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File #: 2021-0432, File Type: Informational Report

Agenda Number: 42.

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**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
JUNE 17, 2021**

**SUBJECT: FARELESS SYSTEM INITIATIVE (FSI) UPDATE JUNE 2021**

**ACTION: ORAL REPORT**

**RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE oral report on Fareless System Initiative (FSI) Update.

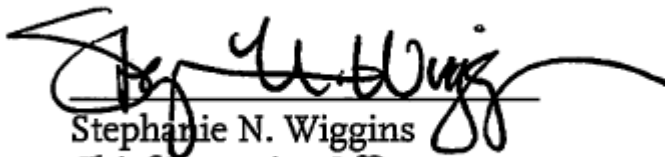
**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - File # 2021-0372 Approved Motion on Fareless System Initiative (FSI) May 2021

Prepared by: Devon Deming, Interim Deputy Executive Officer, FSI (213) 922-7957

Reviewed by:

Elba Higueros, Chief Policy Officer, OCEO, (213) 922-6820

  
Stephanie N. Wiggins  
Chief Executive Officer

**Board Report**

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**File #:** 2021-0372, **File Type:** Motion / Motion Response

**Agenda Number:** 45.

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**REVISED**  
**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**  
**MAY 27, 2021**

**Motion by:**

**DIRECTORS GARCETTI, MITCHELL, AND KREKORIAN**

Fareless System Initiative

Metro's Fareless System Initiative (FSI) is one of the most transformative efforts Metro can take to help Los Angeles County emerge from the pandemic, advance equity, reduce transportation emissions, simplify students' return to school, and increase ridership.

The pandemic has hit students hard. Once the Department of Public Health and schools deem it safe for students to fully return to in-person learning, Metro, municipal operators (munis), and school districts should do everything possible to make the transition back effortless for these families. Studies across the country have shown that the lack of access to transportation is a barrier to student attendance and, therefore, academic success.

Moreover, Metro riders' median household income is \$19,325 systemwide, with approximately 70 percent of Metro riders considered low-income under federal Department of Housing and Urban Development definitions. Many of our riders depend on Metro to reach their jobs as essential workers, and during the pandemic they suffered unavoidable financial impacts. Fareless transit would alleviate some of this burden, helping Los Angeles County get back on its feet.

As the FSI pilot has been developed, the following items remain to be finalized:

1. An efficient implementation process, as well as agreements with the school districts, needs to be put in place to distribute fareless K-12 and Community College student passes.
2. A final funding plan needs to be created.
3. A key concern of municipal operators is the continuation of existing funding agreements with community colleges. These funding agreements have, in many cases, taken years to negotiate. While FSI remains a pilot, these agreements and processes should be kept in place.
4. A mission statement and goals are necessary to help communicate the need for this program.
5. The existing FSI Task Force that developed the pilot should be re-formed to focus on implementation.

Board action is required to ensure these key areas of risk can be addressed and to provide clarity on

FSI's advancement and next steps.

**SUBJECT: FARELESS SYSTEM INITIATIVE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

APPROVE Motion by Directors Garcetti, Mitchell, and Krekorian that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to implement the Fareless System Initiative, subject to a final financial plan and while pursuing cost-sharing agreements.

WE FURTHER MOVE that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to:

*Administrative Coordination*

- A. Develop strategies to streamline and simplify the eligibility process for participants, striving to remove as many barriers to entry as possible;
  - 1. Include an evaluation of a self-attestation process for low-income riders;
- B. Partner with school districts on administrative coordination to enable availability at pilot launch to all LA County school and community college districts (based on each district's interest), including but not limited to any required Memoranda of Understanding or TAP coordination;

*Funding*

- C. In partnership with implementation partners and key stakeholders, pursue and support federal and state opportunities and legislation to fund the Fareless System Initiative, both the pilot phase and any permanent program (should the Board decide to continue past the proposed pilot period), including but not limited to the federal Freedom to Move Act;
- D. Pursue reasonable cost-sharing agreements with school districts;
  - 1. Seek to take advantage and leverage any existing student transportation fee programs (e.g., student-approved LACCD fees);
  - 2. Seek to preserve existing funding agreements between school districts and transit operators;
    - a. Wherever municipal operators have existing fareless agreements with community college districts, consider accepting muni student transit passes on Metro for the duration of the pilot;
  - 3. Seek new funding agreements for districts without any existing discounted or fareless student pass programs (e.g., U-Pass);
- E. Consider pursuing private funding opportunities, including but not limited to philanthropic partnerships;

*Follow-Up*

- F. Report to the Board monthly on the development, launch, and performance of the Fareless System Initiative. The first update should include:
1. A mission statement and goals for the FSI pilot;
  2. Lists of interested municipal operators, school districts, and community college districts;
  3. An update on the refined FSI financial plan; and
  4. Identification of a cross-departmental implementation team.

