



**Customer Services, Operations, and Safety Committee**

**Board Information Item V-D**

**October 2, 2008**

## **Eliminating Paper Transfers**

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
**Board Action/Information Summary**

<input type="radio"/> Action <input checked="" type="radio"/> Information	MEAD Number:	Resolution: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No
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**TITLE:**

Eliminating Paper Transfers

**PURPOSE:**

As part of the FY09 Authority budget, the Board of Directors approved the elimination of paper transfers. This information item is to inform the Board of actions that staff has taken to implement this policy directive.

**DESCRIPTION:**

In the FY09 budget resolution (Resolution 2007-47), the Board of Directors approved the elimination of paper transfers effective January 2009. Since that time, staff from the offices of bus operations, finance, SmarTrip®, civil rights and communications has taken actions to fulfill the goals of the Board's directive.

After January 4, 2009, Metrobus operators will no longer be able to give out or to receive paper transfers. Several months ago, staff placed a final order for transfers and cancelled the contract for future supplies. The budget for FY09 included only enough funding to fulfill requirements until January 2009. There is no money in the budget for paper transfers beyond January 2009 and there is no currently contract in place to execute such an order.

Staff recognizes the importance of effective communication of this change. In August staff developed a preliminary plan for communicating this initiative and, in the subsequent weeks, solicited comments from the Riders` Advisory Council, Jurisdictional Coordinating Committee, and two groups representing regional bus agencies in the surrounding jurisdictions. Staff has also initiated contact with the most transit-dependent groups of our rider population: those who are served by social service agencies throughout the region. Staff has identified dozens of key agencies and social service groups whose clients are likely to be impacted by this change. In early September, staff began to communicate with these key stakeholders to advise them of the coming change and to discuss collectively ways to mitigate the impact on their clients. In January 2008, the Board authorized the distribution of 50,000 SmarTrip® cards to social service agencies in the region. All of those cards have been distributed by Metro to the agencies.

In the coming weeks, communications staff will launch an aggressive marketing and communications effort to educate the public about the elimination of paper transfers. Staff's communications goals are to raise public awareness that paper transfers will be eliminated in January 2009 and to encourage bus customers to see the value of using SmarTrip® cards. At the same time, staff will also remind customers about the value of existing bus and rail passes, which are not slated for elimination in January 2009. Bus and rail passes may be a more economical choice for customers in some cases.

The communications effort is specifically directed at the customers who will be affected. Approximately 50 percent of Metrobus customers pay their fare using cash or transfers. The marketing effort will include: bilingual audio announcements in Spanish and English on 100% of buses; bilingual ads in Spanish and English in the rail system, and on the interiors and exteriors of buses; "Take One" brochures in Spanish and English that describe the elimination of paper transfers and that illustrate how to purchase SmarTrip® and how to use SmarTrip®. The Metro web site will also be an important avenue to communicating messages. Metro's web site already has pages with information about where to buy and load value onto SmarTrip® cards. Staff will supplement those sites with even more specific information and with features for non-English speakers. For example, staff is developing podcast audio recordings in seven languages (Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, French, Arabic, and Amharic) as a resource for community groups who work with customers for whom English is not necessarily their first language. Those podcasts will be able to be downloaded from the Metro web site and staff will also make them available upon request.

Staff will continue to evaluate the efficacy of the marketing effort and will adjust its strategy accordingly. One significant effort will be to educate customers about the locations where they can purchase a SmarTrip® card. Customers currently can purchase SmarTrip® cards via U.S. mail, phone, on the internet and at one of 85 locations throughout the District, Maryland and Virginia. Customers can load value on their SmarTrip® cards at almost 2,800 locations, including all regional buses, all 86 Metrorail stations, all Metro sales offices, and commuter stores and transit centers in the region. By November, staff expects to install another 28 customer point-of-sale units in the region, and another 250 by Spring 2009, bringing the total to over 3,100 locations to load value onto a SmarTrip® card.

