

## **Fare Review Stakeholder Advisory Group Workshop #3**

### **Meeting Summary**

May 18, 2017

King Street Center

DOT Director's Office Conference Room

201 South Jackson Street, Seattle

3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

### **Participants**

- Aaron Morrow, King County Transit Advisory Commission
- Anne Eskridge, University of Washington, Transportation Services
- Arielle Washington, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle
- Ezra Bason, Metro Transit operator
- Hillary Coleman, Seattle-King County Coalition on Homelessness
- Janelle Rothfolk, Catholic Community Services of King County
- Jeff Keever, Seattle Central College
- Katie Wilson, Transit Riders Union

### **Absent**

- August DeVries, Bellevue Downtown Association/TransManage
- Claire McDaniel, Sound Generations
- Cliff Cawthon, Rainier Beach Action Coalition
- Daniel Heldring, Microsoft
- Daphne Pie, Public Health – Seattle King County
- Gail Gustavson, International Community Health Services
- Hester Serebrin, Transportation Choices Coalition
- Hope Drummond, Alliance of People with disAbilities
- Kimberly Heymann, Alliance of People with disAbilities
- Kendle Bjelland, Commute Seattle

### **Welcome and introductions**

DeAnna Martin, Public and Employee Engagement Manager for King County Metro Transit, welcomed participants and reminded them of the groundrules. She provided a brief overview of where we are at in the planning and engagement process and reviewed the meeting purpose and agenda with the group.

## **How Metro went from five to two options – analysis, final feedback**

Chris O'Claire, Assistant General Manager of Customer Communication at King County Metro Transit, shared that staff had an opportunity to evaluate fares because Metro decided to put a pause on planned fare increases. They stressed that this is the first phase in this process and emphasized the need to make a decision on simplification this year for regional coordination on ORCA Next Generation. A participant asked when the Request for Proposals to identify an ORCA Next Generation vendor would go out. Staff responded this fall.

Jana Demas, Supervisory of Strategic Planning at King County Metro Transit, reviewed the options that were eliminated and why. Participants asked:

- Q: What was the farebox recovery projection if a \$2.50 flat fare option were implemented? A: Yes, it would bring it to 24.9% (estimate) in 2019.
- Q: How would each option effect crowding on buses? A: It's hard to say. The modeling we do for projected ridership predicts increase in ridership, but we can't predict or estimate on which routes this will happen. We have a separate planning and investment process to identify where and how to address overcrowding, so if this is a result, we'll be aware.
- Q: Is Metro considering businesses' willingness to work with Metro if this raises their costs? A: Yes, we are always actively working with employers and trying to grow employer participation in providing transit benefits to their employees. We assume business accounts will stay on in either fare change option scenario.

Jana invited any comments or questions on the remaining two options taken out for public comment, a \$2.57 Flat Fare options and \$2.50 off-peak/\$3 peak Fare option. Participants had the following questions and comments about the equity and social justice impacts of each:

- Q: What is does average adult fare mean? A: the average is what an adult pays compared to the total number of adult fares paid.
- Q: Did Metro look at eliminating the peak and why having the peak/off-peak difference would affect low income and minority routes more?

DeAnna provided a high level overview of feedback received from the general public on two adult fare change options. (See powerpoint slides for details.) She also provided a summary of results of an employer account survey conducted during the second phase of engagement.

One member asked if participants could receive a copy of the employer results. Staff responded they could and that Metro is preparing a full summary/report of all feedback received.

DeAnna asked whether the group had any additional feedback on the final two options. Participants shared:

- A flat fare is easier to understand for people with disabilities, fixed incomes, seniors, English Language Learners. The \$2.50/\$3.00 fare is more complex.
- From an operator perspective, simplification is good. But, concern was expressed about crowding as it affects speed of boarding and operations. If a simplified fare increases ridership, this could be a result.
- Q: Has Metro done any studies about going to a Rapid Ride-type system to see if it makes the system more efficient and cost effective? A: costs would go up in terms of fare enforcement and off board fare payment but it is something we continue to consider.
- The university and colleges are concerned about how the options will affect their cost. They would really like Metro to consider a student class or student rate to address that concern. Since ridership is self-administered by institutions the chance of fraud is low to no.
- Q: Do students qualify for ORCA LIFT? A: Some do, but eligibility is not universal. For example, international students cannot qualify.
- Q: Has Metro run numbers for college student fare? A: not as part of this process. Participants encouraged staff to look at different numbers and to do some analysis.
- Q: How would a student fare be defined and administered. A: through the university or college. Q: Do universities pay the full fare? A: Yes, based on a trip rate determined by when users travel and what services the population uses most. The UW gets a slight discount based on the amount of their pass holders who qualify for youth or senior discounts.
- How do each of these options affect fare enforcement? Will Metro continue to do this? A: it has its challenges; but, fare evasion is only 5% and there are only six routes that have fare enforcement. Those are Metro's Rapid Ride lines.

