



Customer Service, Operations and Security Committee

Information Item III-A

June 8, 2017

Fair Share Pilot

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Board Action/Information Summary

☐ Action ☒ Information

MEAD Number:
201878

Resolution:
☐ Yes ☒ No

TITLE:

Fair Share Pilot

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

The Fair Share pilot and other efforts to reduce fare evasion are designed to improve the safety of employees and customers, increase revenue collection, and provide more accurate farebox ridership counts.

PURPOSE:

To provide an overview of efforts to reduce fare evasion in the Metrorail and Metrobus systems, and the initial results of the Fair Share pilot underway at Fort Totten and Gallery Place Metrorail stations.

DESCRIPTION:

The ultimate goal of the Fair Share pilot is to reduce the amount of fare evasion on the rail system by stopping the use of station swing gates except in the event of an emergency. Staff evaluated the pilot using a number of factors, including: effectiveness of securing devices and gate stops, usage of the swing gates, station manager feedback and customer response.

Key Highlights:

- Fare evasion is an issue at all transit properties, including Metro. It presents a safety concern for employees, an equity issue for paying customers, reduces Metro's revenue, and results in inaccurate farebox ridership counts.
- In the Metrorail system, improper use of the swing gates is the primary way that customers avoid paying fares.
- The "Fair Share" pilot began on May 1, 2017, at Fort Totten and Gallery Place stations. The goal of the pilot was to determine if securing

devices on the swing gates, as well as new signage, employee education, and MTPD support would be effective in changing customer behavior and reducing fare evasion.

- Based on the findings, Metro staff is moving forward with implementation of the Fair Share program at additional stations.

Background and History:

Over the past year, Metro has eliminated paper farecards and nearly completely eliminated flash passes, resulting in all Metro passengers having cards they can tap to open fare gates or board a bus. Staff has worked over the last several months with MetroAccess customers and their companions to replace flash pass with SmarTrip® cards that allow them to enter through paid fare gates. Likewise, Metro has partnered with the District of Columbia to ensure students using DC One cards are able to tap through gates. In past years, some students boarded buses with flash passes. Now, all students are required to tap DC One Cards.

These efforts have largely eliminated the need for customers to access the swing gates except in the event of an emergency. This helps to improve fare compliance by eliminating the substantial groups of passengers who were previously instructed to bypass the farebox for legitimate reasons.

A number of challenges continue to make fare collection a difficult issue:

- *Assault risk limits staff role.* Due to the risk of assault, bus operators and station managers play a limited role in fare enforcement. For safety, bus operators are instructed not to confront passengers who do not pay. All passengers are quoted the fare by an automated announcement or the operator. Station managers are not directed to enforce fares through confrontation with passengers.
- *Limited police resources.* Metro Transit Police officers play the leading role in enforcing fare collection, optimizing deployments using trend analysis, but they are only able to be present at a fraction of station entrances and on a limited number of bus routes.
- *Permissive swing gates.* At non-pilot stations, rail station swing gates open both ways, with no audible alarms, making it easy for people to enter or exit stations through the gates with little impediment. This encourages more attempts to evade the fare, leading to more potential conflicts between employees and customers.

Discussion:

Conflicts between employees and customers over fares are a safety and customer service concern at Metro. Fare evasion creates real and perceived fairness issues among customers, most of whom pay for every ride. It also directly results in the loss of revenue that Metro needs to provide safe and reliable bus and rail service, and indirectly impacts federal funding formulas and local subsidy discussions by reducing the official farebox ridership count, a measure of our value to the region.

Fare evasion takes a number of forms on the bus and rail systems. On Metrorail, the use of swing gates is the primary way that customer avoid paying fares. Customers also “tailgate,” which occurs when a fare evader closely follows a paying customer through the fare gates; jump over or go under the fare gate paddles; and squeeze through the barriers. On Metrobus, the primary forms of fare evasion are bypassing the farebox when entering the bus and entering through the rear door of the bus.

