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MTA BOARD ADOPTS BUS/RAIL FARE INCREASE TO \$1.35; 90-CENT TOKEN BECOMES PRINCIPAL DISCOUNT AVAILABLE TO FREQUENT TRANSIT USERS

The MTA Board of Directors Wednesday, July 13, adopted a fare rate increase from \$1.10 to \$1.35 for the base fare on buses and trains while retaining a 90-cent discount token as part of an effort to help eliminate a \$126-million FY 1995 budget operations shortfall.

The first fare hike in six years is scheduled to go into effect on September 1. To provide frequent riders a significant discount over the regular bus and train rate, the board's action maintains the 90-cent token, available in bags of 10. The sale of monthly passes, except for elderly/disabled, college/vocational students and K-12 students, will be discontinued after August.

"We have had to face a number of harsh economic realities in recent months," said Edmund Edelman, MTA chairman and member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. "We have trimmed programs and staffing levels. Increasing the fare for the first time in six years was one of the hardest decisions we faced."

"We first identified a deficit projection of \$126 million early in FY 1994," said Franklin White, MTA's chief executive officer. "Because of a continued decline in ridership during the year, the deficit has increased by \$15 million. Our goal has been to do whatever is necessary to eliminate the deficit and present a balanced budget."

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Monthly pass prices for elderly/disabled riders will be \$12; college/vocational student passes will be \$30, and will be good seven days a week; K-12 student passes will be \$20. The cost of transfers will remain at 25 cents.

The new fare structure also creates Metro Rail fare zones and increases bus zone fares for buses that travel on freeways. In addition to the regular \$1.35 fare, express bus users will be charged 50 cents for each zone they travel through, and Blue Line and Green Line passengers will be charged 50 cents for each additional zone they travel in. The Red Line fare will remain 25 cents until the next section of the subway opens.

Blue Line zones will be about seven miles each, with boundaries between the Del Amo and Artesia stations, and between the Firestone and Florence stations. Upon completion of the Green Line next year, zone boundaries will be established between the Crenshaw and Vermont stations and between the Long Beach and Lakewood stations.

"Creating rail zones improves the fare equity for bus and train use," said White. "The fare changes will allow us to provide the most cost-efficient transit system possible, and at the same time deliver continuity and stability to our riders."

Voting on a motion put forth by County Supervisor Deane Dana, the board also approved some bus service cuts, including the reduction of three peak-hour express lines, and the elimination of two local service lines.

"It is very important that we continue to provide as much service as possible for riders from the South San Pedro-Long Beach and peninsula areas," said Dana. "If we are indeed trying to reduce traffic congestion, we need to offer a true alternative to these riders. Hopefully, the four-month period will show strong support for these lines."

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The express bus lines to be reduced for a four-month evaluation period are: Line 443 (Los Angeles Union Station-North Torrance-Redondo Beach-Palos Verdes), Line 445 (Los Angeles Union Station-West Torrance-Rolling Hills-Rancho Palos Verdes) and Line 457 (Los Angeles-Long Beach Park 'n' Ride Express).

Starting September 5, the lines will each have three weekday morning trips and three evening trips, 45 minutes apart, during a four-month test period ending December 30 to evaluate ridership. Following the test period, ridership will be evaluated to determine if service should be cancelled or retained.

Local service lines to be cancelled are Line 208 (Beachwood Shuttle) and the Line 152 Metrolink shuttle. Portions of Lines 94, 104, 225 and 320, as well as special lines such as Dodger Stadium and racetrack service, will be cancelled.

Tokens are currently available at about 350 locations throughout Los Angeles County. The agency plans to add more locations as riders discover the discount value of the tokens, Edelman said.

"Once the new rate goes in effect, I encourage people to use the 90-cent tokens," Edelman said. "This will be one of the best transit bargains in town, especially in view of the large area served by MTA buses and trains."

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