Fare Strategy & FY2028 Proposed Fare Concepts

Board of Directors Meeting
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
October 8, 2026

Delivering Your Metro, the Way Forward

Focus Today



Service Excellence
Deliver safe, reliable, convenient, accessible, and world-class service that customers can trust across all modes.

Objectives of Service Excellence Goal

- **Safety and Security**
- **Reliability**
- **Convenience**



Talented Teams
Attract, develop, and retain world-class talent where individuals feel valued, supported, and proud of their contribution.

Objectives of Talented Teams Goal

- **Recruitment and Retention**
- **Learning and Development**
- **Customer Service Mindset**

Focus Today



Financial & Organizational Efficiency
Steward public resources and efficiently allocate resources where they drive the most value, to ensure service delivery.

Objectives of Financial & Organizational Efficiency Goal

- **Financial Responsibility**
- **Organizational Efficiency**
- **Energy Management**

Fare policy is shaped by customer feedback, ridership and revenue, and Metro's leadership

July 2023:
Last Metro fare restructuring

Major fare restructuring: eliminated peak fares, aligned bus & rail base fare, and launched Metro Lift

2025 & 2026:
Metro Budget Updates

Metro budget presentations discuss fare increase and fare strategy changes expected in FY2028

December 2026:
Proposed Budget Published

General Manager publishes FY2028 GM/CEO proposed budget, including proposed FY2028 fare changes; Board adopts updated fare strategy

July 2024:
Last Metro fare increase

Fares increased by 12.5% across the board on Metro Bus, Metro Rail, and Metro Access

October 2026:
Preview of GM Proposed Budget

Preview of GM/CEO proposed budget, incorporating feedback and adjustments from Board discussion of fares

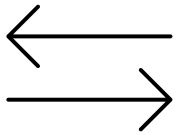
We are here

February - April 2027
Budget Adoption Process

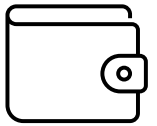
Board discussions, hearings, and adoption of FY2028 budget, includes fare changes

DMV*Moves* called for regional fare integration so customers experience transit as a seamless network

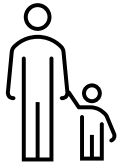
DMV MOVES
Moving our region forward, together.



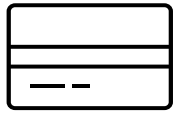
Credit for Transfers
Regardless of operator, customers should always receive full transfer credit.



Low-Income Program
Offer low-income fare discounts through the acceptance of the Metro Lift program



Youth Fares
Access to free transit for youth aged 18 and under across transit agencies in the DMV Region



Regional Unlimited Passes
Customers should be able to purchase and use unlimited passes region-wide

Metro Fares: FY2027

Free Transfers*

FY2027	Fare	Reduced Fare[1]
Rail Regular	$2.25 to $6.75	$1.10 to $3.35
Mileage charge: After first 3 miles, $0.45 per mile		
Rail Late Night[2] and Weekend	$2.25 to $2.50	$1.10 to $1.25
Regular Bus	$2.25	$1.10

Express Bus Fare	$4.80 ($2.40 Reduced)
Metro Access Fare	$4.50 per trip (twice the base fare)[3]
Abilities-Ride Fee	$3.00 per trip
Parking Rates	$3.00 to $5.20[4]



* Transfer credit is equivalent to the base rail/regular bus fare
[1] 50% discount for senior, disabled, and Metro Lift customers
[2] Late night fares apply after 9:30pm
[3] Metro Access trips based on equivalent regional operator routes may result in lower fares
[4] Rates include jurisdictional surcharges

Fare collection matters to Metro, our customers, and our jurisdictional partners

Fares pay for service.

Funding Source, FY2027
$ Millions

Transit Mode	Fare Revenue	Jurisdictional Subsidy
Metro Bus	$62.5	$823.1
Metro Rail	$465.1	$929.5
Metro Access	$9.5	$187.4
Total	$537.0	$1,940.0

Without fare revenue, jurisdictional subsidy would be 25 to 30 percent higher, or Metro would run substantially less service.

Fare Strategy

Issues for consideration in strategy development

How should Metro position the Smart Trip and Tap. Ride. Go. **fare collection platforms**?

How can the region increase **bus fare payment compliance**?

When should Metro **stop accepting cash**?

How can the region integrate fare payment with **regional rail and commuter buses** and other transport operators (bikes, tolls, parking)?

Should Metro introduce **fare-capping** and if so, what type?

How can Metro encourage more **employers to subsidize trips**?

How can Metro develop **partnerships and joint ticketing** for events?

Metro Fare Strategy Framework

Modern Payment System

- **Continue modernization to a modular fare system** to support regionalization, with capabilities for concession fares, third-party integration (e.g., special event tickets), and digital-first fare media

- **Develop and implement fare inspection systemwide by eliminating bus cash payments**, enabling more effective and efficient fare enforcement, especially on ungated bus system, and realize operational efficiencies in cash collection

One Regional Fare System

- **Integrate fare policy across modes and operators** with customers experiencing transit as one system – integrated transfers, passes, and discount programs, including seamless youth travel

- **Metro provides regional fare payment technology and infrastructure**, maximizing efficiency and integration (e.g., provide fare targets/ fare gates and processing for MARC, VRE, Purple Line, and systems for regional bus operators)

Employer-Paid Transit

- **Work with employers to expand the number of people receiving paid workplace transit benefits,** currently uncommon for non-federal employees; leverages the opportunity for employers to offer tax-free unlimited transit to employees with development of new unlimited employer pass offering and pricing model; benefitting ridership, revenue stability, and transaction efficiency

FY2028 Fare Concepts Preview

FY2028 Fare Concepts Preview

Inflation-Based Increase

+11.1% Increase

Revenue: **+$40 to $45 million***
Trips: **-8 million***

$2.50 - $7.50

from $2.25 - $6.75

Applies to all fares, passes, U-Pass,
Metro Access fare cap, and Abilities Ride fee

+

Utilization-Based Parking Pricing Structure

For **park-and-ride** customers:

Revenue: **+$0 million**
Trips: **+1.1 million**

$3 at 23 low-usage lots
$5 at 14 medium-usage lots
$7 at 3 high-usage lots

Youth Fare Program

Offer **free-to-youth fares** for all children ages 5-18 on Metro Rail and Metro Bus

Children must be residents of District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia

Net Cost: **$7 million**
Trips: **+0.9 million**

* Estimated revenue and ridership change from fare increase varies depending on baseline revenue forecast. Baseline may be refined prior to publication of GM/CEO proposed budget.

Universal youth access to transit is a regional investment

What universal access could mean for youth:

Expands access to the region
Allows youth to more easily access school, after-school activities, and community centers in the region

Builds sense of autonomy and independence
Access to safe and reliable transit has been shown to increase a sense of autonomy among young people

What it could mean for the region over time:

Eases costs for families
Lowers the total household travel costs, positioning transit as a practical alternative to driving

Build next generation of transit users
Allows accompanied access to transit at an early age, building comfort and normalizing for adulthood

Peer agencies already provide free & universal access to children:

Free with no limitations:

LA Metro (Los Angeles)

Sound Transit (Seattle)

MBTA (Boston)

MTS (San Diego)

Free with some limitations:

MTA (New York)

SEPTA (Philadelphia)

In FY2028, Metro can offer free-to-youth fares for all children ages 5 through 18 in the region

Offer **free-to-youth fares** for all children ages 5-18 on Metro Rail and Metro Bus

Children must be residents of District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia

Net Cost: +**$7 million**
Trips: **+0.9 million**

Metro can fund the youth fare program by **restructuring existing K-12 funding agreements and new benefits** into the jurisdictional subsidy.

Net change in total investment:

- Virginia: +$3.5 million total investment
- Maryland: +$3.5 million total investment
- District of Columbia: no significant change
  District currently offers and pays for Metro Bus and Metro Rail for most youth aged 5-18 through existing Kids Ride Free program

To meet DMV*Moves* goals, Metro must **universally** implement youth fare program

Actual totals may vary based on number of participating children.
Children 0-4 y.o. already ride Metro for free.

FY2028 Additional Fare Concepts

Additional Ridership-Increasing Concepts

Customer-friendly fare concepts

Metro Lift Eligibility Expansion
Add Medicaid, TANF, and WIC enrollment.
Current program is SNAP-only.

- $0.3 million
+ 1.9 million trips

Weekend Fares on 11 Federal Holidays
Offer weekend fares during 11 federal holidays.
Compare to current weekday fares during federal holidays.

- $1.0 million
+ 70,000 trips

Flat Fares on Weekends and Late Nights
$2.50 flat fare on weekends & after 9:30pm on weekdays. *Compare to proposed $2.50-$2.80 range.*

- $3.4 million
+ 0.6 million trips

Additional Revenue-Increasing Concepts

paired with improvements to late-night and weekend service

Remove weekday late-night discount
$2.50 - $7.50 fare range during all weekday hours.
Compare to proposed $2.50-$2.80 range after 9:30pm.

+ $1.6 million
- 0.2 million trips

or

$3.75 cap on weekends and late nights
$2.50-$3.75 fare range on weekends & after 9:30pm on weekdays. *Compare to proposed $2.50-$2.80 range.*

+ $7.0 million
- 1.3 million trips

Fare Enforcement and Awareness

Metro remains committed to reducing fare evasion on Metro Bus and Metro Rail

Metro has improved approach from multiple angles

Increased fare enforcement
Targeted, data-driven Bus fare enforcement (2024-2025) and increased high-profile Bus evasion sweeps (ongoing)

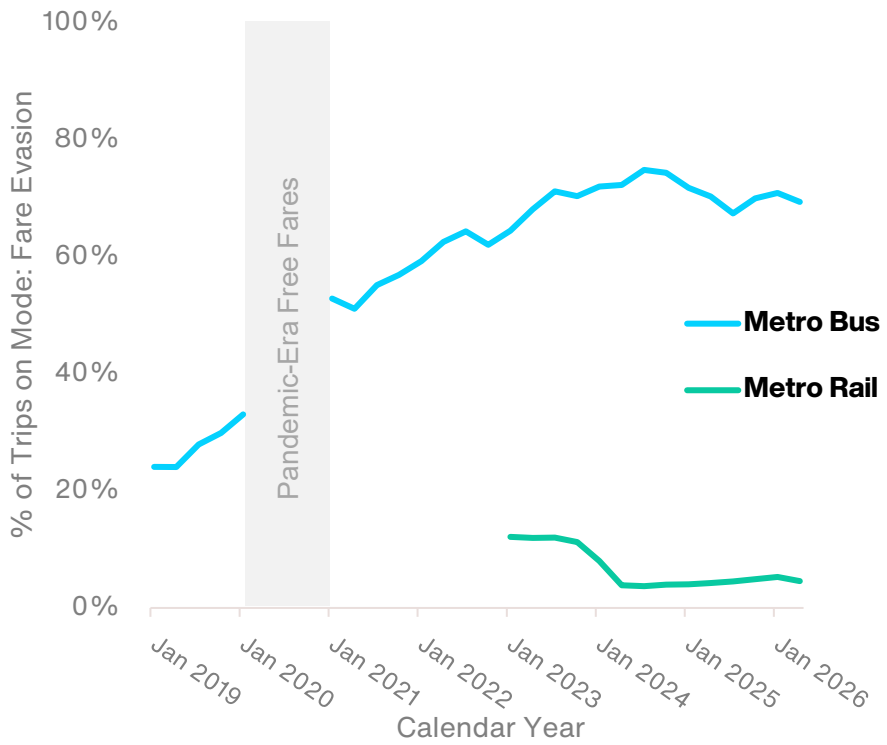
Increased Penalties in District of Columbia
Worked with District of Columbia to pass Secure DC Act (2024), failure to provide real name and address is a crime

Improved Faregates and Readers
Installed taller, reinforced faregates at all stations (2023-2024), upgraded Bus readers (2024), and improved reliability (ongoing)

Improved Payment Options
Launched Metro Lift low-income program (Summer 2023), launched Tap. Ride. Go. (2025)

Awareness Campaigns
“Pay the Fare” (Fall 2022) & “Fares Pay for Service” (ongoing, began May 2026)

Metro Rail and Metro Bus Fare Evasion
January 2019 to Present



Note: 2023 installation of new faregates allows for real-time monitoring of fare evasion on Rail

Fare enforcement involves both Metro and jurisdictions

Metro controls

Enforcement

Metro Transit Police issue criminal summons (VA, MD) or civil citations (DC) to individuals for fare evasion.

Metro Transit Police issued citations worth approximately $600,000 in fines during the period from January 1 through July 1, 2026.

Citation/Summons: 11,000
January 1 – July 1, 2026

Jurisdictions control

Payments & Court Appearances

VA: Offender must appear in court; penalty is assessed for failure to appear.

MD: Offender may prepay citations in Montgomery County. Court date will be assigned if payment is not received. Offender must appear in court in Prince Georges County.

DC: Offender may pay penalty or request an administrative hearing.

Payments & Court Appearances: 1,853
January 1 – July 1, 2026

Jurisdictions receive funds

Collection

VA: Clerk of the Court receives payment

MD: Clerk of the Court receives payment

DC: DC Treasury receives payment

Collections: $96,470
January 1 – July 1, 2026

Industry best practices for effective fare enforcement

Escalation of penalties for repeat offenders

Peers have ladder of escalating penalties for repeat offenders to **establish sufficient deterrence.**

Example: MTA (New York)

Fines escalate based on the number of repeat offenses: a warning on a first offense, $100 on a second, and $150 and/or a criminal summons on a third offense or above.

Fare inspections

Enforcement by non-sworn officers to verify customer payment to allow sworn officers to spend **more time on other duties.**

Example: TTC (Toronto)

TTC uses Provincial Offenses Officers and Customer Service Agents to conduct fare inspections system-wide, allowing Toronto Police Department officers to investigate and deter more serious crimes on the network.

Efficient enforcement & appeals process

Offering a transit-specific appeals process allows for **faster resolutions and collections**.

Example: TfL (London)

TfL contracts with an independent appeals body to handle first-level appeals for fare citations. Further appeals go before a specialized magistrate judge. Citations can also be easily paid online.

Incorporating these features into our approach would require us to pursue one or more of the following changes...

Ban persons engaged in fare evasion

Opportunity:
- Deter repeat offenders
- Increase fare compliance
- Ban persons engaging in fare evasion for repeat offenders

Challenges:
- Requires looking out for more banned individuals
- May require increased staffing to enforce bans
- Potential arrest for trespass for violating ban

Authorize individuals other than MTPD officers to issue citations

Opportunity:
- Enable MTPD to focus resources on safety and security of the Metro system
- Reduces cost of fare evasion enforcement
- Amend legislation in DC, MD, and VA to authorize individuals other than MTPD Officers to issue fare evasion citations

Challenges:
- Increases staffing
- Generates additional citations, without addressing adjudication by jurisdictions
- No commensurate recovery of funding to WMATA as payment of fines go to the jurisdictions

WMATA Administrative Citations

Opportunity:
- WMATA will have more control over managing fare enforcement
- Set high fine to deter fare evasion; fine escalates to deter repeat offenders
- Follow through on collecting payment
- Payment to WMATA; recover some lost revenue

Challenges:
- Cost of administration
- High administrative burden to create stand-alone citation/adjudication process
- Anticipate increased staffing to cover administration
- Add banning as consequence for delinquent non-payment
- Long lead time to implement

Next Steps for WMATA and the Region

Work collaboratively and regionally towards better fare compliance:

1. Align fines for fare evasion
2. Enable civilians, special police, or a new classification to issue fare evasion citations
3. Consistently follow through on collecting fines
4. Consistently adjudicate offenders for non-payment
5. Amend legislation to impose consequences for non-payment (*e.g.,* hold on renewal of driver's license, liens etc.)

