

Systemwide Fare Study and Equity Analysis

Customer and Community Meeting #3

Date: October 20, 2022

Time: 6:00 – 7:15 PM

Location: Zoom Webinar

Participants: 46 unique viewers

Overview

The purpose of the third Customer and Community Meeting was to explain how customer and community feedback informed the design of possible fare structure alternatives, present two options to customers and community members, introduce other policies and programs currently under consideration by RTD, and gather feedback to help refine the proposed structures, policies and programs for recommendation.

This summary reflects key points of the discussion, responses to questions asked during the meeting and the public feedback received.

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Colleen Maleski (GBSM) welcomed the participants, introduced the presenters and shared the agenda for the meeting:

- Presenters:
 - Bill Sirois (RTD – Senior Project Manager)
 - Chris Quinn (RTD – Project Manager)
 - Carl Green Jr. (RTD – Deputy Project Manager)
- Agenda:
 - Study Overview
 - Development of Fare Structure Alternatives
 - Overview of Proposed Fare Structures and Comparison
 - Other Policies and Programs Under Consideration
 - Next Steps and Staying Engaged

Participants were asked polling questions about what county they live in and whether they attended the previous Customer and Community Meetings in April and/or June. (Note: the polling questions and responses are included in Appendix A).

Study Overview

Carl Green Jr. (RTD) presented an overview of the current Fare Study and Equity Analysis, explaining that RTD is undertaking this process to:

- Make RTD services more equitable and easier to understand.
- Align fares with service value provided.
- Consider lowering fare revenues to accomplish broader affordability and ridership goals.

He then spoke to the goals of the study and how RTD defines those goals:

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

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

- April-May 2022 – Customer Feedback Gathered (Milestone #1)
 - Customer feedback in Milestone #1 informed the development of conceptual fare options.
- June-July 2022 – Customer Feedback Gathered (Milestone #2)
 - Customer feedback in Milestone #2 informed the development of fare structure alternatives.
- Fall 2022 – Customer Feedback Gathered (Milestone #3)
 - Customer feedback in Milestone #3 will inform the development of the final fare structure recommendation.
- Early 2023 – Customer Feedback (Public comment and hearing process)
 - The final fare structure recommendation will be presented to and decided on by the RTD Board of Directors. The timing of the implementation of the new fare structure is to be determined.

Fare Structure Alternative Development

Carl Green Jr. outlined the how the proposed fare structure alternatives were developed. Specifically, he described the following factors that were considered during the process:

- Customer and community feedback.
- Fare strategies to achieve the three fare study goals of equity, affordability and simplicity.
- Other transit agencies' fare pricing.
- Fare pricing to maintain long-term financial sustainability.
- Impact on minority and low-income customers.
- Operational, technology and capital considerations.

He then provided an initial overview of the alternatives. He explained that **Alternative A** lowers fares for customers overall while retaining the Local, Regional and Airport fare levels of the current fare structure while **Alternative B** simplifies the fare structure by combining Local and Regional fares while maintaining an Airport fare.

He noted that the proposed fare structure alternatives are preliminary designs and that the final recommended alternative will likely differ from those presented during this meeting. He indicated that customer and community feedback on the alternatives, policies and programs will help shape the recommended fare structure and noted that customers and community members will have the opportunity to comment on the final recommended alternative in early 2023.

Fare Structure Alternatives

Chris Quinn (RTD) then provided an overview of RTD's current fare structure and pricing, noting that:

- RTD's rail system is divided into four separate fare zones:
 - Local – for those customers traveling in 1-2 zones.
 - Regional – for any travel in 3 zones.
 - Airport – for any trips starting or ending at the airport.
- Bus routes do not utilize zones, although some routes are distance-based (such as the Regional bus service, Flatiron Flyer or non-airport trips on Skyride).

He also showed the current fare structure on screen for reference.

Alternative A

Chris Quinn then outlined the first proposed alternative – titled Alternative A. He explained that Alternative A lowers fares overall and retains Local, Regional and Airport fare levels. He also highlighted the feedback RTD received that informed the creation of this alternative, which included requests to:

- Decrease fare prices, with an emphasis on lowering the Local fare and Monthly Pass.
- Maintain current service levels *without* raising fares.
- Reward frequent customers.
- Lower the Airport fare.

He also highlighted the benefits and tradeoffs of Alternative A.

Benefits

Alternative A:

- Lowers all customers' fares.
- Lowers Monthly Pass prices, which rewards frequent customers, including airport and airline employees.
- Maintains service levels while still decreasing fare prices.

