TRANSIT SERVICE AND FARE EQUITY

Overview

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TPB Technical Committee
October 1, 2021

Agenda Item 5

National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

Presentation Outline

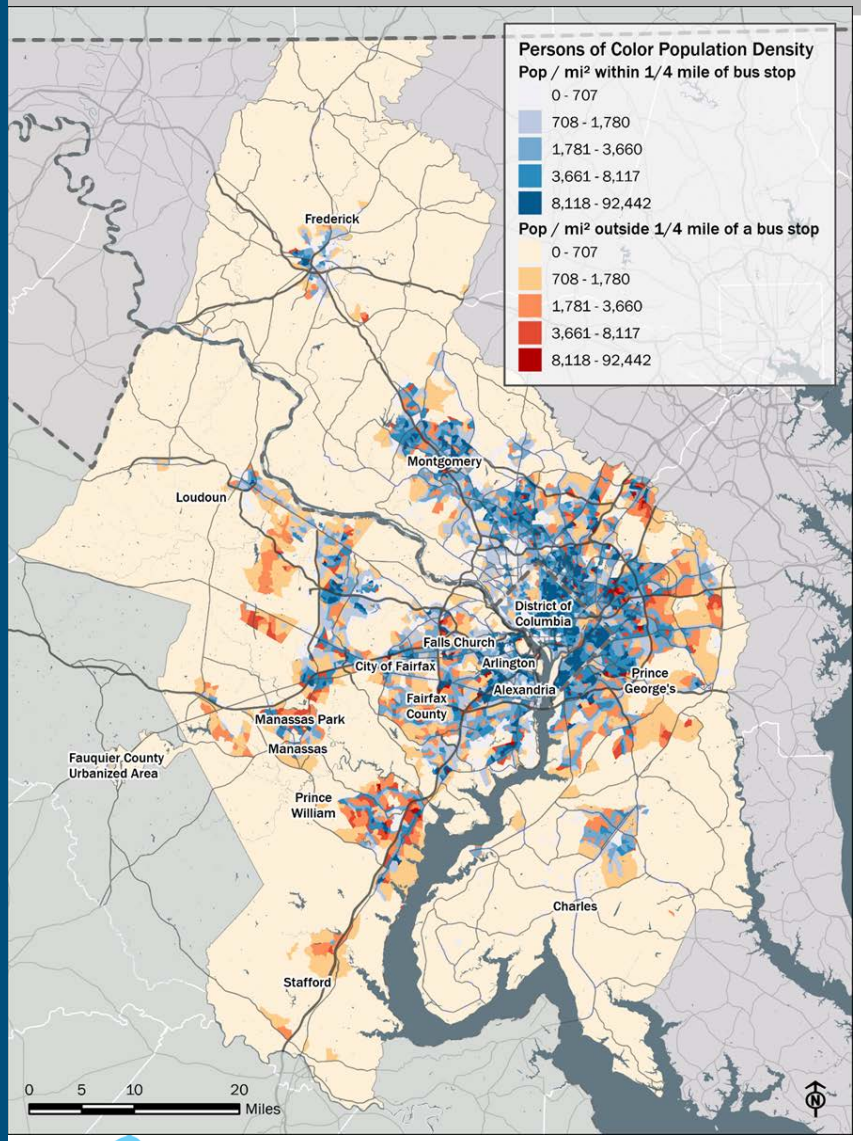
- Transit Service Equity White Paper
  - *Assessing Distribution Of Bus Transit Service For Equity During Covid-19 Pandemic*
- Transit Equity Webmap – *Demonstration*
- Transit Fare Relief Memo

Purpose of Service Equity White Paper

- Identify transit service that should be a priority for restoration coming out of the pandemic
- Plan for long term (post-pandemic) service expansion to improve equity in the region
  - The white paper analysis evaluated the locations of select population groups (e.g., people of color, low-income households, non-native English speakers) in relation to local bus transit stop locations, frequency of service, and other factors

- Analysis and webmap prepared by ICF Consulting and Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning

Regional Persons of Color Population Density



- Sample static map - regional persons of color population density within (blue) and without (red) a quarter mile of bus stops
- Throughout the sequence of maps/factors, any area that is red in multiple maps would be of high priority for transit service

Findings – Regional Access

Sixty percent of the total population in the COG region is within a ¼ mile of a local bus stop

- 41% have access to 15-minute or better service in the AM peak period

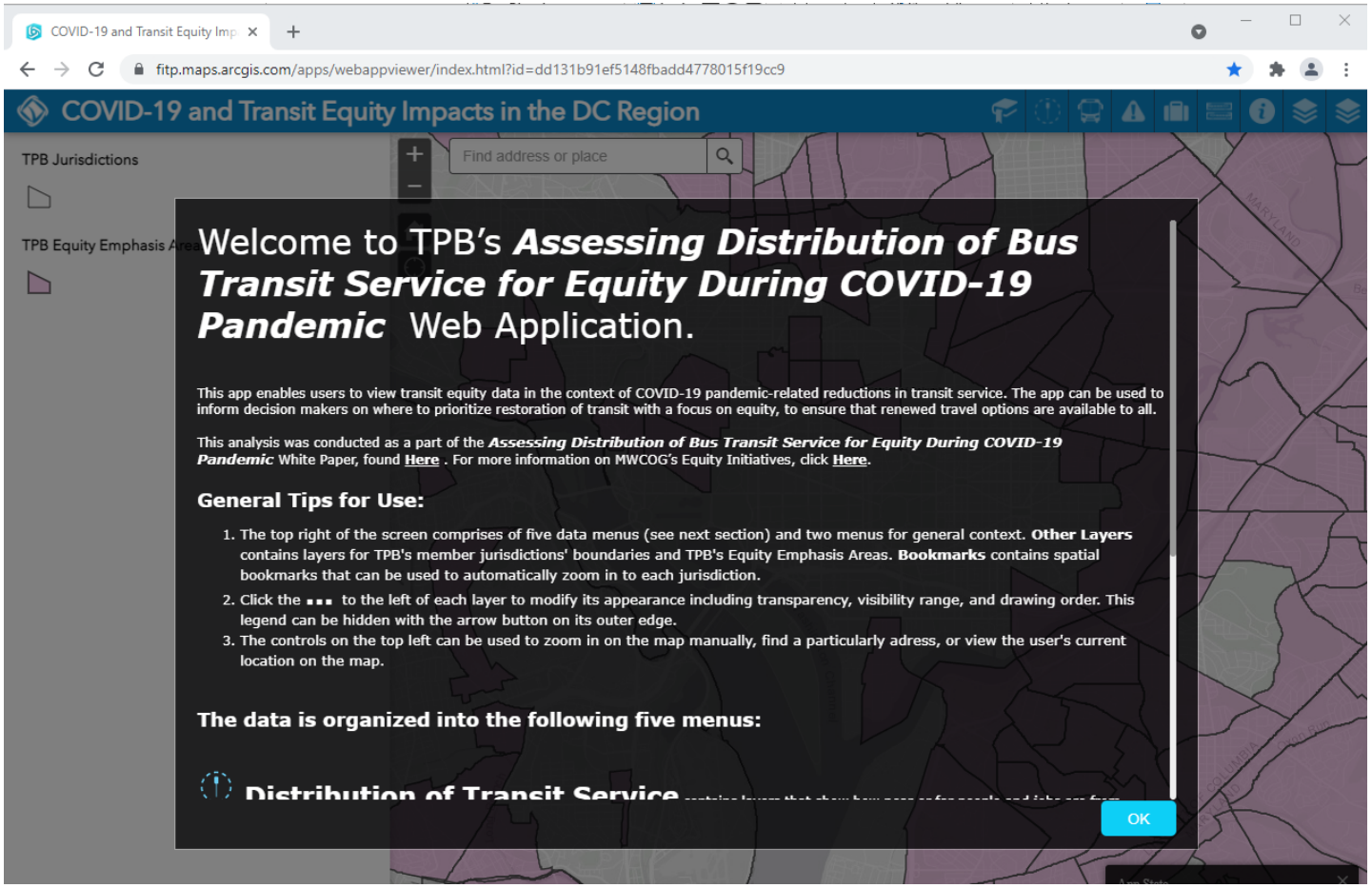
Persons of color, people with low incomes, and zero and one-car households have higher access to bus stops than the general population