Appendix

Fare Background

Customers have many ways to reduce the cost of Metro Rail and Metro Bus fares

Reduced Fare Programs
Half-off full-fare trips on Metro Rail, Metro Bus, and regional operators for eligible customers at least 65 years old

Student Programs
Free-to-student fares on Metro Bus and/or Metro Rail for eligible students in participating jurisdictions
Expanded: Montgomery County (2020), Arlington (2023), Alexandria (2026)

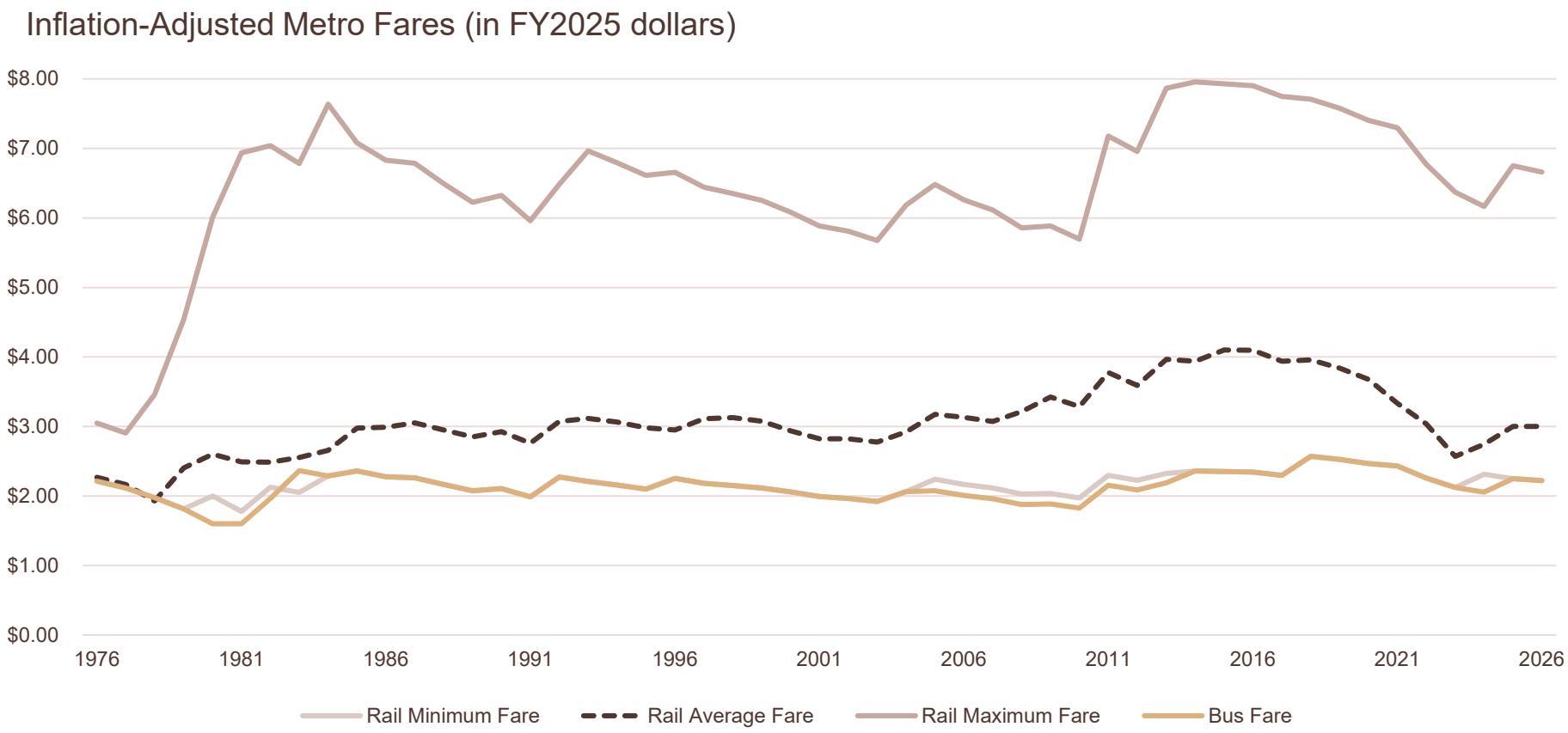
Seven-Day and Monthly Passes
Passes provides free trips on Metro Bus and/or Metro Rail for chosen period and fare level.
Lowered Prices: FY2022 & FY2023

Metro Lift Low-Income Program
Half-off full-fare trips on Metro Rail, Metro Bus, and ART Bus for eligible SNAP participants and their households
Launched: FY2024

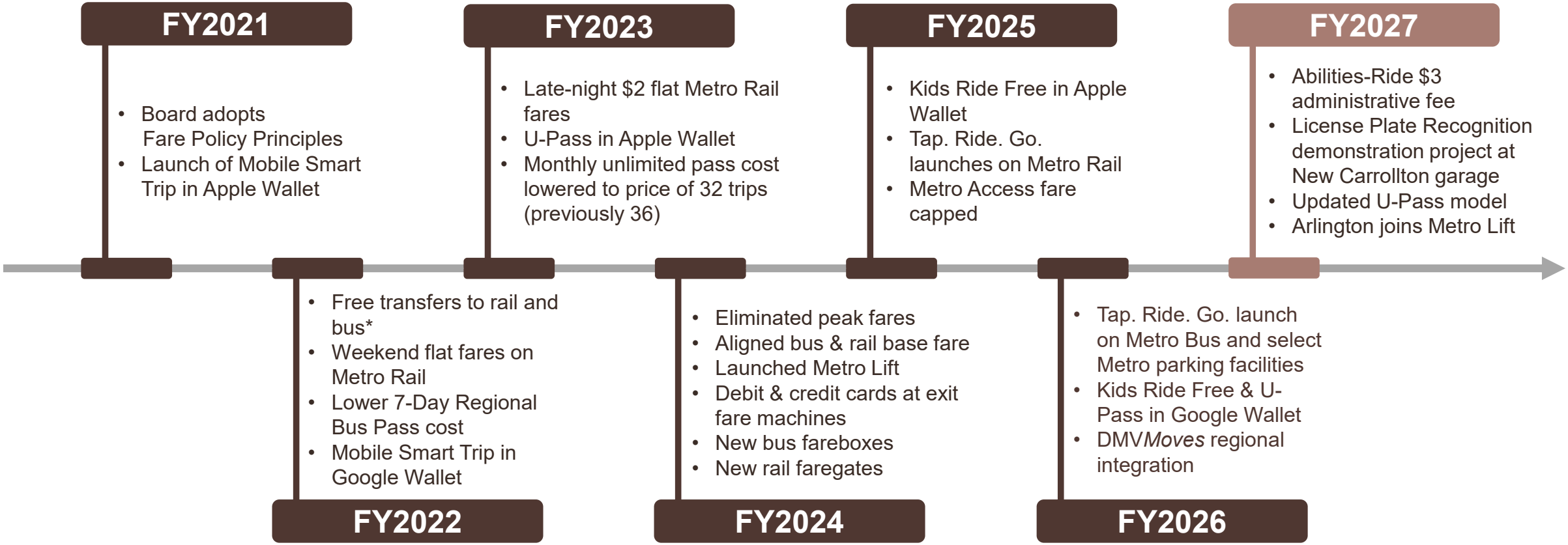
U-Pass Program
Unlimited trips on Metro Bus and Metro Rail at single discounted annual price for eligible students at participating universities
Expanded: FY2027

SmartBenefits Program
Discounted trips on Metro Bus and Metro Rail using pre-tax dollars for employees at participating employers

Adjusted for inflation, Metro Bus and Metro Rail fares have remained relatively stable since 1980



Metro has made significant changes towards fare modernization since FY2021

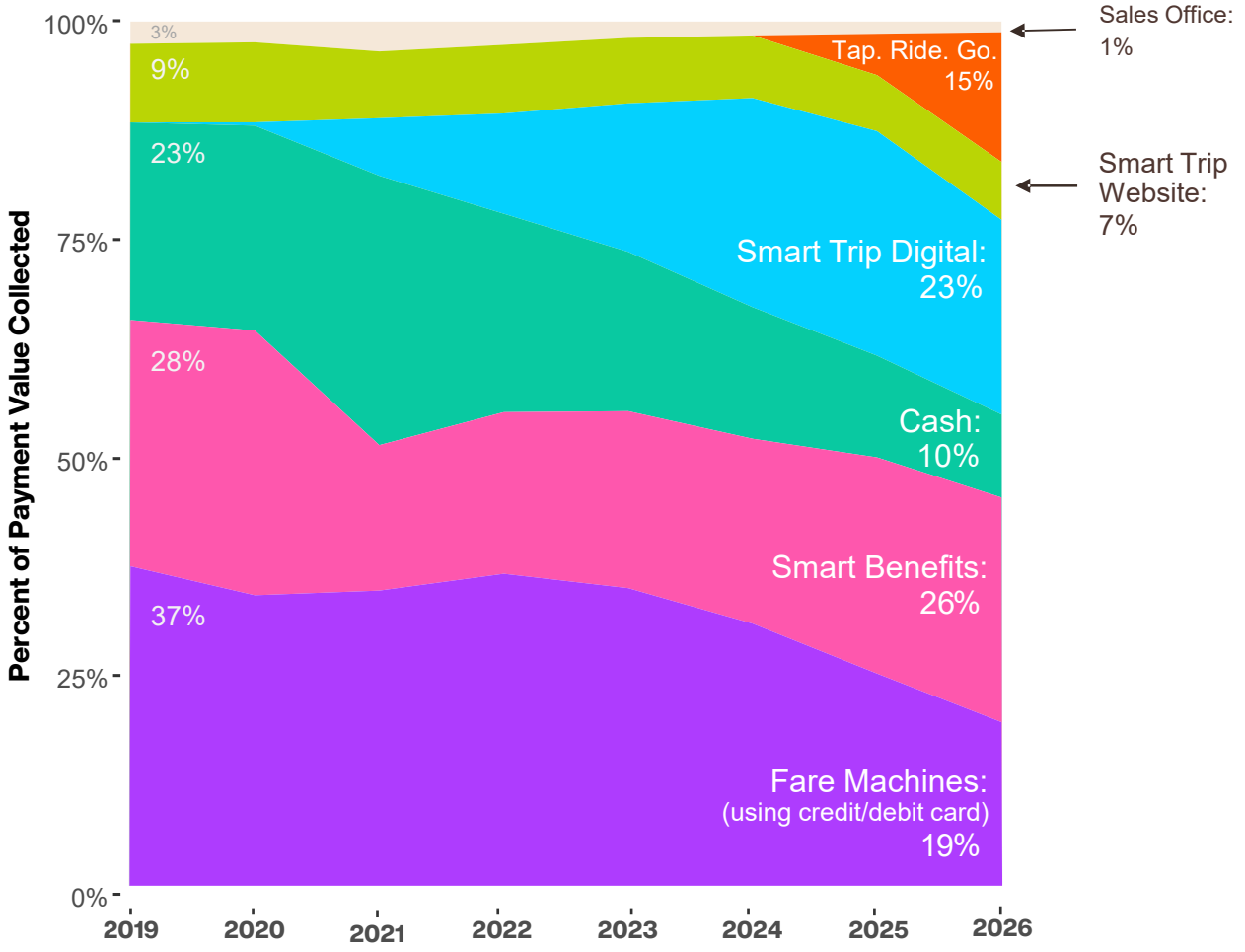


* Transfer credit is equivalent to the base rail/regular bus fare

The way customers pay is changing

- The share of all dollars collected in cash has decreased by almost two thirds since 2019
- The share of all dollars collected with credit card payments at fare machines nearly halved since 2019
- Tap. Ride. Go. now accounts for 15% of all dollars in fare revenue collected
- Institutional and reduced fare programs (including students, seniors and Smart Benefits) still require Smart Trip cards

Total Dollar Value of Sales Transactions by Payment Channel
January 2019 through August 2026



Source: Metro Sales Transactions, January 2019 – August 2026.
Note: Credit/Debit Card at fare machines includes at CPOS.
Note: Unused Smart Benefits Non-Rollover excluded.
Note: 85% of all cash payment occurred at fare machines.

Distance-based fares continues to benefit Metro

Metro Rail was built to charge distance-based fares

Metro Rail has charged customers **distance-based fares since 1977**

The region has long recognized the value of distance-based fares:

> Local officials say flat fares would discourage ridership and "**eliminate the flexibility needed to balance differing political and financial concerns**"
>
> — **Washington Post,** October 30, 1980

Distance-based fares continue to provide an efficient solution for fair fares

Fair, Value-Based Fare Structure
Customers taking longer trips pay more because they travel farther and receive more service, enabling lower base fares providing more competitiveness for short trips

Efficient Fare Structure:
Structured so customers with a greater willingness to pay and who generally use more of the system pay more, allowing the system to generate more ridership and revenue

A revenue-neutral flat fare on Metro Rail would increase fares significantly for many customers

Current:
Distance-based fares

$3.04

Average Metro Rail fare paid, FY2027 estimate

+46%



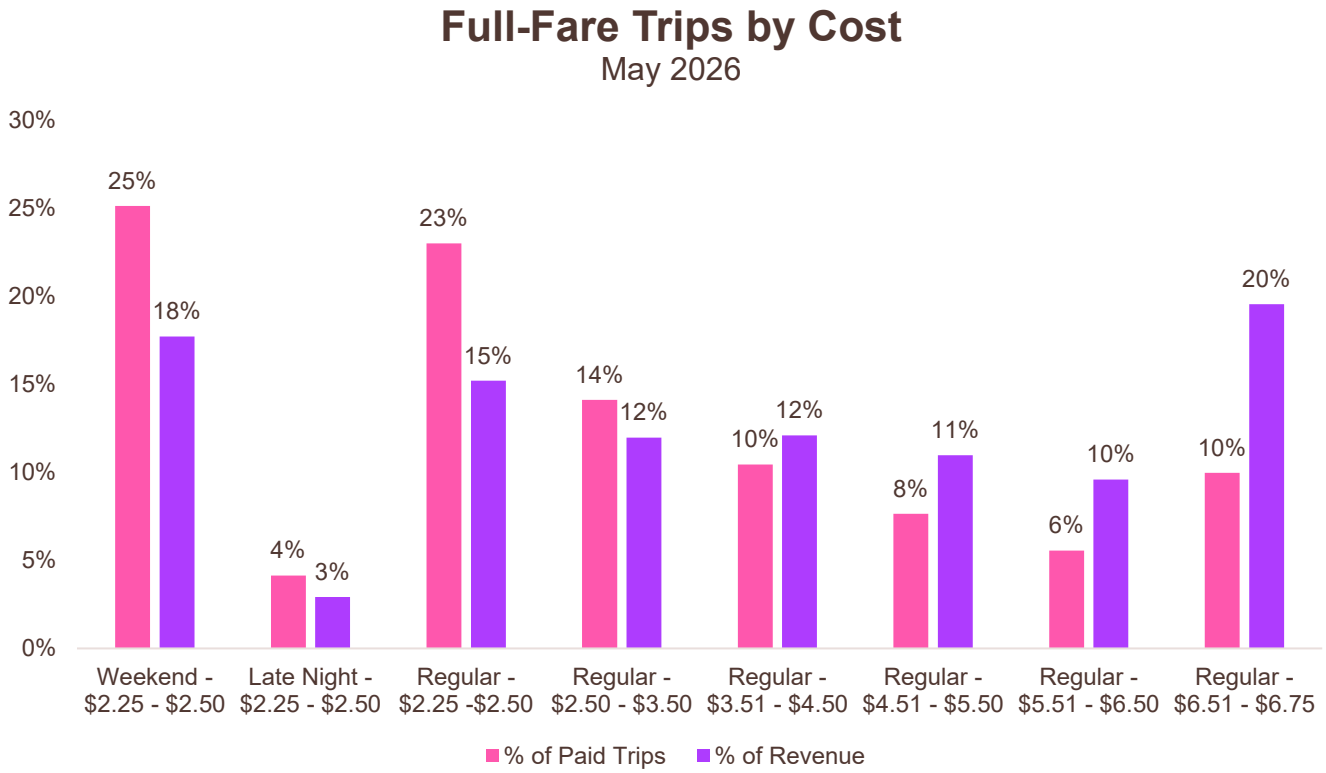
Conceptual:
Revenue-neutral flat fare

$4.40

Metro Rail flat-fare required, FY2027 estimate

Based on June 2026 NCS estimate of share of paid ridership and FY2027 budget figures; assumes maintaining existing transfer policy and no change to Metro Bus fares