Tradeoffs

Alternative A:

- Does not simplify the fare structure or payment process.

He also highlighted how Alternative A would impact each customer compared to the current fare structure, based on the level(s) of service they use: Local, Regional or Airport.

Finally, he presented an overview of how Alternative A performs against the study goals, as outlined below:

Equity – Positive Impact

- Low-income and minority customers experience a greater decrease in service price than higher-income and non-minority customers due to the lower Local fare, a product financially burdened customers rely on.

Affordability – Positive Impact

- All customers benefit from lower fares.
- Alternative A retains the current distance-based fare levels, offering a lower fare for shorter distance trips.
- Local fare and Monthly Pass price decreases improve the competitiveness of transit as a mode of transportation.

Simplicity – Neutral Impact

- Alternative A does not provide simplicity improvements.

The study team then answered questions submitted by attendees. (Note: questions and answers are included in Appendix C.)

Alternative B

Chris Quinn then outlined the second proposed alternative – titled Alternative B. He explained that Alternative B simplifies the fare structure by combining Local and Regional fares while maintaining the Airport fare, making fares easier to choose and pay. He also highlighted the feedback RTD received that informed the creation of this alternative, which included requests to:

- Simplify the fare structure.
- Maintain current service levels *without* raising fares.
- Remove distance-based fares.
- Reward frequent customers.
- Lower the Airport fare.

He also highlighted the benefits and tradeoffs of Alternative B.

Benefits

Alternative B:

- Includes a single fare for all non-airport travel.
- Lowers the Regional fare.
- Lowers the Monthly Pass price for all customers.
- Includes ALL travel in one Monthly Pass.
- Reduces the price for airport and airline employees commuting to the airport, who will pay for a maximum of approximately 10 days per month.

Tradeoffs

Under Alternative B:

- Local fare stays the same.
- Local customers who are infrequent travelers may not benefit from lower Monthly Pass price.
- Regional trips cost the same as Local trips, which does not account for distance traveled.

He also highlighted how Alternative B would impact each customer compared to the current fare structure, based on the level(s) of service they use: Local, Regional or Airport.

Finally, he presented an overview of how Alternative A performs against the study goals, as outlined below:

Equity – Neutral Impact

- The Local 3-hour and Day Pass fares do not decrease, which means that non-low-income and non-minority customers experience greater average fare decrease than low-income and minority customers, based on current ridership patterns.

Affordability – Neutral Impact

- Only a portion of RTD customers benefit, primarily Regional and frequent customers.
- The decrease in the Regional fare and Monthly Pass price improves transit competitiveness. However, there is no improvement in the transit competitiveness of the Local fare.
- The single fare for non-Airport trips eliminates pricing based on distance traveled.

Simplicity – Positive Impact

- Alternative B simplifies the fare structure and payment by consolidating to two fare levels – Airport and non-airport.

The study team then answered questions submitted by attendees.

Comparison

Following an overview of each of the proposed fare alternatives, Chris Quinn showed a side-by-side comparison of Alternative A and Alternative B. The study team answered additional questions about the alternatives.

The study team then polled participants on their preferred fare structure alternative and requested that participants provide qualitative feedback on why they selected their preferred alternative in the chat box. (Note: a summary of the qualitative feedback submitted is included in Appendix B.)

Other Policies and Programs Under Consideration

Bill Sirois (RTD) provided an overview of other policies and programs under consideration, which include:

- Improving transit mobility and access for financially burdened customers by:
 - Offering additional reductions on discounted fares.
 - Expanding LiVE program access.
 - Developing new programs, such as a nonprofit and social service agency grant program or affordable housing program.
 - Creating a semester pass for non-CollegePass institutions (for example community colleges).
- Simplifying pass programs and promoting pass purchases by:
 - Offering a bulk purchase program with a 10% discount.
 - Simplifying EcoPass pricing for employers with less than 3,000 employees.

On the topic of discounted fares, he explained which policies were currently recommended, under consideration or not under consideration, including:

Recommended

- Providing a 50% discount for the LiVE program, which would align LiVE pricing with the discount for seniors, persons with disabilities and Medicare cardholders.

Under Consideration

- Providing a 70% Monthly Pass discount/fare cap for customers paying discounted fares.
- Offering a single fare for discount customers regardless of the distance traveled or services used.
- Implementing zero fares for youth.
- Exploring opportunities to increase access to the LiVE program.
- Adjusting LiVE eligibility by increasing the income a household can make and qualify for the program to 200% of federal poverty guidelines (up from the current 185% threshold).