### **Transit affordability – current and planned efforts, feedback**

Penny Lara, Transportation Planner in Metro's Market Development section, shared work she had done on a grant-funded project to increase ORCA usage among harder to reach populations. She shared some of the results of what she learned from a survey she conducted during this project – namely that people who speak English as a second language weren't understanding how to use ORCA. She worked to develop some materials and videos that use more imagery than lingo to describe the card and how to use it. She will share the videos when they are complete.

One member encouraged Metro to develop a similar version of the materials with ORCA LIFT fares.

Matt Hansen, Manager of Customer Communication, King County Metro Transit, provided an overview of Metro's efforts to address transit affordability. (See slides for details.)

He asked whether it would be worthwhile to reconvene the student fare group. Seattle Central College and UW would like to reconvene. Seattle Central College just launched an all campus survey asking students if they would be willing to pay for a UW-type program. Their board also increased the amount it will subsidize. Staff will reach out to people who were part of the process and initiate reconvening.

Staff shared that ORCA LIFT is nearing 50,000 enrollees, but there is still more to learn and do. An issue was raised at the first meeting about a replacement fee on ORCA LIFT cards that are lost or stolen. Staff reported that Metro has eliminated that replacement fee.

There is early indication from a Human Service Ticket Program provider survey that agencies would like to buy more tickets if possible.

Participants asked:

- Q: What is the barrier to online enrollment for ORCA LIFT? A: Trying to be as inclusive as possible without being reckless and creating conditions that would make it easier for fraudulent activity.
- Q: Will the cost of the fare for the human service demonstration be the same price as for nonprofits. A: Yes, would offer LIFT passes at 10% of price.
- Q: Can school cards continue to work after school year (even if no subsidy). A: Metro is in process working with school districts on this issue. The earliest a change could be made is summer of 2018.
- Q: What does "registered seniors" mean? There is confusion between seniors and drivers when they use a human service ticket to pay their fare. It would help if Metro used the same signage and consistent terms in all fare-related information.
- Comment: it's confusing that youth don't need proof, but seniors do.
- Q: Could the taxi scrip program be used as a filler for the last mile home as an incentive to get Access paratransit users to transit. People living far away often wonder how they get to transit.

- Q: What is the timeline for completing the human service ticket program provider survey and acting on the results? Participants would like to see the results of the survey.
- Comment: SDOT has said they approve combo tickets being used on Seattle streetcars. Q: Has progress been made with communication between SDOT and Metro to confirm and implement this?
- Q: Can human service ticket program providers use day pass/combo tickets for their clients? It would also be helpful to be able to mail tickets to a client to get to the agency without having to fill out forms in advance. Q: Is there a way to lessen requirements? And, is there an easier way to associate Regional Reduced Fare Permits to business accounts? A: no, but staff wish there was.
- Q: Why do ORCA LIFT cards need to be physically replaced at time of re-enrollment? Why can't the card continue to be used if someone's eligibility continues? A: It's a vendor issue, but trying to change this with ORCA Next Generation.

DeAnna invited participants to help inform Metro's next efforts to research the needs of hard to reach populations in order to understand barriers to fare payment and identify action steps to address those barriers. Participants made the following comments:

- Metro should better utilize space on the bus to educate people about how to use ORCA. Make information about where to reload card more available. Could there be a bigger effort to put posters on buses and give concrete places to go?
- The \$5 card fee is also problematic. Metro thinks of customers as well off (park & ride, etc) but there are a lot of people who don't fit description. There is also a high percentage of "unbanked" riders who need to use cash. Metro should do more advertising on how you can use ORCA in an unbanked way.
- It's hard for a lot of people to put aside money to put on a card. Some fear where personal information associated with the card goes and who has access to it.
- LIFT is unfortunate name. It sounds too much like LYFT.

DeAnna paraphrased these comments to say Metro should be researching why people aren't using ORCA and paying with cash.

- What about people who end up paying more over time because they cannot afford the up-front costs of a monthly pass? There should be a monthly and day pass fare cap to help people who can't afford a monthly pass all at once so that if they reach that monthly pass amount, they won't be charged more than that. There was a lot of support for this idea among participants.

- Comment: Some people get assistance at different times, so having a monthly base operate on a 30 day schedule (rather than starting at the beginning of the month) might help.
- The fare cap idea would help with this.

DeAnna asked whether there was anything else Metro is missing that should be considered. Participants offered the following comments and questions:

- The human service ORCA pilot idea is a good one.
- Metro should investigate a Calgary-style low income transit pass that is offered on a sliding scale.
- Very curious about barrier for \$5 fee. Is this actually a barrier or is that just perception?
- Catholic Community Services does lots of replacement cards (10-15/week). At \$3 replacement fee per card, this adds up for them. They could use that money in other ways to provide service. It would be great to have a lanyard or something to give to clients because stuff gets stolen all the time (lost, misplaced, etc) and to help prevent this.

### **Next Steps**

Staff asked whether the group would be interested in being assembled again for an update and/or to provide additional feedback. DeAnna shared a revised timeline for next steps. Staff originally expected that a fare simplification ordinance would go to King County Council in June, but now it's looking more like that would happen in August.

### **Adjourn**