**FUNDING IMPACT:**

Finance staff will continue to update its revenue forecasting model as this transition is underway. At this point, staff does not have enough data to forecast accurately what the revenue impacts will be. After the implementation in January 2009, staff will be looking closely at how this action is impacting revenue and will adjust accordingly, particularly in preparation for the discussions of the FY10 budget. If the past experience of other transit properties is any indication, staff does anticipate a positive revenue impact. For reference, CTA of Chicago realized \$37 million more in revenue in the year that it eliminated paper transfers.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

N/A



# Eliminating Paper Transfers

*Presented to the Board of Directors:*

**Customer Service, Operations,  
and Safety Committee**

October 2, 2008





# Eliminating Paper Transfers

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- The Board approved the elimination of paper transfers as part of the FY09 budget.
- Paper transfers to be eliminated January 4, 2009.





# Community Outreach

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- ~50% of our bus passengers pay their fare using a combination of cash or transfers.
- Met with regional stakeholders
- Ongoing outreach to social service agencies throughout the region that we know will need extra attention






# Marketing blitz begins in October

## 2 ½ months before implementation

- Bilingual ads in all bus interiors, and exterior ads on 10% of the fleet
- Bi-lingual 'take-one' brochures in all buses and rail stations
- New web page with FAQs and an audio recording and podcast in seven languages
- Outreach to Spanish and mainstream media
- On-bus audio notification begins in November

<p>Beginning January 4, 2009, Metro will not issue or accept paper transfers.</p> <p>To get the rail-to-bus discount or to transfer free from bus to bus*, you must use a SmarTrip® card.</p>		<p>A partir del 4 de enero de 2009, Metro no emitirá ni aceptará boletos de transferencia de papel.</p> <p>Para obtener el descuento de tren a autobús o para transferirse gratis de autobús a autobús*, usted tendrá que usar la tarjeta SmarTrip®.</p>
<p><small>For more information, pick up a flyer on this bus or at a rail station, visit <a href="http://MetroOpensDoors.com">MetroOpensDoors.com</a> or call 202-637-7000 (TTY 202-638-3780). Thank you for your cooperation as we make the switch to a more efficient, paperless transfer system.</small></p> <p><small>* Except when transferring to a bus with a higher fare.</small></p>	<p><small>Para más información, pida un folleto en el autobús o estación de tren, o visite el sitio <a href="http://MetroOpensDoors.com">MetroOpensDoors.com</a> o comuníquese al 202-637-7000 (para personas con dificultades auditivas TTY 202-638-3780). Gracias por su cooperación durante nuestro cambio a un sistema más eficiente y sin uso de papel.</small></p> <p><small>* Except when transferring to a bus with a higher fare.</small></p>	





# Benefits to the Customer

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- SmarTrip<sup>®</sup> is cheaper, saving \$0.10 off each ride.
- Time to transfer will be extended from 2 hours to 3 hours.







# Benefits to the Customer

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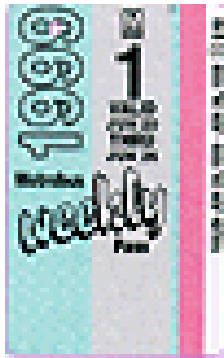
- Distributed 50,000 free SmarTrip® cards in January 2008; and now can be purchased at 85 locations throughout the region.
- Metro is aggressively working to increase the locations where customers can load value onto their cards, on top of the 2,800+ current locations.
- Registered SmarTrip® cards can be replaced if lost/stolen





# All Passes Will Still Be Sold

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• Weekly Bus Pass = \$11



• 7-Day Short Trip Pass = \$26.40



• Weekly Rail Pass = \$39



# Benefits to Metro

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- Improves bus boarding times
- Minimizes fraud and abuse
- Reduced assaults on bus operators



## Benefits to Metro

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- Eliminates need to invest in repairing outdated paper transfer machines and cost of paper transfers (approximately \$50-\$70k every two months)
- Enhanced revenue: Chicago CTA recognized more than \$37 million in revenue in the fiscal year that they eliminated paper transfers.



## Next Steps

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- Metro staff will continue aggressive outreach to the public, regional partners, affected stakeholders and communities.
- Staff will keep Board apprised of challenges and opportunities of implementation of this important policy change.