

Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Customer Satisfaction Advisory Committee (CSAC)

Wednesday, April 13, 2022

6:00 PM

Virtual Presentation

Attendees:

CapMetro Employees: Randy Clarke, Sam Sargent, Catherine Walker, Martin Kareithi, Edna Parra, JoAnne Ortiz, Cynthia Lucas, Samantha Alexander, Nadia Barrera-Ramirez, Jacqueline Evans

Committee Members: Besty Greenberg, David Foster, David Shapiro, Fangda Lu, Ruven Brooks, Ephraim Taylor

6:00 PM

Welcome / Introductions / Call to Order

Ephraim Taylor, CSAC Chair

Randy Clarke: Welcomed and thanked the committee for their work. Spoke about the labor shortage and the future potential fare programs.

Public Communications

Ruven Brooks: On Monday I attended the Campo meeting and Cynthia Long, the chairman of Campo told us that on Williamson County Road projects they were seeing a 20% increase in costs.

Ephraim Taylor: I've started riding the bus more with my family, and I've noticed increasing bus cancellations. A cancelled bus is not immediately obvious, so it makes trip planning difficult, and waiting longer at stations is tiresome for some folks.

David Shapiro: If someone uses Google Maps for routing, will it show live bus data? If a bus is offline, does GMaps reflect that?

JoAnne Ortiz: There are issues with live tracking, but yes, the map can show you live bus locations, though it isn't always reliable, especially if something occurs mid-route.

Cynthia Lucas: A problem that we face is mass communication – discussed potential solutions.

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?

David Foster: What are other transit agencies in the country and the rest of the world doing?

Martin Kareithi: NYMTA is in the same spot we are, they are seeking input form their communities, San Fransisco’s BART has an existing stroller policy. They allow people to board with the full, unfolded stroller. They’ve allocated space for people with strollers to harbor them for the journey. They use the same securement as a wheelchair, so if a person is sitting in a wheelchair boards, the stroller bound customer must give up their seat to the wheelchair bound individual. Dallas’ DART also has an open stroller policy on vehicles when space allows.

Besty Greenberg: It seems reasonable to allow the open stroller, though with a [collapsible] stroller you can fold it. If people are going to take the bus, they can be aware to use a collapsible stroller. Though if a person in a wheelchair comes along, the stroller should get folded or taken out of the way. Another point, maybe if we encourage stroller use so more kinds are being exposed to the transit system at an early age, they’ll grow up to continue using mass transit.

Ephraim Taylor: Discussed soft carrier to transport children - another option for people to use on the bus, that doesn’t expend too much space on the bus.

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.

David Foster: Did you account for less traffic because of the pandemic?

Nadia Barrera-Ramirez: We did not, crashes went up during the pandemic. Due to less traffic and higher speeds.

Besty Greenberg: Keep collecting the data to build a larger data set. The numbers seem inconclusive and follow the trend of natural traffic variation year over year, instead of an overarching trend in the data.

Red Line – Name Background + History

Cynthia Lucas, Director of Marketing

Sam Sargent, Director of Government Affairs

- The Red Line was referred to as the starter line prior to 1997. It was the line considered for light rail and streetcar through a series of studies that began in the 1980s. The Starter Line almost made it to a Board of Directors vote in 1993. In December 1994 The Austin Transportation Study (now Campo) adopted a 25-year plan that included, among many features, 52 miles of light rail.

- That adoption later led to a study in 1997 that included four potential light rail lines:
 - Red Line – Using the Austin Northwestern tracks from Leander to Airport Blvd then east through East Austin
 - Green Line – Running down Lamar to Guadalupe, to Colorado then down Congress Avenue to Slaughter lane (Like the current 801)
 - Orange Line – from downtown using the 4th street tracks to Pleasant Valley, Riverside and the airport.
 - Blue Line- Connecting north/south using the MoPac tracks.

- After the failed referendum of 2000, Capital Metro continued its studies and looked at a starter line that used only the Austin Northwestern tracks. The Red Line name was used since it had been applied to the Austin Northwestern segment in the 1997 study.

- The use of colors to denote lines is a popular application in transit.

Betsy Greenberg: Understands the sentiment of changing the name. Liked the idea of keeping it “red” but changing the name to another shade of red like, Scarlett, Crimson or Ruby. Discussed that the name change might not lead to real change in systemic racism.

Sam Sargent: I’ll make mention that LA’s Line B is still red on their system map, they just changed the name of the line.

Ruven Brooks: Discussed the accessibility of the color red and color-blindness.

David Foster: Who are the groups of people who are faulting the agency on this matter?

Sam Sargent: Community members and action groups like PUMA (People United for Mobility Action) have brought up the issue.

David Foster: Talked about engagement and the knowledge of redlining.

Sam Sargent: Let the committee know that we are discussing it with community members to make sure that we are taking appropriate action and outreach

Ephraim Taylor: I appreciate the seriousness CapMetro is taking with this issue, there’s a lot that goes into branding, marketing, wayfinding so balancing all that and keeping the public contented is a huge endeavor.

Potential Fare Programs

Edna Parra, Community Engagement Manager

Catherine Walker, EVP, Chief Finance and Risk Officer

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 Potencial 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.

Besty Greenberg: Did you consider a higher discount? I feel like if Medicare recipients get 50% off, Medicaid recipients need more.

Catherine Walker: We considered how the discount would work out on the fare system. If it's 50% then the fare might land on an awkward amount like \$0.89 and that would make it difficult to make change at the farebox. We wanted to create a fare that was easy to understand.

David Foster: I'm nervous about people abusing the system, say, higher income earners getting the discount could spell disaster to people to need reduced fares

Edna Parra: There would be a process for enrollment and eligibility that Catherine has more information about.

Catherine Walker: We would collect relevant data, but we would keep data collection to a minimum, because we don't want to harbor much of people's personal data. We would also potentially conduct audits throughout the year for those customers that are enrolled in Equifare to minimize the small chance of abuse of the program.

Approval of the minutes