



City Council Study Session
October 13, 2020

Santa Rosa CityBus Fare Policy Options

Study Session Topics

- Overview of current fare structure and policies
- COVID-19 fare policy implications
- Fare policy options:
 - 1) Restoration of fares
 - 2) Clipper START Discount Program for Low-income Riders
 - 3) Expansion of Unlimited Access Pass Programs
- Next steps/future Council items
- Council questions and feedback

Fare Revenue Overview

- Collect ~\$1.5M in fixed-route fares annually
 - Farebox cash
 - Pass, ticket, and Clipper Card sales
 - OVA contribution to Oakmont Route 16 operating costs
 - SRJC Unlimited Access Pass program reimbursement
- Required to achieve 20% farebox recovery per TDA statute
 - Currently achieve by including Measure M local sales tax revenue
- Fare collection suspended since March 18, 2020 as COVID-19 social distancing strategy

CityBus Fare Structure

Fare Type	Adult	Youth	Senior	Disabled
Cash Fare	\$ 1.50	\$ 1.25	\$ 0.75	\$ 0.75
Day Pass	\$ 4.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.00	\$ 2.00
31 Day Pass	\$ 50.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00
Transfer—CityBus *	Free	Free	Free	Free
Transfer—Inter-operator*	Free	Free	Free	Free
Paratransit Ticket	\$3.00 per one-way ride			

* Good for unlimited free travel for two hours after issued.

