

Systemwide Fare Study and Equity Analysis *Spanish Customer and Community Meeting #2*

Date: June 29, 2022

Time: 6:00 – 7:20 PM

Location: Zoom Meeting

Participants: 78 unique viewers

Overview

The purpose of the second Customer and Community Meeting was to provide an overview of what was heard during the first phase of engagement, outline conceptual fare options based on input received and gather initial feedback on conceptual fare options.

This summary reflects key points of the discussion as well as feedback and responses to questions received during the meeting.

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Virginia Garcia Pivik (GP&P) and Elizabeth Suarez (GP&P) welcomed the participants, introduced the presenters and shared the agenda for the meeting:

- Presenters:
 - Vivian Morales (RTD – Civil Rights Outreach Specialist)
 - Ignacio Correa-Ortiz (RTD – Architect)
 - Eamon Johnston (Transportation Management & Design – Project Consultant)
- Interpreter
 - Sam Green-Jordan – Colorado Language Connection
- Agenda:
 - Study Overview
 - Overview of Stakeholder Feedback in Phase 1
 - How Fare Alternatives Are Being Evaluated
 - What Conceptual Fare Options Are Being Considered
 - Next Steps and Staying Engaged

Participants were asked polling questions about what county they live in and whether they attended the first Customer and Community meeting in April (note: the polling questions and responses are included in Appendix A).

Study Overview

Vivian Morales (RTD) presented an overview of the current Fare Study and Equity Analysis, explaining that RTD is undertaking this process to:

- Explore simplifying fares in order to make RTD services more equitable and easier to understand and to align fares with service value provided.
- Consider lowering fare revenues to accomplish broader affordability and ridership goals.

She also revisited the study timeline and explained the progress to be achieved at each touchpoint.

- Spring 2022 – Gather feedback on the current fare structure.
- Summer 2022 – Share and gather feedback on conceptual fare options, during which this second Customer and Community meeting takes place.
- Fall 2022 – Share and identify trade-offs between alternatives.
- Early 2023 – Host formal public comment and hearing on the recommended structure.
- Spring 2023 – New fare structure decision by the Board.
- TBD – New fare structure implementation begins.

She then spoke to the goals of the study, explaining RTD’s definition of the goals of the study:

- An **equitable** fare structure supports transit reliant/financially burdened customers and provides fair access to fares, products and discounts regardless of race, color, national origin, income status and affiliation with other marginalized communities.
- An **affordable** fare structure aligns fares with the value of the service received.
- A **simple** fare structure makes fares easy to understand, with standardized discounts and streamlined fare payment options.

She also outlined the definition and purpose of transit fares, answering the following questions:

- ***What is a fare?***

A fare is a fee paid by a passenger for use of a public transit system.

- ***What are fares used for?***

Fares contribute to operating the transit system.

- ***Do fares cover the cost of service?***

Fare revenue only covers a portion of the cost for RTD to provide a ride.

Overview of Stakeholder Feedback in Phase 1

Vivian Morales (RTD) outlined the feedback received from customers, community members and other stakeholders during the study’s first phase of engagement. She provided the following data separated by engagement method:

Website, Study Materials and Social Media

- More than 2,000 unique views of the website were recorded, as well as over 36,000 social media impressions.
- The study team developed a standalone Spanish-language website.
- Fact sheets were developed in English, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese.

Customer and Community Meetings

- The study team hosted two Customer and Community Meetings – one in English and one in Spanish.
- More than 100 attendees participated altogether.

Community Partner Focus Groups

- The focus groups were led by six community partners.
- More than 100 participants shared their opinions.
- The focus groups were conducted in English and Spanish.

Feedback Panels

- Three virtual Feedback Panels were convened with stakeholders representing larger constituencies.
- The three Feedback Panels convened include Equity, Pass Programs and Jurisdiction.

Online Survey

- In addition to online collection, in-person surveys were conducted by community partners.
- Over 2,400 responses were received.
- The survey was provided in four languages – English, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese.