- 65% of people of color and 74% of low-income households are within a ¼ mile of bus stops
- However, only 30% have access to 15-minute or better service in the peak periods

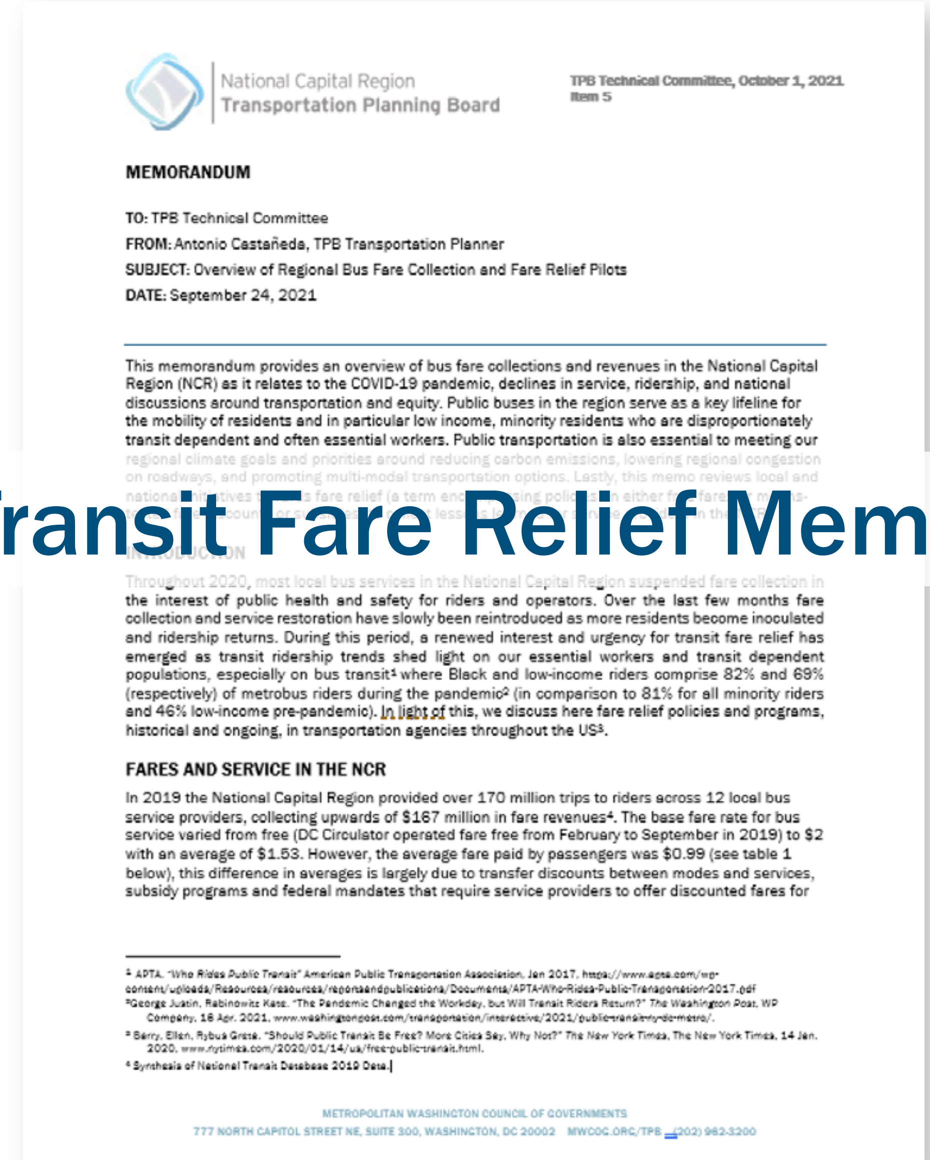
The low percentage of access to frequent service, even in the peak periods, remains a concern, particularly for quality of life and jobs access