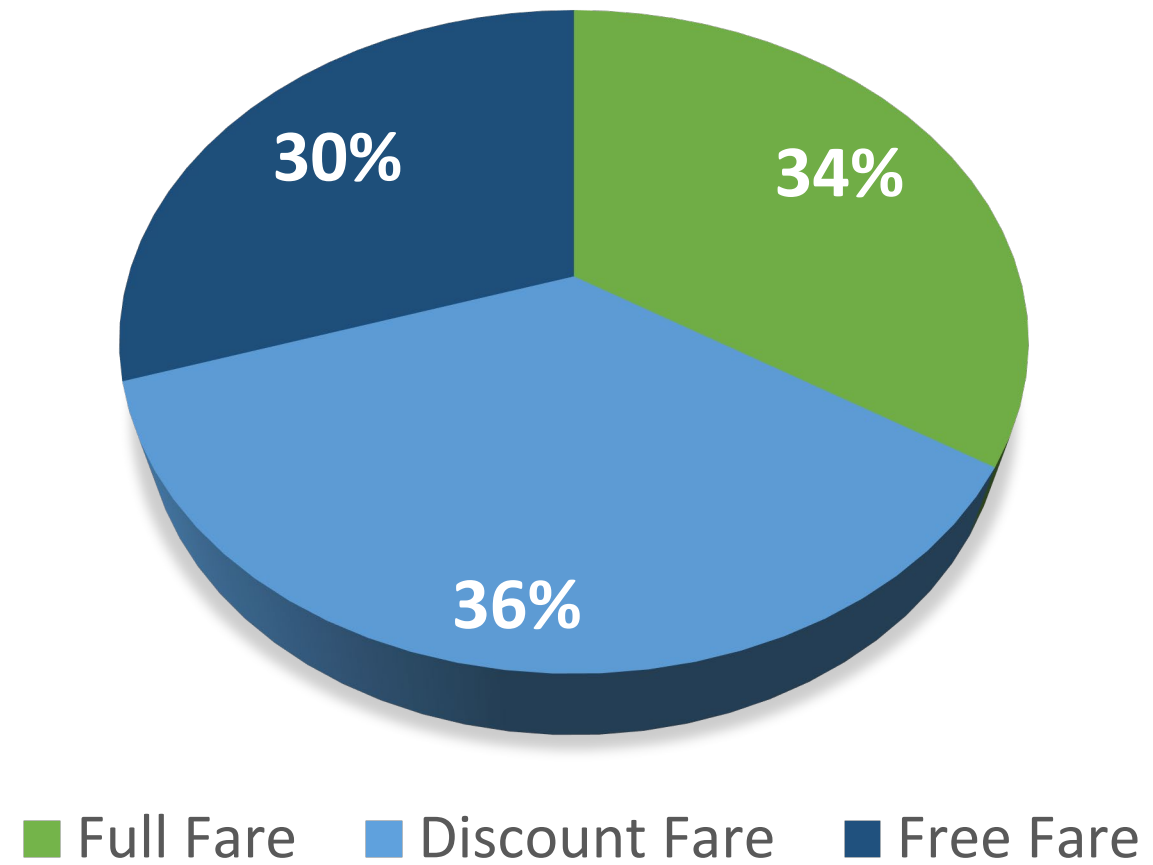
CityBus Ridership by Fare Type

Fare Category	% of Riders	Discounted	Free	Reimbursement of Lost Revenue
Adult (all media)	27%			--
CityBus Transfer	19%	Free with initial paid fare		--
Inter-Operator Transfer	3%	Free with initial paid fare		--
Youth (all media)	13%	✓		TFCA for 31 Day Pass subsidy
Half Fare (all media)*	16%	✓		--
Children under 5	5%		✓	--
Paratransit Registrants	2%		✓	Savings in paratransit program
SRJC Students	13%		✓	SRJC Student Transportation Fee
Veterans	2%		✓	Santa Rosa General Fund
Total	100%			

* For Seniors and People with Disabilities, as required by federal law.

CityBus Ridership by Fare Category

(Excludes transfers)



Key COVID-19 Fare Policy Considerations

- Transit ridership significantly impacted by pandemic
- Economic effects of COVID-19 disproportionately affect low-income residents and riders
 - 86% of CityBus riders are low-income
 - 53% do not have access to a working vehicle
 - 28% are K-12 or college students
 - 76% use CityBus 4+ days/week
- Fare policy decisions can influence social distancing outcomes
 - Ridership recovery in tension with reduced onboard capacity
- Fare suspension has positives and negatives
 - Positives: helps community, promotes ridership recovery
 - Negatives: ongoing revenue losses, social distancing implications

Proposed Approach to Fare Policy



Plan for fare restoration with safety protocols in place and in coordination with transit partners



Promote community economic recovery and transit ridership recovery by implementing additional discounted and unlimited access pass programs



Replace lost fare revenue with other funds whenever possible



Phase implementation of discounted and unlimited pass programs to maintain social distancing onboard buses during COVID-19 pandemic

Fare Restoration



- Most Bay Area transit operators have restored fares or plan to restore fares between November and January
- Requires physical barrier between driver compartment and farebox (e.g., plexiglass, clear vinyl)
- Ideally coordinated with Sonoma County Transit and Petaluma Transit
- Supports social distancing onboard buses by reducing incidence of individuals riding without a destination
 - Critical for potential return to on-site learning at City schools
- CityBus currently forgoing ~40K/month in fare revenue

Fare Restoration

Proposal: Restore fares by January 1, with physical barrier in place and in coordination with SCT and Petaluma Transit

Considerations:

- SCT currently planning January 1 fare restoration
- Ideally give riders/agencies at least 1 month notice of fare restoration and avoid restoring fares during holiday season

Clipper START Discount Fare Program

- MTC pilot program to test new discount fare option for low-income adults, via Clipper Card
 - Provides 20% or 50% discount on single rides to adults 18-64 with earnings up to 200% of the federal poverty level
 - MTC and contractor administer program and qualify riders
- CARES Act funding used to expand program to all Bay Area transit operators as COVID-19 recovery strategy
 - MTC to cover 50% of lost fare revenue resulting from program participation
- Universal participation anticipated, including by Sonoma County transit operators



Clipper START Discount Fare Program

- Local Operators' Planned Discounts:
 - SMART: 50%
 - GGT: 50%
 - Sonoma County Transit: 20%
 - Petaluma Transit: 20%
- Participation at the 20% discount level would reduce CityBus Adult single-ride fare from \$1.50 to \$1.20 for eligible riders
 - Anticipate lost revenue of \$15K-35K during pilot program period (through January 2022)



Clipper START Discount Fare Program

Proposal: Join Clipper START pilot program at 20% discount rate through January 2022 to provide a new discount option for low-income adults*

