

## Consent Item (A) 07-27-2023

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

### Board Action/Information Summary

☒ Action ☐ Information

Document  
Number:  
205525

Resolution:  
☐ Yes ☒ No

**Presentation Name:**

Arlington County Student iRide Program

**Project Manager:**

Tracey Foster

**Project Department:**

Treasury

**Purpose/Key Highlights:**

Staff requests Board authorization to execute the Arlington County Student iRide Program fare buydown agreement to advance equity, mobility, and strategic regional partnerships, and to delegate to the General Manager and Chief Executive Officer (GM & CEO) authorization to approve future program changes.

- In November 2021, the Student iRide Pilot Program was introduced, offering subsidized fares and free rides to expand traditional bus service and transportation options to certain Arlington County Public School high school and middle school students
- During the pilot, student trips increased from 5,100 to 16,000 monthly trips
- Following a successful pilot, Arlington County is requesting a fare buydown agreement to adopt a permanent program effective the 2023-2024 school year at no cost to students
- Metro will invoice the program quarterly, in advance, as a line item along with Arlington's jurisdictional contributions

**Interested Parties:**

Arlington County Public Schools

**Background:**

Partnering with Arlington County on the Student iRide Program fare buydown agreement advances our Strategic Transformation Plan goals of service excellence, regional opportunity and partnership, and sustainability.

In November 2021, Arlington County Board approved the Student iRide Program pilot offering subsidized fares and free rides to expand traditional school bus service and transportation options. The program's mission is to provide mobility options, at a subsidized rate, and encourage the use of public transit on ART regional buses and Metrobus routes within Arlington County for school activities. The pilot program was also designed to broaden student access to transit services, jobs, and regional connectivity, while making transit a preferred option for future generations.

The pilot targeted approximately 2,500 middle and high school students whose transportation to school involved consolidated or hub school bus stops, travel to schools outside their school zone, and/or a walk zone within 1.5 miles. In January 2022, selected student groups received SmarTrip® branded iRide cards. During the pilot, student transit trips increased from 5,100 to over 16,000 monthly rides. Building on this successful pilot, the County expanded the program to all Arlington Public School students the next term and expressed interest to include Metrobus routes at no cost to students. Metro also provides student fare buydown programs in the District of Columbia, Fairfax County, and Montgomery County.

**Discussion:**

Arlington County is requesting a fare buydown agreement at the current Metrobus fare of \$2.00 to adopt a permanent Student iRide Program effective the 2023 - 2024 school year. The County will promulgate eligibility criteria, enforce County-imposed SIP Program trip eligibility requirements, user rules and regulations as necessary for the SIP Program, and provide a copy thereof to WMATA. Metro will invoice Arlington County quarterly, in advance, for the Student iRide Program based on estimated rides and as a line item in the Jurisdictional Subsidy invoice. The initial year quarterly invoicing will be \$90,000. Arlington County will pay full program costs, including any trips taken outside of the program using SmarTrip® iRide media and any future fare increases. Metro will provide Arlington County monthly reporting documenting the student rides taken on Metro. Metro will invoice Arlington County for all Metrobus rides taken by program participants; rides in excess of the advance quarterly payment will be billed by supplemental invoice quarterly, in arrears. Program expansion will facilitate analysis, data collection, and ridership growth.

Because this action requires joint authorization from Metro's Board of Directors and the Arlington County Board, Arlington County staff are seeking concurrent approval in July.

Arlington County anticipates additional program expansion to advance transit equity. Therefore, to allow for future program modifications, staff recommends delegating authority to the GM & CEO to make future program amendments.

WMATA shall complete a fiscal year-end reconciliation on or about June 30 of each school year based on actual rides taken with SIP Fare Media and shall apply any difference toward the SIP Program costs in the next occurring school year. Based upon the reconciliation, WMATA shall apply a credit or debit to the County equal to the Reconciliation Amount.

**Funding Impact:**

Arlington County is requesting an allocation of \$360,000 for this program in their FY2024 budget to reimburse WMATA for student rides on Metrobus. If approved, the program will serve an estimated 2,500 students. The size of the program is subject to change annually based on Arlington County's requirements.

**Previous Actions:**

No Previous Actions.

**Next Steps:**

Program Implementation for the 2023 - 2024 school year.

**Recommendation:**

Approval to: Execute the Arlington County Student iRide Program Fare Buydown Agreement.

SUBJECT: ARLINGTON COUNTY STUDENT iRIDE PROGRAM FARE BUYDOWN AGREEMENT

RESOLUTION  
OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
OF THE  
WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, Compact Section 79 authorizes the Board of Directors to enter into fare buydown agreements and Resolution 2011-30 requires Board approval of any fare buydown agreement; and

WHEREAS, Arlington County's "iRide" program provides to Arlington County Public School students subsidized student bus fares and free bus rides on ART buses; and

WHEREAS, Arlington County desires to expand the iRide program to include Metrobus routes in Arlington County; and

WHEREAS, Arlington County will pay the full costs and fares associated with the iRide program for Metrobus routes;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

*RESOLVED*, That the Board of Directors authorizes the General Manager and Chief Executive Officer or his or her designee to negotiate and execute one or more fare buydown agreements with Arlington County to compensate WMATA at full regular fare for Metrobus fares not collected from Arlington County students and to set other terms and conditions as necessary for a successful Student iRide Program Agreement; and be it further

*RESOLVED*, That in order for the Arlington County Student iRide Program Agreement to begin as proposed with the 2023-2024 school year, this Resolution shall be effective immediately.

Reviewed as to form and legal sufficiency,

/s/  
Patricia Y. Lee  
Executive Vice President, Chief Legal Officer and  
General Counsel