

Regional Means-Based Transit Fare Pricing Study

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting #2: Alternative Scenarios

Monday, August 3, 2015 10:30 am-12:30 pm
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Conference Room 171
101 Eighth Street, Oakland 94607

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Asha Agrawal	San Jose State University
Joe Speaks	CH2M HILL
Celestine Do	CH2M HILL
Christiane Kwok	SamTrans/Caltrain
Pat Piras	Public
Tom Harais	ECCTA
Sarah Fine	SFCTA/TIMMA
Barbara Duffy	Martin Transit
Emmett Nelson	SFMTA
Diana Hammons	SFMTA
Randolph Hudson	Contra Costa Employment and Human Services
Andrea Ford	Alameda County Social Services Agency
Laurel Poeton	Alameda County Transportation Commission
Joe Rye	Petaluma Transit
Alvin Lucas	VTA
Bob Allen	Urban Habitat
Charlotte Barham	BART
Vikrant Sood	MTC
Glen Tepke	MTC
Kristen Mazur	MTC
David Weir	MTC
Jason Weinstein	MTC
Anne Richman	MTC
Matt Maloney	MTC

Introduction

- MTC staff member introduced the goals of the study
- Consultant staff summarized key highlights from policies and conditions memo
- TAC member question: Is BART factored into this data? MTC staff member said yes.

Preliminary Scenario Discussion

- Consultant staff introduced preliminary scenarios
- TAC member question: Can you clarify the scenario of eliminating cash transfers? MTC staff member answered that we are looking at discounts that really impact low income seniors rather than subsidizing higher income seniors. Many senior/disabled fares are used as a proxy for low-income.

- TAC member question: Will we be defining income thresholds for low income, very low income etc.? MTC staff member said that those have not yet been defined, but are not the intended focus of this meeting.

Open Discussion of Scenarios

- TAC member comment: There would be value to including advantages and disadvantages to these scenarios on this handout (as are included in the report). I'm an advocate of adding cash to Clipper card but that requires waiting until C2 to implement; social services could do means-testing so this scenario is possible.
- TAC member comment: We don't want transit operators to do means testing. Transit agencies support the concept of having social services agencies doing means testing. During implementation, discounts can get abused. We (a transit agency) lost \$100k due to abuse of discount pass. Fraud is a big issue.
- TAC member comment: We've identified fraud in our system and use photo IDs to prevent reselling cards/passes.
- TAC member comment: It's critical to talk about the funding question up front because agencies need to be made whole. Consultant staff said that we need to make sure the policies are right but not held back by revenue consideration. MTC staff member said that cost should not be an immediate gating concern because investment in C2 could be the opportunity to implement new low-income scenarios.
- TAC member likes the idea of adding cash to Clipper card because it's simple. Communicating new policies like fare capping to seniors and non-English language speakers is difficult. Seniors need one-on-one training and training is expensive. If scenario is too complicated, it'll turn people off and they won't understand how to use it.
- TAC member comment: Just do means testing for typically high income modes like BART and rail. If we just assume bus riders are low income, then we don't need to do means testing for them.
- TAC member question: What are the criteria we want evaluated for qualitative analysis?
Suggested criteria:
 - Ability to communicate easily
 - Benefits for all stakeholders, e.g. ridership increases for operators with peak and off peak
 - Consideration of low income riders who may not be under the income threshold

Scenario 3: Discounted off peak fare

- TAC member comment: We need to talk to labor before implementing it because peak fare pricing can be the cause of passenger conflicts with drivers. If bus is running late, passengers could be charged a peak fare when they were attempting to board a bus scheduled before the peak. There was a general discussion of policy and technical ways to manage this, but a recognition that it is a concern.
- TAC member comment: We could make seniors pay full fare during peak hours. But given our small staff, we don't want to do means testing.

- TAC member comment: More than 50% of SFMTA Lifeline participants don't participate in other discount programs. Mean-testing specifically for the transportation product would probably be needed in San Francisco.
- TAC member comment: Among the target population for discount programs, there's a high rate of loss for Clipper cards and that makes it administratively difficult to manage. Replacement is complicated when riders don't have a Clipper card number.
- TAC member comment: VTA has removed all monthly passes on paper and they are only on Clipper. We will do day passes exclusively on Clipper starting January 2016.
- TAC member question: Have you seen ridership decline with the move to Clipper? VTA Response: We haven't seen ridership numbers so we don't know if ridership has declined.