**HAHN AMENDMENT:** Direct the Chief Executive Officer to prepare a financial plan for the implementation of a Fareless System Initiative that meets the conditions provided below to the Board's satisfaction:

1. Municipal and local operators that choose to participate will be fully included and provided the same type of fare subsidy as Metro transit operations, in order to ensure a seamless rider experience regardless of geographic location or transit provider;
2. The initiative is funded without reducing existing transit operations or state of good repair expenditures or by using regional funding typically committed to bus and rail transit operations or intended for the capital program;
3. Opportunities to expand or adjust existing fare subsidy programs to maximize community benefit have been studied and presented to the Board; and,
4. An initiative can be scaled and/or targeted in a manner that best aligns with Metro's Equity Platform, adopted by the Board in March 2018.

**MITCHELL AMENDMENT:** Direct Metro CEO to Continue the current fare collection policy in perpetuity until the Metro Board is satisfied with a financial plan for Fareless.

**BONIN AMENDMENT:**

1. Report back in the financial plan with information on the costs, including administration, technology, and enforcement, of the proposed pilot program compared to a universal fare-free system.
2. Include in the overall final program evaluation:
  - a. Reach of the program, including student and low-income participation rates.
  - b. Effectiveness of the program in improving mobility, increasing student attendance and performance, shifting travel behavior, reducing automobile use, and increasing transit ridership.

- c. The net cost of the program and cost per rider.

**SOLIS AMENDMENT:** Report back on the feasibility of using the Federal American Rescue plan funding for the pilot.

## Metro's Fareless System Initiative (FSI)

Fareless System Initiative (FSI) Update  
Executive Management Committee  
Thursday, June 17, 2021

Devon Deming  
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Fareless System Initiative (FS)  
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# Implementation Team

FSI Implementation is an agency-wide initiative and will require support from every department.

- CEO appointed Devon Deming as Interim DEO on June 1
- FSI Implementation reports to OCEO

## Phase 1 Implementation Team Includes:

- Operations (including Service Planning)
- Finance (OMB and TAP)
- Communications (Reduced Fare/Customer Care, Community Relations, Marketing, Government Relations, and Public Relations)

# Program Goals (Phase 1)

- Phase 1 (K-14)
  - To make access to transit fareless for all K-12 and community college students in LA County through cost-sharing partnerships with districts (school and community college) and transit agencies.
  - Feasible funding plan for Phase 1
  - Program could start as early as August 2021 for at least 18-month pilot



# K-12 District Partnerships: Status

Proposed cost-sharing for District K-12 Partnerships would be \$3 per student per year for all students in district and would include:

- Distribution of free TAP Cards through District
- Unlimited rides on all participating transit agencies in LA County

We are surveying districts, conducting online information sessions, and one-on-one meetings to reach as many districts as possible quickly. In preliminary meetings with school districts, this \$3 proposal has been well-received.

# K-12 Launch

- K-12 Pilot (Preliminary)
  - All K-12 TAP cards (rider class) would be recognized by the Metro system to allow students to board without requiring fare to be loaded on the card (same as LADOT DASH to Class)
  - 40,000 existing K-12 TAP cards would automatically be eligible
  - 500,000 additional K-12 cards available for distribution through Districts and more on order
  - Schools would be required to track distribution for school purposes, but not share any student information with Metro
  - Simple online registration process for performance data

# Community College Launch

- Community College Launch (Preliminary)
  - Currently, 18 out of 20 Community Colleges have existing cost-sharing agreements with transit agencies
    - Cerritos College has verbally agreed to participate
    - College of the Canyons pending meeting
  - Proposed cost sharing is based on the muni/college agreements already in place
  - Metro's U-Pass program would need to transition from "Opt-In" to "Opt-Out", which would require contract amendments for existing schools. This is recommended to streamline the programs and to be consistent with the muni/college agreements

# Status of Phase 1 Funding Plan

- Three school districts interested in cost-sharing
- \$100,000 funding from already-planned CARB STEP mobility grant benefits FSI with same technical infrastructure.
- Evaluating if \$80 Million to defease bonds can be shifted to Phase 2
- Calculating lost fare revenue estimate for Metro
- Evaluating financial impact of LACMOA/LTSS request to cost-share 50% of lost fare revenue up to 2019 NTD Ridership levels
- Currently evaluating the use of Federal ARPA funds, and any other funding

# Next Steps

- Continued outreach to all stakeholders and finalization of Phase 1 funding plan
- If key deal terms are finalized per May Board Motion, then a written board report will be agendaized for full Board consideration at its meeting on June 24<sup>th</sup>



## Fareless System Initiative

Fact Sheet  
April 2021