Most Metro Rail revenue comes from short and medium distance trips



Average Distances To/From Jurisdiction
May 2026 customers

From/To	District of Columbia	Maryland	Virginia
District of Columbia	4.0 mi	12.8 mi	13.7 mi
Maryland	12.7 mi	7.1 mi	17.9 mi
Virginia	12.8 mi	18.0 mi	8.7 mi

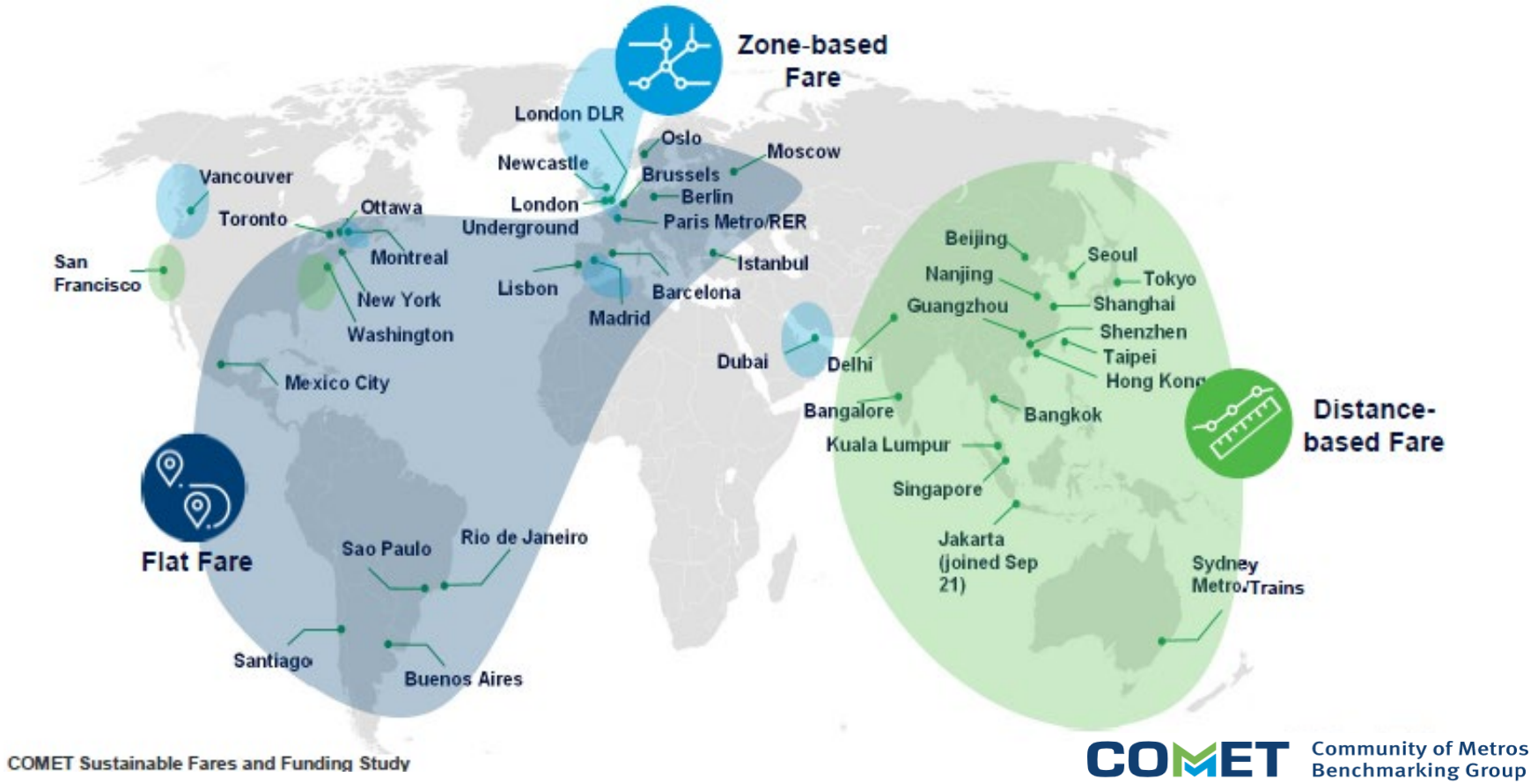
International benchmarking of Metro fare structures

Metro fare systems vary globally with some regional clustering

Distance-based fares are more common on longer networks and in Asia

U.S. examples of distance-based fares:

- WMATA
- BART
- PATCO
- Sound Transit



CoMET map as of 2021

Beyond Full Fare Customers

Reduced Fare Products: Metro offers 50% off full fare to these eligible customers[1]

	Senior SmarTrip	Disability Card	Metro Lift
Eligibility	Customers aged 65 and older	Medicare recipients under 65, other qualifying disabilities	Customers enrolled in SNAP in DC, Maryland or Virginia
Online Enrollment?	In Progress	No	Yes
In-Person Enrollment	Transit Accessibility Center, Montgomery County Libraries, Commuter Stores	Transit Accessibility Center, Trips Commuter Store	Transit Accessibility Center, Commuter Stores
Regionally Accepted?	Yes	Yes	Only by ART
Active Customers (June 2026)	**77,000**	**15,000**	**6,000**
Share of Total Metro Trips	**4%**	**1%**	**0.5%**

[1]*Reduced fares are federally mandated for seniors and persons with disabilities. Metro also offers those customers the ability to purchase a 7-Day regional bus pass for half price.*

Institutional Programs & Smart Benefits

Metro offers discounted rides to institutions and pre-tax rides to eligible employees

	K-12 Students	University Students	Smart Benefits
Eligibility	Varies by jurisdiction	Students enrolled at participating institutions	Employees at participating employers
Online Enrollment?	In Progress	No	Yes
Distribution Method	Through school	Through school	N/A
Regionally Accepted?	Yes, but varies	No	Yes
Active Customers (June 2026)	41,000	23,500	154,000
Share of Total Metro Trips	4%	2%	12%

Metro partners with participating institutions to provide free rides to student customers.

Employees can load pre-tax dollars onto their SmarTrip card.

Unlimited Pass Products

Short-Term Unlimited Passes

Unlimited rides on
Metro Bus and Metro Rail for:

1 Day: $13.50
6 times base fare, 2 times max fare

3 Days: $33.75
15 times base fare, 5 times max fare

7 Days: $60.75
27 times base fare, 9 times max fare

Specialized Weekly Passes

Unlimited rides on
Metro Bus and regional buses for:

7 Days: $13.50
6 times base fare

Unlimited rides up to $4.50 on
Metro Bus and Metro Rail for:

7 Days: $40.50
18 times base fare, 9 times midpoint fare ($4.50)

Monthly Passes

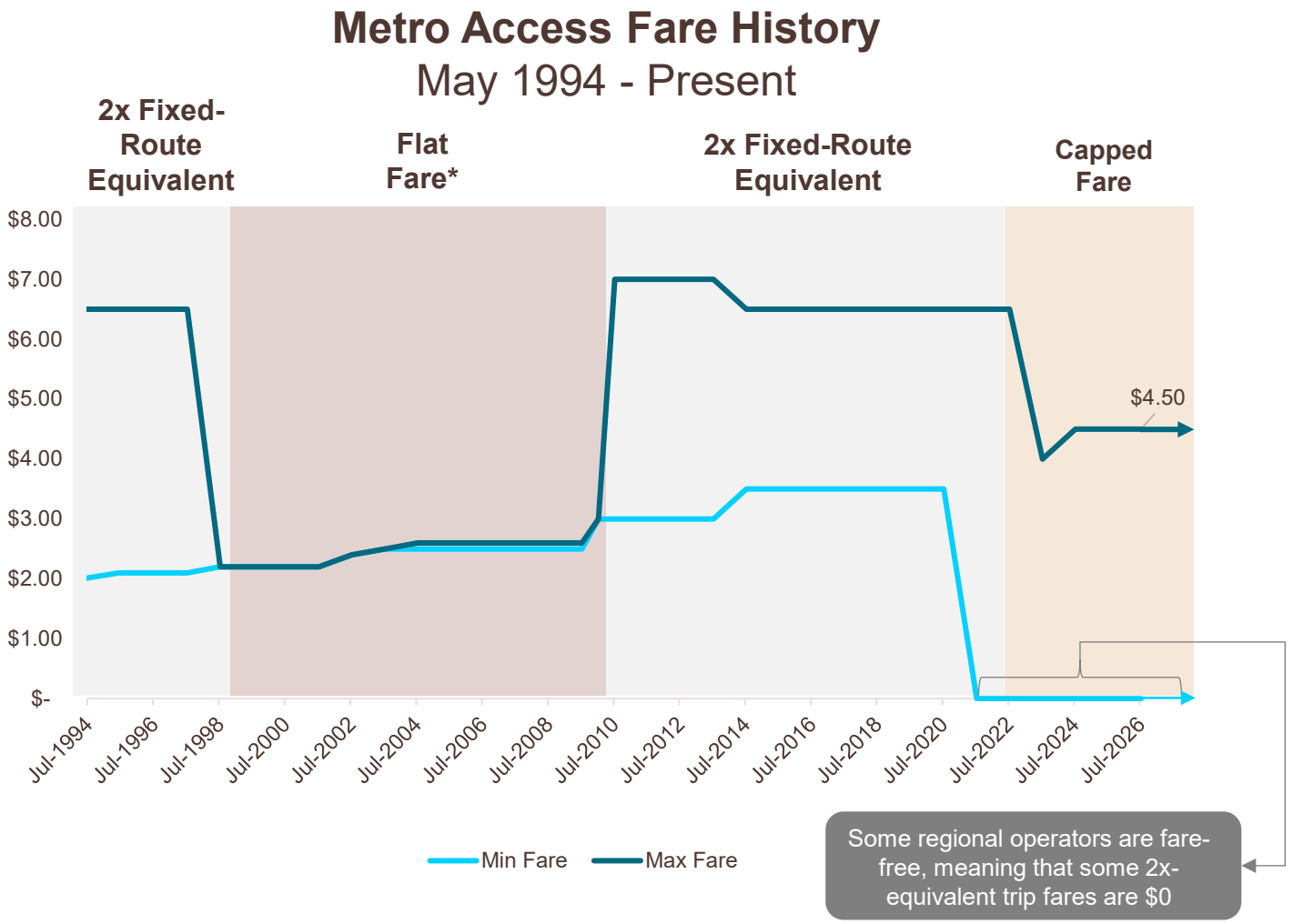
Unlimited rides on
Metro Bus and Metro Rail below:

$2.25 fare: $72.00
32 times fare level

up to

$6.75 fare: $216.00
32 times fare level

The fare structure of Metro Access has changed over time



Metro Access Fare Structure

Metro Access has used several fare structures over time:

- **May 1994 – October 1998: 2x Equivalent**
  Federal paratransit law requires Metro to assess a fare no greater than twice the fare of the fastest equivalent fixed-route transit option available.
- **October 1998 - July 2010: Flat Fare**
  Customers paid a single lower flat fare to use Metro Access, no matter their destination*
- **July 2010- July 2023: 2x Equivalent**
  Fares set at 2x fastest equivalent fixed-route transit option.
- **July 2023 – Present: Capped Fare**
  Customers pay 2x equivalent fixed-route transit option, up to a maximum fare cap no greater than $4.50 (as of 7/1/2024).

*10 cent difference between min and max fare beginning in 2003

Fare Technology

Metro has worked to keep payment methods contemporary with customer expectations

Smart Trip Mobile

Customer Expectation: Load and use Smart Trip cards on mobile

Metro Action: Launched Smart Trip Mobile in 2021

Result:

34%

Rail taps now using Mobile Smart Trip

Tap. Ride. Go.

Customer Expectation: Tap and go directly with a credit or debit card

Metro Action: Launched Tap. Ride. Go. in 2025

Result:

18%

Rail taps now using Tap. Ride. Go.

Metro offers three ways to pay for Bus and Rail...

Smart Trip

Benefits for Metro

- Metro-controlled fare media
- Customers can pay for stored value and passes using many sources
- Free passes possible

Drawbacks for Metro

- Higher complexity to manage and maintain
- Highly customized specifications, limiting flexibility and making bugs and repairs bespoke

Tap. Ride. Go.

Benefits for Metro

- Metro not responsible for operating and maintaining fare media
- Highly modular cloud-based architecture

Drawbacks for Metro

- Less direct control over fare media, making certain programs more difficult
- Transaction-based fee structure makes certain programs more difficult

Cash

Benefits for Metro

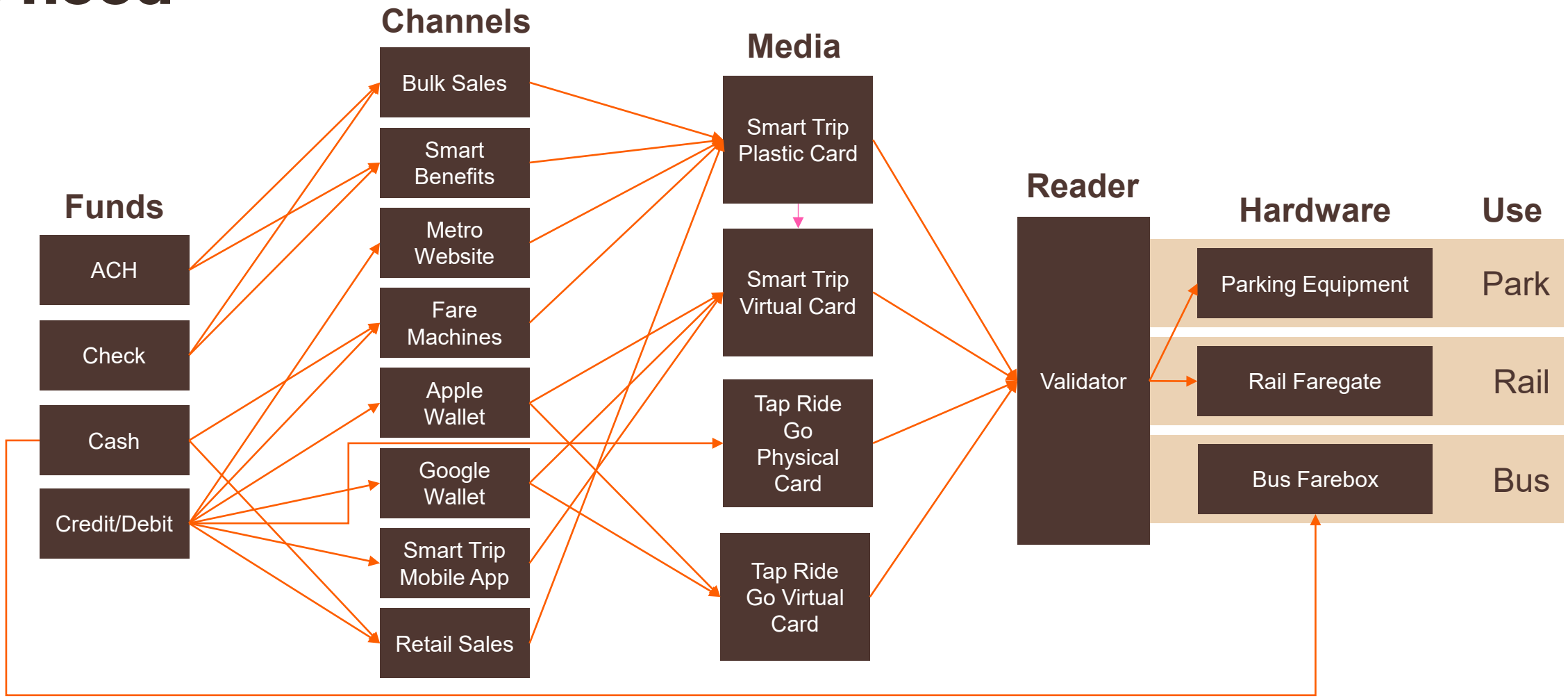
- Cash collection enables payment from unbanked customers
- No transaction-based fees or fare media to maintain

