

## Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority

### Access Advisory Committee - Minutes

Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022

5:30 PM

*Virtual Presentation*

#### Attendees:

**CapMetro Employees:** Suzie Edrington, Chad Ballentine, Martin Kareithi, Brian Booth, Nadia Barrera-Ramirez, Jaqueline Evans, Cathrine Walker, Tevin Lionel, Edna Parra

**Committee Members:** Otmar Foehner, Paul Hunt, Andrew Bernet, Adrea Diaz, Chris Prentice, Estrella Barrerra, Glenda Born, John McNabb, Mike Gorse

5:30 PM

#### Welcome / Introductions / Call to Order

*Paul Hunt*

#### Public Communications

**Glenda Born:** Informed the committee about an accident impeding the route of a MetroAccess shuttle, route 516 if I remember correctly, and dispatch potentially ending the call with the operator.

**Suzie Edrington:** The proper procedure in this case would be that dispatch then alerts all other operators on the road of the situation area and to avoid it. CapMetro will look into the incident.

**Audrea Diaz:** Wanted to know if the Night Owl would be able to pick someone up from past 2 AM. I wanted to be sure that putting in a reservation for that time frame would work like last time I did so?

**Julie Lampkin:** CapMetro would check the Night Owl service from your location and the place you want to go, the usual end of the Night Owl service is 2 AM.

**Audrea Diaz:** It would also be great if all the reservation, booking and trip planning were in the same place or page – that would make the process easier.

**Paul Hunt:** I've been receiving some issues with operators about service animal's documentation. They should ask the right questions and not official documentation of my service animal.

**Julie Lampkin:** Your need for a service animal is already marked on your account, you should not be receiving questions about the validity of your dog, and we will investigate the procedures.

**Chad Ballentine:** Will look into re-training being done to keep all operators up to date on policy and procedures.

#### Stroller Policy – Overview

*Martin Kareithi, Systemwide Accessibility*

**Martin Kareithi:** CapMetro along with various other transit agencies are taking a new look at existing Stroller Policies and the impact it has on caregivers and persons tending to young stroller bound children. The current policy as it stands says "Strollers must be folded up and the child must be restrained either on the caregiver's lap or the seat beside them. The stroller then must be secured under the supervision of the owner so as not to impede traffic or block any seats from any passenger. We are taking another look at that stroller policy, knowing that that may have. Some impacts, particularly on individuals who have use and who have need of use of the wheelchair securement and their priority seating area. So, we want to make sure that first and foremost we see the need to ensure that individuals, particularly in wheelchairs as well as under other individuals with disabilities, have the same access that they've always maintained to that area. But then how can we do a better job to provide some equitable opportunities?

**Mike Gorse:** I remember 15 years ago, in Boston, on their transit service, there were announcements for riders with strollers to share the space with other users of the accessibility spots.

**Martin Kareithi:** Other transit agencies like DART and BART have addressed their stroller policy recently, due to their being a significant hardship on parents / caregivers / guardians to secure a child and a stroller all while the bus is ready to get going with potentially limited space on board.

**Glenda Born:** What are the safety considerations for a child in a stroller versus a child in a parent's lap. How can you secure the stroller if you are holding a child? IS it safer to harbor a child in a stroller during a ride or not?

**Martin Kareithi:** Contemporary strollers are much harder to collapse so that poses a problem for caregivers who need to quickly construct and deconstruct them when interacting with the bus. Our new policy proposal mentions that you can keep the child in the stroller, with the brakes on and holding the stroller the whole time to secure its placement.

**Paul Hunt:** There are other alternatives to a stroller, like a harness and such.

**Martin Kareithi:** There are alternatives to a stroller that individuals could consider, but it's not our job to impede those people who feel the need to use a stroller. The point is to be accessible to our customers.

**Martin Kareithi:** Regarding shopping carts, those would be another issue and level of consideration.

**Glenda Born:** Could there be a designated spot for people with strollers?

**Martin Kareithi:** The accessible spot could be used for such a purpose, but a person in a wheelchair would still take priority over an able-bodied parent. Though, with the purchase of our electric buses, there is more space available on the interior, we could possibly retrofit an area to be a designated stroller / parent with child area.

**Paul Hunt:** Is there such thing as a stroller securement area?

**Martin Kareithi:** In San Francisco, they have been experimenting with a specific space on the bus, specifically for strollers to go, just how much space is being allocated to the strollers.

