

CAN Presentations on CapMetro Fare Increases Questions & Answers

1: Are the 2007 Fare survey results available online?

Yes, www.capmetro.org.

2: Is CMTA still operating Natural Gas buses? What is the history of that? Was there a subsidy for CNG?

In the 1990s, the Capital Metro Transportation Authority (CMTA) purchased and operated a fleet of thirty Compressed Natural Gas powered vehicles and were retired a few years ago.

The vehicles had issues, such as higher initial purchase price, higher maintenance costs, shorter operating range, and higher infrastructure costs when compared to clean diesel technology, which resulted in CMTA deciding not to purchase additional CNG buses. The big advantage to CNG was the reduction in emissions; however in the 1990s the EPA had already laid out a plan to significantly clean up diesel technology and today the emissions gap between the two fuels is quickly being closed.

The FTA provided a percentage of the initial cost of the CNG buses; however that funding was not dependent on them being CNG buses. Each year, the FTA provides a limited amount of funding to offset the purchase price of transit buses regardless of fuel type.

3: What is the ridership numbers of people who ride who come from outside the CMTA service area?

We do not have those definitive numbers at this time. Customers board and de-board within CMTA service area - their initial point of origin is unknown.

4: What programs do we offer to help seniors?

The Half Price Fare pass program to social service agencies. In the past six years Capital Metro has provided over \$1.8 million in discounted passes. In FY 2009, we anticipate we will provide about \$600,000 through the discounted pass program.

5: What extent do the Central Texas government entities communicate?

We are members of CAMPO - Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. We work closely through that group. Our Board is a diverse group of government officials representing the Central Texas region. More specifically, they represent and serve as liaisons to the City of Austin, Travis County, City of Leander, and City of Manor.

Additionally, Capital Metro board members and staff participate in every opportunity we can. From a regional transportation planning standpoint, we have a seat on the CAMPO Board. We work closely with numerous area governments in

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that venue but we also work closely with other governments and citizen and business stakeholders through other avenues.

We have representation on boards and committees such as the Community Action Network, Envision Central Texas, and the Clean Force. We also participate heavily in local initiatives such as the City of Austin's station area planning effort and we solicit feedback through frequent presentations to groups like the City of Austin's Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities and the Urban Transportation Commission. Many of our staff members have regularly scheduled or standing meetings on a monthly basis with other area government staff members, for example with those at the City of Austin, CAMPO, the Texas Department of Transportation, and the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority. This collaboration continues on a daily basis too with staff in the City of Austin's Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department and Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department, and with the City of Leander's and Round Rock's planning departments, amongst others.

6: How recent is the Fare Box recovery data?

Recent through the end of May. Farebox recovery rate YTD is approximately 9%

7: What would be the worst case scenario if we didn't raise fares?

If fares were not increased for five years, we would have to reduce our service plans by about 180,000 hours or between 32,000-36,000 hours annually. We plan to add about 226,000 hours over this five-year period. This includes bus, STS, rapid bus, rideshare and rail. In effect, our service levels would remain flat and not be able to increase to meet demand of our growing region. After 2013 we would have to reduce service to avoid a budget deficit if fares were not increased. The longer we wait the greater the future service impact.

8: What is the rationale for raising the DFC to .35\$ -- (.10\$ more than any other raise)?

The proposed increase would only affect those individuals whose disabilities are not sufficient to entitle them to use complementary paratransit according to ADA. ADA paratransit certified persons would continue to ride fixed route buses and rail for free. The rationale is to bring our fare structure closer to transit industry norms in which disabled and senior citizens ride for a half fare. Federal grants require a half fare during off-peak periods. In 1989 Capital Metro's fare for disabled individuals and seniors was \$0.25 or half of the \$0.50 base fare. Had free fares not been established in 1991, this increase would have only been \$0.10.

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In 1984 before Capital Metro was formed the then \$0.50 base fare generated an average per passenger fare of \$0.34. Today that same \$0.50 fare only generates about \$0.20 per passenger.

9: How many Disability Fare Cards (DFC) do we dispense?

As of today we have 6623 active Disability Fare cards in our database. Disability fare cards account for about 2,340,000 free rides annually.

10: What is the projected increase in STS going to result in revenue?

The first year proposed increase will generate an additional \$153,000 annually.

11: What are the ridership numbers for seniors?

Based on the farebox data we provide about 350,000 senior rides annually. (FYI, the customer satisfaction survey shows that those over 65 years make up about 3% of regular route riders and less than 1% of express bus riders. This is not the percentage of trips but actual people.)

12: Who is going to make the distinction between who is STS eligible and who is disabled?

This will be coordinated with the re-certification efforts to be accomplished within STS. Currently the proposal is to contract with a firm that has expertise in the area. Most cities begin an in-person assessment for all new applications and then the current clients go through the process when the re-certification period (every two years from the original date of client certification) occurs.

13: Is CMTA going to hire someone to determine STS eligibility?

The discussion has been that the assessment process would be contracted out, as it is in most cities, to professional services, while appeals would be handled internally. As of this time, CMTA is working with members of the disability community to produce a scope of work as it relates to the eligibility process.

14: How many people use Disability Fare Cards?

Disability fare cards account for about 2,340,000 free rides annually.

15: Is there a way to track the impact of the Fare increase and its effects on ridership, specifically in the poor census tracts?

There are many studies that have been conducted to suggest that on average for every 10% fare increase, there is an initial 3 - 4 % reduction in ridership. Other factors also play a role in ridership levels, such as gas prices and service level changes.

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A customer satisfaction survey shows that 44.9% of our regular route customers have an annual household income less than \$20,000. This income group comprises about 23% of express bus customers. 37% of those earning less than \$20,000 pay fares by cash or day pass, while 33% use monthly bus passes and 17% use student monthly passes. Capital Metro is proposing to introduce a 7-day unlimited ride pass priced at \$7.00 to provide lower income individuals with a less expensive multi-ride discounted fare option.

The survey indicates that 55% of regular route customers are either Hispanic or African-American. Hispanic and African-American customers make up 20% of express bus riders. 47% of Hispanic and 35% African-American customers pay fares by cash or day pass compared to 33% of Caucasian.

16: What initiatives will be available to the elderly to help alleviate the increase?

Half Price Fare pass program

17: How much do RideShare riders pay for mileage out of the service area?

We are proposing to charge out-of-service area RideShare customers \$37.50 plus a mileage surcharge. The basic rate is increasing the same percentage as the base fare. RideShare currently recovers over 40% of its cost through fares while our regular bus services recover less than 10%.

Mileage is .79 cents per mile when they are out of the service area.

18: Is there a plan to increase our donation of passes to Social Service Agencies?

Yes. The program will continue. In the past six years Capital Metro has provided over \$1.8 million in discounted passes. In FY 2009, we anticipate we will provide about \$600,000 through the discounted pass program.

19: Is the August '07 Fare Adjustment presentation available on the website?

Yes. www.capmetro.org

For More Information Call:

Matt Curtis

Asst. Director, Business and Community Development

512-389-7546

www.capmetro.org