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Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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MARCH 23, 2020

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FROM: PHILLIP A. WASHINGTON PAW
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

SUBJECT: TRANSIT FARES AND BACK DOOR BOARDING

ISSUE

This memo provides an explanation on fare policy as it relates to back door boarding for safety of operators and those whose transit trips are essential, in the context of Stay at Home and Safer at Home orders from state and local governments.

BACKGROUND

In response to the current COVID-19 crisis, Metro has taken critical steps to ensure the health and safety of its workforce and the public.

As a result of the Stay at Home and Safer at Home orders executed at the state and municipal governments last week, Metro has triggered the next level of protections for our bus operators, who are essential to getting LA's most vulnerable to medical appointments, grocery stores and other vital locations.

Starting at 1:00 am, this morning, all operators were mandated to use the operator barriers to ensure another level of protection. In addition, I also directed and mandated all rear-door boarding moving forward. All patrons, except for those needing the on-boarding ramp, are now required to enter through the rear door.

DISCUSSION

Metro has received a few requests for free transit resulting from this change to back door boarding.

It is important to understand our reasoning behind our recommendation not to waive fares at this point in time:

- Charging fares actually supports the “Safer at Home” and “Stay at Home” orders and social distancing efforts for those who must continue to make trips by transit, either to acquire necessary food and supplies or to provide essential services, such as health care or transportation.
- As the population has been asked to make essential trips only, free fares could contradict everyone’s efforts to limit unnecessary travel, thus exposing both our employees and those who are making the essential trips on transit to greater risk.
- Metro is also inquiring with the responsible federal authorities to ensure that any steps we may consider taking with respect to our fare policies do not endanger or compromise the existing federal formula funds our agency receives on an annual basis. In addition, we would want to avoid potentially jeopardizing any funding we anticipate receiving from the COVID-19 pandemic legislation being considered by Congress this week.

NEXT STEPS

While we are working to sharpen our messaging behind our policies related to rear door boarding and fare collection, we believe our reasoning to not recommend the waiving of fares at this time is sound. More information to come.

For more information or if you have questions, please contact me directly at 213.922.7555 or our Chief of Staff, Nadine Lee, at 213-922-7950.