

Business Item

Transportation Committee



Committee meeting date: July 14, 2025

For the Metropolitan Council: July 23, 2025

Business Item: 2025-171

Free Regular Route Rides for Certified Metro Mobility Customers

District(s), member(s):	All
Policy/legal reference:	FM 12-2 Transit Fare Policy Changes Policy and FM 12-2a Transportation Service Fare Policy Changes Procedure, FTA Circular 4702.1B, Minnesota Statutes section 473.408
Staff prepared/presented:	Gerri Sutton, Director Contracted Transit Services, MTS (651) 602-1672 Charles Carlson, Executive Director MTS (651) 602-1761
Division/department:	Metropolitan Transportation Services

Proposed action

That the Metropolitan Council establish free (\$0.00) fares on regional regular route services for certified Metro Mobility customers retroactive to June 14, 2025, as directed by the legislature.

Background

Minnesota Statutes section 473.408 requires the Metropolitan Council to establish and enforce transit fare policy, including a requirement to charge a base transit fare.

The 2023 Transportation Omnibus Bill established a free fare pilot program in 2023 and 2024 that included a requirement for free rides on regular route buses and trains for certified customers with a disability or health condition that qualifies them for Metro Mobility services. The pilot program ended on December 31, 2024, with nearly 75,000 rides by certified Metro Mobility riders.

On November 14, 2024, the Council approved business item 2024-304 implementing a pilot program establishing a nominal one-cent fare on regular route services for Metro Mobility certified customers from January 1, 2025, through June 30, 2025. The reduced pilot fare enabled time for the legislature to receive fare pilot reporting and to determine any statutory fare system direction.

The Governor's 2025 state budget proposal included a Metropolitan Council initiative to require free rides on regular route services for certified Metro Mobility customers. The 2025 Transportation Omnibus Bill included this provision. On June 13, 2025, the governor signed the bill into law; the provision became effective on June 14, 2025. Fare systems were immediately updated to reflect the new fare.

Council action is required to approve this fare policy change to be consistent with state law.

Rationale

Council approval is required for permanent fare changes. Because the change is a fare reduction and is required by state law, a public hearing process is not recommended.

Thrive lens analysis

On Feb. 12, 2025, the Council adopted Imagine 2050, which builds on policy direction in Thrive MSP 2040. Under the Thrive lens, this action promotes equity and stewardship by providing reduced cost transportation for riders who have a certified disability or health condition.

Funding

The recommendation proposes fare adjustments for services operated by all regional transit providers.

Small business inclusion

This request is for Council Approval of fare policy and fare changes and does not directly impact small businesses.