**Mike Gorse:** If someone with a stroller is taking up the space of a disabled person, what would be the procedure?

**Martin Kareithi:** The person with a stroller would need to evacuate the accessibility seat and give it up to a disabled person. Appropriate training would need to take place for staff.

## **Transit Speed and Reliability Program Update**

*Nadia Barrera-Ramirez, Cross Agency Programs Transit + Mobility*

### **Agenda:**

1. Transit Speed and Reliability Program Background
2. Bus Stop Optimization
3. Multi-Modal Accommodations at Bus Stops
4. Rubberized Platform Pilot Update
5. Guadalupe at Cesar Chavez

### **Transit Speed & Reliability Program: Background**

- 2015 –

- CapMetro staff meet bi-monthly with the Austin Transportation Department (ATD) as the Transit Priority Working Group (TPWG)
- 2018 –
  - Interlocal agreement signed between CapMetro and ATD for construction of transit priority and safety projects within the right of way.
- 2020 –
  - Annual Report published, outlining TPWG accomplishments Safety and Mobility Bond includes \$22m for Transit Enhancements
- 2022 –
  - Initiate Transit Enhancement Report

### **Bus Stop Optimization**

- Coordination with multiple programs with similar goals
  - Vision Zero
  - Corridor Program
  - Active Transportation & Street Design
  - Safe Routes to School
  - Bus Stop Maintenance
- Prioritize pedestrian crossings at signalized or enhanced crossing
- Prioritize far-side bus stops.
- Meet Service Guidelines and Standards for stop spacing

### **Rubberized Bus Pad Pilot: Background**

- Pre-Covid 2/2020
  - 13 routes
  - PM Peak: 24-33 buses/hour, or one bus every 2minutes.
  - Average weekday riders:
  - 900 on/420 off = 1,320 total
- September 2020
  - 7 routes (no Night Owls, and only 1 Express)
  - PM Peak: 9 buses/hour, or one bus every 7minutes.
  - Average weekday riders:
  - 100 on/70 off = 170 total
- Heavy peak delay approaching Dean Keeton
  - Buses travel <4 MPH during PM peak with almost a thousand passengers onboard
- Bus stop positioned before the intersection (“near-side”) caused delay for all modes
- Very high pedestrian activity
- Heavy right-turns, northbound vehicles heading to I-35

### **Rubberized Bus Pad Pilot: Approach**

- Partnership between Capital Metro and Austin Transportation Department in January 2021
- Consolidated and relocated the bus stops to the “far-side” of the intersection
- Installed a modular, rubberized platform (Zicla) on Guadalupe at 26th Street:
  - Test effectiveness of far-side placement
  - Quickly improve accessibility at bus stops
  - Resolve conflicts between bikes and buses
  - Modular product can be broken down and re-applied at another location after the test

### **Rubberized Bus Pad Pilot: Consolidation + Relocation**

- Consolidated and moved the bus stops to the “far-side” of the intersection to:
  - Improve safety
  - Alleviate right-hook crashes
  - Mitigate traffic congestion
  - Remove bus stop delay for right turners
  - Incorporate best practice for bus operations
  - Improve travel times
  - Retain convenient access to U.T.

### **Pilot Findings: Bus On time Performance**

- No noticeable change in overall On-Time Performance (OTP) for buses
- Changes varied from 25% slower to 15% faster at timepoints adjacent to the project
- Results may reflect changes in travel patterns from the pandemic

### **Pilot Findings: Crashes**

- About a 50% reduction in bus crashes at Guadalupe and Dean Keeton
  - 2018 – 2020: 4 bus-related crashes/year
  - 2021: Only 2 bus-related crashes
  - Any bus crash reduces bus reliability as a report from a supervisor is required before the operator can continue service.
- About a 25% reduction in general-purpose minor severity crashes at this intersection
  - 2018 – 2020: 8 minor crashes/year
  - 2021: Only 6 minor crashes
- While the pilot project occurred during the pandemic, the reduction in crashes is significant, especially in this heavy pedestrian corridor.

**Glenda Born:** So this is more about reducing crashes which in turn would reduce potential for time / money wasted investigating the crash on location.

**Nadia Barrera - Ramirez:** That’s right, there’s a lot that goes into on time arrival and crash mitigation, but we work to save our customer time.

**Estrella Barrera:** Safety is of higher importance than just network speed, so I appreciate this effort going into reducing crashes and protecting the community.