The “Fair Share” pilot was developed to address the issue of swing gate usage in the Metrorail system. The pilot began on May 1, 2017, at Fort Totten and Gallery Place stations. The goal of the pilot was to determine if the program would be effective in changing customer behavior and reducing fare evasion.

Two different designs for securing or limiting movement through the gate were tested during the pilot. Due to a requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a maneuvering area of 5’ by 5’ on each side of the swing gate is required for the gate to be secured. For gates with that maneuvering space, a magnetic securing device was installed. For gates without the ADA-required space, a gate stop was installed to limit movement in the direction of egress.

- **GATE STOP:** No minimum maneuvering area exists at some swing gates because the gate is located too close to one of the fare gates or too close to a wall. These gates cannot be secured and a gate stop is installed to limit the swing movement of the gate in the direction of egress.
- **MAGNETIC SECURING DEVICE:** Gates with the required maneuver areas can be secured with a magnetic securing device, push-to-release bar on the gate, entry card reader, exit card reader, a gate status light, and kiosk controllers. These gates also swing only in the direction of egress.

The two pilot stations have a total of seven swing gates (five at Gallery Place and two at Fort Totten). Fort Totten gates were both secured during the pilot. At Gallery Place, the swing gates include both secured and gate stop configurations.

In addition, the Fair Share pilot includes new gate signage, employee and customer education, and police enforcement. Station managers at the pilot stations have been trained to use the new equipment and to make exceptions to entry through the swing gate under very limited circumstances, to include uniformed police officers, employees delivering equipment to stations, and to accommodate any MetroAccess user whose equipment is not sized for ADA accessible gates.

During the Fair Share pilot, additional Metro Transit Police (MTPD) officers have been deployed to the pilot stations to assist with law enforcement. This supplements MTPD's regularly conducted targeted efforts to enforce fare regulations in both the Metrorail and Metrobus system. In any given week, MTPD issues hundreds of citations for fare evasion.

Pilot Results

Reduced Usage of Swing Gates: During the pilot, it has been observed that customers attempting to fare evade through the swing gates frequently turn away when they encounter a secured gate. The secured configuration, which includes magnetic securing devices and alarms, has been most effective. The gate stop configuration was observed to be less effective once regular fare evaders figured out that the swing gate can still be used by swinging it in the opposite direction.

Metro staff reviewed security footage from Fort Totten Station to compare unauthorized swing gate usage before the Fair Share pilot (March 8, 2017) and following the installation of the magnetic securing device (May 3, 2017).

Because the Fort Totten swing gates have the required ADA maneuvering room, they were fully secured during the pilot. On both days, the swing gate was monitored between 2:30 – 6:30 p.m. A 91% reduction in swing gate usage was noted after the gates were secured and signage installed as part of the Fair Share pilot.

Observations during the pilot revealed that continued education for both employees and customers is needed to further reduce the use of swing gates, except in emergencies. Also, it was observed that once the securing devices were released during an unauthorized passage, the gates at times remained unsecured, allowing some additional passengers to pass through.

Station Manager Feedback: Conversations were conducted with Station Managers at the two pilot locations in mid-May to gather feedback on the Fair Share pilot.

- Station Managers were generally supportive of efforts to reduce fare evasion through the Fair Share pilot; however, most Station Managers commented that fare evasion tactics are most effective when combined with increased MTPD presence.
- Employees generally felt that the pilot was working at slowing down fare evasion, but many individuals were still finding ways to exit without paying (i.e. piggybacking through fare gates, jumping over gates, etc.).
- Two station managers noted the pilot was positive in showing the public that Metro is focusing on fare evasion.
- Two weeks into the pilot, the station managers did not report a significant change in the number of disputes regarding fares that they experienced with customers.
- Employees at station entrances with secured swing gates were far more supportive of the Fair Share pilot than employees working near an unsecured swing gate.
 - Station managers working with swing gates with gate stops installed observed that after approximately one week the gate stop device was no longer a deterrent as fare evaders realized they could still walk through the swing gate.
 - Employees at secured swing gates support the idea of expanding the program to more stations, as long as (1) MTPD showed some presence and (2) the securing devices remained operational.