RTD Staff Interviews and Focus Groups

- The study team conducted 13 interviews with RTD staff representing various departments and functions.
- Focus groups were held with the front-line staff from Customer Card, Bus Operations and Transit Security.

Vivian also included an overview of the themes heard during the first phase of engagement, as well as the suggestions made by customers, community members and stakeholders, listed below:

Themes

- Financially burdened customers should pay less than higher income customers.
- Fares are too expensive.
- There are too many fare products and discount levels.
- There is confusion surrounding fare levels (Local/Regional/Airport).
- Purchasing passes is inconvenient.
- It is not possible to purchase monthly passes aboard the bus.
- Service is more important than affordable fares.
- There are questions about potential fare study impacts on paratransit fares.
- There is support for higher fares for longer distance trips, although others support the same fare for ALL bus and rail.
- There is limited interest in higher fares during busier times and lower fares during midday and weekends.
- There is diminishing “value” associated with RTD services (less frequent/reliable service, concerns about safety/cleanliness).

Suggestions

- Reduce or eliminate fares without reducing service.
- Offer a single flat fare.
- Decrease fares for shorter trips.
- Consolidate to a single discount fare.
- Promote technology to simplify fare payment while recognizing some lack technology access.
- Reward frequent travelers with a discount.
- Implement fare capping.
- Provide lower fares for financially burdened customers.
- Provide youth and financially burdened customers free fares.
- Reduce barriers to LiVE and discount fares.
- Provide a college student discount.
- Lower the airport fare, specifically for airport employees.
- Offer a family fare.
- Identify new revenue sources (outside of fares) to offset costs related to reducing or eliminating fares.

How Fare Alternatives are Being Evaluated

Ignacio Correa-Ortiz (RTD) and Eamon Johnston (Transportation Management & Design) presented information on how fare alternatives are being evaluated. They provided a timeline of the development of fare alternatives, outlined chronologically below, with periods of customer feedback and engagement hosted prior to each step in the process:

- *April-May 2022 – Customer Feedback (Milestone #1)*
 - **Identification of Conceptual Fare Options**
- *June-July 2022 – Customer Feedback (Milestone #2)*
 - **Evaluation of Fare Structure Alternatives**
- *Fall 2022 – Customer Feedback (Milestone #3)*
 - **Development of Recommendations**
- *Early 2023 – Customer Feedback (Public Comment and Hearing Process)*
 - **Final Recommendation**

They also outlined the five elements that comprise the evaluation of the fare structure alternatives, which include:

1. Customer and community feedback on fare alternatives.
2. Evaluation against the three fare structure goals established for the study (equity, affordability and simplicity).
3. Fare modeling to determine pricing and projected total ridership and revenue.
4. Preliminary fare equity analyses to identify potential adverse effects and benefits on minority and low-income customers per requirements of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).
5. Consideration of operational, technology and capital impacts.

The project team then answered questions submitted virtually or voiced by participants (note: questions and answers are included in Appendix B; additional questions and comments not answered or addressed during the meeting due to time constraints are included in Appendix C).

What Conceptual Fare Options are Being Considered

Eamon Johnston (Transportation Management & Design) provided an overview of the conceptual fare options that are being considered, as well as those not under consideration in this study:

Under Consideration

- Lowering fares.
- Simplifying the fare structure (e.g., flat fare).
- Rewarding frequent customers by reducing Monthly Pass pricing, offering weekly fare cap instead of monthly fare cap and/or reintroducing Annual Pass.
- Streamlining and improving access to discount fares.
- Leveraging technology to simplify fare payment.
- Addressing challenges of unique subsets of customers (e.g., families, college students, airport employees).
- Exploring pass program simplification and expansion while maintaining utilization-based pricing.
- Promoting bulk pass purchases through the new fare collection system.
- Simplifying the Nonprofit Program.
- Evaluating implications of the fare level changes on Access-A-Ride fares.

