

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board Action/Information Summary

☒ Action ☐ Information

MEAD Number:
202175

Resolution:
☒ Yes ☐ No

TITLE:

Metrobus Fare Waiver Extension

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

Staff will request that the Board authorize an extension of the emergency waiver of Metrobus fares due to COVID-19 which is necessary in order to implement rear-door only boarding as part of Metro's efforts to enhance the safety of frontline workers

PURPOSE:

Request Board authorization to extend the emergency waiver of Metrobus fares due to COVID-19 pandemic.

DESCRIPTION:

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Key Highlights:

- The Board approved emergency waiver of Metrobus fares due to the coronavirus pandemic will expire on May 22, 2020.
- The waiver was granted to implement rear-door only boarding in accordance with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) social distancing guidelines and to protect the health and safety of Metrobus operators and customers.
- Due to the continuing pandemic, Board approval is sought to extend the current emergency fare waiver.

Background and History:

The continuing pandemic caused by the coronavirus has resulted in both national and regional health emergencies. Metro and its Pandemic Task Force continue to work around the clock to support the region and slow the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Metro's efforts have sought to strike an appropriate balance for Metro's workforce, their families, our customers, and the region as a whole.

Consistent with the CDC social distancing guidelines which recommend maintaining six feet of physical separation between individuals and mitigations taken by other transit operators, Metro implemented rear-door only boarding on Metrobus following Board approval of an emergency fare waiver on March 23, 2020. The current waiver of fares on Metrobus will expire on May 22, 2020. Rear-door only boarding as well as blocking off the area immediately behind the operator is one of several actions Metro has taken to enhance the safety of frontline workers on Metrobus. Since Metrobus fare collection equipment is only located near the operator, rear-door only boarding can only be implemented with a suspension of fare collection. Persons requiring a wheelchair ramp are exempted from the rear-door only boarding policy and can continue to board at the front of the bus.

Discussion:

The emergency fare waiver results in a reduction of passenger revenues as it suspends all fare collection on Metrobus. The impact of the lost passenger fare revenue is estimated to be \$35.7 million through the end of FY2020. The impact of this action is diminished due to the decline of Metrobus ridership by 78%, as compared to the budget, after the region implemented current stay-at-home measures and Metro adopted service changes to support essential only travel.

Metro expects to cover COVID-19 related revenue loss in FY2020 through utilization of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding made available by the federal government. This action has been fully reflected in the FY2021 Budget Amendment.

FUNDING IMPACT:

Budget:	Operating Budget, Fiscal 2020
Project Manager:	Dennis Anosike
Project Department/Office:	CFO/OMBS
This Action:	\$35.7 million estimated through end of FY2020
Remarks:	The impact of this action is diminished due to the decline of Metrobus ridership by 78%, as compared to the budget, after the region implemented current stay-at-home measures and Metro adopted service changes to support essential only travel.

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	
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	March 2020 – Board approved original emergency waiver of Metrobus fares due to COVID-19 pandemic allowing implementation of rear-door only boarding
Anticipated actions after presentation	Periodic status updates

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize the extension of the emergency waiver of Metrobus fares due to COVID-19 pandemic until further action by the Board.

SUBJECT: EXTENSION OF WAIVER OF METROBUS FARES DUE TO CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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

WHEREAS, WMATA Compact § 60 grants the Board sole control over fares to be charged by WMATA; and

WHEREAS, The national emergency declared by the President of the United States and the public health emergencies declared by the District of Columbia, the State of Maryland, and the Commonwealth of Virginia due to the coronavirus pandemic remain in effect; and

WHEREAS, In Resolution 2020-08, the Board waived for 60 days the payment of all fares on Metrobus, including cash payments, and required rear-door only boarding and exiting, except for customers who use wheelchairs who will continue to board via the wheelchair lift at the front door; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Transit Administration has recently provided industry guidance that temporary fare changes enacted as a result of the coronavirus pandemic health emergency are exempt from the Title VI fare equity analysis requirement;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board extends the waiver of the payment of fares on Metrobus, including cash payments, and requirement for rear-door only boarding and exiting, except for customers who use wheelchairs who will continue to board via the wheelchair lift at the front door, for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic health emergency; provided, however that the General Manager and Chief Executive Officer (GM/CEO) shall provide the Board with periodic status updates; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Board shall take further action to reinstate fare collection and front door boarding on Metrobus as appropriate upon a recommendation from the GM/CEO; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That this Resolution shall take effect immediately to continue implementation of the CDC social distancing recommendation during the coronavirus pandemic health emergency and provide greater protection for WMATA's customers and employees.

Reviewed as to form and legal sufficiency,

/s/
Patricia Y. Lee
Executive Vice President and General Counsel

WMATA File Structure No.:
9.12.9 Tariff (WMATA Fare Structure)