

To: Administration and Finance Committee
From: Anne Muzzini, Director of Planning & Marketing

Date: July 26, 2013
Reviewed by:

Subject: Mid-Day Free for Senior and Disabled

Summary of Issues:

Prior to the 2009 service cuts and fare increase seniors (65 yrs) and people with disabilities could ride the fixed route system between 10 and 2 for free. This encouraged them to use fixed route instead of the LINK paratransit service and it encouraged them to use the system during non-peak times when there is more capacity.

The percentage of the total ridership that are seniors and disabled hasn't changed from 2007-08 to 2011-12 and has been stable at 11% of the total. The volume has dropped however due to the service cuts. Prior to the cuts we carried 492,636 seniors and disabled and last year the number was 339,577. When there was a mid-day free fare; approximately half rode during the mid-day and took advantage of the free fare.

The Marketing and Operations Committee is interested in bringing back the mid-day free fare for seniors and disabled and even expanding it to a broader time window – 10am to 3pm. To determine the financial impact we used the Ridecheck software to sort fare payment method by time of day. Fares collected from the senior discount cash fare, the 20 ride senior punch pass, and the senior BART transfer, between the hours of 10am and 2pm totaled 2% of the total fare revenues. This represents \$70,000 of fare revenue out of a total of \$3,500,000 annually.

Clipper and Mid-Day Free Fares:

Because Clipper will only be used by people paying a fare; free fare riders won't be using the Clipper when they board the bus. The same is true on the WC Trolley; because it's free no one will use their Clipper card when boarding.

Peer Systems with Mid-Day Free Category for Senior and Disabled

An internet search of fares for fifteen peer operators was done and surprisingly none of them had a mid-day free fare for seniors and disabled. Systems included in the survey were Tri Delta Transit, WestCat, Wheels, Muni, AC Transit, VTA (Santa Clara), Golden Gate (Marin), DART (Dallas), King County Metro (Seattle), Community Transit, Pierce Transit, TriMet (Portland), Santa Cruz, and Monterey. The Dallas system does offer free

service all day to those who are determined to be eligible for ADA service. This assures them that the free rides are going to those who would otherwise have used the more expensive ADA service.

Recommendation:

Consider re-instating the mid-day free fare for seniors and people with disabilities at a cost of \$70,000 a year. The benefits would include; positive public opinion about County Connection, shifting of ridership to non-peak times, and encouraging frail riders to stay on fixed route as opposed to transferring to the LINK paratransit system. The downside is that no one else seems to be doing it and we are in a period where fare coordination and simplicity is a regional priority.