



Item #6

DATE February 3, 2021
TO GCTD Board of Directors
FROM Steven Brown, General Manager
SUBJECT Consider Resumption of Fare Collection

SUMMARY

A new directive by Governor Newsom issued the morning of January 25 will begin to loosen restrictions on stay-at-home orders. This may allow some businesses to reopen and ridership levels will continue to increase over the next two months. This report contains information on the status of GCTD's readiness to resume collecting fares and recommends authorizing staff to set a start date for resuming fares on both fixed-route and ACCESS paratransit services, on or shortly after April 1st, 2021.

BACKGROUND

In December 2020 staff brought an item to the Board to consider resuming fare collection after having helped support the economic recovery of the community. As the region-wide shutdown of business and an extended stay at home order continued through December and January, staff has continued to suspend fare collection at this time. Looking forward to the re-opening efforts in the community, the Board of Directors is asked to consider authorizing staff to resume fare collection this spring, on or shortly after April 1st.

As noted in the December 2020 report, \$125,000 to \$300,000 in revenue per month has been lost due to the lack of collecting fares. The decision to suspend fare collection was the right decision when it was made in March 2020 at the beginning of the Emergency Declaration due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Now that plexiglass barriers have been installed on all buses and ACCESS paratransit vehicles, enhanced cleaning and sanitizing efforts are in place for all vehicles, it is prudent to resume the collection of fares.

Operationally, as noted in previous reports, an unintended consequence of suspending fares has been an increase in passengers on board some buses who do not have destinations and are loitering on-board buses as they travel around the community. This forces Operators to need to confront passengers at the end of the line to deboard, which has led to an increase in negative customer interactions onboard buses. Those passengers once removed, often then wait for the next bus, and ride as long as possible, thereby repeating the cycle and creating an unpleasant atmosphere on board the bus.

GOLD COAST TRANSIT DISTRICT

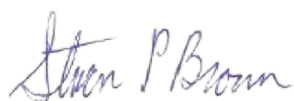
At the December Board meeting, the question of regional collaboration was raised. At this time GCTD has reached out to all of the transit operators in the region, however no consensus on a date to resume fares was made. Most of the operators expressed that because fares played a very small role in their overall budgets before the pandemic, not collecting fares has not impacted them as it has us. For example, one municipal transit operator in the Easy County reported that pre-pandemic fares made up just 8% of their operational costs. GCTD conversely relies much more on passenger fares, with nearly 20% of its operating costs being covered at the farebox. While most transit agencies in our region have not made a decision about resuming fares, the 2nd largest transit provider in the region, VCTC Intercity Service, has expressed they are also looking at resuming fare collection this spring. The VCTC Director of Transit has indicated that April 1 may be a good start time for them to resume fare collection, although no decision has been made.

Once fare collection is resumed, safe contactless fare collection is available, through the use of GCTD's contactless fare option (Token Transit). This system is currently in place and ready to reinstitute. GCTD is ready to launch a promotional program to encourage passengers to use this option to help to speed boarding and reduce contact points.

Staff will continue work already underway to assist with the resumption of fare collection, such as servicing all the fareboxes to ensure their proper functioning. Other steps to be taken will include establishing a schedule to empty and probe the fareboxes by the service workers, scheduling and training staff to empty the vaults on a regular basis, resuming the armored car service with Brinks, and ensuring accurate tracking and accounting for the revenue on daily and weekly basis. Additional work will be needed to resume opening of ticket sales outlets. An exact date for resuming fares once established will be published to the public in advance to help the public prepare for resuming fares.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of Directors authorize staff to resume the collection of fares on all fixed route and ACCESS paratransit service on or shortly after April 1st.



Steven P. Brown
General Manager