Scenario 4: Regional inter-agency pass

- TAC member comment: The emphasis on regional approach is important because we need to address that low income commuters are being pushed farther out. How can we reduce the cost of linked trips and what revenue implications are for riders who take three transit operators to get to work?
- TAC member comment: A regional pass would be new product for BART. How would we participate in a pass based program?
- TAC member comment: We need to ask riders what they want. MTC staff member: We are doing focus groups.
- TAC member question: What's income distribution for BART? BART Response: 29% are 200% FPL or below.
- TAC member comment: I'd be interested in how many riders have a three agency transit ride. SFMTA's riders don't have a three agency transit ride. MTC staff member said that we have aggregated data on that, not by operator.
- TAC member comment: The vast majority of low income riders in Antioch stay in county. Our target populations aren't going into San Francisco.
- TAC member comment: Buying up front pass is difficult for low income riders, worried that regional pass would be more expensive and low income couldn't buy it. Caltrain is distance based so it would be difficult to have it on a regional pass.
- TAC member comment: We have a super pass for Sonoma county, there's no discount except for institutional programs and public isn't aware of it. Pass sales are small but reinforces point that operators would have to sacrifice to be part of it.

Scenario 8: Increase use of existing discounts

- TAC member question: Which scenario is low hanging fruit?
- MTC staff member: I think scenario 8 is low hanging fruit. A rolling period pass is easier for low income because it's not a fee required at the beginning of the month.
- TAC member comment: Increasing existing discounts would be a new product on Clipper and that would be difficult to implement. MTC staff member: We could support a new product on Clipper even if it requires a change order.
- TAC member comment: Non-senior, non-disabled adults would suffer from revenue Scenario A, elimination of non-mandated discounts.

Scenarios 2 & 7:

2) Discounted low-income fares and/or pass program

7) Add cash to Clipper card for low-income riders

- TAC member comment: I can imagine social services distributing clipper cards with cash.
- TAC member comment: It's easy to communicate to riders.
- TAC member comment: Responsibility for means testing needs to happen outside of transit agency.
- TAC member comment: For Uplift program, VTA delivers the product to social service agencies, but it's the social service agencies that determine who gets it. VTA doesn't look deeply into how social services determines eligibility.
- TAC member comment: We like scenario 2 because it creates a means testing location, just like the RTC program.
- TAC member comment: Currently, social services buy paper passes and hands them to clients or sends them through the mail. Scenario 7 could be administratively challenging. Electronic card balance isn't as easy to read as a paper pass with a printed balance.
- TAC member comment: We also put money on debit cards for social services recipients to buy a transit pass. Perhaps the debit cards could fund the Clipper card, or funds could be placed directly on the Clipper card using the same system currently used for the debit card.
- TAC member comment: Are we going to shift responsibility of providing affordable transit to transit agencies? Who is doing it now? Is this like the service provision of ADA/paratransit where we shifted responsibility to another agency?

Scenario 5: Make transfers more affordable

- TAC member comment: 80% of riders stay in area. Transfers can currently be made to other operators but they're not utilized.
- TAC member comment: I don't see a lot of inter-agency transfers.
- TAC member comment: Let's start with needs of low income riders on buses but not lose the future demography of the region. Low income riders are being pushed to the suburbs and commutes are getting longer. What is the nature of displaced riders' transit pattern? What about a piloted transfer program?
- TAC member comment: Scenario 5 isn't a desirable outcome.

Voting on Scenarios

- After a discussion on whether it would be useful or appropriate to vote on the scenarios, the facilitator asked for a show of hands in support of each scenario.
- Scenario 2: 2/3 of the room in favor
- Scenario 3: Half the room in favor
- Scenario 4: Less than half the room in favor
 - TAC member comment: I'm interested in having scenario 4 because BART Board is interested in connectivity.
- Scenario 5: Only one person in favor
- Scenario 6: 2/3 of the room in favor

- Scenario 7: Half the room in favor
- Scenario 8: Less than half the room in favor