

MTA Testing High-Tech Fareboxes That Collect Data as well as Fares

(November 2) The MTA's Revenue Department expects this week to complete a two-month evaluation of an improved electronic farebox that not only collects passengers' money, but also can provide useful information about Metro Bus ridership.



The electronic farebox is one of several such fareboxes the MTA expects to test as the agency moves toward establishing a Universal Fare System (UFS). Such a system, implemented throughout LA County, would enable transit riders to more easily travel across the region using various transit systems.

The MTA is interested in a new generation of fareboxes that can process and validate paper currency, coins and tokens, while also processing electronic transactions by passengers using magnetic-stripe cards. The farebox also can accept "smart cards," which can process fare transactions without being inserted into a slot. The card is "read" when it is passed near the farebox or card reader.

"This type of farebox could provide financial data and information on passenger loading," said Agapito Diaz, director of Revenue. "It also can give us valuable insights that will allow us to match our riders' needs with the capability of the Metro Bus system."

The two fareboxes currently being tested on Lines 102 and 200 automatically track cash and tokens. The operator uses a key pad installed on the farebox to record the type of pass - monthly, weekly, student, senior, etc. - presented by patrons.

The MTA would like to have a farebox that can download data wirelessly when the bus returns from its run and approaches the division vaulting house. Currently, an MTA employee must connect an electronic cord to the farebox to retrieve the data.

The two fareboxes - upgrades of the those currently used by the MTA - were installed in September on Metro Buses which operate out of Division 2. Part of the evaluation is to assess the interaction between operators and passengers and to look at farebox reliability and service issues.

The MTA's current fareboxes are 11 years old and are increasingly difficult to find replacement parts for.

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