Drawbacks for Metro

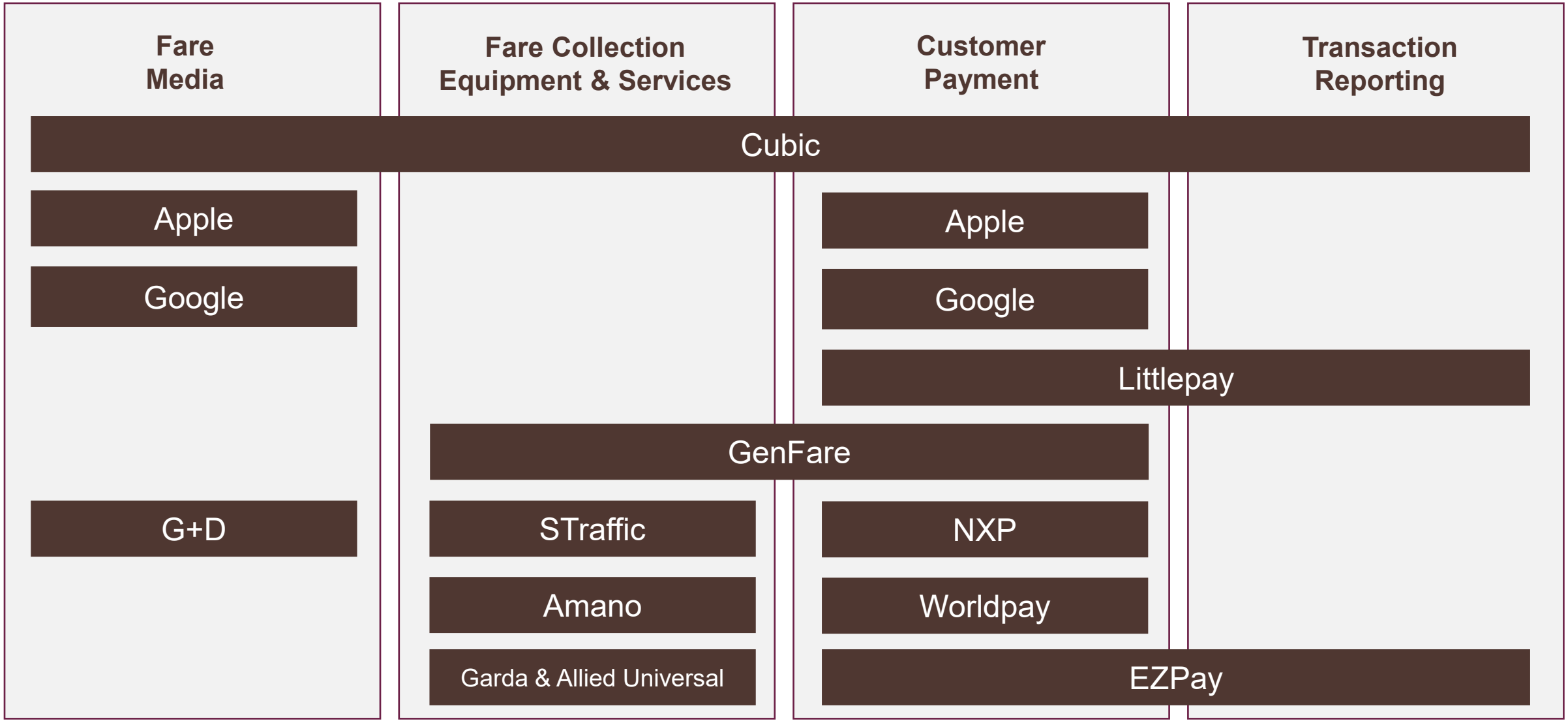
- Cash collection infrastructure is significantly more expensive to collect and count physical cash at fare vendors and fareboxes

Does not include Metro Access EZPay; see Appendix

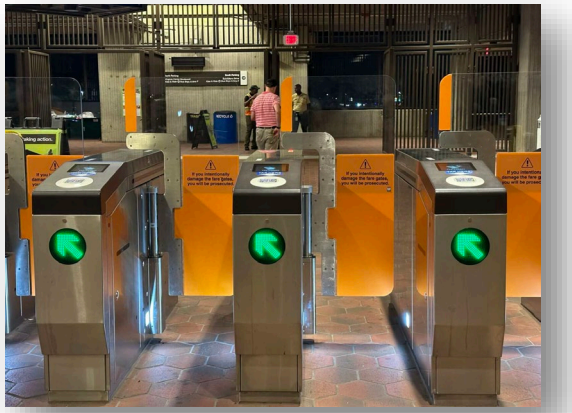
...but Metro deals with much more complexity under the hood



The fare ecosystem at Metro also involves many vendors



Metro has diversified the Bus and Rail fare systems

	Faregates	Fare Vendors	Fare Systems
New	 STraffic *2021 - Present*	 Indra *2028+*	Littlepay *2025+* Cubic *2027+*
Old	 Cubic *1970's - 2021*	 Cubic *1970's - 2028*	Cubic *1970's - 2027*

Ongoing Projects: Smart Trip

Smart Trip **Infrastructure Upgrades**

- **Integration with new parking system**
  Upgrade parking equipment to support Tap. Ride. Go. and modern payment options.
- **Oracle Cloud Infrastructure migration**
  Move core systems to the cloud to improve performance and reduce infrastructure costs.
- **Compact Point of Sale (CPOS) replacement**
  Replace end-of-life retail sales devices to improve reliability and reduce maintenance challenges.
  Note: requires procurement action

Smart Trip **Enhancements**

- **Kids Ride Free in Google Wallet**
  Enable conversion of Kids Ride Free cards in Google Wallet, expanding beyond Apple Wallet.
- **Over the air autoloads for Mobile Smart Trip**
  Enable automatic loading of funds and passes to mobile devices without requiring a tap.
- **WMATA.com and Smart Trip modernization**
  Modernize web platforms to deliver a faster, simpler, and more user-friendly experience.

Major Project In Progress: **Next Generation Customer Terminals**

Replacement of all aging fare machines at Metro stations with fewer new machines
Customers will be able to buy and load Smart Trip cards, plan trips, and receive alerts in multiple languages

Ongoing Projects: Tap. Ride. Go.

Tap. Ride. Go. **Expansion**

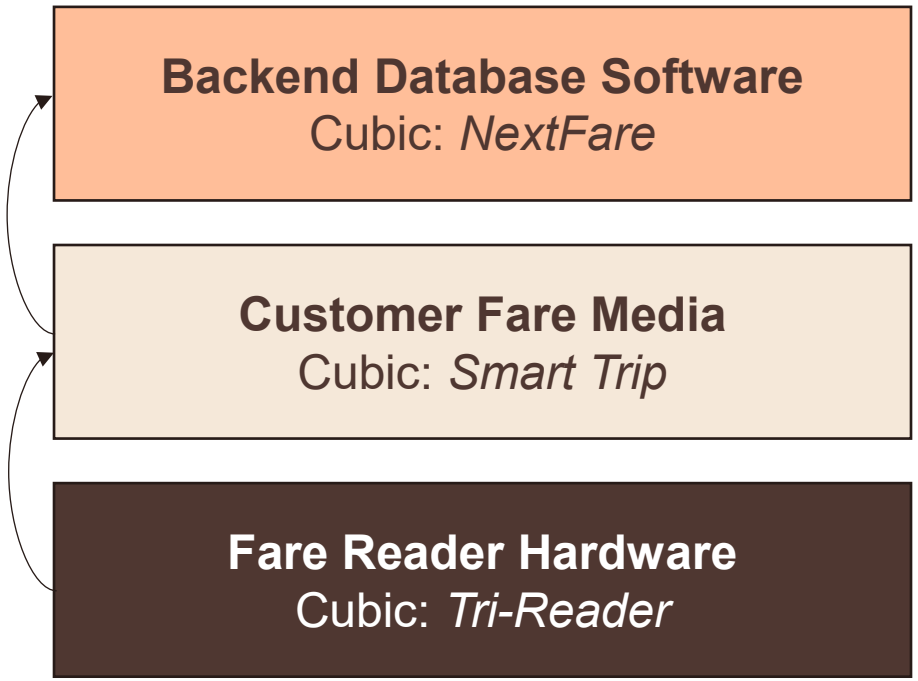
- **Ongoing:** Expansion to Metro parking facilities
- **In discussions:** Expansion to Purple Line and regional bus operators
- **Future-looking:** Expansion of Tap. Ride. Go. to VRE and MARC

Tap. Ride. Go. **Enhancements**

- **Ongoing:** Inspection app, additional bank cards
- **In discussions:** Concessions program(s)
  e.g., Senior and Metro Lift
  & payment aggregation
- **Future-looking:** Integrated ticketing with large event providers

For two decades, Metro used a vertically-integrated fare system

Metro's fare system was vertically integrated from 2000 through 2024, with a major improvement coming from the introduction of Smart Trip Mobile in 2020.



Backend Database:
Stores record of all card-level transactions, allowing Metro to maintain reporting capabilities and transfer value between cards.

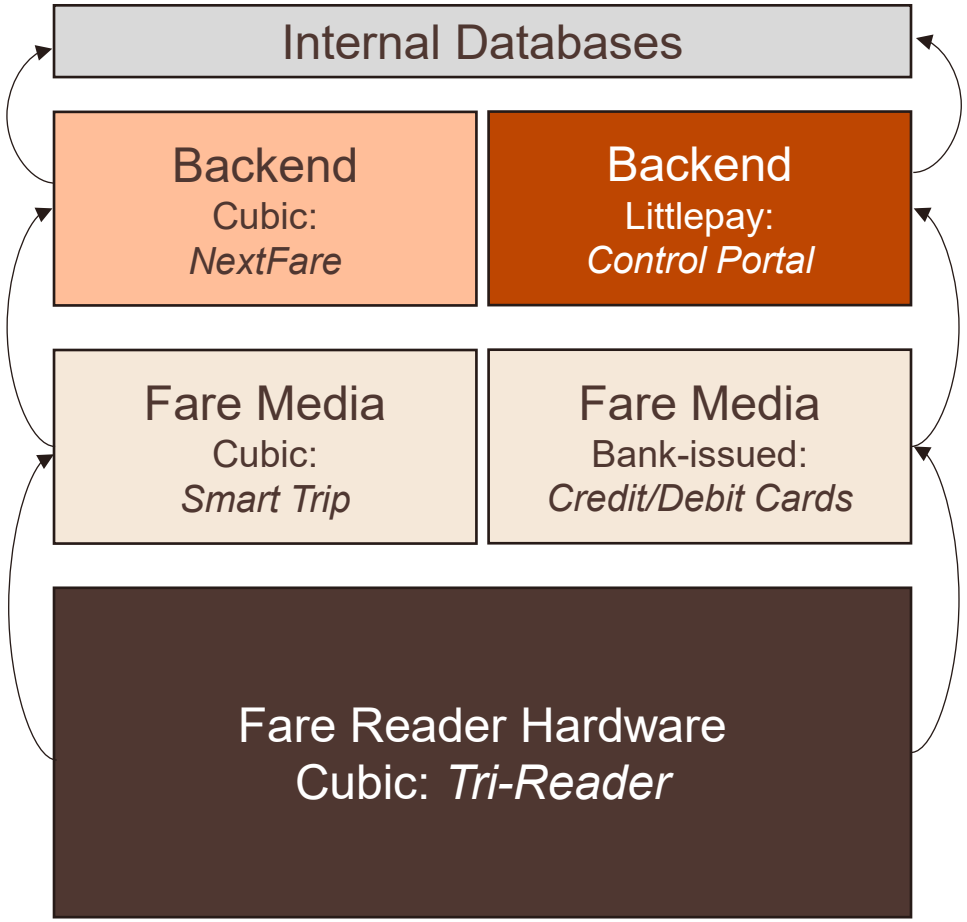
Fare Media:
Metro issues Cubic fare media to customers. Fare media stores all value and passes purchased by customer.

Fare Reader: Required to add and subtract value from Smart Trip card. Contains fare rules that determine whether to allow boarding and calculates value to deduct for trip.

Note: Simplified overview also applies to Mobile Smart Trip

Today, Metro's current fare system is no longer vertically integrated—changes created no customer impact

Customers may still use the previous vertically-integrated system, but Metro now provides an additional option.



Internal Databases: Currently used by analysts for reporting

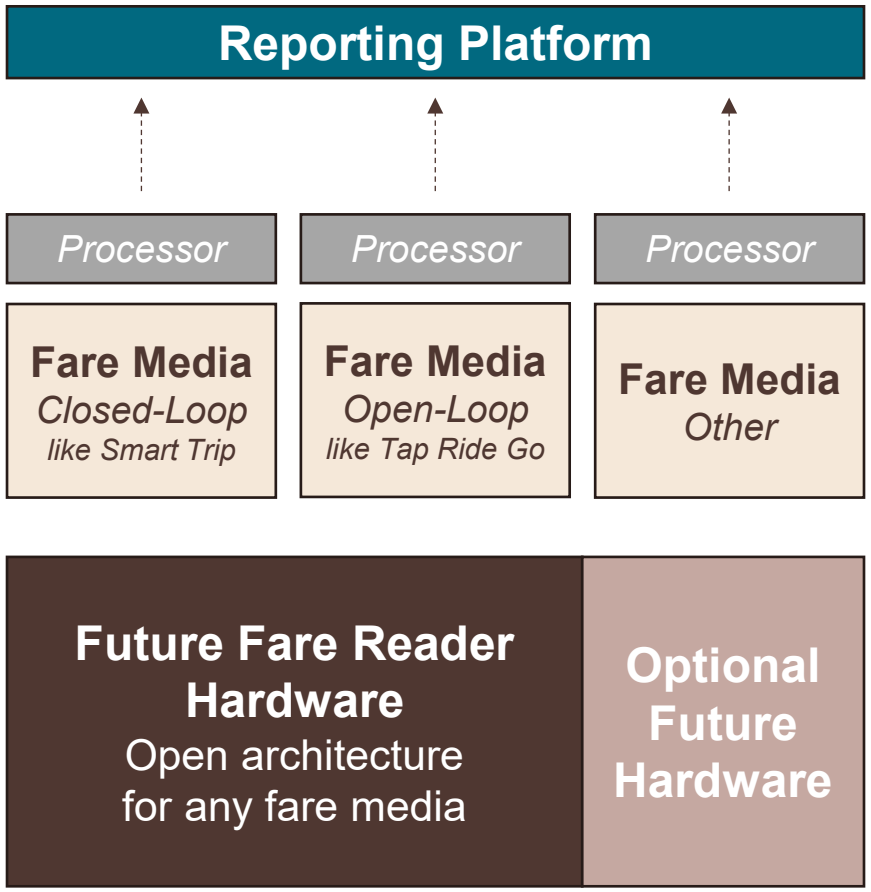
Backend Databases:
Both backends store record of all card-level transactions, allowing Metro to maintain reporting and audit capabilities. Metro combines reporting from these sources into in-house databases.

Fare Media:
Smart Trip stores value and passes purchased by customer.
Credit/debit cards only used as token to bill customer retroactively.

Fare Reader: Provides different functions for different fare media

- All Fare Media: Determines whether to allow boarding
- Smart Trip Only: Adds and subtracts value from card; contains fare rules that calculates value to deduct for trip.
- Littlepay Only: Reads, encrypts, and sends credit/debit card info to Littlepay for fare rules calculation and billing.

In the future, Metro's fare system will be scalable, modular, and easily adaptable to future customer payment trends



Reporting Platform:
Metro leverages a unified reporting platform that acts as a source-of-truth for all fare payment methods.