- Provides immediate financial benefit for economically vulnerable riders during COVID-19 pandemic and recession
- Improves transit access and supports ridership recovery
- Supports fare integration in the local and regional transit system
- Promotes increased participation in the Clipper Card program

*** *Action item on today's Council consent calendar***

Unlimited Access Pass Program Expansion

- Provides fare-free access to transit for groups to meet transit system and community goals
- Current programs:
 - SRJC students
 - City employees
 - Veterans
 - Children under 5
- Proposed programs:
 - EcoPass Program (institutions, employers, residential developments)
 - Youth (K-12) Unlimited Access Pilot Program



**Veterans
ride free on
CityBus!**

A promotional graphic for SRJC students. It features a green and white background with a geometric pattern. The text reads: 'SRJC STUDENTS RIDE FREE ON ALL MAJOR TRANSIT LINES!' followed by 'ANY LINE, ANY TIME' in large, bold, blue letters. At the bottom, there is a small image of a student ID card and a photo of a student. To the right of the ID card, it says: 'Just flash your validated CubCard photo ID and ride FREE on Sonoma County Transit, Santa Rosa CityBus and Petaluma Transit!'.

EcoPass Program

- Provides universal fare-free access to transit for a population of participants through an agreement between an entity and a transit provider
 - Entity pays a bulk rate for their entire population of participants to have access to ride without paying at the time of boarding
 - Common in university settings, but also possible for employers, residential developments, other groups
- Current implementation: SRJC Unlimited Access Pass Program
- Possible future implementations:
 - Residential developments (e.g., Roseland Village, funded by AHSC grant)
 - Employers
 - “Equity” EcoPass for clients of homeless services organizations, Section 8 voucher recipients

EcoPass Program

- Proposed focus on entities with a population of 50+ participants
- Fee to be based on estimate of annual rides to be taken by participants with trips billed on a per-ride basis at the CityBus average fare (reduces financial risk to participating entity)
- Program design flexible enough to enable creative partnerships
- Benefits:
 - Reduces cost of transit access for riders
 - Increased transit ridership
 - New sources of operating funding to sustain/improve transit services
 - Can reduce transportation-related expenses for participating entities
 - Supports Council goals for housing development and greenhouse gas reduction

EcoPass Program

Proposal:

- **Adopt formal EcoPass Program to expand availability of model to employers, residential developments, and other entities with 50 or more participants**
- **Use TFCA grant funds to “seed” new implementations to reduce risk to participating entities while testing value and effectiveness of the program**

Youth (K-12) Unlimited Pass Pilot Program

- Longstanding Council interest in fare-free transit for youth
- Recent proliferation of programs with well-documented positive impacts on ridership, household budgets, and school attendance
- Impact of lost fare revenue on operating budget and farebox recovery has been a barrier to implementation (est. cost of \$275,000 annually)
- Current opportunity:
 - Reduced ridership lowers cost of program
 - TDA farebox recovery requirements temporarily suspended
 - TFCA grant funding available to support pilot program



Youth (K-12) Unlimited Pass Pilot Program

Proposal:

- **Develop a Youth Unlimited Pass Pilot Program to be funded with approx. \$100K in one-time grant revenues and implemented in coordination with local partners including school districts**
- **Use pilot program as opportunity to test concept and understand benefits; work with partners to develop long-term funding strategy.**

Considerations:

- Risk that increased ridership will lead to social distancing challenges during pandemic; implementation must be carefully phased and monitored
- Length of pilot program highly variable based on rate of ridership recovery and return to on-site learning at city schools

Next Steps

- Action on Clipper START on today's consent calendar
- Prepare for fare restoration (operational, safety-related, and public information activities)
- Further develop EcoPass Program and Youth Unlimited Access Pilot Program and return to Council for action in December

Council Questions and Feedback

- Looking for feedback on proposals for :
 - Fare restoration
 - Clipper START low-income discount program
 - EcoPass Program
 - Youth Unlimited Access Pass Pilot Program
- Are we missing any needs or opportunities?
- What information would Council like to see when we return?