



RTD Systemwide Fare Study and Equity Analysis Pass Program Feedback Panel Meeting May 11, 2022 Meeting Summary

Meeting Objectives:

- Approve the Feedback Panel Charter
 - Build mutual understanding of the Study purpose and goals
 - Provide feedback using public comments on the current fare structure
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RTD General Manager Welcome

Debra Johnson, RTD General Manager and CEO welcomed Feedback Panel members to the meeting.

Feedback Panel Charter

Pass Program Feedback Panel members reviewed and approved the draft Feedback Panel Charter as drafted.

Systemwide Fare Study and Equity Analysis

Chris Quinn, RTD Project Manager, Planning, provided an overview of the Systemwide Fare Study and Equity Analysis purpose, goals, customer engagement, and schedule. Chris also provided an overview of the current fare structure and discount levels.

Questions and Answers

There were no questions at this time.

Input on the Current Fare Structure

Laura Wolfgram, Four Nines Technologies, provided a summary of customer input on the current fare structure from the April 21 community meeting in English and the April 28 community meeting in Spanish.

Informal Poll

Members took an informal poll on their thoughts on the biggest benefits and challenges with the current fare structure and possible improvements. The poll also asked about ridership and how to make fares less expensive. See Appendix B for complete poll results for all six questions.

Key results, from nine respondents, for a sample of the questions asked:

- The biggest challenge with the current fare system was that fares are too expensive (33%), and the second and third biggest challenges were understanding how and where to pay the fare (22%) and too many different types of passes, making it difficult to pick (22%).
- The most supported improvement would be to make fares less expensive (44%), and the second most supported improvement would be to provide the same discount for seniors, individuals with disabilities and low-income adults (22%).
- There was a range of perspectives on how to make fares less expensive. One-third supported making fares less expensive for shorter distances (33%), one-third supported making Monthly Passes less expensive (33%), and the remaining third's support was evenly spread over three other options.
- To convince people to ride RTD, one-third supported more frequent bus or train service, or to have them run later in the day (33%). Other options with support included: improve reliability of services (22%), lower cost fares and passes (22%), stop/station closer to where people live, work or study (11%), and fares that are easier to understand (11%).

Discussion Questions

- **What are the elements of the current fare structure that work well? [and what are the challenges?]**
 - Day Passes are well received - customers are able to buy one pass and use it for the entire day.
 - Pass programs simplify fare payment. Just tap the card and get onto whatever bus or train regardless of the fare structure.
 - Moving to the mobile app for CollegePass for Auraria Campus has been smooth. Additional organizations will have the option to move to the mobile option with the launch of the new fare collection system.
 - Pass Program specific positives
 - The utilization rate for passes has had a positive impact on some

- organizations considering whether to provide the passes during the pandemic. The price for these organizations decreased as ridership declined.
- The cost of passes and usage rate structure works well.
 - Transition to flat cost regardless of enrollment for CollegePass positively received.
 - RTD has been a good partner during the pandemic, working with organizations on options for maintaining passes.
 - It was positive to be able to exclude fully remote workers in pass prices.
 - Pandemic mitigation and sanitation measures helped customers feel safe on transit.
 - Challenges
 - Students do not know how to buy and use the passes. RTD could improve information for training students how to use CollegePass.
 - A lack of access to transit, some routes were removed during the pandemic.
 - Students paying out-of-pocket for passes decreased the use of the passes; there was more participation when passes came through the school and included in student fees.
 - There is uncertainty of how prices will change going forward as ridership increases and employees return to office.
 - **What are fare structure related unmet needs for marginalized groups? What are the barriers/preventing those from historically marginalized groups from riding?**
 - Cost of fares is a barrier.
 - Fare and discount complexity is intimidating. Customers do not know what discounts are available and/or which discount level is best for them.
 - Lack of access to transit lines. If there is no access to transit lines, the fare structure doesn't matter.
 - Transit frequency and/or the schedule. Some employees need to arrive at work very early in the morning or in the middle of the night when transit is not available (or limited service is available). When RTD is not a viable option, employers instead focus on promoting vanpools.
 - Lack of technology knowledge and/or lack of access to technology. Many do not own or have easy access to the internet to complete online applications or purchasing.
 - Not all customers know how to read and write or speak/read English. Some are English language learners, while others may not read and write in any language. This deters some potential customers from looking for and/or understanding the

discount options available.

