



King County

**Metropolitan King County Council
REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE**

STAFF REPORT

AGENDA ITEM: 9

DATE: March 17, 2010

BRIEFING NO. 2010-B0047

PREPARED BY: Arthur Thornbury

SUBJECT: Fare Evasion Proviso Response

SUMMARY: Representatives of the Transit Division and Amalgamated Transit Union Local 587 will update the committee on plans to gather fare evasion data in response to a proviso requirement which the council added to the 2010/2011 Transit Budget.

BACKGROUND: While concerns about fare evasion have been raised in the past by RTC members, councilmembers, transit operators and riders on Metro buses, the extent and cost of the problem has never been quantified. In addition to an unknown amount of lost revenue, fare evasion has been linked to disruptive on-board behavior and operator assaults as well as to a degree of cynicism among fare-paying passengers. The council has responded to this and other security concerns by substantially increasing the number of Transit Police officers but, without knowing the extent of the problem, it's difficult to know how many resources to devote to it. With that in mind, the council adopted the following 2003 policy recommendation of the Regional Transit Committee:

The Transit Division should work with its operators to improve the quality of reporting of fare evasion and security incidents.

Last November the council took another step toward addressing what continues to be a problem of unknown magnitude by attaching the following restriction to the 2010/2011 Transit Budget:

Of this appropriation, \$1,000,000 shall not be expended or encumbered until the executive transmits a report on fare evasion by April 30, 2010. The report shall provide an estimate of the extent and cost of fare evasion based upon the results of an intensive, limited duration, data collection effort that will involve a representative sampling of the entire system and be conducted in collaboration with the transit operators. The report shall also include recommended strategies to address fare evasion.

Although the fare evasion report is not due until the end of April, today's briefing will give the Transit Division an opportunity to describe its approach to the data collection phase and, in addition, a representative of the transit operators will describe their role in the project. Attached to this staff report is the text of a letter to the editor which appears in the current issue of the "News Review" a publication of Local 587 of the Amalgamated

Transit Union. The writer, an ATU member and shop steward comments on her role as part of an operator focus group testing the strategy to be used in gathering fare evasion data.

ATTENDING:

Kevin Desmond, General Manager, Transit Division

Paul Bachtel, President, Local 587, Amalgamated Transit Union

ATTACHMENT: Fare Survey letter from Ruth Wilson, North Base Shop Steward, March 2010 issue of ATU Local 587 News Review

Attachment 1

ATU Local 587 News Review, March 2010, Letter to the Editor

Fare Survey

Could this be it?? The King County Council is requiring our transit agency to conduct a survey to account for non payment of fares. The County Council asked that this survey should be done in collaboration with transit operators. This may be a first step to address the fare collection problems we all face. Now I agree that each operator has their own opinion on fare collection. Much of the problem is the mixed messages we get from management. "State the fare once if you feel safe doing so." What a useless meaningless policy! All that does is cause more confusion, putting the operator in a catch 22 (remember no fare disputes), creating more security problems, with the fare evader asking more questions "so can I ?", "so I guess I can get on and break that rule and hey why not break a few more?"

Then we have the Transit police telling us to not say "OK" when someone asks to get on for free as they cannot prosecute if the operator says "it is ok" to ride for free. Most of us would like to be taken out of the fare collection issue. this survey may be our chance.

I know there is a lot of cynicism that this will do nothing but I have hope that this may be the start of addressing this huge issue. I encourage all operators to do this survey and be as accurate as you can. This is our chance to show what really goes on out there. The comment by Mr O'Rourke that fare evasion is about one percent of fares based on the 3 key shows how inaccurate the picture of fare evasion is to management. The truth is most operators have given up on pushing the 3 key and I would guess 95% of operators do not push the 3 key. I have heard talk from a few operators that this survey will just cause more problems for operators, bringing them more into security issues with fare collection. I disagree. There was a test done by some of the operators from a focus group evaluating the way to conduct this survey. I was part of the survey test. I was given a card the size of a run card with instructions saying, "push A key on fare box for non payment of adult fare, B key for youth non-payment and C key for partial non-payment."

For 9½ hours on a 66 night run I did this survey. At first I found that I did have to think or remember to push the key. But after the first trip I found it very fun and a way to get out any frustration I had over fare evasion. I did not say anything if someone showed me an expired transfer and I mentioned it was expired... I just pushed the A key. If someone got on asking for a free ride I said "I cannot offer free rides so you chose" and if they got on I pushed the A key. I actually looked forward to the fare evaders! Finally I could give an accounting! What will happen with this information? I have no idea. I just know that if operators do not participate in an honest way nothing will change. We need change! Please participate in this survey!

*Ruth Wilson
North Base Shop Steward.*