NOT Under Consideration

Ignacio Correa-Ortiz (RTD) differentiated between the conceptual fare options not being considered, noting that they are outside of the scope of the study, are difficult to implement, are being considered in other ways or received limited interest during the first phase of engagement.

Outside of the Scope of the Study

- Eliminating all fares.
- Identifying new revenue sources (outside of fares).
- Reducing fare revenue such that it results in service reductions.
- Broadening discount eligible categories (e.g., pollution-impacted communities, increasing youth age to 26).

Difficult to Implement

- Setting fares at dollar increments.
- Introducing rolling 24-Hour and 30-Day Passes.
- Offering pro-rated passes for unused portions of a pass.

Being Considered in Other Ways

- Offering family fare products.
- Introducing changes to the 3-Hour and Day Passes.

Limited Interest

- Lowering fares midday and on weekends.
- Pricing fares based on amenities.

Account-Based Ticketing (ABT) System and Fare Capping

Eamon Johnston continued by providing an overview of the Account-Based Ticketing (ABT) system, which is currently being implemented as an upgrade to the MyRide stored-value card system and the RTD Mobile Tickets app. He explained that the ABT system will provide an enhanced customer experience, outlining that with the system:

- The customer's account is updated in real-time, providing immediate access to funds.
- Customers can use a smart card or a mobile device.
- Fare capping will be implemented with the launch of ABT, ensuring the best fare for the customer.

RTD is preparing for implementation of the ABT system and replacement of current ticket validators in late summer or early fall.

He also provided an overview of fare capping, answering the following questions:

- ***What is fare capping?***

Fare capping is a policy that ensures customers always pay the best fare.

- ***How does fare capping work?***

The fare collection system automatically applies individual fare purchases towards a period pass (e.g. 3-Hour, Day Pass, Monthly Pass).

- ***What does RTD have planned as part of the launch of the ABT system?***

As part of the ABT launch, RTD will implement daily (service-day) and calendar monthly fare and will incorporate fare capping for discount customers as well, including LiVE participants. RTD will also remove the existing MyRide discount, but the same discount will be available to customers who purchase physical or mobile 10-Ride Ticket Books.

Fare Structure Simplification

As part of the study, RTD is aiming to simplify its fare structure. Eamon Johnston explained the current structure for bus and rail, explaining that:

- The RTD rail system is divided into four fare zones (A, B, C and Airport), with fares based on the number of fare zones traveled:
 - Local (traveling in 1-2 zones) – \$3.00
 - Regional (traveling in 3 zones) – \$5.25
 - Airport (any trip originating or ending at the Airport) – \$10.50
- Bus routes do not utilize zones, although some routes are distance-based with higher fares on Regional and SkyRide bus routes. Shorter trips on these routes may only require a Local or Regional fare.

He also provided an overview of what RTD has heard about simplicity, what RTD is considering and what some of the challenges are with simplification.



What We Heard

- The fare structure is confusing.
- There is mixed feedback on whether to keep different fare levels or flatten fares.
- There is support for flat fares – offering the same fare for all services and eliminating higher Regional and Airport fares.
- There is support for different fare levels across Local/Regional/Airport to reflect the longer distance traveled.

What We Are Considering

- Retaining the current fare structure.
- Eliminating distance-based fares on bus.
- Implementing a flat fare structure with one fare for all bus and rail service.
- Implementing a flat fare structure with an airport premium.

What are some of the challenges with fare structure simplification?

- Charging Regional and Airport customers the Local fare results in decreased fare revenue.
- Loss in fare revenue may limit RTD’s ability to lower the Local fare without negatively impacting service levels.
- Lowering Regional and Airport fares may increase demand, thereby impacting capacity, dwell times and parking.