Not Under Consideration

- Reducing the Youth discount from 70% to 50% to align it with other discount programs.

Bill Sirois then provided an in-depth overview of two of the policies and programs under consideration.

70% Monthly Discount

Bill Sirois explained that this update would include a 70% discount on the full fare Monthly Pass for LiVE customers, seniors, persons with disabilities and Medicare cardholders. He also noted that 3-Hour and Day Passes would still be discounted 50%. The prices paid under the alternatives are highlighted below:

- **Alternative A**
 - Discount fare Local Monthly Pass – \$27.20
 - Discount fare Regional/Airport Monthly Pass – \$48.00
- **Alternative B**
 - Discount fare Monthly Pass – \$28.80

He explained that RTD is considering this because it makes frequent travel with RTD even more affordable for financially burdened customers and may encourage more eligible customers to enroll in LiVE.

Single Fare for Discounted Fares

Bill Sirois explained that this update would allow for travel to *any* destination throughout the RTD service area at the Local discounted fare rate for customers paying discounted fares. For example, if the Local full fare was \$3, the following prices would apply:

- \$1.50 for seniors, persons with disabilities and LiVE customers (at the 50% discount).
- \$0.90 for youth (at the 70% discount).

The project team then answered questions submitted about the other policies and programs under consideration. Carl Green expressed appreciation for all of the ideas provided during the Q&A session, noting that the feedback from the Customer and Community Meetings will be used to refine the proposed structures, policies and programs.

Following questions and answers, the project team polled participants on whether:

- RTD should consider offering a 70% Monthly Pass discount for customers paying discount fares.
- RTD should consider a single discounted fare that enables customers paying discounted fares to travel to any destination throughout the RTD service area at the Local discounted fare.

The project team also asked participants to provide feedback on their preferences.

Next Steps and Staying Engaged

Colleen Maleski provided an overview of future opportunities to get involved in the Systemwide Fare Study and Equity Analysis, including:

- Responding to the [RTD Proposed Fares Survey](#)
- Visiting the updated Fare Feedback website at www.farefeedback.rtd-denver.com
- Participating in the next engagement opportunity in early 2023 to provide public comment on the fare structure recommendation

Chris Quinn thanked the attendees for their participation and for their engagement throughout the duration of the meeting.

Panelists and Attendees

RTD Staff: Bill Sirois, Carl Green Jr., Chris Quinn, Annette Hunter, Dani McLean, Brandon Figliolino, Monika Treipl-Harnke

Consultant Team: Curtis Pierce (Four Nines), Amy Martin (Four Nines), Colleen Maleski (GBSM), Sam Stookesberry (GBSM), Victoria Ravaioli (GBSM), Elizabeth Suarez (GP&P)

Appendix A: Polling Results

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

- Adams – 15%
- Arapahoe – 35%
- Boulder – 8%
- Broomfield – 0%
- Denver – 31%
- Douglas – 0%
- Jefferson – 12%
- Weld – 0%

Polling Question 2: Did you attend previous Systemwide Fare Study Customer and Community meetings?

- I attended the April meeting – 12%
- I attended the June meeting – 4%
- I attended both the April and June meetings – 27%
- I did not attend either meeting – 58%

Polling Question 3: Which fare structure alternative do you prefer?

- Alternative A – 27%
- Alternative B – 73%

Polling Question 4: Should RTD consider offering a 70% Monthly Pass discount for customers paying discounted fares?

- Yes – 82%
- No – 18%

Polling Question 5: For customers paying discounted fares (e.g., LiVE low-income customers, seniors, individuals with disabilities, youth), should RTD consider a single fare for travel anywhere in the RTD service area, including the airport?

- Yes – 80%
- No – 20%

Appendix B: Customer Feedback

The following reflects a summary of the feedback by customers during the meeting.

Support for Alternative A or Alternative B

Customers who selected Alternative A as their preference indicated that it was because of the lower fares offered for Local customers and that Alternative A would save them money. One customer suggested increasing security to support operators in enforcing fare differences between Local and Regional fares. Another idea was having just one Monthly Pass price for all destinations under Alternative A to increase simplicity.