- Fear of providing personal information on discount applications.
- Pass Program specific barriers
 - The EcoPass pay-for-all model is a cost barrier. Not all employers want to participate because they have to pay for all employees and paying for all employees is too expensive.
 - Lack of access to EcoPasses for part-time, lower-wage and/or contractor employees; EcoPasses are only offered to eligible full-time staff only.
 - Limiting EcoPass program involvement only to individual employers at the airport. This limits pass participation for the 30,000 employees at the airport, many of whom are from diverse communities and are lower-income workers. Desire by airport for opt-in pass option.
 - It takes a lot of neighborhood coordinator time to develop and maintain Neighborhood EcoPass. As a result, Neighborhood EcoPass programs are generally in wealthier neighborhoods because of the time and volunteer commitment in running the programs.
- **What is one element you would change to have the fare structure better meet each Study goal - more equitable?**
 - Streamline the fare structure and narrow the choices.
 - Provide a flat fare.
 - Provide a single discount level or two.
 - Provide a discount (or free fares) for community college students. Community college students are typically ethnically, racially, and economically diverse.
 - Provide distance/zone-based fare on the Airport route so customers traveling a short distance to the airport pay a reduced fare.
 - Focus more on the location of routes and the schedule of routes in/around low-income neighborhoods.
 - Shift RTD's funding priority from light rail to bus routes.
 - Provide free fares for higher education or allow a certain percentage of free fares for higher education sectors, for example free fares for incoming freshmen.
 - Ensure people without access to the internet are able to easily apply for LiVE.
 - Pass Program specific suggestions
 - Streamline the Neighborhood EcoPass process to decrease the time needed to apply and manage it.
 - Broaden the ability for employers to include as-needed employees and contractors in EcoPass; these employees tend to be low-income and from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds.
 - Reduce the all-employee purchasing requirement.
 - Consider a Neighborhood EcoPass at a community level.

- Create a way to provide passes for contractors and as-needed employees.
 - Allow an organization to either exclude some employees or only include some employees in the utilization pricing, for example: exclude graduate students.
 - Reach out to companies that contract for outsource work, like custodial and food service companies.
- **What is one element you would change to have the fare structure better meet each Study goal – more affordable?**
 - Base fares on distance traveled.
 - Offer a discount for certain areas (i.e., low-income areas).
 - Implement fare levels on the airport lines - price by distance.
 - Offer a discount for higher education.
 - Provide a free pass for community college students.
 - Reduce the Monthly Pass fare. The Monthly Pass is too expensive for lower-income and marginalized communities, and it has to be used too many times during the month to make it affordable for hybrid or part-time workers.
 - Create a mobile ticketing option where an organization can pay/subsidize part of the fare, the subsidy could be embedded in the customers' mobile account.
 - Offer greater discounts on pass program pricing for areas with limited service.
 - Offer bulk discount to reflect reduced administrative costs for larger programs that are administered by the organization.
 - Offer discount to reflect pass program participants not downgrading fare on Regional and SkyRide buses based on distance traveled.
 - **What is one element you would change to have the fare structure better meet each Study goal - simpler?**
 - Offer a single fare option, a Day Pass only fare.
 - Offer a family pass with a discount.
 - Offer an installment option to pay for passes over time, rather than all at once.
 - Offer one discount rate for all who are eligible so don't need to figure out which discount category you are.
 - Offer employers the ability to bulk purchase Day and Monthly Passes at a discount for their employees.
 - Ensure English language learners can understand the fare structure and how to apply for discount fare programs.
 - Consider digital divide for applications and not everyone has access to the internet.
 - Use technology to make things simpler and find new ways to subsidize transit (e.g., embed subsidies into mobile app).

- **Knowing there will be trade-off choices, which is your priority goal for fare structure improvements – equity, affordability, simplicity? And why?**
 - Affordable.
 - If fares are more affordable, more people will buy tickets.
 - Affordability impacts equity and simplicity. If a customer can't afford it, they won't use it.
 - Not only the cost of the transit trip, but the time of the trip.
 - Simplicity
 - If the fare structure is too complicated, customers won't learn to use it. If it is simple, customers may pay more.
 - Simpler, easy to understand fare and discount structure leads to equity. It breaks down social class implications and barriers to discount cards.
 - Access and addressing transportation deserts is the priority.