Fare Media & Fare Media Processor(s):
Metro will be ready to adapt to changing customer payment methods by enabling modular fare media offerings provided through a transaction processor layer provided by vendors. Cloud-based processors will enable fare calculation & customer billing for each separate payment method.

Fare Reader(s): Hardware is not linked to a particular vendor. Hardware will serve to route multiple types of customer fare media to the appropriate transaction processor. This will enable customers to seamlessly tap any supported fare media at faregates and fare readers.

Note: Fare Media Processor role is functionally equivalent to software orchestration layer(s).

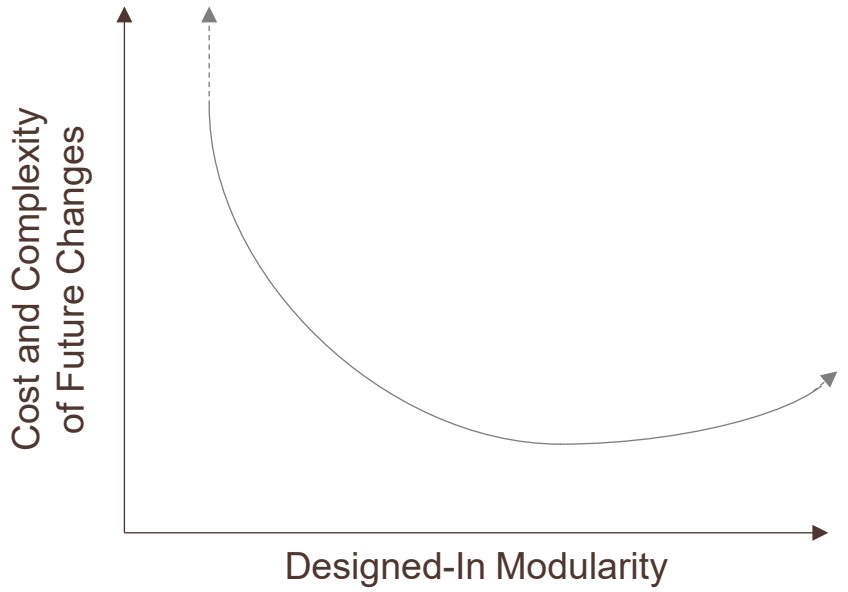
The most powerful trait of future infrastructure: modularity

Customer payment trends have changed multiple times since the launch of Smart Trip
Customers transitioned from a primarily cash-based economy to debit cards, then to credit cards, and now to a mobile-first payments system.

Adding new payment methods to a single monolithic system is difficult
Metro has added features to the non-modular Smart Trip system…but at significant cost and complexity.
e.g., Mobile Wallet

Metro cannot anticipate all future payment trends and should invest in future modularity
A future fare payment system should respond to current customer preferences while leaving room to easily integrate future payment methods.

Metro's future fare infrastructure should be designed to be easily adaptable



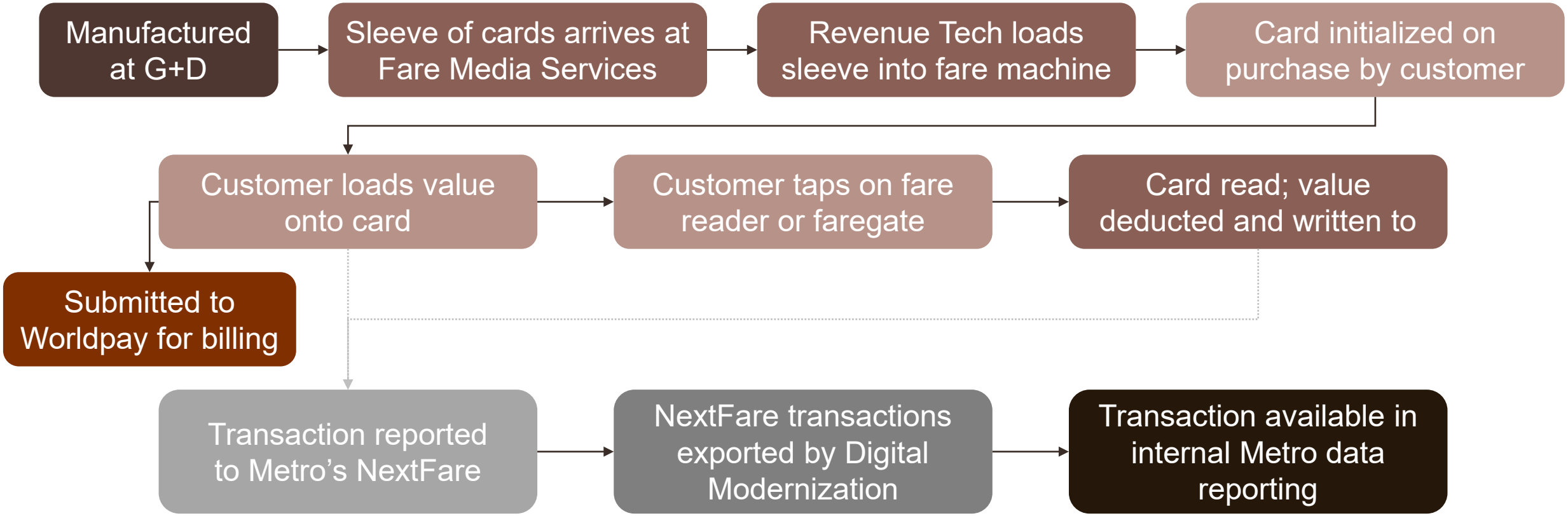
Future modular fare infrastructure also better enables DMVMoves goals

DMVMoves Vision:
One region, one transit network, **one fare system**

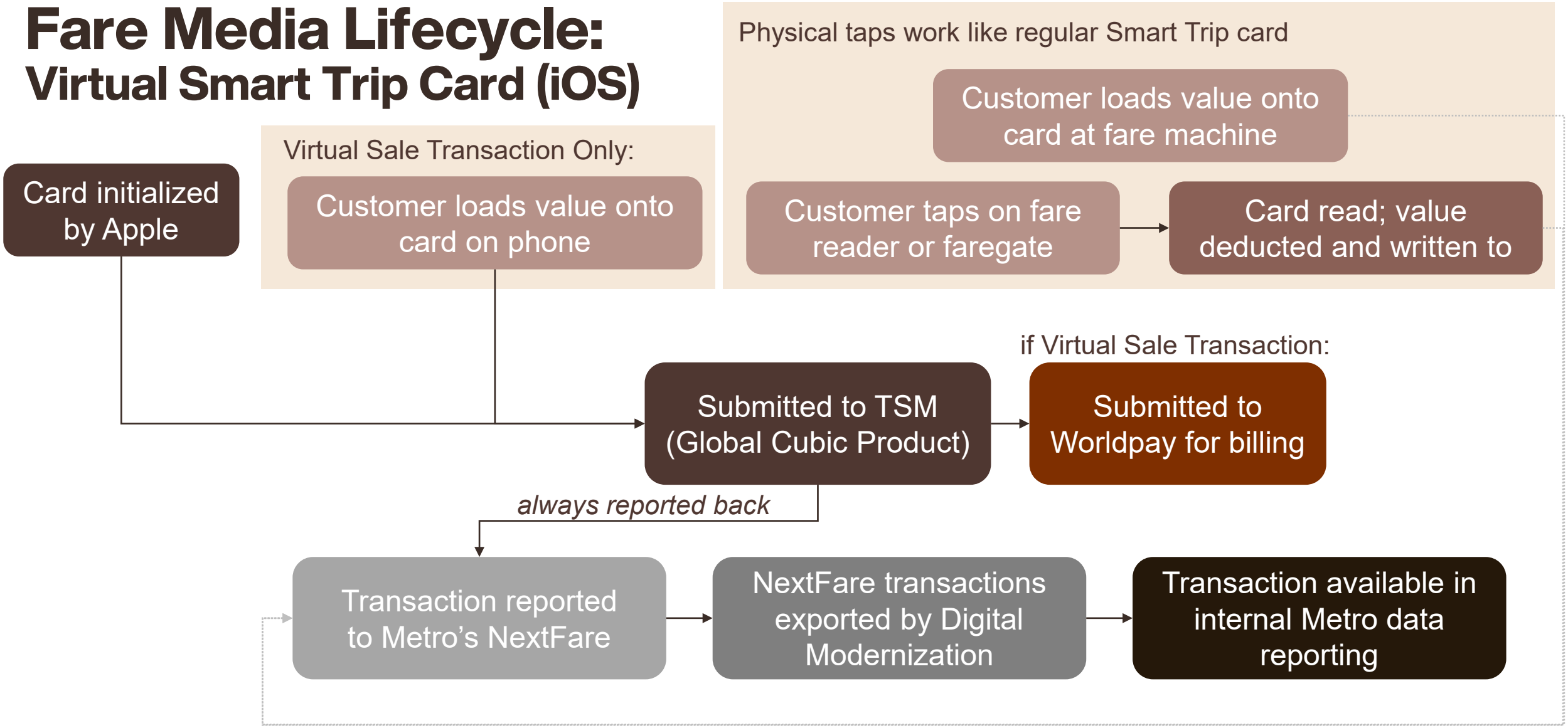
Consistent fare rules	Standardized discount frameworks	Expanded concessions programs

Implementation requires flexible and scalable fare infrastructure

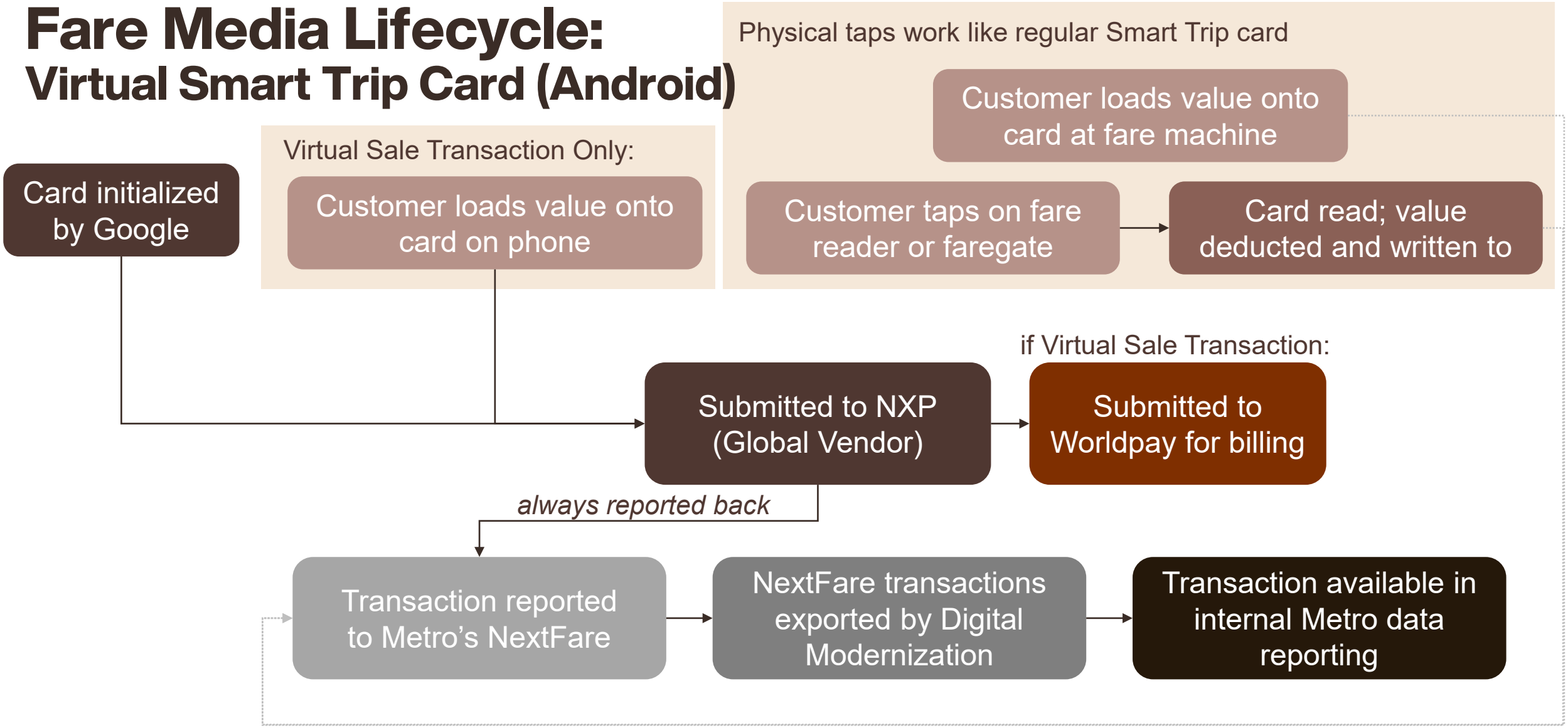
Fare Media Lifecycle:
Physical Smart Trip Card



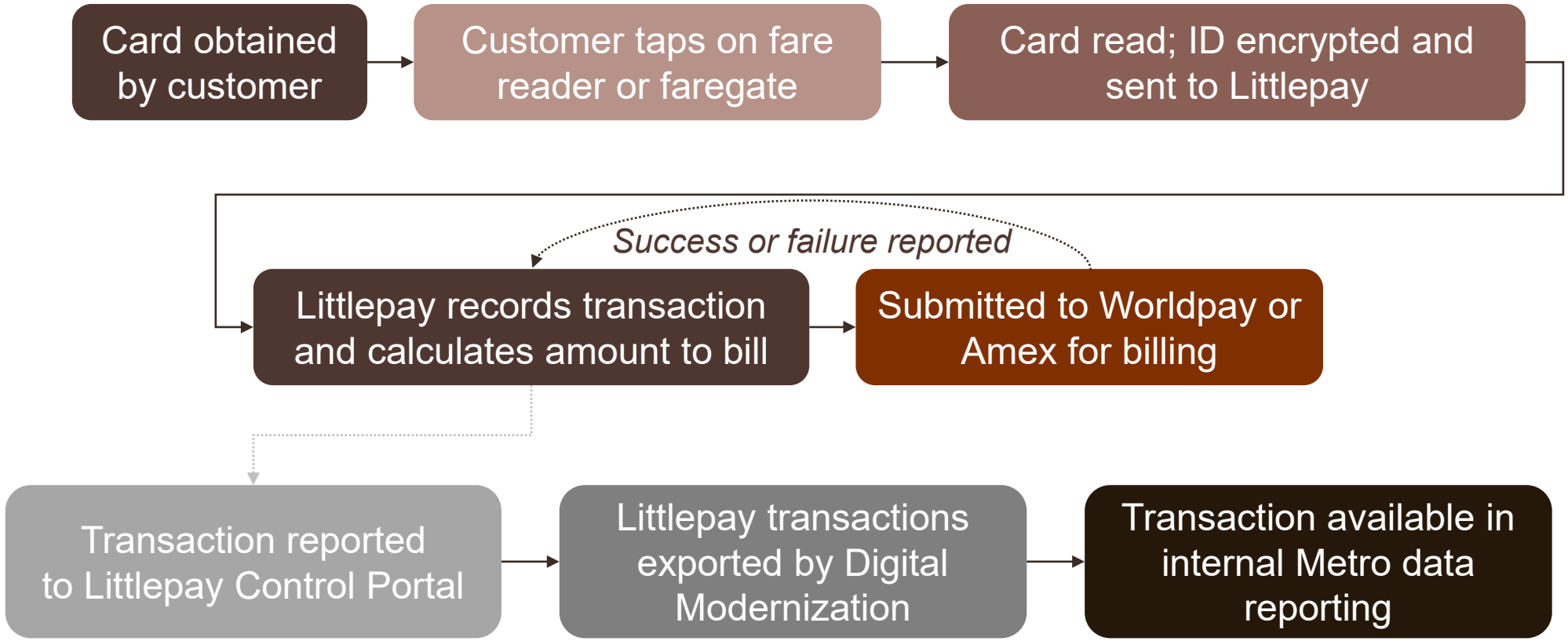
Fare Media Lifecycle:
Virtual Smart Trip Card (iOS)