Customers who selected Alternative B as their preference largely indicated that they preferred it because it was simpler to understand – both for customers and for operators. They explained that Alternative B made the fare structure less complex and complicated, particularly because they did not have to distinguish the difference between Local and Regional fares. Customers also indicated that they supported Alternative B because:

- Alternative B reduces the price for traveling long distances, which can reduce car use and is better for the environment.
- Making the fare structure easier to understand may attract new customers and more customers would make RTD more sustainable in the long term.
- The Monthly Pass includes travel to anywhere in the RTD service area, including the airport, for under \$100.
- The \$0.25 discount under Alternative A was too insignificant.

One customer did not express a preference for either Alternative A or B, citing that they did not have enough information on current ridership to make a decision. Other customers indicated that they preferred a combination of elements of Alternative A and B.

Fare Structure Alternatives Design

Customers also shared general feedback about the design of the fare structure alternatives. One participant questioned what impact lower Regional or Airport fares might have on financially burdened customers, and if the lower fares might actually provide affordable access to farther destinations for those customers.

Other customers indicated that the cost of the Airport fare is still too high, particularly in comparison to prices paid to travel to airports in other cities, in comparison to the cost of parking for airport employees and for customers who live near the airport and therefore only travel a few stops to get to the airport. One customer indicated that the length of the 3-hour Pass was too short.

Policies and Programs

Customers provided their perspective on some of the policies and programs under consideration.

70% Discount on Monthly Pass and Single Fare for Discounted Customers

Customers largely supported the idea of a 70% discount on the Monthly Pass for customers paying discounted fares and a single fare for discounted customers. They indicated that they supported the idea because it would:

- Encourage more transit use, resulting in less traffic.
- Make it easier for financially burdened customers.
- Provide low-income airport workers with a lower fare.

Customers also indicated that these discounts would help to achieve the study's goal of equity and that the use of these discounts could offset the retention of the \$3.00 Local fare in Alternative B.

Additional Discount Feedback

Support was shown for the Free Fare for Youth program that is under consideration if RTD can secure external funding for implementation. Customers shared their excitement for it and indicated that children shouldn't have to pay both because they do not have an income and because historically children up to age 15 could ride free with paying adults, referencing a 1990s policy.

Several ideas or concerns were raised related to discount programs, including:

- Making Medicaid recipients eligible for discounted fares.
- Providing low-income workers with free transit (and paying for that program by increasing the proposed Monthly Pass rate or charging a small amount for parking at RTD facilities).
- Making discounted fares whole dollar amounts and/or ensuring that customers paying cash are not charged extra if they do not have the exact change for the discounted fare.
- Removing the LIVE emblem from printed tickets so that customers' incomes are more discreet.

Pass Programs

Customers also provided comments on two pass programs that were shared, including the EcoPass and Semester Pass. One customer indicated that her employer would be unlikely to pay a fee for all employees to enroll in EcoPass, particularly since some employees are unable to take transit to work. Another indicated that college students would receive a significant discount with a semester pass.

General Feedback

Customers also submitted messages with general feedback on the study and RTD operations. With regards to the study, one customer indicated that the meeting should be held at a time when more RTD customers could attend, noting that many customers may be commuting during the 6 pm start time. Another customer requested the survey in Vietnamese and Amharic. *(Note: Language assistance to complete the survey was made available at no cost by emailing a request to faresurvey@rtd-denver.com.)*

Another customer expressed excitement for the fare capping that went into place with the implementation of Account Based Ticketing in September and that fare capping is also available for discounted fares.

Appendix C: Q&A

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

Study Overview

Q: When can we expect to see the final fare structure implemented (assuming that it goes through public review semi-smoothly)?

A: The proposed fare structure, policies and programs will be refined and available for public comment with a final recommendation for the RTD Board of Directors in early 2023. The goal is to launch the new fare structure by 2024, which allows for time to make the operational changes necessary to implement it. There could be an option for a graduated approach, starting some policies or programs sooner if they are easier to begin implementing.

Q: Should “sensitivity” be an additional goal of the study?

A: The three goals of the fare study – equity, affordability and simplicity – were established last fall based on customer and community feedback. Through the goals of equity, affordability and simplicity, RTD aims to create a fare structure that is also sensible.

Fare Structure

For more information on the proposed fare structure alternatives and the impact they would have on you as a customer, [visit the Fare Feedback website](#).

Q. Has RTD examined different pricing for bus versus rail? All bus service could be local while the rail might cover zones.

A. This question has come up previously during community conversations but is ultimately an option that we did not move forward with. In surveys and other feedback that we’ve received from the public, there was generally less support for different pricing for bus versus rail. This was especially true for customers who use multiple modes of transportation.

