



Board Report

File #: 2022-0126, File Type: Informational Report

Agenda Number: 26.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MARCH 17, 2022

SUBJECT: ENCOURAGING THE USE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

AUTHORIZE Chief Executive Officer to make Metro bus, rail, and bike share services free on Transit Equity Day (February 4th), Earth Day (April 22nd), National Bike to Work Day (celebrated with LA County every 3rd Thursday of May) and California Clean Air Day (October 6th) on an annual basis, permanently.

ISSUE

Transit Equity Day, Earth Day, Bike to Work Day, and California Clean Air Day are annual events celebrated to demonstrate support for environmental protection. These annual events support actions taken by the Agency toward clean air, reducing Green House Gas emissions, combatting climate change, and promoting the use of public transportation. Staff recommends offering free rides on bus, rail, and bike share services on Transit Equity Day, Earth Day, Bike to Work Day and California Clean Air Day on an annual basis to demonstrate support for environmental protection and encouraging the use of public transportation.

BACKGROUND

In 2018 and 2019, Metro's Board of Directors directed staff to provide free bus, rail, and bike share services on Earth Day as a way of advocating and promoting a healthy, sustainable environment. In March 2020, a request to approve the permanent designation of Earth Day as a fare free day was scheduled, but the meeting was cancelled due to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although COVID-19 restrictions were in place in 2020 and 2021, Metro continued to celebrate Earth Day, Bike to Work Day and California Clean Air Day through various virtual events and promotions. Below shows the ridership and TAP usage from 2018 to 2021.

To improve access to public transit on days when it is needed most, Metro has already received board authority to provide free fares for the following events/holidays:

1. Federal Elections
2. Statewide Elections
3. Christmas Eve
4. New Year's Eve

Adding Transit Equity Day, Earth Day, Bike to Work Day and California Clean Air Day would show Metro's support for programs that improve equity, benefit the environment, and more seamlessly position the agency to automatically plan for these fareless days moving forward.

DISCUSSION

Reducing the number of single occupancy vehicles by using transit can contribute to making the air cleaner by reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in LA County. Encouraging public transit use on Transit Equity Day, Earth Day, Bike to Work Day, and California Clean Air Day by offering free rides on buses, trains and bike share help us reach our goals aimed at supporting environmental protection.

Operations & TAP

Metro provided free service for Earth Day in 2019, Bike to Work Day in 2016, and California Clean Air Day in 2021. Specifically, Metro offered free bus and rail service between 2:00 am to 11:59 pm. Staff reviewed and compared Earth Day 2019 TAP transactions on the rail system with the prior week's transactions, and there was a 20% increase in TAP transactions on Metro Rail for Earth Day.

Metro will continue to coordinate with our municipal operator partners for their participation in any free ride days offered to our customers. Although participation is optional, they will be highly encouraged to participate with the end goal of supporting environmental protections for Los Angeles County.

Bike Share

Bike Share will provide a promo code to customers that will allow for free thirty-minute single rides, accessible via station kiosks, the Metro Bike Share app or online.

Communications

Metro will promote the use of free Metro transit services on Transit Equity Day, Earth Day, Bike to Work Day, and California Clean Air Day externally using various communication outlets to share information and answer questions, including traditional and social media. Tactics include news releases, live shots and interviews, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Employees, who are expected to be ambassadors of the Agency, will be given information on the importance of each day through the Daily Brief, Friday Facts, and myMetro.

Fareless

Simultaneously to these efforts to encourage transit usage during these designated days, Metro

Government Relations and Planning Departments are pressing forward to secure additional funding to support future phases of the Fareless Initiative Program.

Metro has aggressively advocated for state funding to be provided to support free fare programs in the State of California. Metro has been and remains a national leader in advocating for Congress and the White House to provide federal funding for reduced-fare and fare-free transit services.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Approval of this item will have no impact on the safety of our customers and employees. Metro is committed to delivering service that is safe and reliable for our customers.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Metro estimates a *daily* bus and rail fare revenue impact in the amount of \$300,000 for providing freerides on Transit Equity Day, Earth Day, Bike to Work Day and California Clean Air Day. This includes any single day fares paid with cash or stored value for Metro Bus and Rail services, and excludes the cost of transfers to non-participating municipalities. It does not include the revenue impact to any other municipalities or transit agencies.

All future costs relative to providing free rides on Transit Equity Day, Earth Day, Bike to Work Day and California Clean Air Day will be reviewed and approved annually during the regular budget process. Since this is a multi-year and multi-departmental effort, the respective cost center managers and chiefs will be responsible for budgeting expenses in future years.

Impact to Budget

The source of funding for the promotional activities is local funds which are eligible for bus and rail operating expenses.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Providing free rides for bus, rail and bike share services on Transit Equity Day, Earth Day, Bike to Work Day and California Clean Air Day will not only promote the use of public transportation, it will also bring awareness to our transit riders of the importance of environmental protection and alternative mobility options that will assist in a reduction of emissions and have positive impacts to climate change.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Approval of this recommendation supports Metro's Strategic Plan Goal 3) Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity and Goal 4) Transform LA County through collaboration and leadership. Metro will continue work toward providing accessible and inclusive services for the residents of Los Angeles County.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternative to this recommendation would be to charge fares on these days. This is not recommended because allowing the public to ride free on these days will increase ridership and promote a healthy and sustainable environment in LA County.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue internal and external planning and coordination efforts in support of making free bus, rail, and bike share services permanent on Transit Equity Day, Earth Day, Bike to Work Day and California Clean Air Day (excluding transit station parking).

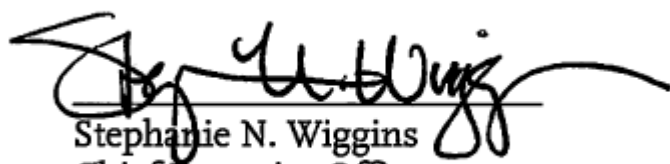
Staff will provide a comprehensive update on Metro's Fareless Program and initiatives next month. Staff will continue to advocate for State and Federal funding to expand the Fareless program.

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