



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Public Works and Transportation Committee

Date: May 24, 2016

From: Victor Wei, P. Eng.
Director, Transportation

File: 01-0154-04/2016-Vol
01

Re: TransLink Transit Fare Review

Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled "TransLink Transit Fare Review," dated May 24, 2016, from the Director, Transportation, be received for information.

Victor Wei, P. Eng.
Director, Transportation
(604-276-4131)

Att. 1

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Community Social Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS: DW	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

In late April 2016, TransLink advised the City that it would be initiating a review of its transit fare policy in May 2016, which will span an 18 to 24 month period and include four phases of public consultation. This report outlines the process and objectives of the review and proposes priorities and issues to be considered by TransLink in the review.

This report supports Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #3 A Well-Planned Community:

3.3. Effective transportation and mobility networks.

This report supports Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #5 Partnerships and Collaboration:

Continue development and utilization of collaborative approaches and partnerships with intergovernmental and other agencies to help meet the needs of the Richmond community.

Analysis

Current Transit Fare System

The existing three-zone fare structure (Figure 1) was originally adopted in 1984 and has remained unchanged in the ensuing 30+ years. There are six core components that currently determine how much customers pay to use transit in Metro Vancouver.

- *Distance Travelled:* Customers pay more for each zone boundary they cross. All bus and HandyDART travel temporarily operate under one-zone, SkyTrain and SeaBus under three zones, and West Coast Express operates under its own five-zone structure.
- *Type of Transit Service:* There is one set of prices for bus, SkyTrain, SeaBus, and HandyDART. The West Coast Express is a higher priced premium service.
- *Time of Travel:* Customers travelling outside of peak times (i.e., after 6:30 p.m. on weekdays and all day weekends and holidays) pay a one-zone fare on SkyTrain and SeaBus.
- *Fare Product:* Customers can choose to purchase a single-ride ticket or use a Compass Card to get a discount by using Stored Value or purchasing a DayPass or a Monthly Pass.
- *Customer Group:* Adults pay full price. Youth, students, seniors, and people with disabilities that impact their ability to travel independently are eligible to travel at a reduced price. Children under four years of age travel for free when accompanied by an adult.



Figure 1: Current Fare Zone Map

- *Journey Time*: Customers can make multiple trips across bus, SkyTrain and SeaBus on a single fare for up to 90 minutes, and 120 minutes with a West Coast Express fare.

Process and Timeline

The introduction of Compass provides an opportunity to improve the way TransLink’s transportation system is priced. In addition to a review of best practices of other transit agencies around the world, data from the Compass system such as trip patterns and overall travel behaviour will help inform the development and evaluation of fare system options.

A dedicated page on TransLink’s website has been established at translink.ca/farereview. As shown in Figure 2 below, the process will have four phases each with its own public and stakeholder consultation period. The feedback gathered at each phase will be analyzed and, together with technical studies, will inform the next phase.

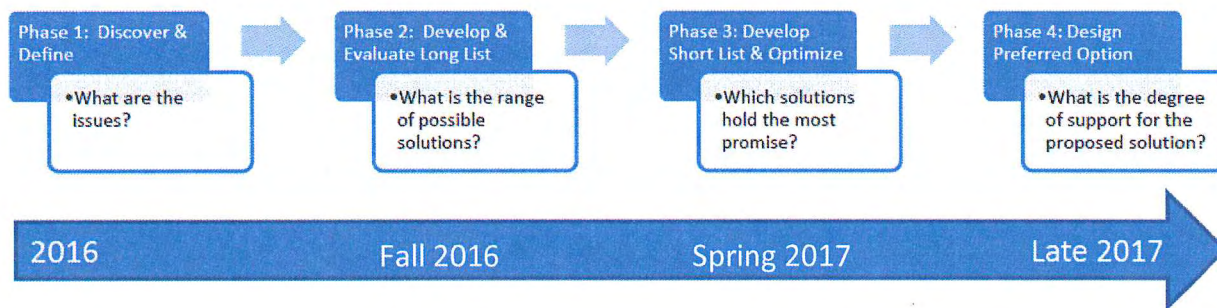


Figure 2: Project Overview and Timeline

As a starting point for discussion, TransLink has identified the following factors to be considered as part of the review:

- Customers have expressed a desire for fairness, simplicity, affordability, and value for money.
- Current policy (per TransLink’s *Regional Transportation Strategy*) is that fares should be priced for fairness, efficiency and revenue, and have the goals of growing ridership and achieving a modal shift to transit.
- Compass allows a finer-grained fare structure not previously available.