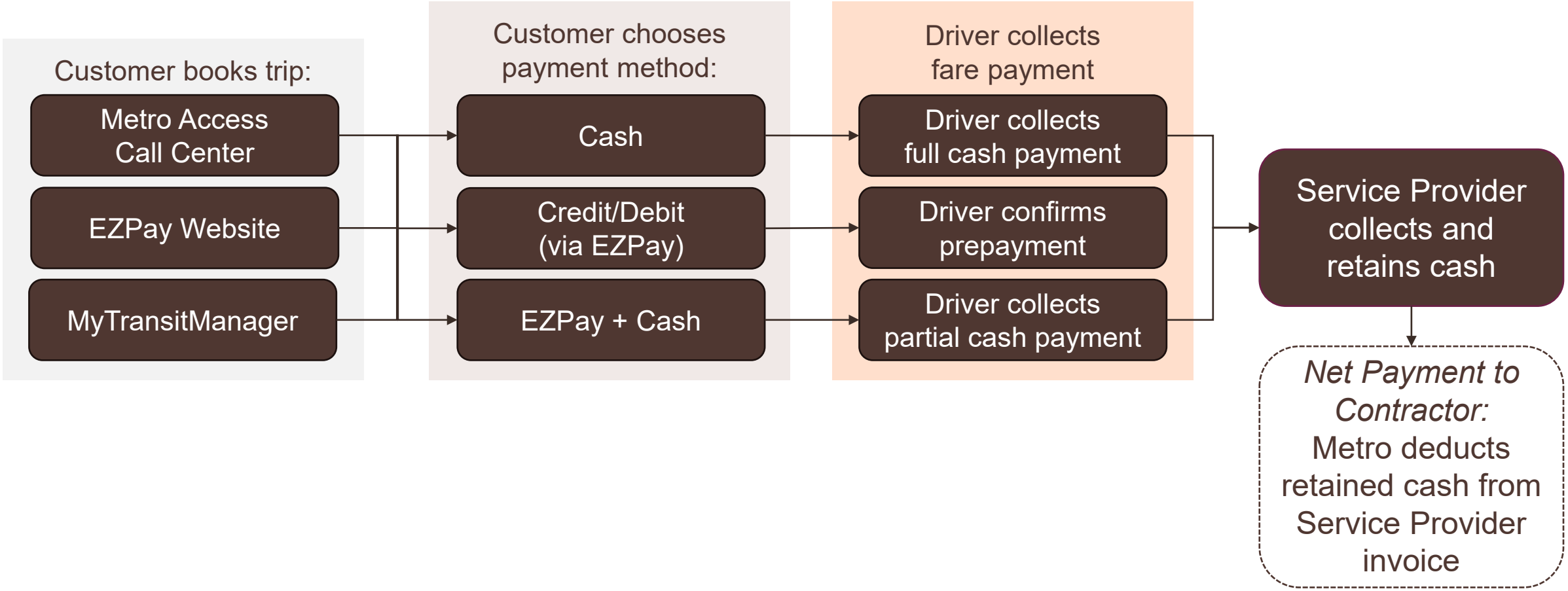
Fare Media Lifecycle:
Virtual Smart Trip Card (Android)



Fare Media Lifecycle:
Credit or Debit Card (Littlepay)



MetroAccess Fare Flow



Note: Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) ride free | Companions pay same fare as eligible customer | Abilities-Ride customer fare currently $0 (WMATA subsidized) + $3 administrative fee beginning 7/1/26

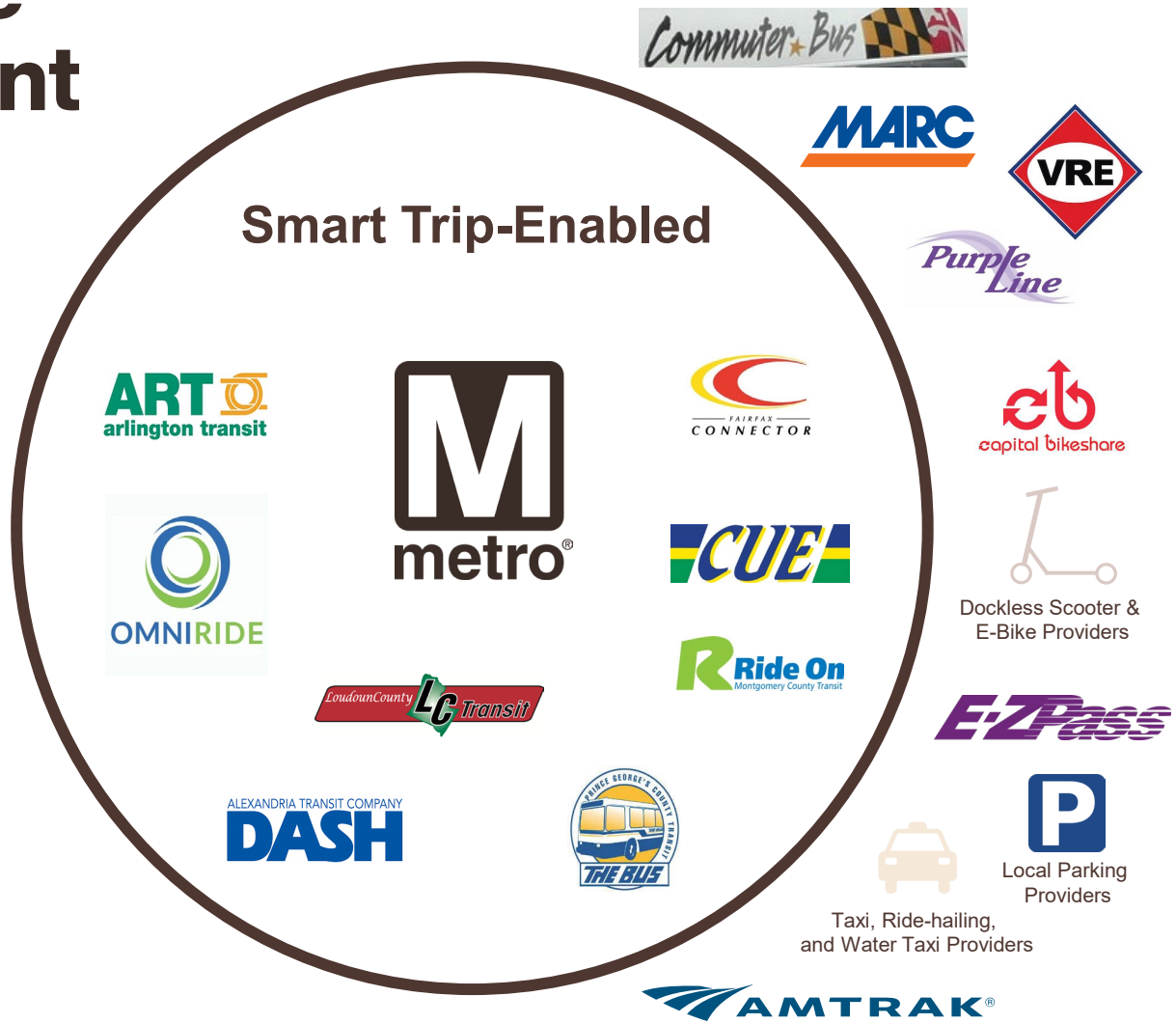
Regional Fare Policy

Smart Trip continues to be the primary transit payment method in the area

Smart Trip allowed the region to unify fare payments for the first time.

From its inception, agencies recognized a need for a single regional payment method.

Today, **Smart Trip-enabled operators provide 92% of transit trips in the region**, and the share of customers paying with Smart Trip has increased as the use of cash has declined.



Note: These agencies participate in the Smart Trip Operations Funding Agreement to provide for cost sharing of the funding for a seamless regional Smart Trip card system. Ride On, TheBus, DASH, and CUE are currently not collecting fares.

Customers are using the region's transit as one unified system

Customers can and do choose to travel using multiple operators.

Customers want one simple and frictionless way to pay for service.

In **both the near term and the long term**, more work can be done to benefit our shared customer base.

77%

of customers using regional transit services also use Metro.*

20%

of all Metro Bus trips start at bus stops shared with a regional transit provider.**

* Percentage of taps from cards also using Metro as a share of all customer taps on operator, May 2025. Operators not using Smart Trip in May 2025 were not included. Source: May 2025 AFC Data.
** Using regional GTFS data and July 2025 Metrobus APC counts.

Today, regional fare policy is inconsistent and fragmented

	Operator	Base Fare	Free Transfers	Rail-Bus Unlimited Passes	Senior & Disabled*	Metro Lift	U-Pass	K-12 Student Pass*	Smart-Benefits
	Metro	$2.25	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local Bus	Fairfax Connector	$2.25	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Local Bus	ART	$2.25	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Local Bus	RideOn	Free	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Local Bus	DASH	Free	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Local Bus	CUE	Free	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Local Bus	TheBus	Free	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Regional Rail	MARC	$6.00	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Regional Rail	VRE	$5.00	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Regional Rail	Purple Line	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Regional Rail	Amtrak	N/A	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Bike & Scooter	Capital Bikeshare	$1.00	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Bike & Scooter	Dockless Scooter & Bike	N/A	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Commuter Bus	OmniRide Express	$11.00	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Commuter Bus	LC-Transit Commuter	$11.00	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Commuter Bus	MTA Commuter Bus	$4.00	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Parking & Tolls	Parking Operators	N/A	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Parking & Tolls	EZ-Pass	N/A	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

* Jurisdictions offer similar programs to one another but are not necessarily standardized or accepted by other operators.

Fare Strategy

Customers can use many ways to pay for Metro Bus and Metro Rail trips

Smart Trip Card

Customers can purchase Stored Value and passes at Metro stations, through Apple Wallet and Google Wallet, at select retail locations, through the Smart Trip app, or online at wmata.com.

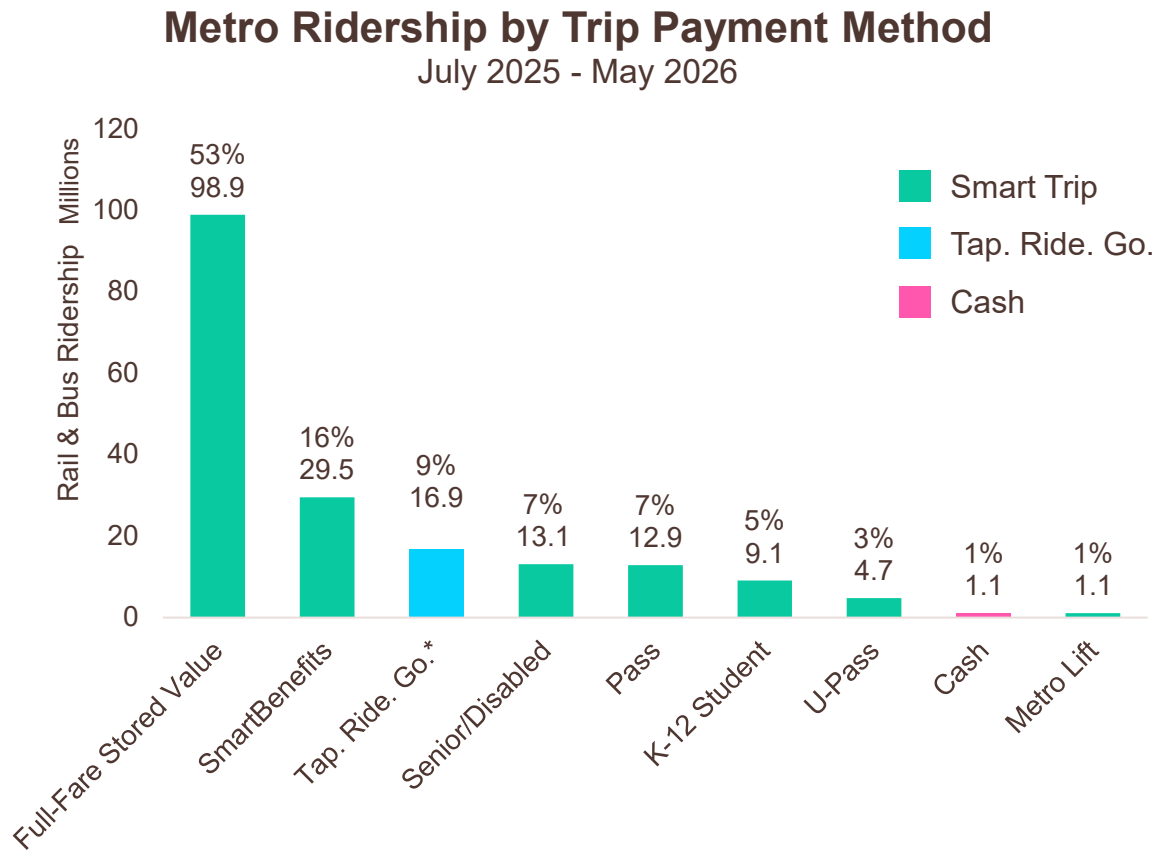
Customers can receive a half-off discounts on fares through Metro's Reduced Fare programs.

Tap. Ride. Go.

Customers can pay for Metro services directly using their physical or virtual credit or debit card by tapping at the fare gate or fare reader.

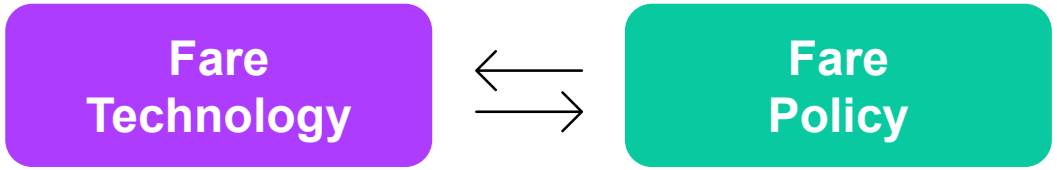
Cash

Customers can load cash to their Smart Trip card at Metro stations and on Metro Bus or pay for a single trip at the Bus farebox.



Tap. Ride. Go. accepted on Metro Rail for full period and on Metro Bus since November 2025.
Figures reflect cash used for direct trip payment on bus only; cash loads onto Smart Trip not included
Note: Customers with a qualifying disability may receive free trips on Metro Rail and Metro Bus.

Today's fare technology decisions set tomorrow's fare policy options



Short Term

Technology

drives

Policy

Long Term

Policy

drives

Technology

Example: **Smart Trip**

1990s: **Smart Trip Investment**
To improve the customer experience, Board authorizes capital investment into Smart Trip, a monolithic fare management system

2000s: **Regional Integration**
Using new unified Smart Trip capabilities, region makes policy decision to provide single integrated payment and transfer system

2010s: **Smart Trip Reinvestment**
Smart Trip backend upgrade cancelled for performance issues, requiring recommitment to maintain existing fare infrastructure

2020s: **Fare Modernization**
Existing Smart Trip infrastructure limits new policy opportunities, requiring new investment in parallel Littlepay fare infrastructure

To collect fares from customers, Metro relies on an interconnected system of hardware and software

Fare Reader



Metro Bus / Metro Parking



Metro Rail

Fare Media

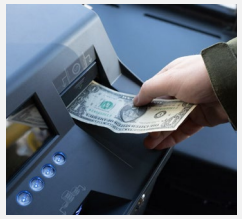




Smart Trip

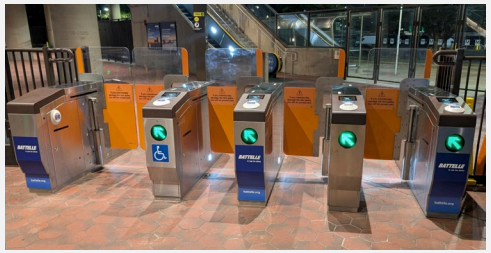


tap. ride. go.℠



Cash
Bus Only

Supporting Hardware



Metro Rail Faregates



Metro Bus
Farebox

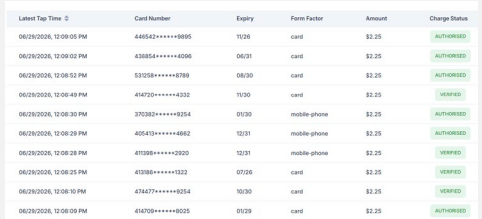


Smart Trip
Fare Machines

Supporting Software



Cubic Nextfare



Littlepay
Control Portal

Fare Strategy should enable...