Discount Fare Pricing

Eamon Johnston explained the current RTD discount levels, as well as the related feedback received, what RTD is considering and how different discount pricing options are being incorporated into the fare alternatives:

Current Discount Levels

| Program | Eligibility | Discount |
|----------------|---|-----------------|
| LiVE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-Income | 40% |
| Discount | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors 65+ • Individuals with disabilities • Medicare recipients | 50% |
| Youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth ages 6-19 | 70% |

What We Heard

- Discount fares promote equity.
- There is confusion about which discount fare program to apply for and/or which discounted fare product to purchase.
- There is a desire to increase the LiVE discount level from 40% to 50% to align with Special Discount for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- There is interest in reducing the number of discount levels (some feel there are too many discounts).



- One discount level can simplify messaging and product sales.

What We Are Considering

- 50% discount for LiVE and Discount customers (retaining 70% for Youth)
- 50% discount for all discount-eligible customers (LiVE, Discount and Youth)
- 50% discount on 3-Hour Pass and Day Pass and 70% discount on Monthly Pass for all discount-eligible customers.
- Flat fares for discount fare customers (regardless of number of zones traveled) that are set at 50% of the Local fare while retaining the current zone/distance-based fare structure for full fare customers.
- Zero fares for youth.

How are different discount fare pricing options being incorporated into the fare alternatives?

- There are trade-offs between the different discount fare pricing options.
- Depending on fare levels and the discount fare pricing option included in an alternative, some discount customer groups will benefit while others (Youth in particular) may not benefit.
- The study team will consider how best to minimize impact on discount customers.

The project team then answered questions submitted virtually or voiced by attendees.

Next Steps and Staying Engaged

Elizabeth Suarez (GP&P) thanked the participants for their presence and for their continued engagement throughout the duration of the meeting. She also provided an overview of future opportunities to get involved in the Systemwide Fare Study and Equity Analysis, including:

- Participating in the next public engagement, anticipated for early fall, to discuss fare alternatives and tradeoffs between alternatives.
- Accessing past meeting materials, FAQs, the last feedback panel information and additional resources by visiting the project website at rtd-denver.com/estudio-de-tarifas
- Using the comment form on the fare study website or by calling customer care at (303) 299-6000 to stay involved and submit feedback.

Panelists and Attendees

RTD Staff: Vivian Morales, Ignacio Correa-Ortiz, Bill Sirois, Carl Green, Chris Quinn, Brandon Figliolino

Consultant Team: Laura Wolfgram (Four Nines), Virginia Garcia Pivik (GP&P), Elizabeth Suarez (GP&P), Sid Bittman (GBSM), Eamon Johnston (Transportation Management & Design)

Appendix A: Polling Results

Polling Question 1: In what county do you currently live?

- Adams – 61%
- Arapahoe – 6%
- Boulder – 3%
- Broomfield – 0%
- Denver – 25%
- Jefferson – 3%
- Weld – 3%
- Douglas – 0%
- Other – 0%

Polling Question 2: Did you attend the April Customer and Community Meeting?

- Yes – 59%
- No – 41%

Appendix B: Q&A and Customer Feedback

The following includes questions asked by participants in the question/answer chat and answered verbally or in writing during the meeting. The questions and answers have been grouped by theme:

Equity

Q: Are there any surprises that have come out of the initial fare study and equity analysis?

A: There were no surprises because the intention we had from the very beginning was to arrive without premeditation and listen to the opinion of the public and clients. In that sense, and without having anything premeditated, there were no surprises, since the intention was clear in that regard and we received the information as if it were new.

Through our outreach, we have noted a difference of opinion between the English-speaking community and the Spanish-speaking community. What this means is that we have to consider all the information and how what is being considered can benefit not only one group but benefit all groups of communities that we serve. And from there, we can continue to move forward in this process.

Fare Structure

Q: I wonder if the youth discount is going to be based on their student status or just their age range?

A: RTD is still processing whether there will be any changes to youth fare eligibility. Your input on this is the type of information that we are seeking from the community. For now, the youth fare eligibility is based on age. Individuals who are 19 and under are eligible for the youth fare, regardless of a student status. This discount is different from what is offered through the CollegePass.

Q: What is Zero Fare for Better Air?