The two primary components to be reviewed are: (1) the fare structure (i.e., across distance, time and modes); and (2) programs/products (e.g., discounts, passes). Elements of the transit fare system that are not part of the review are:

- *Compass and Fare Gates*: Current issues related to accessibility of the gated system at SkyTrain and SeaBus stations are being addressed through a separate process.
- *Fare Increases*: The intent is for the preferred option to maintain the current average fare paid by customers recognizing that the distribution of fares paid may change (i.e., some customers may pay more while others may pay less).
- *Eliminating Revenue from Fares*: Fares currently recover approximately 53 per cent of transit operating costs and contribute approximately 39 per cent of total revenues to TransLink. Given the failure of the Metro Vancouver transportation and transit plebiscite in May 2015,

there is no potential alternative funding source to replace the significant portion of TransLink revenue that fares comprise.

Staff will provide input into each stage of the process through regular participation at TransLink’s Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) and stakeholder forums held as part of the engagement processes.

Current Phase 1

Figure 3 illustrates the key steps of Phase 1. The multiple account evaluation framework will be used to assess a range of options against objectives, enable development of a short list and guide selection of a preferred option.

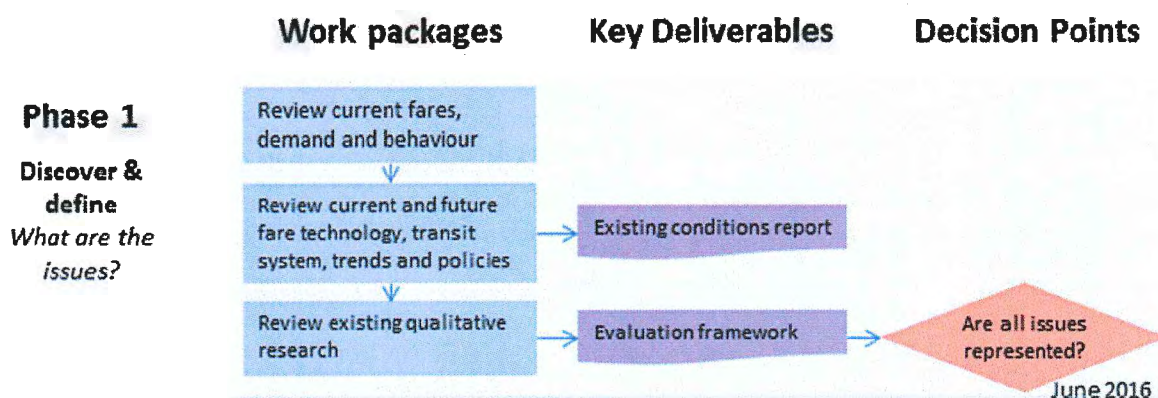


Table 1 identifies draft priorities of the review. Through the engagement period of Phase 1, stakeholders and the public will be asked to choose their top four priorities for TransLink to consider from this list and can add a new objective, which will help guide the evaluation process.

The engagement period of Phase 1 began on May 18, 2016 with three regional stakeholder forums, one of which was attended by staff. TransLink staff provided an overview of the process and attendees then responded to two questions regarding: (1) how well the current system operates; and (2) the top priority objectives of the review. Both questions form the on-line survey (at translink.ca/farereview) for the general public that is open from May 24 to June 30, 2016 (Attachment 1). The survey questions are intended to identify the current issues (what is working well, what is not working well) and gain feedback on the desired key objectives that TransLink should consider in the review.

