

**Meeting of the Ridership Committee and
 Final Public Hearing for Proposed Fare Increases & Automated Fare Payment
 Meeting Minutes
 April 10, 2019**

Minutes of the Ridership Committee Meeting of Wednesday, April 10, 2019 held at 5:45 p.m. at East End School, 195 North St., Portland, ME.

Committee Members Present:	Staff:	Others:
Ed Suslovic, Chair	Greg Jordan	Belinda Ray, Board President
Hope Cahan	Denise Anania	Aimee Goodwin, Brand Collective
Jeff Levine	Lauren Shaw	Kevin Mitchell, Brand Collective
		Bridget Purkin, Public
		Amy Coffman, Public
		Trevor Brackley, Public
		Pat Donoghue, Public
		Dianne Agresta, Public
		Linda McCarthy, Public
		Elizabeth Miller, Public
		David Body, Public
		Cameron Autry, Public
		Leeann Brionez, Public
		Judith McAllister, Public
		Linda Knight, Public
		Eric Handley, Public
		Shereen Toolani, Public
		Debra Holston, Public

At 5:55, prior to the Ridership Committee meeting being called to order, Greg Jordan, General Manager, gave a Powerpoint presentation about the proposed Automated Fare Payment and Technology and Fare Pricing. He walked through the steps leading up to this proposal including:

- A fare pricing peer review of New England transit agencies found that METRO fares are lower than the area average.
- The Board’s Fare Policy goals, including 25% of operating costs coming from fare revenue (currently at 22%), which is a common industry standard.
- Reducing potential conflicts about fare payment and reducing boarding time to allow drivers to focus more on driving safety and keeping the buses more on time.
- The timeline of improvements since the last fare increase in 2010 (most agencies raise fare incrementally, but more often).
- Findings of 500 rider surveys collected in February/March regarding smart phones, smart cards, automated fare, etc. Those received spread across socio-economic lines and age ranges.
- Fare Capping Benefits: no minimum up front payment to access fare savings; any amount can be loaded on card by cash, debit/credit, or bank account; funds carrying over to next month; 90-

minute ride window (2 hours for Breez and maybe Route 7) instead of transfers; larger retail network to access passes; being able to cancel lost card and transfer account information and funds onto new card; faster boarding; every customer using smart card or app will always get the best fare; only charged for the rides used with a maximum cap (\$60 local, \$30 local reduced fare, \$120 Breez, or \$60 Breez reduced fare).

- Fare Capping Downside: cash still accepted, but no transfers for cash payers, so will have to pay twice – hope this will incentivize people to use passes or app; not sure if South Portland will be part of the system.
- Timeline: will keep paper passes during Phase 1, which includes fare increase and launch of mobile app. Phase 2 will begin in 2020 with smart cards and fare capping. Vendor will need at least two months of data after the app is launched to set up the fare capping technology. Paper passes purchased during Phase 1 will be at the increased rate, but those purchased beforehand will be honored until the end of 2019.

The presentation ended at 6:25 p.m.

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:26 p.m. by Ed Suslovic with Committee, Board, and Staff introductions.

2. The meeting was opened to public comment.

There was no public comment at this time.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Hope Cahan, seconded by Jeff Levine, to approve the minutes from the March 13, 2019 Ridership Committee Meeting as written. **Unanimously passed by all present.**

4. Fare Changes/Automated Fare Payment

As the presentation was already complete, Ed Suslovic opened the floor to public comments and questions. He stated that all questions will be answered at the end, followed by another opportunity for public comment. There will also be time for public comment at the 4/25/19 Board of Directors meeting before a vote is taken on this item (all questions/comments are combined by speaker rather than in actual order given). During the course of public comments, Ed regularly reiterated that Metro will continue to take cash fares on the buses.

Pat Donoghue:

- The 90-min. cap may not be long enough for people in wheelchairs or otherwise mobility-restricted. Is there a way around that?
- She never planned on riding buses, but Metro buses and their drivers are great.
- Please remind drivers to announce at stops that people are trying to get off the bus and to watch out for them.
- The front seats are specified for those who need them and young people are sitting there, not moving. Please remind drivers to speak up/be more assertive and have them move when those who actually need the seats board the bus.
- Nothing gets done when she calls [the police] about cars blocking stops. There should be a fine.

Elizabeth Miller:

- A fare increase is overdue.
- Does not see an all-day pass or unlimited multi-day pass listed for visitors. She has cards for other cities visited and they work well. Will we offer something like that?

Bridget Purkin:

- What about people who scramble for money on the street to go on the bus? Can we give free passes to those who can't afford them?
- There are "traffic" jams on the bus when people are trying to get on and off. Is there a way to smooth this out?
- People don't pay attention to bus stops when they park, blocking the stop.
- Shoveling could be better near stops.

Leeann Brionez:

- Concerned about people who can't afford bus fare. Likes changes otherwise.
- Suggest that we make a call out to people to help shovel bus stops.

Judith McAllister:

- She has been in Portland 13.5 years and since Greg Jordan joined Metro there have been great improvements and he has transformed the system.
- Is the price of a 10-ride ticket going up when the fare increases, but before smart cards and fare capping go into effect?
- What happens to 10-ride tickets purchased before the fare increase?

