 - Provide facilities and services that are available and accessible to residents.

Report

The 2012 Transit Master Plan (TMP) recommended that a detailed assessment of the fare structure and policy be conducted. A couple of issues noted in the TMP included:

- Ensuring all residents can afford transit
- Transitioning Mobility Bus fares to equal fixed route commuter and local fares

The 2015 Transit Fare Strategy Final Report agreed with the recommendations of the TMP, that Mobility Bus fares should be aligned with the fixed route fares. A further study was conducted in the fall of 2016 to better understand the implications of a fare alignment. The report concluded that trip requests from a fare alignment would increase over three years at which point, between annual growth and impacts from the fare alignment, would see the trip requests doubling from about 21,000 to over 45,000.

To be able to address this increase and provide the minimum of 98% of the trip requests received, the 2018 Operating Budget included the following:

- New Team Lead Scheduler/Dispatch position hired in March 2018
- Three part-time (hourly) Operators hired in June/July 2018
- Expand the Mobility Bus fleet from 10 buses to 13
- Increase taxi service from 3.45% to 10% through a new accessible taxi contract, which is in progress
- Implement new scheduling software, which is in progress

After five months of fare parity we are already seeing a significant increase in trip requests on a monthly basis when compared to 2017:

Increases in Trip Requests Since Fare Parity				
	2017	2018	Increase	Percentage
July	1,514	1,839	325	21%
Aug	1,561	1,909	348	22%
Sept	1,544	2,118	574	37%
Oct	1,820	2,584	764	42%
Nov	1,923	2,623	700	36%
Dec	1,488	2,018	530	36%
Total	9,850	13,091	3,241	33%

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While we expected to see an increase in trip requests, these significant increases exceed anticipated growth. This is significant as it shows how important this initiative has been in providing affordable transportation options, as identified in the County's Social Framework, for residents with mobility challenges.

This increase in trip requests has put a strain on the system. While the mitigation plans that were implemented in 2018 (increase in Operators and buses) have allowed us to accommodate the majority of the increase in trip requests, we have not been able to accommodate the entire trip requests received. In November 2018 about 45 trip requests were denied or re-booked for a different day, which equates to about a 1.8% trip denial rate. A trip denial is defined as:

"The inability for an agency to provide a trip within the agency's pick-up window when a request is made within the agency's booking window. Denials are determined by difference between the number of trips requested and the number of accessible trips actually provided." (CUTA's Specialized Transit Services Industry Practices Report)

While our goal is to have a 0% denial rate, it is important to note that the 2017 Mobility Bus Fare Implication Review identified industry denial rates range from a low of 0% to a high of 12%. Based on these findings, Mobility Bus did set a target of a maximum trip denial rate of 2% which we are currently below. It is anticipated that once the new scheduling software has been implemented and a new accessible taxi contract is in place, the trip denial rate is expected to go down. It is expected to take until June 2019 to have both of these in place.

As we work to manage the increase in trip requests we are continuing to accept new clients, however at this time we are not accepting any new subscription requests (a minimum of one trip per week, from the same origin to the same destination at the same time for at least four weeks). Any subscription requests are being directed to submit their requests as per the regular booking procedures. Once we have the new accessible taxi contract and scheduling software in place, we will start accepting new subscription requests. It is important to note that no emergent medically based requests, for trips such as dialysis or cancer treatment, are being denied.

Council and Committee History

- October 18, 2016 – Transit presented an update to the Priorities Committee on the fare strategy
- June 14, 2016 – Transit presented an update on the 2012 Transit Master Plan.
- October 25, 2011 – Council approved the Social Inclusion Policy (SER-005-004: Social Inclusion) and received the Municipal Subsidy Strategy for information.
- April 19, 2016 – Transit presented Council with an update on the consultant's Transit Fare Strategy Final Report June 2015.
- March 10, 2015 – Consultant presented Council with the draft recommendations.
- March 27, 2012 – Council approved the Transit Master Plan which recommended a detailed transit fare study.

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: n/a

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Interdepartmental: Transit fares could impact other departments including Family and Community Services

Master Plan/Framework: 2012 Transit Master Plan

Enclosure

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Mobility Bus Fare Parity Update Presentation