Q. If a family of four is traveling round trip to the airport, it’s going to cost them \$80 for a weekend trip, even if that’s only traveling a few stations. How does the fare study address the affordability of families traveling together?

A. Currently, fares for youth ages 6 – 19 are discounted by 70% and fares for children five and under are free, which reduces the roundtrip cost for families traveling with children to a price between \$42 and \$55 depending on the ages of the children. However, we understand that traveling to and from the airport can be a burden, especially for families, and the study is exploring additional discounts that would support families traveling together to the airport and other destinations.

First, RTD is considering a single fare for all customers paying discounted fares (including Youth), regardless of how far that customer travels or what services they use. Customers paying discounted fares could travel anywhere in the RTD service area for the cost of the Local discounted rate. For example, if the Local full fare price was \$3.00, Youth could travel to any destination (including the airport) for \$0.90. Second, RTD is exploring free fares for youth to reduce the cost of public transit for families. Implementing free fares, however, would require financial support from external funding partners. These policies in combination with either Alternative A or B would make the roundtrip cost of traveling to the airport with two children range from \$40 to \$44. Third, RTD customers will still be able to travel to the airport for no additional charge if they have an EcoPass, a Regional Monthly Pass (Alternative A), or systemwide Monthly Pass (Alternative B). Customers with a Local Monthly Pass (Alternative A) would pay a partial upgrade fare to access the airport.

Q: How does RTD justify charging one of the highest airport fares in the USA?

A: RTD charges an Airport fare premium based on the quality of the service and the distance traveled to reach the airport. Transit to Denver International Airport provides a convenient connection, allowing for customers to disembark just steps from the terminal. In addition, the distance to Denver International Airport is significant. The RTD A-Line provides service along the 23 miles between downtown Denver and the airport, a further distance than many other airports across the country are from their city center. The SkyRide bus services travel even further distances (30-42 miles) for a convenient, limited stop service.

The Airport fare remains a competitively priced choice for many customers compared to other transportation options. For every airport traveler, which mode of transportation is best for them is based on many circumstances that are unique to them and their trip, such as proximity to an RTD station, length of trip, or the number of travelers, among many other factors that contribute to the overall cost and convenience of using public transportation compared to other modes of travel such as ride share services or parking a personal vehicle at the airport. The price is also consistent; unlike ride share services, RTD does not raise prices during times of high demand or inclement weather.

Q: What the panelists just said about the airport and distance is understandable, if you are only thinking about someone originating downtown. Why is it so expensive still the closer you originate your trip to the airport?

A: Two of the fundamental goals of the Fare Study and Equity Analysis are Equity and Simplicity, and these goals occasionally conflict and require trade-offs, including the pricing of travel to the airport. While pricing based on distance traveled might be perceived as more equitable, it comes with added complexity. The implementation of differentiated Airport fares based on distance traveled or stations traveled would require the development of additional zone boundaries, which would make the system more complicated for customers and operators. Charging an airport premium, regardless of the distance of the trip, is common in other airports across North America, including Chicago, St. Louis, Calgary, San Francisco, Oakland, Vancouver, Montreal, New York (JFK) and Newark.

Q: Has anyone considered that people who live in outer areas of Denver are not going to downtown but instead to the airport? I live in Green Valley Ranch and am a flight crew member. I would like to ride the A line to the airport but paying \$10 to go to work and then \$10 to come back 3 days later after my trip is over is far too expensive, considering employee parking at the airport is \$36 a month. I typically go to the airport to work 5-6 times per month, and sometimes need to drive because the RTD schedule does not line up always. The bottom line: for people who live out here and are traveling entirely within one zone and only traveling one stop (aka Local, by any other interpretation of your policies) it still costs \$10. Please consider how unfair this is.

A: The Airport customer is one we have been looking at very closely. We have maintained a higher fare for rides to and from the airport in both alternatives but are looking at other ways of addressing affordability for those who travel to the airport regularly, such as reducing the price of the Monthly Pass (to \$160 in Alternative A or \$96 in Alternative B which would equate to only 16 or 10 trips to reach the monthly max, respectively). Customers with unpredictable or inconsistent schedules who at this point prefer to buy Day Passes rather than a Monthly Pass would still benefit from the monthly max under fare capping if they use a MyRide mobile barcode or the new MyRide card.