Appendix A: Attendees

Feedback Panel

1. Anschutz/Fitzsimmons Campus, Kerrie McLean
2. Auraria Campus, Mike Clarke
3. Boulder Valley School District, Jeanne Thrower Aguilar
4. Colorado University-Boulder, Brandon Smith
5. Community College of Aurora, Reyna Anaya
6. Denver International Airport, Rachel Gruber
7. Denver University, Rosalynn Feagins
8. Go Boulder/City of Boulder, Chris Hagelin
9. RTD, Chris Quinn - Project Manager, Planning
10. RTD, Carl Green - Deputy Project Manager, Transit Equity Manager
11. RTD, Theresa Rinker - Market Development

Others or Observers

1. Denver University, Lloyd Moore
2. RTD, Dawn Plooster

Project Team

1. RTD, Debra Johnson - General Manager
2. RTD, Bill Sirois - Senior Advisor, Transit Oriented Communities
3. Four Nines Technologies, Laura Wolfgram
4. Four Nines Technologies, Christina Winberry
5. JSE Associates, Jody Erikson (Facilitator)

Appendix B: Informal Poll Results

There were nine respondents to poll questions. Results are show in order of support.

1. What do you like about RTD fares? Please pick your top choice:
 - 44% - Using EcoPass/NECO Neighborhood Ecopass/College Pass to ride
 - 22% - Discount fares for seniors, persons with disabilities, and youth
 - 11% - Different passes available for my travel needs
 - 11% - Easy to use day pass
 - 11% - The Regional and Airport fares are appropriate for the value of service
 - 0% - RTD fares provide good value for money
 - 0% - RTD fares are easy to understand
 - 0% - 3-hour pass provides flexibility
 - 0% - Low-income fare through the RTD LiVE Program
 - 0% - I do not like the current RTD Fares

2. What is the biggest fare related challenge with riding RTD? Please pick your top choice:
 - 33% - Fares are too expensive
 - 22% - Understanding how and where to pay my fare
 - 22% - There are too many different types of passes, making it difficult to pick
 - 11% - Understanding when to purchase a Local, Regional or Airport fare
 - 11% - Upgrading from a Local fare or pass to a Regional or Airport fare is inconvenient
 - 0% - On-board purchase and inspection processes are unclear
 - 0% - No access to locations to purchase a pass
 - 0% - There are too many discount levels

3. If you could improve RTD fares, what change would you make? Please pick your top choice:
 - 44% - Make fares less expensive
 - 22% - Provide same discounts for seniors, individuals with disabilities, youth, and low-income adults
 - 11% - More locations to purchase fares or add value (e.g., retail stores, ticket vending machines, etc.)
 - 11% - More ways to pay my fare (e.g., mobile app, ApplePay, credit/debit card, etc.)
 - 11%- Expand access to the LiVE low income fare program
 - 0% - Replace zones on rail with station-to-station fares
 - 0% - Offer the same fare for all bus and rail services
 - 0% - Introduce new fare passes (e.g, weekly pass, 3-day pass)

4. How would you make RTD fares less expensive? Please pick your top choice:
- 33% - Make fares less expensive for shorter distance fares
 - 33% - Make the monthly pass less expensive
 - 11% - Make fares less expensive for Local buses
 - 11% - Eliminate higher fare for Airport services
 - 11% - Eliminate all fares
 - 0% - Eliminate higher fare for Regional services
 - 0% - Make fares less expensive when there is lower demand, such as midday and weekends
5. What is the top reason people have chosen not to ride RTD services?
- 22% - Riding RTD takes too long to get to where people need to go
 - 22% - Costs of RTD fares and passes
 - 22% - People do not feel safe riding the bus or the train
 - 11% - RTD does not go where people need to go
 - 11% - RTD services do not come frequently enough
 - 11% - RTD services are not on time or do not show up
 - 0% - People do not understand how much they are supposed to pay
 - 0% - It is inconvenient for me to purchase an RTD fare
 - 0% - RTD does not provide good value for my money
 - 0% - People are concerned about sanitary conditions on the bus or train
6. Which of the changes below would convince people to ride RTD? Please pick your top choice:
- 33% - More frequent buses or trains, or buses and trains running later/earlier in the day
 - 22% - Improve reliability of services
 - 22% - Lower cost fares and passes
 - 11% - Stop/station closer to where I live, work, or study
 - 11% - Fares that are easier to understand
 - 0% - More locations to purchase fares or add value (e.g., retail stores, ticket vending machines, etc.)
 - 0% - More ways to pay my fare (e.g., mobile app, ApplePay, credit/debit card, etc.)
 - 0% - Improved lighting, cameras or other measures to increase security
 - 0% - More sanitization of vehicles / stations
 - 0% - No changes would encourage me to ride RTD