**Paul Hunt:** The floating bus stop seems dangerous - it seems difficult to get over to the floating station, so I’ll have to see how they work

**Nadia Barrera – Ramirez:** It is a learning experience for all of us to see what works and what doesn’t. We also need to work on communication to inform the public on how to use the stations in the safest way possible.

**Mike Gorse:** Are you trying to move some of the old legacy stops that are for instance near side when you're able to do that or is that part of the process?

**Nadia Barrera – Ramirez:** Yes, that is part of the process and the only I would say there are some exceptions. For example, if there is a busier stop on the far side, and we are going the other direction we may keep one near side because it facilitates the transfer if that makes sense. So, you're having a bus stop on the corners on the two sides of the corner as opposed to having one far side. So, people must cross the street.

### **Potential Fare Programs**

*Brian Carter, EVP, Chief Experience and Engagement Officer*  
*Katherine Walker, EVP, Chief Finance and Risk Officer*  
*Jacqueline Evans, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

**Agenda:**

1. Fare Strategy Review
2. Update on Account Based Fare Payment System
3. Title VI Analysis & Equity In Action
4. Next Steps & Considerations

**Fare Strategy Review**

- Desire to make fares more equitable for our community:
- Our lowest income riders are often those who purchase Single Ride passes versus Day or Month passes.
- Our lowest income riders are often those who also depend on our services versus other means of transportation.
- The goal of our fare strategy is to provide progressive fare capping while supporting an equitable means-based fare structure.
- To accomplish our goal, we will be launching

**Technology Roll Out**

- Virtual smart cards in a new CapMetro App, with an alternative physical smart card:
  - Accommodates all customers with or without a smart phone.
  - Money can be loaded by using a credit card connected to their account or using at a retail network location (250+locations).
  - Initial distribution of physical cards through street teams, community engagement events, and CapMetro Transit Store.
- Customer beta testing in Summer 2022 to assess usability and gather direct customer feedback.

**Branding and Research**

- CapMetro studied other transit agencies and found a best practice to provide a brand name on the account-based system.
- Good timing to introduce a new brand name with brand refresh in process.
- We conducted surveys and focus groups to gain community input on how to market and brand the new technology platform:
  - Four focus groups were conducted with both English and Spanish language participants, customers & non-customers
  - Online survey sample with 350 adults (ages 18+) responding; the ethnicity of the sample was like the Austin area based on the Census Bureau's (2018) American Community Survey. Results have an error of +/- 4% at a 90% confidence level. The survey was conducted by Dynata; 23% were recent transit customers.
- Based on focus group feedback, the agency is moving forward with the name "Amp" for the account-based fare system.
- Amp name carries many potential creative applications to tie in with music, our investment in electric vehicles, and get our community energized on the value of transit.
- CapMetro will use Amp name to describe and promote the account-based system.
- Customers will use their Amp accounts to pay for fares within the CapMetro App or by using their Amp account smart card.

**Considerations for Potential Fare Structure**

- This new technology can be used to support the agency’s values, which are also shared with the Project Connect program.
- Staff has begun analyzing the benefits of fare capping and introduction of a new Equitable fare category called “Equifare”. These types of programs are already being used by peer transit agencies.
- As fare fee adjustments are considered, these two programs would protect affordability of passes for low-income customers.

**Overview of Fare Types**

- Standard
  - The full rate for a transit pass.
  
- Reduced
  - 50% off full rate transit pass.
  - Eligible for customers who verify their status in the following groups:
    - Seniors 65 and older\*
    - Medicare card holders\*
    - Active-duty military personnel
    - Riders with disabilities\*

\*50% rate required by FTA for these categories
  - Apply online, at Transit Store, by mail.
  - Status is valid for 2 years. RFID Card costs \$3.
  - Eligible customers must have the RFID Card with them in order to
  - receive the reduced fare.

**Proposed New Fare Type & Eligibility**

		CURRENT FARE TYPES		PROPOSED*
	Pass Type	Standard	Reduced	Equifare
Local Bus	Single Ride	\$1.25	\$0.60	\$1.00
	Day Pass	\$2.50	\$1.25	\$2.00
	Month Pass	\$41.25	\$20.60	\$33.00
Commuter Bus + Rail (incl. Local Bus)	Single Ride	\$3.50	\$1.75	\$3.00
	Day Pass	\$7.00	\$3.50	\$6.00
	Month Pass	\$96.25	\$48.10	\$77.00

**EQUIFARE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Household income less than 200% of Federal Poverty Level or proof of enrollment in one of these programs\*:

- Medicaid Program
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
- Telephone Lifeline Program
- Travis County Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)
- Medical Access Program (MAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)

\* Same eligibility requirements used for City of Austin Customer Assistance Program utility discounts.