RTD is also actively meeting with airport stakeholders and employers to explore discount or pass programs, such as EcoPass or discounts on bulk purchases, that would ensure traveling via transit is more affordable for airport employees. Unfortunately, without a subsidy or shared cost from an airport employer, the cost of transit to the airport will likely never be able to match the subsidized \$36 employee parking rate.

Q: Do people who work at the airport get a pass via their employer?

A: Employer EcoPass options are available to airport employees if their employer chooses to participate in the program. We have heard from employers that the current EcoPass pricing is a barrier to providing a pass to all their employees and have worked to design fare alternatives that are more affordable. We continue to collect feedback from and engage in conversations with airport stakeholders to see how we can best meet the fare needs of airport employees.

Q: Alternative A only seems to really benefit Local fare and Monthly Pass holders and the \$0.25 decrease may be too insignificant for the others to acknowledge. Is there an option to reconfigure the zone structure for an added benefit?

A: Fare zones would not change under the current design of Alternative A, but would be consolidated if the fare structure were to be simplified, combining Local and Regional zones, as is currently proposed in Alternative B. In the first rounds of community feedback, customer sentiments were about equally split between those who believed that the price someone pays should reflect the distance traveled (that is, customers traveling farther should pay more than those traveling shorter distances) and those who did not think price and distance should be linked. Through these two alternatives, we are seeking to better understand customer opinions about how to price various levels of service.

In addition to the reduction of fares across all levels of service under Alternative A, there are many policies and programs under consideration to support affordability for financially burdened, youth, pass program and other types of customers.

Q: I like the idea of paying for the distance traveled, especially to help those who more need the discount get a deal. But I also like the idea of a simplified day pass. Would you consider offering an \$8 day pass that gives a break if you take three local trips?

A: Under the Account Based Ticketing system that went into effect in September 2022, a customer in this scenario would benefit from fare capping if they use [a MyRide card or a MyRide mobile barcode](#). This customer would be charged the price of a 3-Hour Pass for their first trip and the price of a 3-Hour Pass for their second trip, and any additional trips taken that day (even if they fall beyond the second 3-hour window) would be free since the system automatically provides a Day Pass. Under Alternative A, the Day Pass or max is \$5.50 for Local customers (and \$10.00 for Regional or Airport customers). Under Alternative B, the Day Pass or max is \$6.00 for Local and Regional customers (and \$10 for Airport customers.) Read more about fare capping below or on our [FAQ page](#).

Programs and Policies Under Consideration

For more information about the policies and programs under consideration, please [visit the Fare Feedback website](#).

Q: When you say bulk purchase, do you mean the 10-ticket booklets? Will you be maintaining the 10 coupon discount booklets?

A: One of the programs RTD is currently considering is a bulk purchase program for employers or organizations that want to provide transit passes for their staff or the clients they serve. Purchases of \$2,000 or more in fare products would receive a 10% discount.

RTD is considering many additional discount policies and programs as well, some of which may be viable substitutes for the 10-ride ticket books. Whether or not RTD will maintain the ticket books and/or the discount on the ticket books is still under consideration. However, for any changes to the fare structure, policies or programs – including eliminating a product – there will be a Title VI equity analysis conducted to ensure that making that change would not negatively impact Title VI populations, particularly low-income or minority populations. Learn more about the [fare equity analysis](#).

Q: I liked it when you had a discount for MyRide card holders. With the new card, there is no longer a discount. Are you considering bringing it back?

A: Because MyRide now uses the Account Based Ticketing system, fare capping benefits will apply to customers using MyRide but there will not be additional discounts. The decision to remove MyRide discounts was made to simplify the introduction of MyRide and was supported by an equity analysis to understand the impacts of the discontinuation of the discount.

Q: If you do a semester pass, will semester fare capping be available to college students?

A: This has not been under consideration to-date as there are not yet details about how a Semester Pass would be implemented. It is likely that any Semester Pass product would only be offered through participating educational institutions.

Q: Do you have any more information yet on the potential EcoPass pricing for the smaller employers?

A: RTD is aiming to address two main challenges that have been expressed by employers by simplifying pricing and making pricing more predictable. EcoPass pricing is based on Service Level Areas (SLAs), and RTD is considering consolidating some SLAs to make the pricing easier to understand. RTD has also received feedback that EcoPass is difficult to budget for because it changes year to year. RTD is exploring setting multi-year prices to make transportation costs more predictable.

Technical Analysis

Q: What year(s) Census data was used in the equity analysis?

