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Metro Sets May 24 Public Hearing to Consider Fare Changes

- 'Metro is struggling to overcome an operating deficit projected at \$1.8 billion over 10 years,' says CEO Roger Snoble.

By RICK JAGER

(April 19, 2007) A public hearing on the first major restructuring of Metro fares in 12 years will be held at 9 a.m., Thursday, May 24, at Metro Headquarters.

The Metro Board of Directors will hear public testimony at the hearing and will consider adopting changes in Metro fares. If adopted, the new fares will be phased in July 1, 2007 with a possible second adjustment on January 1, 2009.

CEO Roger Snoble is proposing to keep the Metro regular cash fare at \$1.25 until 2009. That's the lowest of any major metropolitan area in the nation. New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Diego and other cities currently charge \$2 or more.

However, Metro staff is proposing to change the regular base fare to \$2 in January 2009 and substantial changes are proposed this summer and in 2009 for Metro passes, tokens and discount fares.

Discount fares for seniors, students and the disabled have not been changed since 1995. In 2004, Metro cut the regular cash fare a dime to \$1.25, eliminated transfers, instituted the popular \$3 Day Pass and changed the monthly pass by \$10 to \$52, among other adjustments.

'Metro is struggling'

"Metro is struggling to overcome an operating deficit projected at \$1.8 billion over 10 years," explained Snoble. "Our costs for new buses, fuel, labor and other expenses have gone up exponentially over the years while fees to our customers have not changed."

Snoble noted that in 1988 fares covered 44 percent of the cost of operating buses in Los Angeles. Today, the farebox recovery ratio is just under 25 percent and the national average for large transit properties is 38 percent.

The average Metro rider is only paying 58 cents a boarding due to deep discounts to seniors/disabled, students and pass users. Although the changes appear large in percentage terms, they represent pennies in terms of daily use. If the changes are approved, the average rider fare will change from 58 cents to 86 cents per ride.

"We can't sustain these massive subsidies," Snoble said. "Either we raise

fares or cut service. We simply can not operate the existing service let alone offer the public new transit improvements.”

“It is indeed unfortunate that at a time of such high transit demand due to continued population and job growth and the rising cost of all modes of transportation that Metro will not be in a position to serve the demand without additional revenue,” Snoble continued.

Cutting overhead, seeking revenue

Snoble noted that Metro continues cutting overhead. More than 500 administrative and management positions have been eliminated in the past five years and Metro continues to look for other areas of additional revenue, such as increasing advertising opportunities on the Metro system.

Over the past decade, under the federal Consent Decree, Metro also has purchased more than 2,000 new buses and, under court order, greatly expanded bus service it can’t afford to operate.

After hearing public comment on the proposed fare modifications, the Board may consider, and at its discretion may adopt various fare modifications. The Board is not bound by or limited to the specific proposals or amounts described in the hearing notice.

In addition to the hearing, members of the public may comment on the fare change proposal by writing to Metro or by sending e-mail to fares@metro.net or by FAXing comments to 922-4594.

Here are the proposed fare modifications to be considered at the May 24 public hearing:

Regular	Last Change	Current	Proposed 7/1/07	Proposed 1/1/09
Cash	2004	\$1.25	\$1.25	\$2.00
Token	2004	\$1.10	\$1.25	\$2.00
Day	2004	\$3.00	\$5.00	\$8.00
Week	2004	\$14.00	\$20.00	\$32.00
Semi	2004	\$27.00	Eliminate	Eliminate
Month	2004	\$52.00	\$75.00	\$120.00
EZ	2002	\$58.00	\$95.00	\$140.00
Regular – Other				
Cash Zone 1	1995	\$0.50	\$0.80	\$1.30
Cash Zone 2	1995	\$1.00	\$1.60	\$2.60
Monthly premium each zone	1995	\$15.00	\$24.00	\$39.00
Owl/Late-Night/Off-Peak	2004	\$0.75	\$1.25	\$2.00
Metro to Muni Transfer	1995	\$0.25	\$0.50	\$1.00
Senior/Disabled/Medicare				
Cash	1995	\$0.45	\$0.60	\$1.00
Zone 1	2004	\$0.25	\$0.40	\$0.65
Zone 2	2004	\$0.50	\$0.80	\$1.30
Day	2004	\$1.50	\$2.50	\$4.00

Month	1995	\$12.00	\$37.50	\$60.00
EZ	2002	\$29.00	\$47.50	\$70.00
Monthly premium each zone	1988	\$7.50	\$12.00	\$19.50
Metro to Muni Transfer	1988	\$0.10	\$0.25	\$0.50
Students				
K-12	1995	\$20.00	\$45.00	\$72.00
College	1995	\$30.00	\$52.50	\$84.00
Senior Age				
July 1, 2007	63			
July 1, 2008	64			
July 1, 2009	65			