Transit Equity Webmap - *Demonstration*

https://fitp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=dd131b91ef5148fbadd4778015f19cc9



Transit Fare Relief Memo



National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

TPB Technical Committee, October 1, 2021
Item 5

MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee
FROM: Antonio Castañeda, TPB Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Overview of Regional Bus Fare Collection and Fare Relief Pilots
DATE: September 24, 2021

This memorandum provides an overview of bus fare collections and revenues in the National Capital Region (NCR) as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic, declines in service, ridership, and national discussions around transportation and equity. Public buses in the region serve as a key lifeline for the mobility of residents and in particular low income, minority residents who are disproportionately transit dependent and often essential workers. Public transportation is also essential to meeting our regional climate goals and priorities around reducing carbon emissions, lowering regional congestion on roadways, and promoting multi-modal transportation options. Lastly, this memo reviews local and national … fare relief (a term enc… in either f… fare… … or … lesso… in the …

INTRODUCTION

Throughout 2020, most local bus services in the National Capital Region suspended fare collection in the interest of public health and safety for riders and operators. Over the last few months fare collection and service restoration have slowly been reintroduced as more residents become inoculated and ridership returns. During this period, a renewed interest and urgency for transit fare relief has emerged as transit ridership trends shed light on our essential workers and transit dependent populations, especially on bus transit[1] where Black and low-income riders comprise 82% and 69% (respectively) of metrobus riders during the pandemic[2] (in comparison to 81% for all minority riders and 46% low-income pre-pandemic). In light of this, we discuss here fare relief policies and programs, historical and ongoing, in transportation agencies throughout the US[3].

FARES AND SERVICE IN THE NCR

In 2019 the National Capital Region provided over 170 million trips to riders across 12 local bus service providers, collecting upwards of $167 million in fare revenues[4]. The base fare rate for bus service varied from free (DC Circulator operated fare free from February to September in 2019) to $2 with an average of $1.53. However, the average fare paid by passengers was $0.99 (see table 1 below), this difference in averages is largely due to transfer discounts between modes and services, subsidy programs and federal mandates that require service providers to offer discounted fares for

[1] APTA. "Who Rides Public Transit" American Public Transportation Association, Jan 2017, https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Resources/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/APTA-Who-Rides-Public-Transportation-2017.pdf
[2] George Justin, Rabinowitz Kate. "The Pandemic Changed the Workday, but Will Transit Riders Return?" The Washington Post, WP Company, 16 Apr. 2021, www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/interactive/2021/public-transit-dc-metro/.
[3] Berry, Ellen, Rybus Greta. "Should Public Transit Be Free? More Cities Say, Why Not?" The New York Times, The New York Times, 14 Jan. 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/01/14/us/free-public-transit.html.
[4] Synthesis of National Transit Database 2019 Data.

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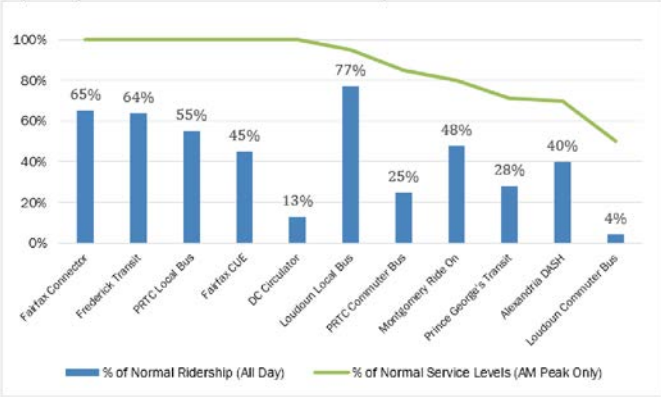
Purpose of Transit Fare Relief Memo