Table 1: Draft Priorities for Review

Draft Priorities
Fares should be the same for all trips
Make fares lower for shorter distance trips
Provide more fare product options for different periods of time (e.g., 3-day, weekly)
Make fares lower in areas with infrequent service
Make fares lower in less busy times
Make fares lower for services that cost less to build and operate
Make fares lower for people with less ability to pay
Provide more fare product options to make transit more affordable for families to travel together
Make fares lower for slower and less direct service
Make fares lower for people who use transit frequently
Make it easy to understand and predict how much you'll pay

Similar to TransLink's public engagement process recently undertaken for Phase 1 of the Southwest Area Transport Plan, activities during the period include:

- On-line survey supplemented by in-person sessions and hard-copy surveys.
- Promotion of online survey to community/business groups and other stakeholders via email outreach as well as media releases, placement of advertisements in local newspapers, and use of social media.
- Forum for elected officials (local, provincial and federal governments) where TransLink staff will share information about the project (date to be determined).

The City will further support this engagement process through its standard communication tools including social media (Twitter and Facebook) and inclusion on the City website.

Draft Priorities

Staff offer the following comments on the 11 draft priorities with the first four below suggested as those of greater importance in terms of equity, efficiency and encouraging greater ridership.

- *Easy to Understand*: Fares are a key lever in encouraging changes in travel behaviour, whether a shift from auto to transit in support of regional goals, or a shift in time of travel in order to more efficiently use existing capacity. To effect those changes, users need to be able to understand, accurately predict and compare the prices of various options (e.g., lower fare in off-peak times).
- *Discounts for People with Less Ability to Pay*: Transit is a public service and lower fares should be available for qualified low-income users who may have no other means of mobility.
- *Lower Fares in Less Busy Times*: Encouraging a shift in travel behaviour to less busy times will optimize the use of existing capacity, mitigate congestion in peak times, and defer the need for costly expansion.
- *More Fare Product Options*: Increased options (e.g., evenings or weekends only) may better attract potential new riders by tailoring the fares to a greater range of travel behaviour.

With respect to the remaining draft priorities, staff have the following comments:

- *Varying Fares by Type of Service*: Different fares based on the type of service (as opposed to the type of user or trip) such as a lower fare for slower services suggests that users have a choice of service (e.g., pay a higher fare for a direct service) but this is not always true.
- *Lower Fares for Frequent Transit Users*: Typically, passes include a discount compared to a cash fare. If a further discount is desired, there are alternative options to "reward" frequent transit users (e.g., loyalty program) rather than lowering fares and thus revenues.
- *Flat Fare for All Trips*: A flat fare would not enhance system efficiency as there would be no incentive to shift travel times to optimize capacity.

Additional Topics for Consideration

Staff have identified the following additional topics for consideration as part of the fare review.

- HandyDART: Consider means to better integrate the HandyDART fare structure with that of conventional transit to provide consistency and seamless accessibility across the systems.
- Transportation Demand Management: Work with municipalities and the development industry to use bulk/discount transit passes/fares as a means to encourage transit usage and in support of reduced parking requirements in new developments.
- Employer Pass: Consider reinstatement of the employer transit pass program or an equivalent incentive to provide a discount on transit fares for employees of qualified employers.
- Price Cap: Currently, there is no maximum daily fare paid by Compass users who travel multiple times in a single day. The maximum daily fare should be equal to the cost of a day pass.
- Future Enhancements: Consider future integration with other modes of travel such as bike-share and BC Ferries.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

TransLink has initiated a review of its transit fare structure, products and programs, which have remained essentially unchanged for 30 years. The process will run until late 2017 and staff will continue to provide regular updates to Council on the progress of the review with the next update, anticipated in Fall 2016, reporting on the results of the Phase 1 public consultation period.



Joan Caravan
Transportation Planner
(604-276-4035)

JC:jc

Att. 1: Transit Fare Review – Phase 1 On-line Survey



Transit Fare Review

0%

Transit Fare Review

Over the last 30 years, the way we determine fares – including our zone structure and our fare products – hasn't changed much.

It's time to take a fresh look at our fare system.