Modern Payment System

- Digital-first pass & enrollment process
- Regional travel and event ticketing
- Fare inspections on Bus and Rail

One Regional Fare System

- Shared regional fare media
- Fare readers & faregates on regional rail and bus
- Integrated reduced fare programs

Employer-Paid Transit

- Employer-funded unlimited pass sales
- New pass pricing models for employers
- New travel benefits for employees

FY2028 Fare Concepts Preview

Only 40% of children in the region have access to free-to-student travel on Metro Bus and Metro Rail

Children can obtain a student Smart Trip card that provides free-to-student access to…

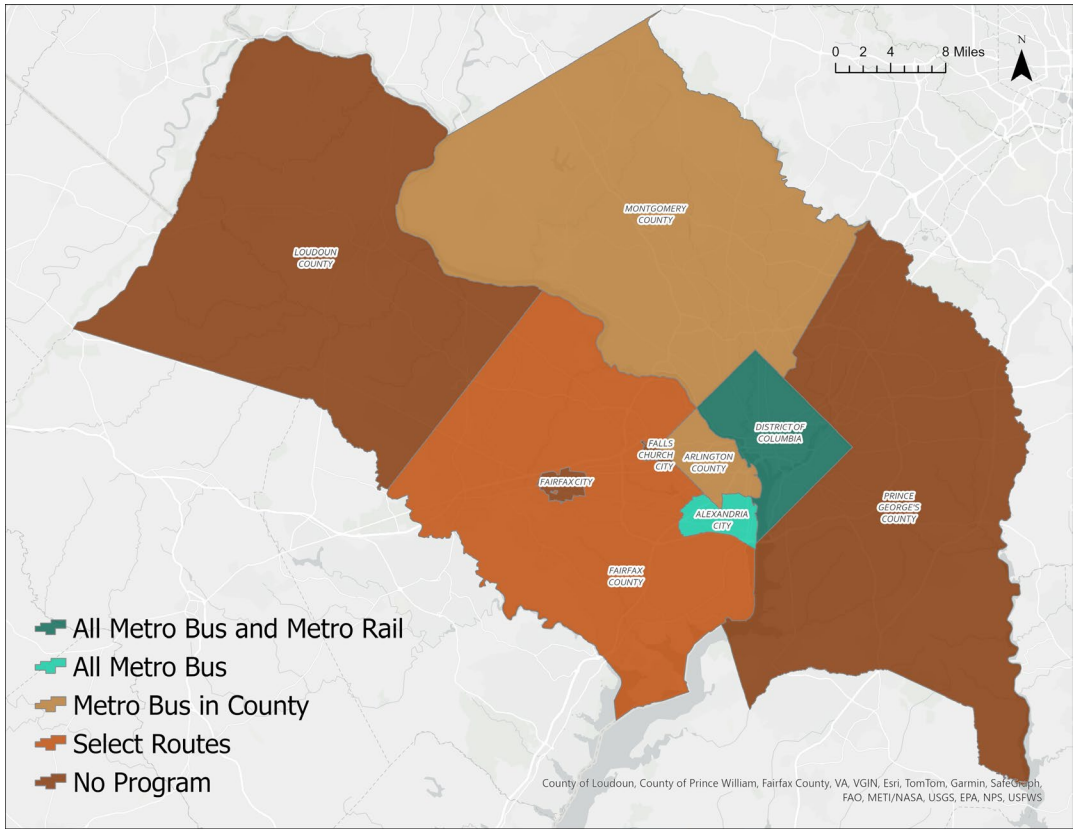
✓ **Any trip on Metro Bus and Metro Rail**
District of Columbia

Any trip on Metro Bus
City of Alexandria

Any trip on Metro Bus route in county
Arlington County, Montgomery County

School transport on select Metro Bus routes
Fairfax County

✗ **No program available**
Prince George's County, Loudoun County, City of Fairfax, City of Falls Church



Why Now?



Improved fare architecture
Fare Strategy recommends modernized payment system, which enables enhanced integration with new fare media and school database systems



Digital-first student learning
Almost all students in the region now using digital-first learning models, allowing easier integration of digital enrollment process and student status



Regional momentum
Local jurisdictions have coalesced around providing universal access to free-to-youth travel as recommended in the DMV*Moves* Action Plan

In partnership with school districts, Metro can offer all children in the region free-to-youth access to transit

Joint Model

Enrollment
Children enroll and receive benefit through joint Metro-and-school platform based on school-known student status.

Fare Media
Students must tap phone (primarily for over 13 y.o.) or physical card with all-access pass.

Expiration
Valid for duration of enrollment in school district; expires on high school graduation.

Metro-led Model

Enrollment
Children enroll directly through Metro website by submitting proof of school enrollment or proof of age and residence.

Fare Media
Students must tap phone (primarily for over 13 y.o.) or physical card with all-access pass.

Expiration
Valid until 19th birthday, or if still enrolled, high school graduation.

FY2028 Fare Concepts Preview: Customer Impact

Inflation-Based Increase

All Metro customers see
+11.1% increase
to cost of transit

Revenue: **+8%**
Trips: **-3%**

Includes customers purchasing passes and U-Pass, Metro Access rides, and Abilities Ride fees

Does not immediately impact cost of K-12 student programs

New Parking Pricing Structure

Park-and-ride customers see approximately:

Revenue: + $0 million
Trips: +1.1 million

+ $2 change in fee at 4 locations
$0 change in fee at 14 locations
- $2 change in fee at 23 locations

Non-rider customers see +$3.00 to +$5.00 change in fee at most locations

Youth Fare Program

An additional **+580,000 children** receive access to reduced fares on Metro

Children located in Prince George's County, Loudoun County, Fairfax County, and City of Falls Church currently have no access to K-12 program discounts

Net Cost: $2.3 million
Trips: +0.6 million

Current student programs across the region are fragmented

Program	Who is eligible?	Which services are included?	How is Metro reimbursed?	Approximate # of Schools	Active Participants, FY2026	Avg tap trips per card	Program Start Date
DC Kids Ride Free	DC resident aged 5-21 enrolled in an elementary or secondary public, charter, private or parochial school located within the District.	Ride for free on all Metro Bus and Metro Rail routes. In prior years Circulator was included.	Per unique user, per school year, at rate of $365.	300 schools	49,400	10.5 trips/ month	June 2013 for bus and extended to rail in 2015
iRide for Arlington Students	Arlington County residents enrolled in K-12 can obtain an “iRide” card. Determined by the county.	Ride for free on select Metro Bus routes. Other regional operators or Metro Rail trips can be purchased using stored value.	Per ride at full-fare bus fare rate ($2.25), not including transfers.	41 public schools	5,400	3.5 trips/ month	Since 2023
Fairfax County Student Bus Pass	All Fairfax County and City of Fairfax middle and high school students (grades 7-12).	Ride for free on Fairfax Connector, CUE, and select Metro Bus routes. Other bus trips can be taken using stored value. Card does not work on Metro Rail.	Per ride at full-fare bus fare rate ($2.25), not including transfers.	52 middle and high schools	2,400	3.8 trips/ month	Since 2020 (pilot 2018)
Montgomery County Youth Cruiser Cards	Montgomery County residents with a RideOn Youth Cruiser Smart Trip card or a student id valid for the current school year	Ride for free on Metro Bus routes with stops in Montgomery County. Other regional operators or Metro Rail trips can be purchased using stored value. (Ride-On is currently fare-free).	Per ride at full-fare bus fare rate ($2.25) beginning in FY27. Previously, average fare across stored value and weekly bus passes.	210 public schools	1,500	0.8 trips/ month	Since 2020, updated 2024
Alexandria Student Subsidy	Alexandria City Public Schools middle and high school students.	Ride for free on all Metro Bus routes. Other regional operators or Metro Rail Trips can be purchased using stored value. (DASH is currently fare-free).	Per ride at full-fare bus fare rate ($2.25), not including transfers.	6 middle and high schools	Upcoming	Upcoming	Since 2026

Note: Active participants is measured as distinct cards used at least once Aug 1, 2025 - Jul 31, 2026 and not reported as lost/stolen for all jurisdictions except the District, where measured as distinct student ids associated with a card issued in SY25-26 and used at least once.

Jurisdictional breakdown of youth fare program costs

Jurisdiction	New Benefits	Additional Spend Required
District of Columbia	N/A	No significant change
Montgomery County	**New:** Metro Rail **Expanded**: Metro Bus	+$1.7 - $2.2 million
Prince George's County	**New:** Metro Rail **New**: Metro Bus	+$1.5 - $2.0 million
Fairfax County	**New:** Metro Rail **Expanded**: Metro Bus	+$1.0 - $1.2 million
Arlington County	**New:** Metro Rail **Expanded**: Metro Bus	+$1.0 - $1.3 million
City of Alexandria	**New:** Metro Rail	+$0.4 - $0.6 million
Loudoun County	**New:** Metro Rail **New**: Metro Bus	+$0.1 - $0.2 million
City of Falls Church	**New:** Metro Rail **New**: Metro Bus	+$0.05 - $0.07 million
City of Fairfax	**New:** Metro Rail **New**: Metro Bus	Approx. +$0.01 million

Range reflects variance due to:

- Number of new jurisdictions participating
- Number of children participating
- Partnership model(s) selected

Daily rates for park-and-ride customers vary by jurisdiction, ranging between $4.45 and $5.20

Location	Rider Pricing
Montgomery County Grosvenor, North Bethesda, Twinbrook, Rockville, Shady Grove, Glenmont, and Forest Glen Exception: Wheaton ($4.45)	$5.20
Prince George's County New Carrollton, Cheverly, Capitol Heights, Greenbelt, College Park, West Hyattsville, Southern Avenue, Naylor Road, Suitland, Branch Avenue, Morgan Blvd, Downtown Largo Exception: Hyattsville Crossing, Addison Rd ($4.45)	$4.95
Northern Virginia Huntington, Dunn Loring, Vienna, Franconia-Springfield, Van Dorn Street, East Falls Church, Ashburn, Loudoun Gateway, Herndon, Innovation Center, and Wiehle	$4.95
District of Columbia Deanwood, Minnesota Ave, Rhode Island Ave, Ft. Totten, and Anacostia	$4.45 - $4.95
Low-Price Lots West Falls Church (Virginia) & Landover (Prince George's)	$3.00

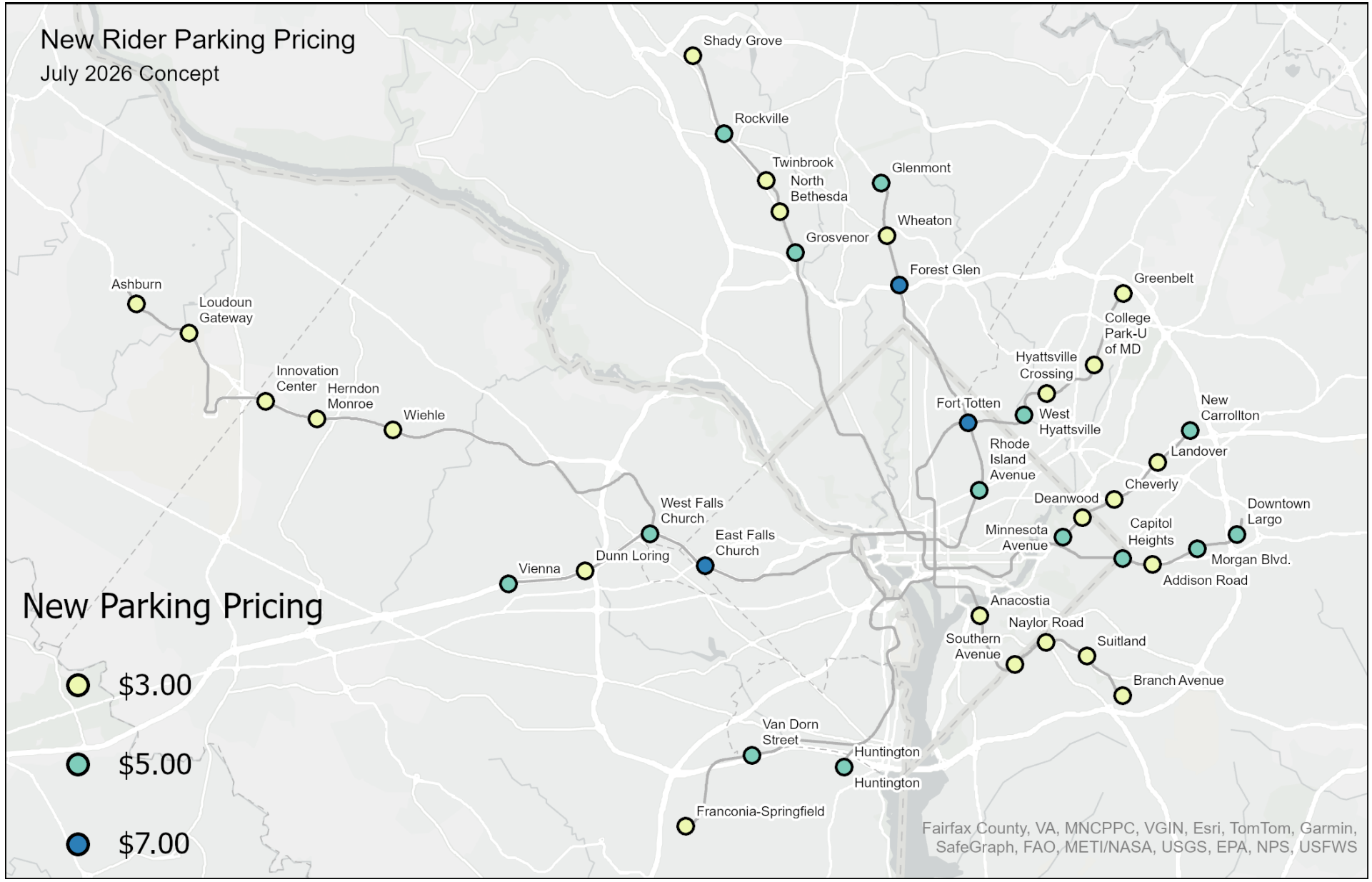
All parking prices include jurisdictional surcharges, when applicable.

