

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 8/5/2020

Staff Report No. 20-269

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Michael A. Hursh, General Manager
SUBJECT: BART-to-Bus Paper Discount Transfer Ticket

ACTION ITEM

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider waiving the two-hearing requirement specified in Board Policy 110 and set a public hearing on September 23, 2020 at 6:00 PM to receive public comment on the proposed elimination of the paper version of the BART-to-Bus discount transfer ticket.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

The elimination of the paper transfer between BART and AC Transit removes a very under-utilized and antiquated form of fare discount and further encourages use of the Clipper card system, which is a quicker and more convenient form of fare payment that has the ability to reduce transit delays due to fare payment.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

Setting the public hearing does not have a fiscal impact on the District, other than the costs associated with publicizing the hearing.

Use of the BART-to-Bus paper discount transfer is very low and has declined in recent years. It is believed that this decrease is largely a result of BART eliminating the sale of paper tickets. Although ridership is down significantly since mid-March due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Table 1 below illustrates that use of the BART-to-Bus paper transfer had declined to between 33 and 41% before the pandemic Shelter-in-Place (SIP) order.

Table 1: BART-to-Bus Paper Transfer Usage

	Ridership (cash)	BART-to-Bus Transfer	% of ridership	Year Over Year change
Jan 19	887,828	5,060	0.57%	
Feb 19	821,497	4,393	0.53%	
Mar 19	906,325	4,943	0.55%	
Jan 20	752,145	3,000	0.40%	-40.71%
Feb 20	754,266	2,932	0.39%	-33.26%

Mar 20*	423,688	1,372	0.32%	-72.24%
---------	---------	-------	-------	---------

*Shelter-in-Place order began March 17, 2020

This finding is reinforced by the substantial reduction in the amount of paper ticket stock requested by BART to supply the transfer ticket dispensing machines. Given the requirement to use Clipper on BART, staff believes cash use by customers who ride both BART and AC Transit will fall to zero naturally. Since fare collection costs for Clipper are substantially lower than fare collection costs for cash, elimination of this fare media will result in a cost savings.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

Customers who transfer between AC Transit and BART qualify for a fare discount on the bus portion of those trips. The management of this discount is contained in the Feeder Agreement between AC Transit and BART; however, the discount is applied only to the AC Transit bus fare. While this discount is applied automatically on Clipper, cash paying riders get the discount by taking a paper ticket from a dispensing machine inside the BART station fare gates and presenting it to the bus operator. The dispensing machines are maintained by BART, using ticket stock provided by AC Transit.

The new BRT ticket vending machines and fare collection system do not have a means to accept the paper transfer ticket or apply the discount, so staff has been charged with finding a solution for all riders to access the discount.

BART has eliminated paper tickets at some stations and plans to eliminate them at all stations. This means that more AC Transit riders who are also BART users will need to use the Clipper card going forward and receive the discount automatically. As new BART stations have opened in recent years, they have not included ticket dispensing machines for this product. Use of the paper transfer ticket has significantly declined, and even though many of the dispensing machines are out of order, staff has not received any complaints related to not being able to get a paper ticket.

Title VI Analysis: The Board is required under Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations and Board Policies 110 and 518 to consider and approve a fare equity analysis before the District can eliminate any fare media to ensure such a proposed change will not result in discriminatory impacts on populations protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Staff will undertake the Title VI analysis and solicit input on it as a part of the evaluation of the proposed changes, and report back to the Board before they make a decision about the proposals.

Public Engagement Related to Proposal: Following Board policies and the District's Public Participation Plan, staff will engage in public outreach to promote participation in the public hearing and comment period and ensure receipt of input and comments about the proposal. As the BART-to-Bus paper transfer is used by a defined segment of the District's riders, the engagement strategy will build on the relationship staff has with BART to reach users and provide notification about the proposed change. Planned outreach will include: posting of the Public Hearing Notice on both AC Transit and BART websites and at strategic locations; point-of-service signage at BART stations (at transfer dispensing machines and at bus stops); and eNews distribution to riders along with elected and community stakeholders. The public hearing will be held through video conferencing and the public will have multiple ways of submitting comments: in writing, through the video

conference itself, by email or online eComment, by U.S. mail, and by phone with three dedicated voicemail lines in English, Spanish, and Chinese. Spanish and Chinese interpreters will be available at the hearing, and upon request additional interpreters may be provided. Public feedback will be presented to the Board of Directors for their consideration.

Waiving the two-hearing requirement: As noted above, staff believes a very small number of riders use the paper version of the BART-to-Bus discount transfer, and do not expect much public comment on this matter. In addition, staff proposes to provide many opportunities and methods for the public to submit comments, so the obligation to provide additional real-time opportunities is less pressing at this time.

Decision: Because the impacts of this change are minor, staff recommends that the Board render a decision on the same day following the public hearing in order to expedite notification to the public and removal of transfer dispensing machines before the start of BRT fare collection. If approved by the Board, this fare change would go into effect as soon as practicable, but no later than November 9th, 2020.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

Advantages: Staff believes very few riders will be inconvenienced by the elimination of this fare product. This is balanced by the many benefits which are received by riders who use Clipper. Holding a public hearing to receive public comment will provide an opportunity to hear the voices of riders and members of the community with opinions on this topic. Another advantage of moving forward is that the District would be able to resolve this issue before the start of fare collection on BRT, which is important because the paper discount ticket cannot be used on BRT.

Disadvantages: Given the current decrease in ridership due to SIP orders, it could be difficult to reach riders who typically use this fare product or who might have opinions about its elimination. Well before the SIP order, however, the District did not receive any complaints about malfunctioning machines or the fact that new BART stations do not have the dispensing machines. Accordingly, staff believes a very small population would be negatively impacted.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

Staff considered the following alternatives:

- The District could decide to modify BRT TVMs to accept the paper discount transfer tickets. The BRT TVMs currently allow for the purchase of single ride with cash, but their functionality is limited. It takes up to 22 keystrokes for a rider to complete a BRT ticket purchase; incorporating the ability to accept the paper transfer ticket and apply a discount would further complicate transactions. Staff does not believe the cost and effort of this option is justified.
- Another option would be to eliminate use of this product on BRT only. Such an elimination would impact riders in the BRT corridor only, which could carry possible equity concerns that the District lacks the data to investigate at this time. This alternative would still trigger the public hearing process as outlined in this staff report. This option runs counter to the District's fare policy goal of simplicity, and staff does not recommend this option.
- A decision to retain the paper ticket discount would require the District to invest resources into fixing and stocking dispensing machines in existing BART stations, and installing and maintaining new ones in

BART stations with AC Transit connecting bus service where such machines do not exist.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

Board Policies 110 and 518 regarding Public Hearings and Title VI analyses, respectively

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Public Hearing Notice

Prepared by:

Sally Goodman, Title VI Program Administrator

In Collaboration with:

Diann Castleberry, External Affairs Representative

Julia Kocs, Marketing & Communications Manager

Approved/Reviewed by:

Claudia Burgos, Director of Legislative Affairs & Community Relations

Robert del Rosario, Director of Service Development and Planning

Sue Lee, Director of Revenue Management

Derik Calhoun, Director of Transportation

Chris Andrichak, Director of Management and Budget

Lynette Little, Director of Civil Rights & Compliance

Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering

Beverly Greene, Executive Director of External Affairs, Marketing & Communications

Salvador Llamas, Chief Operating Officer

Claudia L. Allen, Chief Financial Officer

Jill A. Sprague, General Counsel

Linda A. Nemeroff, District Secretary