
MTA Introduces Universal Fare System at Transit Agency Workshop

(March 20, 2002)
Representatives of local transit agencies got a full briefing, Monday, on the MTA's plans for a universal fare system that will use regional passes and "Smart Card" technology to achieve seamless travel throughout Los Angeles County.



Rick Johnson of Cubic Corp., left, demonstrates a Smart Card farebox and "card validator" for CEO Roger Snoble and Deputy CEO John Catoe during Monday's universal fare workshop.

A fare box and a "Smart Card validator," both programmed to accept electronic data from Smart Cards, were on display outside the Board room. Almost 100 transit officials attended the half-day workshop.

The MTA last month awarded an \$84 million contract to San Diego-based Cubic Transportation Systems, Inc. to design, manufacture and install UFS equipment throughout the Metro system.

Ramping up for the new system is expected to take at least two years. Implementing a universal fare system throughout the county will allow transit patrons to use the Metro system, Metrolink or any municipal agency buses with fare media that will be recognized by all.

"This is a fundamental component of a seamless transportation system," says CEO Roger Snoble. "It will be simpler and easier for people to learn and will have a positive effect in getting people to use transit."

Reliable, timely data

The new technology will provide "reliable, timely data," Snoble said, that will help the MTA better determine patrons' travel patterns and shape service to suit their transportation needs. "That will drive better customer service, better on-time performance, better overall system performance."

As an interim step, the MTA and municipal operators this summer will inaugurate a countywide transit pass, similar to an MTA monthly "flash" pass that patrons can use to ride any system.

Countywide Transit Pass on Board this summer

- MTA
- Culver City Municipal Bus Lines
- Foothill Transit
- Montebello Bus Lines
- Gardena Municipal Bus Lines
- City of Commerce
- Long Beach Transit
- NorwalkTransit
- Big Blue Bus
- Torrance Transit
- Santa Clarita Transit
- LADOT

Eventually, passengers will carry Smart Cards imbedded with computer chips that could be programmed with “cash, pass and token equivalents” that can be used on any bus or train in the county.

“This begins a new relationship for all transit operators in Los Angeles County,” Deputy CEO John Catoe told workshop participants. “Having a fare collection system operated by all municipal operators will be wonderful for our customers because it provides a seamless mode of transportation – one card, countywide.”

With the contract award to Cubic, the next step in implementing a universal fare system is to work with municipal operators on such issues as revenue distribution. Catoe also wants to cooperate with schools, colleges and other organizations to promote joint uses of the Smart Cards.

During the implementation phase, MTA maintenance staff will be trained to maintain the new farebox and card recognition technology. The system will be given a thorough test on buses and trains before full introduction countywide.

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