Demonstrated Customer Support of Fare Collection Efforts: Metro staff have polled riders in recent years about their opinions on efforts to crack down on fare evasion. The findings demonstrate overwhelming support for efforts to reduce fare evasion.

- Nearly all riders (92%) said they support Metro cracking down on fare evasion as a way to realize additional funds each year (*from FY16 Budget Outreach to the Public survey*).

- A large plurality (84%) of Community Based Organizations support Metro cracking down on fare evasion as a way to realize additional funds each year (*from FY16 Budget Outreach to CBOs survey*).

Next Steps

As the Fair Share pilot continues, Metro engineers are conducting a formal review of the securing devices to ensure effectiveness and troubleshoot any mechanical issues raised during the trial. Metro staff are also beginning to plan for the expansion of the Fair Share pilot to secure additional swing gates at high fare evasion stations. Continued education for customers and Metro employees, as well as strategic MTPD deployments, will be a necessary component of the program.

FUNDING IMPACT:

Funding for the pilot program was included in the FY17 budget.	
Project Manager:	Joseph Leader
Project Department/Office:	Chief Operating Officer

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	May 2017 – Fair Share pilot begins at Fort Totten and Gallery Place Metrorail stations
Anticipated actions after presentation	Summer/Fall 2017 – Fair Share program implemented at additional Metrorail stations



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How fare evasion impacts Metro

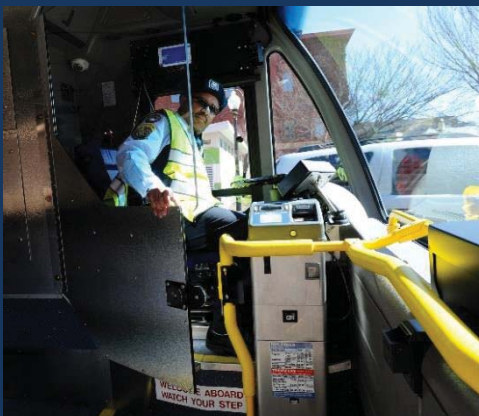
Fare evasion is a multi-dimensional problem:

- Greatest cause of conflicts between customers & employees
- Creates fairness issues among customers
- Results in revenue loss
- Reduces farebox ridership counts, impacting funding formulas
- Linked to more serious crimes



Key actions to date

- All customers tap: SmarTrip® cards issued to replace flash passes for MetroAccess customers and students
- Reinforce requirement for all employees to tap badges
- Addressing employee assaults triggered by fare disputes:
 - Transit Police doubled written enforcement actions
 - Training and outreach, bus operator shields, and bus CCTV video monitor pilot





Fair Share Pilot

- Began May 1 at Fort Totten and Gallery Place Stations
- Pilot includes:
 - New emergency exit signage on swing gates
 - Gate stops and electronic securing mechanisms
 - Police enforcement efforts
 - Internal and external communications
- Considers Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and safety in emergencies
- Assess effectiveness in changing customer behavior, reducing fare evasion





Swing Gate Pilot Configurations

Gate Stop Configuration

Unsecured with gate stop to open only in direction of exit



Secured Configuration

Magnetically secured with push-to-open bar, alarm, and card swipe





Fair Share Pilot Preliminary Results



Mar 8, 2017, 5:34 PM



May 3, 2017, 5:30 PM



Fair Share Pilot Preliminary Results

- In sample measurements, the pilot reduced fare evasion through the secured swing gate at Fort Totten by more than 90%
- The secured gate configurations were found to be most effective, along with increased MTPD presence
- Station managers were generally supportive of Fair Share pilot
- Customers overwhelmingly support efforts to reduce fare evasion & increase revenue collection



Next Steps

- Implement the Fair Share program at additional stations
- Identify solutions for other fare evasion station areas (e.g., unattended elevators)
- Continue MTPD enforcement efforts
- Estimate level of rail system fare evasion
- Continue promoting fare products, passes, and online loading options to customers