- To assess transit fare relief efforts in the region and nationally
- Provide an overview of local bus fare collection and revenue as they relate to the COVID-19 pandemic, declines in service, ridership and transportation equity
- Outline lessons learned from fare free and means-tested programs historic and ongoing across the US

Fare Recovery & Service Impacts of COVID-19

- The NCR provided over 170 million annual trips across 12 local bus services pre-pandemic
- During the pandemic ridership levels varied across the region, ranging from 20 – 80% of pre-pandemic levels

Percentages of Normal Transit Ridership and Service Levels Reported by Selected Transit Providers as of Dec. 1, 2020



Local Bus Characteristics in CY19 (Source: NTD)

Name	Annual Trips (Millions)	Base Fare Rate	Average Fare Paid by Passengers	Fare Recovery Ratio (%)
MetroBus	123.3	$2.00	$1.01	17%
Ride On	20.6	$2.00	$1.00	16%
Connector	8.3	$2.00	$1.31	13%
DC Circulator	5.5	$1.00		
DASH	3.9	$1.60	$0.88	21%
ART	2.8	$2.00	$1.29	25%
TheBus	2.6	$1.00	$0.50	5%
OmniRide	0.9	$1.55	$0.81	5%
VanGo	0.8	$1.00	$0.53	7%
CUE	0.6	$1.75	$0.63	27%
TransIT	0.6	$1.50	$1.02	10%
Loudoun County Transit	0.4	$1.00	$0.52	4%
Total	**170**	**$1.53**	**$0.99**	**16%**

Regional & National Fare Relief Programs

- Fare relief initiatives have existed in the NCR over the last 20 years. Agencies who have studied or implemented fare relief locally include: WMATA, Circulator, Ride On, Connector, CUE & DASH
- System-wide fare free programs are most often implemented in smaller agencies with low fare recovery ratios
- Means-tested programs have been implemented in many large agencies where foregoing fares would be too costly

"Fare-free public transit has been discussed and considered ever since the federal government became involved in providing capital assistance to local public transit agencies in the 1960's"

TCRP Synthesis 101 - Implementations and Outcomes of Fare Free Transit Systems (2012)

Service Area	Fare Relief Type	Start Year	Population of Service Area	Comments
Seattle, WA	Means-Tested Subsidy	2015	2,149,970	45% subsidy for adults earning > 200% FPL 75k enrollees
Portland, OR	Means-Tested Subsidy	2015	1,565,010	50% subsidy for adults earning > 200% FPL 2k monthly enrollees
New York City, NY	Means-Tested Subsidy	2019	8,398,748	50% subsidy for adults earning > FPL Over 227k total enrollees
Kansas City, MO	System-Wide Fare Free	2019	788,748	
Lawrence, MA	3 Routes Fare Free	2019	306,339	20% increase after first few months. 90% of riders on free routes earned less than $20k a year
SF Bay Area, CA	Means-Tested Subsidy	2020	7,100,000	20-50% for eligibile low-income adults; 3k approved applicants
Olympia, WA	Fare Free	2020	185,500	+20% ridership (600K riders) after first month
Alexandria, VA	System-Wide Fare Free	2021	139,966	Implemented with network redesign. Anticipated ridership increase of 23%
Los Angeles, CA	*System-Wide Fare Free*	*2022*	*8,621,928*	*+138-141k in projected daily boardings, +77M in total boardings*

Lessons Learned

- Ridership gains have been experienced across almost all pilots
  - Larger impacts on heavily utilized systems
- Travel times and service reliability can be affected and should be regularly monitored
- Loss of fare revenues is the largest barrier to implementation
  - It is equally important to assess the cost of fare collection and enforcement
- Fare relief can improve the safety and equity of riders and bus operators by eliminating fare disputes and fare enforcement which disproportionately impacts minority and low-income transit riders
- Fare relief can improve the quality of life and sustainability of local communities

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