A: Through a state grant, RTD will be making its services free for the month of August. There are many reasons why we use this slogan. Public transportation is a way to be more environmentally conscious and responsible. Emissions from fuel use are lower when we travel in a group. Further, the Colorado legislature has given RTD through grant funding the ability to transport its riders during the month of August without charging fares. That means we're going to have the opportunity to work with the community to offer free service. So we hope that in August - when there are a lot of emissions and ozone alerts affecting the air - that those in the RTD service area will take advantage of this wonderful opportunity and use RTD.

Q: Will RTD consider extending the free fare to all who are under the age of 18?

A: RTD is currently looking at whether it is possible or not to have FREE fares for youth as well as other populations. RTD is considering offering free fares for youth, transit-reliant and

financially-burdened customers. However, RTD is not considering free fares for all customers as part of this study.

Q: Did you think about discounts for people with Medicare and food stamps?

A: When people go to solicit different benefits through the state, via Colorado PEAK system, one of the options is to apply to our LiVE Program and obtain a LiVE ID to pay the LiVE discounted fare. The LiVE program is for people 20-64 year old who are not eligible for other discounts or programs. Individuals who are 19 and under are eligible for the Youth discount, while individuals who are 65 and older are eligible for the Special Discount. Individuals who are 20-64 who have a disability may also be eligible for the Special Discount.

Q: Does a disabled person, who does not have legalized immigration status, qualify for discounts?

A: RTD has a Special Discount fare that is available specifically for individuals who have a Medicare card and/or disability. In regards to proof of identification, in addition to Colorado and United States government-issued proof of identification, RTD may accept other proof of identification prepared by a home-country consulate in place of traditional legal documents/materials. RTD strives to accommodate all customers who request and who are eligible for a discounted fare and aims to be flexible and make exceptions based on individual needs. For further information, in regards to our special discounts, you can visit: www.rtd-denver.com/discountfares. We work with our customers directly to find the right discount for them.

Q: In the surveys that RTD has conducted, did you have any special fare requests for senior citizens and for students? This last one is an important population sector because this sector has DACA. And this population is in a very complicated situation at the moment because this program is depending on another Supreme Court decision, and it is very likely to be eliminated.

A: At this moment, RTD has discounts for youth, who are 19 years old and under. Youth only have to show their student ID card that belongs to any school level (middle or high school). It is worth clarifying that up to 6 years old, RTD services are free of charge. From 6 to 19, they have a 70% discount which means that for a Local fare - with a 3-Hour Pass - it is \$0.90. All you have to do is present a form of identification or ID, indicating that you are still a K-12 student or 19 years old or under. RTD can also issue a youth ID.

For youth 19 and under covered under DACA or for youth who are having trouble gathering other forms of identification, all we ask for is a legal document that has a date of birth on it. This form of identification can have been issued by any country and by any consulate. It does not have to be from the United States. The need to see the date of birth is because the Youth discount is based on the age of the applicant, and with that information we can determine what discount they may apply for or qualify for. If someone does not have any documents on hand, we can be flexible and give them a temporary card for 30- 60 days while that individual can access their paperwork, or consulate and return with that required form of identification.

If you have other options or suggestions, let us hear them, this is why we hold these community meetings.

For those over the age of 19 who are perhaps studying at a college or university, many of the

universities or colleges include the CollegePass as part of the student tuition. This means that they may not have the direct discount that youth 19 and under have, but they have a CollegePass provided by the educational institution. Since CollegePasses are issued to students directly by colleges/universities, students receiving the pass don't have to have a government ID, they don't have to show proof of their legal stay in the country to RTD. No government ID must be presented. They only have to use their CollegePass issued by an educational institution registered in our CollegePass program.

RTD Service, Enforcement and Safety

Q: How is RTD evaluating itself? Do you think you should raise your fares? Furthermore, do you think you are doing great or not so good?

A: We recognize that since the pandemic hit, we have had some pretty severe service reductions and we recognize that many people are unhappy with this. As we move forward we want to make sure that whatever fare structure we come up with, our customers believe is fair or reflects the service that they are receiving.