A: The Average Fare Analysis component of the equity analysis relies on a combination of ridership, fare revenue and customer demographic data. The ridership and fare revenue data used was for calendar 2021, the most recent complete year of data available. The customer demographic data is from three RTD-specific customer surveys. The main source of demographic data is from RTD's 2017 Customer Satisfaction Survey, the most recent comprehensive customer survey undertaken by RTD. Supplemental data related to MyRide and LiVE customer demographics was provided through the 2019 Customer Satisfaction Survey and 2020 LiVE Program Survey, respectively. Census data does not factor into the Average Fare Analysis component of the Title VI Fare Equity Analysis. Per the Federal Transit Administration, Census data will not be effective data for fare analyses, since it is impossible to know, based on Census data, what fare media or fare payment type people are using.

Q: How much of an underlying consideration is increased ridership in this fare study?

A: The three goals of the fare study – equity, affordability and simplicity – were established last fall based on customer and community feedback. By balancing these goals and meeting the needs of the region, RTD hopes to see increased ridership from the changes proposed in the fare study. The two proposed alternatives as designed are anticipated to result in increased ridership.

Q: What is the data on the split between how many trips are local, regional, airport? Is it 33%, 33%, 33%? Are most trips local?

A: In 2021, RTD estimated that 82% of boardings were for Local rides, with 10% Regional boardings and 8% Airport boardings.

Q: What's the source - what year - of the data that minority & low-income people mostly use only local trips? While this may have been true 10 years ago, a lot of EJ population members have been displaced to the suburbs recently because of the housing shortage.

A: The Average Fare Analysis component of the Equity Analysis relies on a combination of ridership, fare revenue and customer demographic data. The main source of customer demographic data comes from RTD's 2017 Customer Satisfaction Survey, the most recent comprehensive customer survey undertaken by RTD. While the equity analysis is an integral component of the fare study, feedback from RTD customers, including minority and low-income populations, is essential to the development of an equitable and sustainable fare structure. The focus groups conducted by community partners will expressly ask community members about their current ridership and how each of their fare structures would impact their travel.

Q: Are both fare alternatives modeled to generate equal fare revenue for RTD?

A: The fare modeling undertaken as part of the fare study is not focused on a firm revenue target so much as ensuring that the revenue generated from the proposed alternatives is sufficient that RTD can continue to expand service in line with their COVID recovery service delivery plans. As designed, both alternatives are broadly in the same range for expected fare revenue generation.

Fare Payment

Q: Are there any plans to accept card payments in the future?

A: Today, customers can use credit and debit cards online and in the MyRide mobile app to purchase mobile tickets and passes or load stored value to their MyRide account. They can also buy mobile tickets in the Transit, Lyft, or Uber apps. Additionally, the ticket vending machines at RTD rail stations accept credit and debit cards for purchasing tickets. The RTD sales outlets as well as the King Soopers and Safeway stores throughout the region also accept credit and debit cards for ticket purchases. Paying fares directly on board with a credit or debit card is something that RTD may explore in the future but is not being considered as part of this fare study.

Q: For those who are paying cash, one of the main benefits of Alternative B is that it is all whole dollar amounts. Carrying change is not efficient, common, or easy these days. Is it possible to round the fare down in Alternative A to make them whole dollar amounts for those who do pay in cash?

A: Setting fare prices at whole dollar amounts or in 25 cent increments is something RTD can consider as it uses customer input to refine the proposed fare structure alternatives for a final recommended design. In addition, RTD is exploring expanding its retail network where customers who prefer to pay in cash could load cash into their MyRide account at convenient locations across the service area.

Q: Under alternative A, would it be possible to give change on a fare card the way RFTA does?

A: Implementing such a change would involve a lot of expensive equipment to buy and maintain and is not currently being considered. However, as outlined above, RTD is hoping to provide convenient locations for customers to load cash into their MyRide account so that customers who use cash can pay the exact fare without the need to carry or receive change.

Customer and Community Participation

Q: How do we collect feedback from youth and ensure their voices are heard?

A: Youth are an important customer for RTD as a public transportation provider, and we aim to understand their perspectives to ensure we are providing young people affordable, reliable transit to work and school and inspiring them to become lifelong transit customers. As part of this study, RTD has been working with local nonprofits and other community partners who have a youth and/or family focus, such as Athletics and Beyond, to gather feedback for this study. Additionally, there is youth representation on the Equity Feedback Panel to ensure the perspectives of youth are included in this study.