New Parking Pricing

Low Usage Lot:
$3 at 23 lots

Medium Usage Lot:
$5 at 14 lots

High Usage Lot:
$7 at 3 lots



Park-and-Ride Price Concept

Parking Facility	Current Price	New Price
Addison Road	$4.45	$3.00
Anacostia	$4.45	$3.00
Ashburn	$4.95	$3.00
Branch Ave	$4.95	$3.00
Capitol Heights	$4.95	$5.00
Cheverly	$4.95	$3.00
College Park-U of Md	$4.95	$3.00
Deanwood	$4.70	$3.00
Downtown Largo	$4.95	$5.00
Dunn Loring	$4.95	$3.00
East Falls Church	$4.95	$7.00
Forest Glen	$5.20	$7.00
Fort Totten	$4.70	$7.00
Franconia-Springfield	$4.95	$3.00
Glenmont	$5.20	$5.00

Parking Facility	Current Price	New Price
Greenbelt	$4.95	$3.00
Grosvenor	$5.20	$5.00
Herndon	$4.95	$3.00
Huntington	$4.95	$5.00
Hyattsville Crossing	$4.45	$3.00
Innovation Center	$4.95	$3.00
Landover	$3.00	$3.00
Loudoun Gateway	$4.95	$3.00
Minnesota Ave	$4.95	$5.00
Morgan Blvd	$4.95	$5.00
Naylor Road	$4.95	$3.00
New Carrollton	$4.95	$5.00
North Bethesda	$5.20	$3.00
Rhode Island Ave	$4.95	$5.00
Rockville	$5.20	$5.00

Parking Facility	Current Price	New Price
Shady Grove	$5.20	$3.00
Southern Ave	$4.95	$3.00
Suitland	$4.95	$3.00
Twinbrook	$5.20	$3.00
Van Dorn Street	$4.95	$5.00
Vienna	$4.95	$5.00
West Falls Church	$3.00	$5.00
West Hyattsville	$4.95	$5.00
Wheaton	$4.45	$3.00
Wiehle-Reston East	$4.95	$3.00

Usage based on percentage of spaces occupied on average weekday

Low Use: 0% - 50%
Medium Use: 51% to 90%
High Use: 91%+

Parking Example: Anacostia

32.9%

Average Weekday Utilization

Currently

$4.45/day

Concept

$3/day



Picture: Google Maps Satellite View

Parking Example:
Shady Grove

45.6%

Average Weekday Utilization

Currently

$5.20/day

Concept

$3/day



Picture: Google Maps Satellite View

Parking Example:
New Carrollton

72.5%

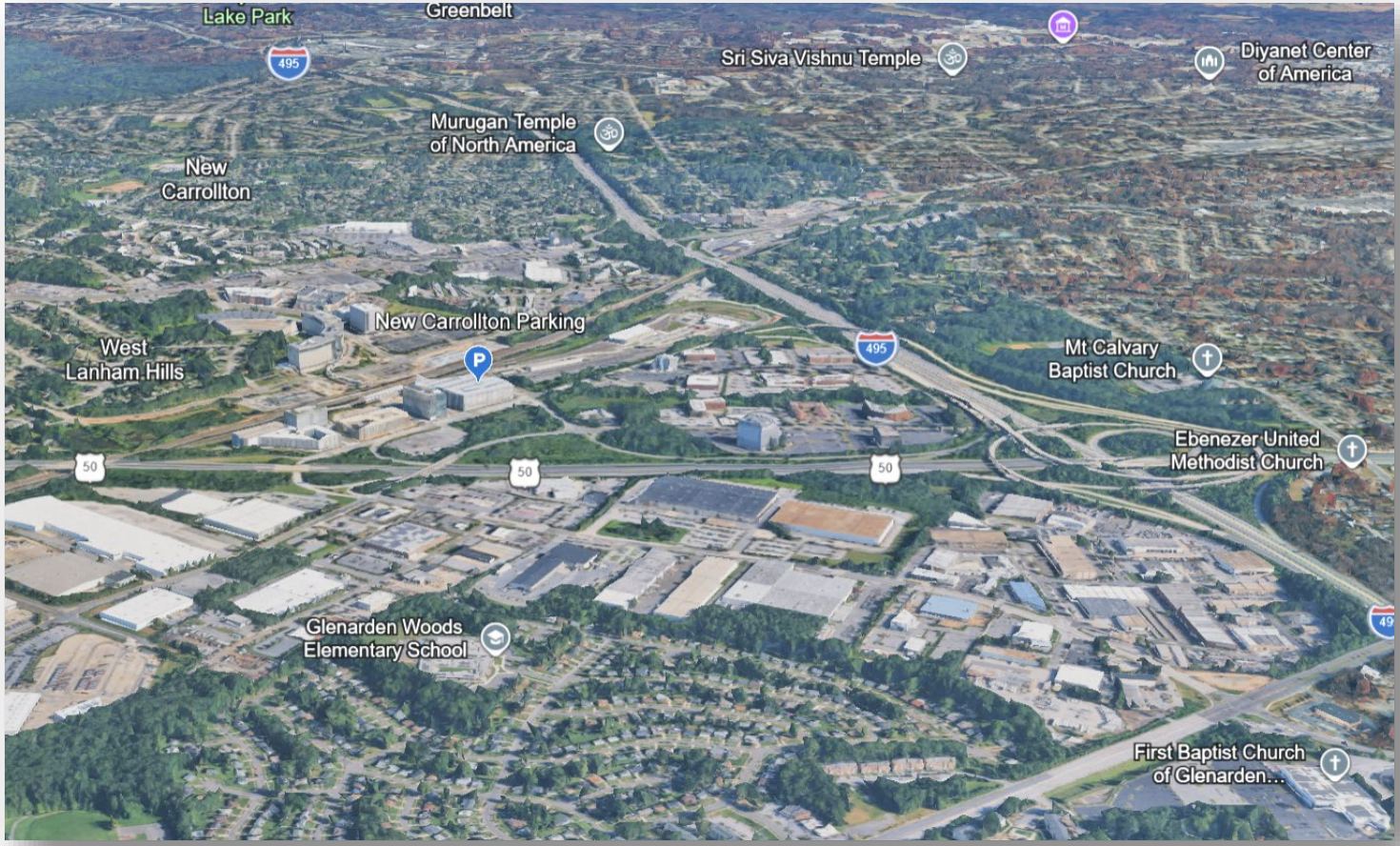
Average Weekday Utilization

Currently

$4.95/day

Concept

$5/day



Picture: Google Maps Satellite View

Parking Example:
East Falls Church

96.5%

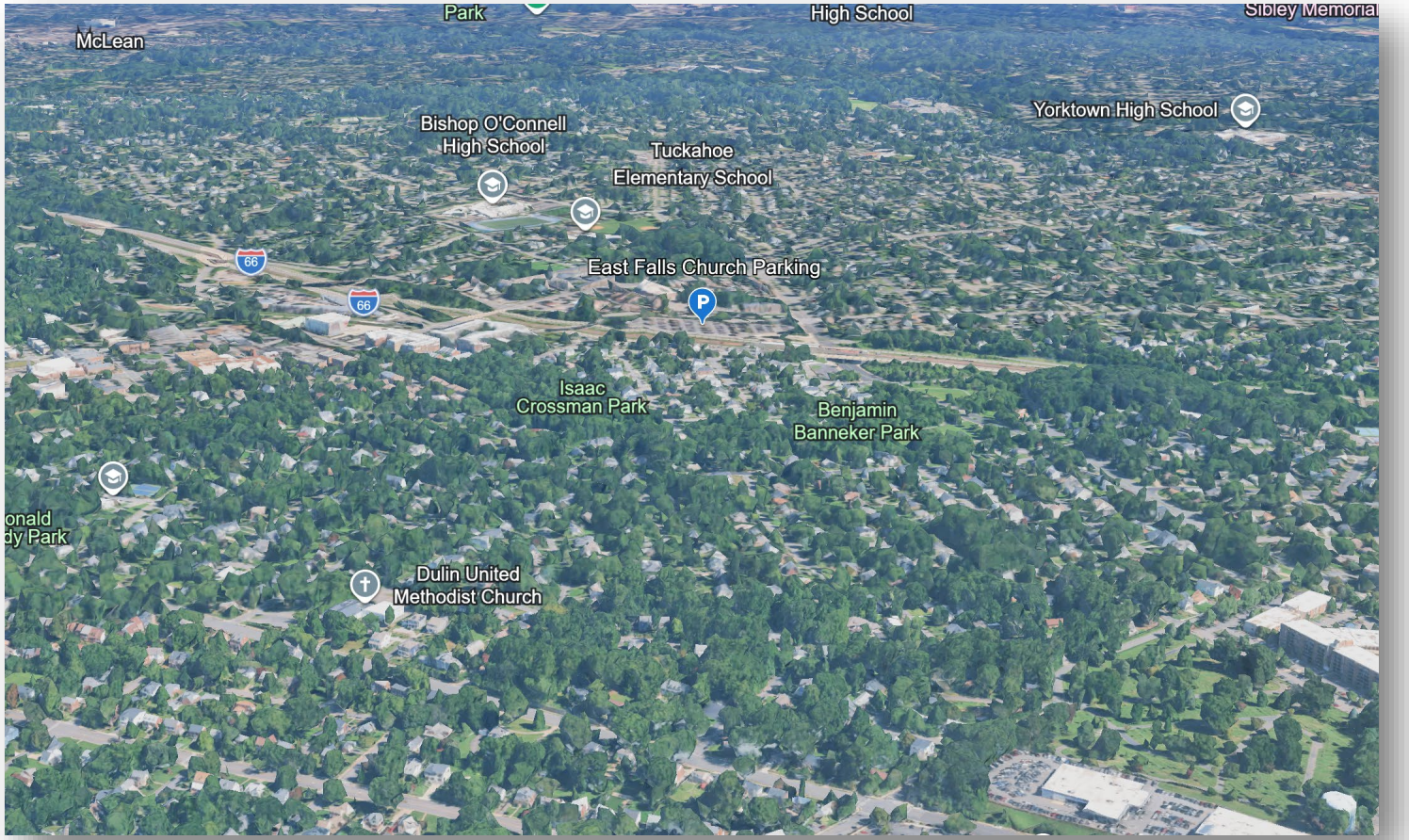
Average Weekday Utilization

Currently

$4.95/day

Concept

$7/day



Picture: Google Maps Satellite View

Non-Rider Parking Rate Concept

Current Pricing: Prices for customers using Metro parking garages but not travelling on Metro Rail range $3.00 to $10.00, depending on the location of the parking facility.

Concept Pricing: Baseline non-rider rate of $10 with higher non-rider rates up to $15 at lots with especially high utilization, non-rider usage, or high equivalent nearby parking prices.

Customer Impact: Increases lot availability for customer parking, no change to customer rates.

Adjust Non-Rider Parking Rates

Fare Change: Baseline non-rider rate of $10 with higher rates at lots with especially high utilization, non-rider usage, or high equivalent nearby parking prices
Change in Revenue: $2.3 million
Change in Ridership: N/A
Change in Non-Rider Usage: (0.4M)

Board delegated authority to implement non-rider rates to General Manager

*Customers may purchase a standard $2 card and call customer service to activate discount

Metro Access & Disabled Replacement Card Fee

Current Replacement Card Fee

Smart Trip Rider Type	Replacement Cost for Lost Cards
Full Fare	$2.00
Senior	$2.00
Metro Lift*	$2.00
Metro Access & Disabled	First Replacement: $10.00 Additional Cards: $25.00/replacement

Background
Historically, Metro Access & Disabled cards were provided as paper passes. As Metro could not cancel paper passes, a higher replacement fee was used to deter fraud from duplicated re-issued cards.

New Concept
Metro now issues all Metro Access & Disabled cards as Smart Trip media, which can be electronically deactivated. As such, Metro can now **standardize replacement card fees at $2.00** for all customers with **minimal ongoing revenue impact** (~$10,000/yr).

Concept to be included in FY2028 GM Proposed Budget

Potential Metro Lift Eligibility Expansion

** FPL: Federal Poverty Line*
*** Potential enrollment is based on eligible population in the compact area, who are likely transit users, and can verify enrollment status. TANF, WIC, and Medicaid estimates include only participants who are not additionally enrolled in SNAP.*

Lift Expansion Opportunities

Benefits Program	Total Potential Enrollment**	Estimated Year-One Enrollment
Current: **SNAP** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Recipients generally have incomes up to 200% FPL*	60,000	**Actual:** ~7,500
TANF Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Recipients generally have incomes up to 130% FPL*	600	60
WIC Women, Infants, and Children Recipients generally have incomes up to 185% FPL*	2,400	240
Medicaid Healthcare for Low-Income Families Recipients generally have incomes up to 200% FPL*	94,250	9,500

What is Metro Lift?

Metro Lift is a half-price fare discount program for SNAP participants residing in the District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia. The program has been offered since June 2023 and provides discounts on Metro Rail, Metro Bus, and Arlington Transit.

How do customers enroll?

Customers can enroll their and their households' Smart Trip cards online by completing an enrollment form and uploading pictures to verify eligibility, or at three in-person locations across the region.

How many customers are enrolled?

As of May 2026, there were more than 17,500 customers enrolled, of an estimated 60,000 likely participants, accounting for 0.6% of tap ridership.

Potential Holiday Concept

Current Pricing: Customers riding Metro Rail on federal holidays are charged as a regular weekday trip, ranging from $2.25 to $6.75 depending on distance and time of day.

Potential Concept Pricing: Metro would charge weekend fares on federal holidays.

Customer Impact: Customers currently expect to receive weekend fares on federal holidays. Mostly impacts customers travelling for leisure across all three jurisdictions; will make Metro more competitive with other travel modes on federal holidays.

Weekend Fares on Federal Holidays

Federal Holidays:
New Year's Day
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Washington's Birthday
Memorial Day
Juneteenth
Independence Day
Labor Day
Columbus Day
Veteran's Day
Thanksgiving Day
Christmas Day
Inauguration Day
(every 4 years)

Change in Revenue
- $1.0 million

Change in Ridership
+ 70,000 trips

Fare Enforcement and Awareness

Summer Metro Bus Fare Awareness Campaign

Marketing, comms, & outreach efforts included:

- Letter to elected officials
- Press release & press conference (May 28)
- Media coverage
- In-person outreach by staff (May 24-June 7)
- Digital and print ads across rail and bus system (fare gate paddles and panels, bus kings, bus and rail cards, fare machine covers, web, social media, and more)

Impact: Decrease in Metro Bus fare evasion following campaign. Staff continuing to analyze and monitor trends.



September Wall of Fame Campaign

- Metro launched the Wall of Fame marketing campaign in September to **reinforce importance of fare payment** through **real customer voices**.
- Campaign features customer photography, testimonials, and messages highlighting personal experiences with Metro and the importance of contributing to a system that provides millions of trips each year. Campaign includes:
  - **Short-form video content** and other social media content
  - **Paid advertising** throughout the Metro service area
  - **In-system signage**, including on five large screens at Gallery Place, Farragut North, Navy Yard, NoMa, and Mt. Vernon Sq



Fare enforcement approaches by peers

Metro continues to modernize fare policy and technology to meet world class standards. Peer practices illustrate what that same standard looks like applied to fare compliance and enforcement.

Common elements include:

- Fare inspection with proof of payment required on demand
- Issued citations are followed through to collection
- Penalties may escalate with repeat offences or time left unpaid
- Consequences for not paying may extend beyond transit, including collections and license or insurance holds

TransLink Vancouver

$173 fine for fare evasion or failure to show valid proof of payment. Rises to $213 after 180 days and $273 after 366 days. Unpaid tickets go to collections and can block driver's license or insurance renewal.

Valid proof of payment required on demand

TTC Toronto

Penalties range from $235 to $425 across a range of offences. The low end for refusing to pay or using an expired pass, the high end for invalid or altered fare media

Valid proof of payment required on demand

MTA New York

Fines escalate over a four-year period: a warning on a first offense, $100 on a second, and $150 or a criminal summons on a third. A second-offense fine paid on time earns a $50 OMNY credit, returning the penalty to the rider as transit value. Unpaid fines accrue penalties and interest and can result in a lien.

Valid proof of payment required on demand

TfL London

£100 penalty fare, reduced to £50 if paid within 21 days. Unpaid penalties and deliberate evasion can be prosecuted, carrying a fine of up to £1,000 plus compensation and costs, and a criminal record.

Valid proof of payment required on demand

Fare evasion fines are different across jurisdictions

Virginia

City of Alexandria

- Civil
- $100 fine

Arlington County

- Civil and Criminal
- **1st** - $10 - $50 fine
- **2nd & subsequent** - $50 - $100 fine and/or up to 10 days jail or both

Fairfax County

- Criminal
- Up to $100 fine

Maryland

Montgomery County

- Civil and Criminal
- **1st** - $50 fine if paid; up to 10 days jail if not paid
- **2nd & subsequent -** $75 fine if paid; up to 10 days jail if not paid

Prince George's County

- Criminal (Must Appear)
- **1st** - $10 - $50 fine
- **2nd & subsequent** - $50 -$100 fine if paid; up to 10 days jail if not paid

District of Columbia

Effective May 3, 2019

- Civil
- ≤$50 fine
- In 2024, civil citation changes to criminal when person: (1) fails to provide name and address; or (2) knowingly provides an incorrect name or address; fine increases to $100 upon conviction.