

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 8, 2019**

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## **Greater Portland METRO to Hold Public Meetings Proposing Fare Pricing Changes, Introducing Automatic Fare Payment Options**

(Portland, Maine) – Greater Portland Transit District METRO will hold public meetings between March 12 and March 28 to present information on proposed fare pricing changes and automatic fare options.

**METRO plans to introduce new payment options that will allow riders to pay fares using either a smart card or mobile app.** Both the smart card and mobile app can be linked to an account that riders can fund from bank accounts, credit cards, or pre-paid debit cards. Riders without access to banking would be able to load cash onto a smart card at municipal and retail outlets across the region. Riders using smart cards or a mobile app would be required to scan their cards or phones when they board the bus. Cash will still be accepted on buses.

**The base fare will increase from \$1.50 to \$2.00 and all current period passes and tickets will be replaced with a new electronic discounting method called “fare capping.”**

- When paid with a smart card or by mobile app, the proposed \$2.00 base fare (\$1.00 for riders eligible for reduced fare) activates a 90-minute pass. This means the rider can take unlimited trips within the 90-minute window. Riders who qualify for “reduced fare” include seniors, people with disabilities, and Medicare card holders and, with this change, youth ages 6-18 as well.
- When paying fares by smart card or mobile app, full fare local riders would not pay more than \$6.00 per day and \$60.00 per month. Riders eligible to pay “reduced fare” would not pay more than \$3.00 per day and \$30.00 per month for local service. Upon hitting these daily and monthly fare caps, all rides thereafter will be free.
- Fare capping is a pay-as-you-go approach that significantly improves affordability and equity in the cost of using transit. It allows all riders equal access to discounts based on their transit use and not on upfront dollars invested in a high cost pass. This fare payment strategy allows lower income riders who cannot afford the higher upfront cost of a 10 Ride ticket or monthly pass access to the same discounting as higher income riders. Also, fare capping allows riders to pay only for what they use whereas buying a monthly pass today requires riders to predict their future use.



- Cash will continue to be accepted on buses, but paper transfers would no longer be offered. This will create an additional incentive for riders to migrate to smart cards or the mobile app. Smart cards would be widely accessible at municipal offices and retail outlets across the region. This will offer riders without access to banking or a smart phone the ability to load cash onto a smart card.

The last fare increase was implemented nine years ago in 2010. Since then, METRO has made significant improvements to its transit service including expanded routes and improved frequency; improved bus stops and new bus shelters; rolled out real-time bus arrival technology and Wi-Fi on all buses; and commenced a fleet modernization campaign. These improvements have been paid for mostly with taxpayer dollars.

A passenger fare increase is necessary and overdue, but METRO recognizes that many transit riders live on limited incomes and have tight household budgets. For these reasons, the increase is timed to coincide with the introduction of new fare payment technology and the “fare capping” approach to help improve the affordability of using transit and the overall equity of our fare pricing.

METRO wants to hear from riders, the general public, businesses, and social service agencies on how these changes might impact you. Riders and stakeholders are encouraged to attend these open-forum, public meetings, held in these communities along METRO routes:

## **PUBLIC MEETINGS**

### **Portland Public Library (Rines Auditorium)**

Tuesday, March 12 | 3-7 p.m.

Saturday, March 16 | 10:30 a.m. - NOON

### **Brunswick Town Hall (Room 206), 85 Union St.**

Thursday, March 14 | 5-7 p.m.

### **Westbrook Community Center (Spruce Room), Bridge St.**

Monday, March 18 | 3:30 -7:30 p.m.

### **Yarmouth Town Hall (Community Room) 200 Main St.**

Tuesday, March 19 | 5-7 p.m.

### **Lunt Auditorium, 74 Lunt Rd., Falmouth**

Wednesday, March 20 | 5 - 7 p.m.



**Freeport Town Hall (Chambers), 30 Main St.**

Monday, March 25 | 5 - 7 p.m.

**Gorham Municipal Center (Conf. Room A), 75 South St.**

Tuesday, March 26 | 5 - 7:30 p.m.

For additional METRO information, updates, and survey:

- Website: [GPMETRO.ORG](http://GPMETRO.ORG)
- Phone: 207-774-0351
- Questions? Feedback?: [info@gpmetro.org](mailto:info@gpmetro.org)
- Social media: [Facebook](#); [Twitter](#); [Instagram](#)
- Stop by the METRO Pulse at 21 Elm Street, METRO's downtown transit hub for information, tickets, schedules, and connections.  
Open Monday-Friday, 7am-7pm; 9am – 4:30pm on Saturday.

With annual ridership of nearly 2 million, METRO is the largest public transit agency in Maine. Greater Portland METRO provides bus service between Brunswick, Falmouth, Freeport, Gorham, South Portland, Westbrook, and Yarmouth.

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