Q: Do we collect feedback also from people who operate our transit and what they'd like to see? I know there's a bus driver shortage.

A: The fare study has been widely shared internally for all RTD team members to learn more and get involved, including the opportunity to participate in focus groups with the Operations, Customer Care and Transit Security teams. In particular, we know that operators struggle with the same issues of simplicity as our customers; they themselves have expressed confusion with what fares customers should purchase. The study goal of simplicity is intended to respond to our operators' needs as well.

Fare Enforcement

Q. Will fare enforcement be simpler for drivers and for security if RTD goes to a unitary fare system? If Local and Regional are combined will fare enforcement be simpler?

A. Combining Local and Regional fares could reduce interaction with fare enforcement, particularly in scenarios when a customer boards a train with a Local fare but travels beyond two zones, essentially making a Regional fare trip. In focus groups with operators and transit security, and in conversations with bus operators, RTD has heard anecdotally that it would be easier if Local and Regional fares were the same and that one of the top challenges the operations team faces are fare disputes. Simplicity is a goal not only for RTD customers but also the operators and fare enforcement teams. The fare study team is working closely with the bus operations and transit security on changes to the fare structure and the impacts on fare enforcement.

Other RTD Initiatives

Q. My understanding is that fares represent a small share of RTD's annual income. Was Zero Fare for Better Air a pilot study and is there a scope for making this permanent? If not, why was it trialed?

A. Zero Fare for Better Air allowed for all services to be free during the month of August. This initiative was funded by the State of Colorado through an ozone season grant program which covered 80 percent of the cost of that initiative. It is a two-year grant, and RTD may offer a no-cost initiative again next year. It was not a pilot study for permanent fareless transit.

While both proposed alternatives include lower fares for some service levels, free fares are not being considered as part of the fare study. Fares don't make up a large percentage of operating costs; however, fares are still significant enough that if RTD were to move forward with zero fares, it is likely the agency would have to implement substantial service cuts to account for the lost revenue or identify a new and substantial revenue source with support from regional and state partners. RTD is considering free fares for youth as a part of the fare study but implementing that program would require an external funding source.

Q: Is RTD looking at implementing "fare capping"?

A: RTD has recently implemented fare capping with the introduction of the new Account Based Ticketing system in September 2022. With fare capping, there is a maximum amount that a customer would pay in a day or in a month if they are using a [MyRide](#) mobile barcode or new MyRide card. That means that customers are charged fares in smaller increments (the price of a 3-hour trip) but still never pay more than the price of a Day or Monthly Pass. Under the current fare structure, once you have been charged for two Local 3-hour trips on the same day, the system will automatically provision a Local Day Pass and will not charge for any additional Local trips on that day. Once you have been charged for 38 3-hour Local trips in a calendar month, the system will automatically provision a Local Monthly Pass and will not charge for additional local trips in that month. All Local, Regional and Airport fare charges in a day count towards the Regional/Airport Day Pass cap, and all fare charges in a month count towards the Regional/Airport Monthly Pass cap. This system will remain in place under both alternatives under consideration. You can learn more about fare capping on the [FAQ page of the Fare Feedback website](#).

Q: Do you know the proportion of customers that are paying cash and thus not able to use fare capping?

A: In 2021, about 16 percent of the fare revenue that RTD collected was from cash payments. To be able to ensure that all customers can benefit from fare capping, RTD is working to expand its retail network so that customers who prefer to pay cash are able to load cash onto a MyRide card at multiple convenient locations throughout the service area.

Q: Is RTD going to establish policies for farebox buy ups as part of this study?

A: Farebox buy ups are not a part of this study. However, RTD is currently moving forward with the development of a Partnership Program which includes a policy, evaluation criteria and metrics. This is part of the guiding principles of Reimagine RTD to pursue partnerships with public and private organizations that help identify innovative opportunities to enhance mobility throughout the region.

Appendix D: Additional Resources

Learn more about the fare study, alternatives, policies and programs by accessing the resources below:

- Background on the [Systemwide Fare Study and Equity Analysis](#)
- [Previous customer and community feedback](#) that informed the development of the fare structure alternatives, policies and programs
- [Fare Structure Alternatives A and B](#)
- How those fare structures would impact [Local](#), [Regional](#), [Airport](#) or [Youth](#) customers or customers paying [Discount](#) fares or using [Pass Programs](#)
- [Policies and Programs](#) under consideration
- [How equity is being centered](#) in the Fare Study
- [How to get involved](#) in the Fare Study