Amy Coffman:

- Currently 10-punch cards do not expire; will they do so in the future?
- Which is more accurate for bus information, the app or text?

Eric Handley:

- Buses don't run the Munjoy loop after major storms due to how narrow the street is. Is there a way to prioritize which streets get plowed first for bus service?
- A bus shelter is needed at the top of Congress and Munjoy Hill.
- Cars park in bus stops and block them.

Linda Knight:

- Would like clarification about 10-ride tickets expiring at the end of December and smart cards not going into effect until January 2020.
- Will monthly passes be cut at the beginning of 2020?
- Will smart cards work in South Portland? If South Portland is not "on board," what will happen?
- The City has installed parking meters in certain areas too close to the bus stop, especially the #8 on Preble and Horton, so buses can't pull into the stop and riders have to go into the street to board. This is the worst for those in wheelchairs.

- How will groups like Logisticare, who currently sends passes to people who qualify, be able to get into this? They depend on the US Mail, so will there be a delay?

Unknown:

- How do you check the balance left on your smart card?

Ed Suslovic sorted all comments and questions into two categories for response: (1) those surrounding the Fare Increase/Automated Fare topic; (2) suggestions/recommendations/concerns.

Fare Increase/Automated Fare questions with Greg Jordan's responses:

- Would we consider a one or 3-day pass?
 - We will not have one or 3-day period passes. With mobile app or smart cards, there will be a cap of three fares paid in one day (\$6 local, \$12 Breez). Metro will reach out to hotels and other ingress points for tourists to teach them how to communicate to visitors about how the smart card/mobile app system works.
- How will the transition happen between Phase 1 and Phase 2?
 - Phase 1 is the launch of the fare increase and mobile app. Phase 2, smart cards and fare capping, will be in effect by January 1, 2020. Paper passes will increase in price as of the first day of the fare increase. All buses will be technologically compatible with the new system before it takes effect (components will be installed over a weekend).
- Passes expiring and how that will work between end of 2019 and beginning of 2020?
 - All paper passes are now being stamped with a Metro expiration date of 12/31/19. If South Portland does not join Metro in this new program, they will still accept paper.
- How do you check the balance of a smart card?
 - Riders will be able to go on our web site or through the mobile app. Technology on the bus will also give some kind of indication of a low balance when a rider taps their card while boarding, and the ultimate goal is to have it show the actual balance.
- How can low income needs be met?
 - We do not currently have a low-income program, but work with many agencies who buy passes and give them away or sell at a lower price, and have met with those agencies as noted below.
- Can a longer one-fare time limit be given to those with mobility issues?
 - The bigger issue with the 90-minute ride window is the frequency of our buses – there needs to be shorter route times. It will be two hours for the Breez and may also extend it for the Route #7 since it is such a long ride to Falmouth.
- What happens to 10-ride tickets purchased before the fare increase?
 - They will continue to be accepted until 12/31/19.
- How will groups like Logisticare, who currently sends passes to people who qualify, be able to get into this? They depend on the US Mail, so will there be a delay for recipients?
 - Metro has been meeting with stakeholders and social service agencies who are excited, especially Logisticare, that they will be able to load customer cards directly.

Suggestions/recommendations/concerns with Committee/staff responses:

- Please remind drivers to announce at stops that people are trying to get off the bus and to watch out for them.
 - Annual training is in the summer and this topic is included.
- The front seats are specified for those who need them and young people are sitting there, not moving. Please remind drivers to speak up/be more assertive and have them move when those who actually need the seats board the bus.
 - Annual training is in the summer and this topic is included.
- There are “traffic” jams on the bus when people are trying to get on and off. Is there a way to smooth this out?
- Which is more accurate for bus information, the app or text?
 - General consensus agreed that the text option is more accurate.
- The buses don’t run the Munjoy loop after major storms due to how narrow the street is. Is there a way to prioritize which streets get plowed first for bus service?
- A bus shelter is needed at the top of Congress and Munjoy Hill.
- Cars park in bus stops and block them and the City has installed parking meters in certain areas too close to the bus stop, especially the #8 on Preble and Horton, so buses can’t pull into the stop and riders have to go into the street to board. This is the worst for those in wheelchairs.
- Some buses are old and don’t run well (Leeann).
 - The average age of our fleet is getting younger; 11 buses were replaced last year and six more will be replaced this year. In 2020, the rest of the old buses will be replaced and two electric buses will be added. The Board’s goal is to have Metro be completely electric by 2040.

The items not directly addressed/responded to at this meeting will be further discussed by the Ridership Committee.

Ed Suslovic, Ridership Committee Chair, thanked all the members of the public who attended the meeting and asked them to complete the survey available at this meeting or on-line. He also stated the plan is for the full Board of Directors to vote on the Fare Increase/Automated Fare Payment at the 4/25/19 meeting, held at 4:00 p.m., 114 Valley Street and that there will be time for public comment before the vote.

5. Future Agenda Items

6. Upcoming Meetings

- Finance Committee – April 25, 2019 at 3:00 p.m.
- Executive Committee – May 8, 2019 at 4:30 p.m.
- Ridership Committee – May 16, 2019 at 4:00 p.m.
- Board of Directors – April 25, 2019, 2019 at 4:00 p.m.

7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Jeff Levine, seconded by Hope Cahan. **With unanimous approval by all present, the meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.**