## Benefits of an Account Based System

- Amp Cards
  - When a CapMetro customer uses an Amp smart card or virtual card, they can pay for transit passes using the stored value on the card.
  - This also protects the stored value in case the card or phone is lost or stolen.
- Discounted Fare Benefits
  - When a customer registers their Amp card, they will be able to use benefits of discount programs after they have completed the qualification process (i.e., Reduced Fare or Equifare categories).
  - Customers currently using an RFID card for the Reduced fare will use the Amp smart card or virtual card.
- Fare Capping
  - Fare capping would be available on every Amp card, with or without a registered account.
  - With fare capping, customers using an Amp card or account never pay more than the total cost of a Day Pass in a calendar day, or the total cost of a Monthly Pass in a calendar month.

## Similar Programs at Peer Transit Agencies

- TriMet Qualifications for Honored Citizen Fare
  - Enrolled in Oregon Health Plan, SNAP or TANF, or if you meet the income requirements (making less than double the federal poverty level)
  - Have a verifiable mental or physical disability
  - Age 65 or older or on Medicare

Source: <https://trimet.org/fares/honoredcitizen.htm>

- DART's Qualifications for Discount GoPass
  - Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
  - Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)
  - DHA Housing Solutions for North Texas
  - Housing Choice Vouchers - Section 8
  - Medicaid
  - Medicare
  - Parkland Financial Assistance
  - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - Texas Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Source: <https://dartaccess.dart.org/dtappass>

## Extensive Community Engagement

- Community-based organizations, community leaders, and local agencies will be necessary for successfully implementing fare technology and the new Equifare program.
- Staff will be working with non-profits and agencies that provide housing, healthcare, education and unhoused services to educate and sign up their clients in person, including organizations like Foundation Communities, Austin Area Urban League, Casa Marianella, ECHO, and many others.

## What is Title VI Equity Analysis?

- Only one component in CapMetro's approach to equity.
- Foundation in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

- Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin
- CapMetro must ensure that it provides its service without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- Legally required by Federal Transit Administration Title VI Circular 4702.1B
  - Applies to transit providers that have greater than 50 fixed-route vehicles in peak service.
  - Requires agencies to conduct equity analyses on service or fare changes that meet the agency’s definition of Major Service Change.
  - Looks for impacts of a service or fare change that may be borne disproportionately by minority or low-income populations.

### **Title VI Analysis Underway**

- Required when there’s any potential changes to fare structures.
- Four Nines Technology is conducting a Fare Equity Analysis for all the potential changes to CapMetro’s fare products, prices, media distribution and other associated elements to determine whether the changes will result in discriminatory impacts to minority or lowincome populations.
- The results of the analysis will be shared publicly before CapMetro staff proposes fare structure changes for Board approval.

### **Equity Review and Additional Engagement**

- Gathering input from Board Advisory Committees and DEI Advisory Group in April and May.
- Conducting Virtual Meetings
- Meeting with staff at COA, Travis County and partner cities to gain input on the process for verifying customer eligibility for Equifare program.
- Direct engagement with customers on transit, and activations and monthly “Meet CapMetro” events.
- Begin discussions with social service organizations on how to engage their clients in the enrollment process.
- Explore database integrations for online eligibility verification to potentially reduce the manual process.

### **Advancing Our Fare Strategy**

- Our transit system expansion plan, Project Connect assumes fare structure changes, with the cost of fares changing along with ridership increases needed to support the program funding model.
- The Equifare rate ensures that as fares adjust over the years that costs for transit passes remains affordable for our low-income customers.
- Our proposed phased approach to a new Fare Structure would prioritize affordability and allow time for adoption of the technology and processing eligibility for Equifare.

**John McNabb:** Is there going to be a price rise? Or would the people paying the Equifare rate, would they end up being charged more for less frequent usage?

**Catherine Walker:** Using an account-based system, we’re more easily able to track customer usage and what tier they would fall under, since it is all tied to their individual account. So, some people would continue to qualify for just the reduced price, while others qualify for the Equifare rate. If a person qualifies for both, they will receive the lower fare.

**Glenda Born:** So if a person buys a monthly pass, would there be a point where they are using the metro more than what the card is worth, what would happen?

**Catherine Walker:** Since they already paid for a monthly pass, it would work for the whole month, regardless of usage.