This is the first of four phases of the Transit Fare Review. In order to get this right, we want to make sure we get your input along the way. The process is just starting and no decisions have been made.

The survey should take you about 10 - 15 minutes to complete. Before you start, make sure you've read more about the project on our [Transit Fare Review page](#).

Transit Fare Review

16%

Overall Satisfaction

Currently, the key features that determine your transit fare in Metro Vancouver are the transit mode, zones travelled, time of travel, and eligibility for regular or concession fares.

1. For each of the transit services you use, how satisfied are you with the current way that fares are determined?

(If you don't use one of the transit services below, select "not applicable".)

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not applicable/Don't Use
Bus						
SkyTrain						
SeaBus						
West Coast Express						
HandyDART						

Transit Fare Review

33%

2. What is your level of agreement with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The current zone-based fare structure works well.						
There should be more fare product options for different periods of time (e.g. 3-day, weekly).						
There should be fare product options to make transit more affordable for families to travel together.						
The current transfer window (90 minutes) is long enough.						

Transit Fare Review

50%

2. What is your level of agreement with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Fares should be lower for people with less ability to pay than for people with more ability to pay.						
Fares should be lower at less busy times of day than at busier times of day.						
Fares should be lower for services that cost less to build and operate, than for services that cost more to build and operate.						
Fares should be lower for shorter distance trips than for longer distance trips.						
Fares should be lower for people who use transit frequently than for people who use transit occasionally.						
Fares should be lower in areas with infrequent service than in areas with frequent service.						
Fares should be set to be a cost competitive alternative to driving.						
Fares should be the same for all trips.						
Fares should be lower for slower and less direct services than for faster and more direct services.						
Fares currently cover a bit more than half of the cost of operating transit. Fares should be set to cover a higher share of transit costs.						

Transit Fare Review

66%

3. What should be the top four priorities as we consider changes to the transit fare structure, products and programs?

Please choose four objectives.

- Provide more fare product options for different periods of time. (e.g. 3-day, weekly)
- Make fares lower for services that cost less to build and operate.
- Fares should be the same for all trips.
- Make fares lower for slower and less direct services.
- Make it easy to understand and predict how much you'll pay.
- Provide more fare product options to make transit more affordable for families to travel together.
- Make fares lower for people with less ability to pay.
- Make fares lower for people who use transit frequently.
- Make fares lower for shorter distance trips.
- Make fares lower at less busy times.
- Make fares lower in areas with infrequent service.

Current number checked: 0 Minimum: 4 | Maximum: 4

Transit Fare Review

83%

You're almost done! Please tell us a bit about yourself.

We're collecting this anonymous demographic information to better understand general characteristics of our customers.

Which age group do you belong to?

How often do you use each of the following transit services?

	Every day	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once a year	Rarely or never
Bus					
SkyTrain					
SeaBus					
West Coast Express					
HandyDART					

What mode of transportation do you use most often? If you use multiple modes equally, select the mode traveling the greatest distance.

(One response only.)

- Drive alone
- Travel in a private vehicle with at least one other person/carpool/rideshare
- Bicycle
- Motorcycle, Scooter
- Walk
- Public Transit (Bus, SkyTrain, SeaBus, West Coast Express, HandyDART)
- Use two modes the same/Can't choose one mode
- Don't know
- Other

Type here

4. What are the first three characters of your postal code?

- Postal Code:
- Don't know

Type here

How did you hear about the Transit Fare Review?

(Select all that apply.)

- Advertisements on bus, SkyTrain, SeaBus, or West Coast Express
- Bus shelter advertisement
- Buzzer blog
- Email from an organization
- News media (Newspaper article, radio or television news story)
- Newspaper advertisement
- Print material (postcard, rack card/brochure)
- TransLink booth in the community
- TransLink eNewsletter
- TransLink Listens panelist email
- TransLink website
- TransLink Social Media (Twitter, Facebook)
- Word of mouth (Email/heard from family, friend or colleague)
- Online ads
- I work for TransLink, CMBC, BCRTC, West Coast Express, Transit Police or InTransitBC
- None of the above
- Don't recall