

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board Action/Information Summary

Action Information

MEAD Number:
201433

Resolution:
 Yes No

TITLE:

Improving Safety Through Fare Enforcement

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

Metro is addressing a growing concern about the safety of its employees and customers through a fare enforcement program. Fare evasion and disputes are resulting in escalating conflicts between riders and employees, putting employees at risk as well as the passengers they serve. Rider complaints range from customer service matters to issues of equity among those who pay fares. The Metro fare enforcement campaign supports both the Board's strategic goals around safety and customer service.

PURPOSE:

To enhance employee and customer safety, improve customer service, and make fare collection more equitable, Metro will launch a pilot program to conduct a special 90-day fare enforcement campaign at key stations and bus routes beginning next month.

DESCRIPTION:

Transit Police, Bus and Rail Operations, are working together as part of the Customer Care task force to collaboratively address growing concerns about employee assaults and passenger safety. The team will launch a pilot program on April 27th that deploys uniformed police officers on certain bus routes and at key rail station gate areas to enforce fare collection.

The program will begin with Metro Transit Police conducting two weeks of customer awareness and community outreach, during which warning notices will be issued to fare evaders. During this period, the riding public will be alerted to the fare enforcement campaign through notices to the jurisdictions, announcements distributed through the news and social media, kiosk screen displays, and electronic alerts to bus and rail customers.

Commencing on May 11 – following two weeks of public education, police will begin issuing citations to fare evaders. The deployment of police will be based on several data points, including bus routes and rail stations with the top rates of fare evasion, high frequency of employee assaults, and volume of customer complaints.

At the end of the 90-day pilot period, success of the program will be measured based on safety metrics, including a decline in employee injuries and assaults, a reduction in complaints, as well as a decrease in fare evasion.

The Customer Care Working Group will assess the need to adjust the program before it advances throughout the system.

Key Highlights:

Beginning April 27th MTPD will deploy uniformed patrols on the following key bus routes and rail stations to issue friendly fare evasion “warnings” to adult customers for a two week period.

The warning period will be accompanied by robust community outreach and communication, after which, fare enforcement will commence with citations issued on these targeted and rotating bus routes and rail stations.

This effort will span three months and success will be measured by a decline in employee assaults, decreased customer complaints, and reduced fare evasion.

Background and History:

Statistically, 2014 saw a 37% increase in employee reported assaults over 2013. Fare evasion/disputes are the primary driver of customer conflicts. In 2014 alone, 78 WMATA employees reported assaults that ranged from being spat upon, to being struck, punched or stabbed while on duty. Employees have expressed concerns about their wellbeing while on duty through surveys, town hall meetings and now through various customer care meetings.

Recent customer research conducted by Metro with respect to balancing the FY16 budget revealed that nine out of ten customers support enforcing fare collection.

The history of fare enforcement at WMATA has been mixed, and is complicated by varying legal guidance from the jurisdictions. For example the penalty for fare evasion for adults in Alexandria is a \$50 fine; Arlington \$10- \$50; Fairfax \$100 fine; the District \$50 fine in Prince Georges County, \$10-\$50 fine and Montgomery County, a \$50 fine.

Fare enforcement among youth is difficult. In the District of Columbia, Transit Police write warning citations and hope the youthful offender provides the correct information or they are arrested. In Maryland, criminal citations may not be given to a person under 18 years of age; instead police issue a civil citation (or a J-2). In Virginia, the youth offender is issued a Virginia Uniform Summons and must appear in court.

The MTPD officers have the discretion to issue adult or juvenile offenders an MTPD Warning Citation. These citations have no criminal or financial impact to the offender and overtime such citations haven proven ineffective.

Discussion:

The 90-day Pilot includes:

1. Beginning April 27th MTPD will deploy uniformed patrols to select bus route and rails stations. Officers will establish a visible presence at fare collection areas to issue friendly fare evasion “warnings” to adult offenders. Warnings will come in the form of a hand-out explaining the fare collection policy and penalties for evading.

2. The warning period will continue for 2 weeks, and will be accompanied by community outreach, notice to jurisdictions and announcements to news and social media.
3. Customer and employee information will explain the need for the program and warn the public in advance to help riders avoid receiving a fine.
4. Internally, employees will receive refresher counseling about their roles and responsibilities in fare collection.
5. At the end of the warning period, police patrols will appear again at the fare evasion locations on board buses and at station gates to enforce collection. This enforcement effort will rotate, and will continue for about three months, after which we will assess the pilot program.
6. At the end of the 90-day enforcement period, the working group will review the results, including customer feedback (causes and volume), employee feedback from focus groups, a review of crime statistics and reports from participating patrols, as well as, fare collection.

FUNDING IMPACT:

Budget:	Operating Budget, Fiscal 2015
Project/Account:	Overtime # 50102030
Project Manager:	Chief Pavlik
Project Department/Office:	MTPD
This Action:	500,000
Remarks:	

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	In 2014 the MTPD issued over 2,000 criminal citations in rail and over 200 in the bus system. Also in 2014, MTPD issued over 1,400 warning citations.
Anticipated actions after presentation	Update the Safety and Security Committee on the pilot results

RECOMMENDATION:

To move forward with the pilot as stated is the recommendation

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Improving Safety & Customer Service through Fare Enforcement

Safety and Security Committee

March 26, 2015



Purpose

- Fare evasion: root cause of conflict between employees and passengers
- Impacts range from customer complaints to assaults of employees
- Pilot program proposed to enhance safety, reduce conflicts, ensure fare collection equity



Background

- Assaults on Metro employees rose 37% in 2014
- Assaults on bus operators and station managers include spitting, striking, punching, and stabbings
- Safety risk to passengers when bus operators assaulted during operation of vehicle
- Employees identify assault risk as safety culture gap



Pilot Program

- Mar-Apr - Refresher instruction for bus operators and station managers on fare collection
- April 27 – May 8 - officers patrol select bus routes and stations – give fare evasion “warnings”
- Education period includes public awareness and community outreach





Pilot Program Launch

- May 9 – 90 day police deployment on buses and at stations enforcing collection
- Routes & Stations based on evasion/assault/customer complaint data
- Fines of \$50-100
- Success measured by reduction in assaults, fewer customer complaints, enhanced fare collection



Costs and Benefits

- Preventing injuries and enabling bus and station employees to focus on serving customers
- Protecting customers as fare collection deters other crimes by fare evaders
- Collecting fares will partially offset \$500,000 cost of police deployment





Industry Experience

- Fare Evader Crackdown helps SEPTA Cut Subway Crime

"Riding Philadelphia's subways is becoming much safer, and police say that's thanks to a new push to crack down on turnstile jumpers. SEPTA transit police say 10 times as many "fare evaders" were arrested last year, compared with just two years ago."

Source: Newsworks.org





Next Steps

- Begin public education period April 27th
- Commence fare enforcement pilot May 9
- Brief Safety Committee on pilot results