

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board Action/Information Summary

☒ Action ☐ Information

MEAD Number:
202030

Resolution:
☒ Yes ☐ No

TITLE:

Cash-Free Bus Program

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

The Board is asked to approve a six-month extension to the cash-free boarding pilot on Route 79 MetroExtra to allow for additional data collection and analysis.

PURPOSE:

Request that the Board approve a six-month extension to the cash-free pilot on Route 79 MetroExtra that began June 24, 2018.

DESCRIPTION:

Key Highlights:

- The Board of Directors approved a six-month pilot of cash-free boarding on Route 79 MetroExtra in May, 2018. The pilot began June 24, 2018.
- In order to collect more data and conduct a more robust performance analysis, a six-month extension is requested from both the Metro Board of Directors and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Background and History:

The time that buses spend servicing stops, known as dwell time, makes up a significant portion of the running time on most bus routes and is a major source of delay. Research at Metro and other agencies shows that cash transactions take much longer than SmarTrip® payments. At Metro about 12 percent of transactions systemwide include cash, but these transactions represent 24 percent of boarding time. Eliminating slow fare payments provides an opportunity to speed up bus service and improve travel times for all customers.

In May 2018, the Board of Directors authorized a six-month pilot of cash-free boarding on Route 79 MetroExtra. This limited-stop route was selected due to the availability of a local route, Route 70, serving most of the same stops, the fact that the route serves several rail stations where SmarTrip® cards can be purchased and value can be added, and the presence of several SmarTrip® retail outlets near the corridor. The pilot began on June 24, 2018, and included

extensive public outreach along the route. Without an extension, the pilot will end on December 24, 2018.

Along with authorizing the pilot, the Board authorized a public hearing to seek input on cash-free service on Route 79 as well as all other MetroExtra routes, Metroway, and equivalent limited-stop routes. That hearing was held on September 17, 2019. The results of the public hearing and public input process will be presented to the Board in Spring 2019 with the full results of the extended pilot.

Discussion:

Thus far, the data collected on the operational impacts of cash-free boarding are largely from the summer months, when traffic conditions tend to be lighter. The Red Line shutdown from late July through early September also affected operating conditions on Route 79, which serves some of the same travel markets as the affected Red Line stations. An extension to the pilot will allow for a more robust performance analysis over several additional months in other seasons.

The original six-month duration of the pilot was chosen to be in accordance with FTA regulations on pilot programs affecting access to fare media. A request for a six-month extension to the Route 79 cash free pilot was submitted to the FTA on October 24, 2018, and an answer is expected back by late November.

Performance results from the extended pilot will be presented to the Board in Spring 2019, along with the results of the public hearing and public input process. A staff recommendation for whether to make the pilot permanent and the business rules under which cash-free boarding may be expanded to other limited-stop routes will be made at that time.

FUNDING IMPACT:

The pilot extension does not require an operational changes. Customers will be notified of the pilot extension as part of the outreach for regularly-scheduled December bus service changes.	
Project Manager:	Jim Hamre/Jim Hughes
Project Department/Office:	BPLN

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	March 2018 – Office of Customer Research survey of cashpaying customers on Route 79
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	May 2018 – Board of Directors authorized the cash free pilot on Route 79 and the public hearing on cash-free boarding on limited-stop routes. May/June 2018 – Outreach conducted on Route 79 and start of pilot September 2018 – surveys performed on Route 79 and Route 70. Public hearing held along with wider public input process.
Anticipated actions after presentation	Spring 2019 – Performance analysis and results of public input process will be reported to the Board of Directors, along with a staff recommendation as to whether to make the pilot permanent and whether to expand cash-free boarding to other limited-stop routes.

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend that the Board approve a six-month extension to the cash-free pilot on Route 79 MetroExtra.

SUBJECT: APPROVAL TO EXTEND THE CASH-FREE BUS PILOT ON METROEXTRA
ROUTE 79

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

WHEREAS, Resolution 2018-19 authorized staff to pilot MetroExtra Route 79 as a cash-free bus route for up to six months, and

WHEREAS, Staff seeks additional data regarding the effectiveness and impact of the cash-free pilot to develop a recommendation for the Board of Directors, and are seeking Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approval to extend the pilot; NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors approves the extension of the MetroExtra Route 79 cash-free pilot for up to six months, provided FTA approves the extension; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That this Resolution shall be effective 30 days after adoption in accordance with Section 8(b) of the WMATA Compact.

Reviewed as to form and legal sufficiency,



Patricia Y. Lee
General Counsel

WMATA File Structure Nos.:
6.6.4 Bus Route & Service Planning
9.12.9 Tariff (WMATA Fare Structure)