Q: In previous years, we have attended this type of initiative to try establishing together a more equitable fare system. It was very frustrating to see that they did not achieve any results or that, at some point, the limitations of RTD were truly big and they were not able to serve a large proportion of the population that was asking for a more equitable fare system. Specifically in Aurora, where an important sector of the population are workers and could potentially use the RTD system on a daily basis, if there were to have greater incentives at a fare level to use the service. Specifically, what is planned for the working population sector in that area of the city to stimulate the use of RTD and the light rail system as the main means of transportation? But not only for special events, because they got a free ticket to go see the Avalanche award ceremony or another game, but to be the main transportation system in that area?

A: One of the things that is different from the last time that we conducted a fare study is that this time around we no longer have a state requirement to recover a certain amount of revenue from our fares. That is to say, we no longer are required to cover a minimum amount of our operating cost from the recollection of fares, so this change provides us with a lot more flexibility in how we look at our fares and whether or not we can consider a fare reduction. Also, whether or not we can consider discounts or even free fare for youth, that is something that is under consideration.

Q: RTD system feels like a system for some "elite" areas: and one can see - mostly during the day - a large number of unused or empty vehicles. In a way, this reflects the fact that until there is a fare system that understands the working sector, there will not be a greater use of the system and that is the point. Why are there so many empty units driving around in Aurora?

A: The fare study aims to consider part of this problem. From a fare perspective, the study will consider what is the reason why these vehicles are empty. Is it because the workers are already at their workplace or because the fares are impossible to afford. The purpose of this fare study

is in part to understand this. It is also important to clarify that RTD reviews the service three times a year. If there are routes that need more frequency because there is more demand, then they are increased.

Q: How is RTD working with local governments and school districts?

A: RTD is working directly with local governments, and colleges. We have three feedback panels, as part of this study: the equity feedback panel, the pass program feedback panel, and the jurisdiction feedback panel. Members of these feedback panels represent colleges and/or local governments. So we are working directly with these entities as part of this study.

Further, as a public organization, RTD is in permanent contact with local organizations. RTD has 8 counties within the District. It is paramount that RTD has solid communications with all of the local governments because otherwise it would not be able to accomplish what RTD does at the transportation level. When the RTD representatives talk about universities, school districts and colleges, there are some colleges and universities beyond high school that have contracts with RTD to provide what RTD calls, the CollegePass. This program provides RTD passes to students registered at a participating educational institution with their registration materials. There are other communications going on with school districts, and some schools purchase passes for some of their students. Denver Public School District offers RTD passes to some of its students. If schools approach us for a dialogue, RTD will listen.

Miscellaneous

Q: How can I receive notifications about future project work?

A: To receive notifications about future project work, visit the website at rtd-denver.com/estudio-de-tarifas and sign up for news and updates on the study by filling out the comment form and checking the box to sign up.

Q: Are you considering using smaller vehicles in the future (e.g., minibuses instead of 45-foot buses)? Would smaller units reduce ticket price?

A: RTD covers a lot of ground across eight metro-area counties and partners with agencies who can assist with that accommodation, only in smaller areas within those metro neighborhoods. However, RTD is not considering the impact of smaller vehicles on fare structure as part of this study.

Appendix C: Additional Questions and Comments

The following includes comments that were submitted to the study team through the Zoom meeting platform. The questions and comments have been grouped by theme:

RTD Service, Enforcement and Safety

C: RTD absolutely needs to have more consistent and reliable schedules. Some buses don't show up and fares are expensive.

Fare Structure

C: Suggestions to look into stimulation of daily use of light rail trains and/or buses in working-class areas such as Aurora. Not only to use the transportation services for Avalanche or Nuggets games, but on a sustained basis.

C: Suggestions to reconsider fares for low-wage earners.

Miscellaneous

C: Attendees joining the Community meetings via phone should be able to ask LIVE questions too.