





containing 5 light rail stations; however, an expansion of the zone is currently being considered to incorporate the library light rail station.

*Financial Impact:* UTA is not compensated for operating the free fare zone and has not calculated its foregone revenue.

*Impact on Ridership:* Manual count sheets prepared by operators indicate that between 5% and 8% of total agency ridership occurs entirely within the free fare zone; however, UTA staff believes that this is somewhat high. No studies or analyses have been conducted to assess whether the free fare zone has impacted paid ridership.

*Impact on Operations:* The Operations department and the drivers have repeatedly requested that the downtown free fare zone be eliminated. It adds significantly to the stress with drivers and is believed to result in a significant increase in fare evasion.

*Intangible Impacts:* The free fare zone creates a lot of good will with Salt Lake City. However, several of the outlying cities have requested their own downtown free fare zones and not providing those zones has resulted in some animosity from those cities to UTA.

*Environmental Justice:* This issue has not been raised, but the agency expects that it would be raised if they try to eliminate the free fare zone. A large, diverse population uses the downtown free fare zone as approximately 32% of the city's population travel downtown in any given week.

*Comments:* There has been some interest expressed in replacing the downtown free fare zone with a free shuttle service to simplify operation of the bus routes through downtown.

### ***Rochester-Genesee Transit Authority (R-GRTA)***

Urbanized Area Population (2000 Census): 694,396

Service Area Population: 694,394

Service Area Square Miles: 293

*Setting:* Rochester (NY) is a county seat and the corporate headquarters of Eastman Kodak, Paychex, and Constellation Brands, among other corporations. It is also home to the Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of Rochester.

*Origin:* Rochester's downtown free fare zone was implemented in 1986 to improve downtown circulation. It applied only to the period between 11 AM and 2 PM and the boundaries were drawn so that it served the major employers and merchants in and around downtown.

*Financial Impact:* It was created under an agreement between RGRTA, the city of Rochester, and the downtown merchants under which the merchants paid a fee that reimbursed RGRTA its lost revenue from providing the service. (This lost revenue included revenue lost to fare evaders who boarded in the downtown free fare zone.)

*Impact on Ridership:* The downtown free fare zone served approximately 1,000 riders per day, with the agency's total ridership is approximately 60,000 riders per day.

*Impact on Operations:* Operations and the operators were against the free fare zone as it increased fare disputes; however, since the hours were limited it was not a major issue.



*Intangible Impacts:* The city, the merchants, and the general public all loved the service.

*Environmental Justice:* This issue was never raised with regard to the service.

*Modifications and Termination:* In the early 1990s, Rochester faced both declining downtown employment and a declining downtown retail base. This led to lower ridership on the service as well as higher fees for each merchant to support the service (as there were fewer merchants to share the cost). To reduce the burden on the merchants, a \$0.25 fare was implemented on the service, after which ridership fell to approximately 250 riders per day. This was considered insufficient to justify the cost, and the downtown fare zone was eliminated.

### **Port Authority of Allegheny County**

Urbanized Area Population (2000 Census): 1,753,136

Service Area Population: 1,415,244

Service Area Square Miles: 775

*Setting:* Pittsburgh is the 22<sup>nd</sup> largest metropolitan area in the United States and the county seat of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. The geography of the city, and especially the downtown, is strongly impacted by its location at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers. Pittsburgh's economy is currently based on education, healthcare, technology and financial services. It is the home of several universities and location of the corporate headquarters of seven Fortune 500 companies.

*Origin:* The downtown free fare zone was implemented in the early 1980s for two purposes: (1) to facilitate the movement of buses through downtown, and (2) to promote use of transit downtown. When light rail was completed, the free fare zone was also applied to its downtown section. The downtown zone generally aligns with the area known as the "Golden Triangle" which is bounded by the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers and Interstate 579. It currently covers an area of approximately 500 acres with about 115 bus stops.

Fares are based on 4 concentric zones, the free fare zone, the Downtowner Zone, One Zone, Two Zone, and Three Zone. The free fare zone applies to boardings made between 4 AM and 7 PM on weekdays, provided the rider disembarks within the fare zone. During this time, riders traveling inbound pay when boarding and riders traveling outbound generally pay when alighting from the bus (special rules apply on some routes and services). Outside these hours, riders generally pay when boarding, and riders traveling on the bus within the free fare zone pay the Downtowner Zone fare of \$1.25. Two routes (500 & 501) operate through downtown, so operators on those routes provide fare receipts to all passengers who paid a fare to avoid confusion and fare disputes. Travel on the light rail in the free fare zone is free on all days and at all times.

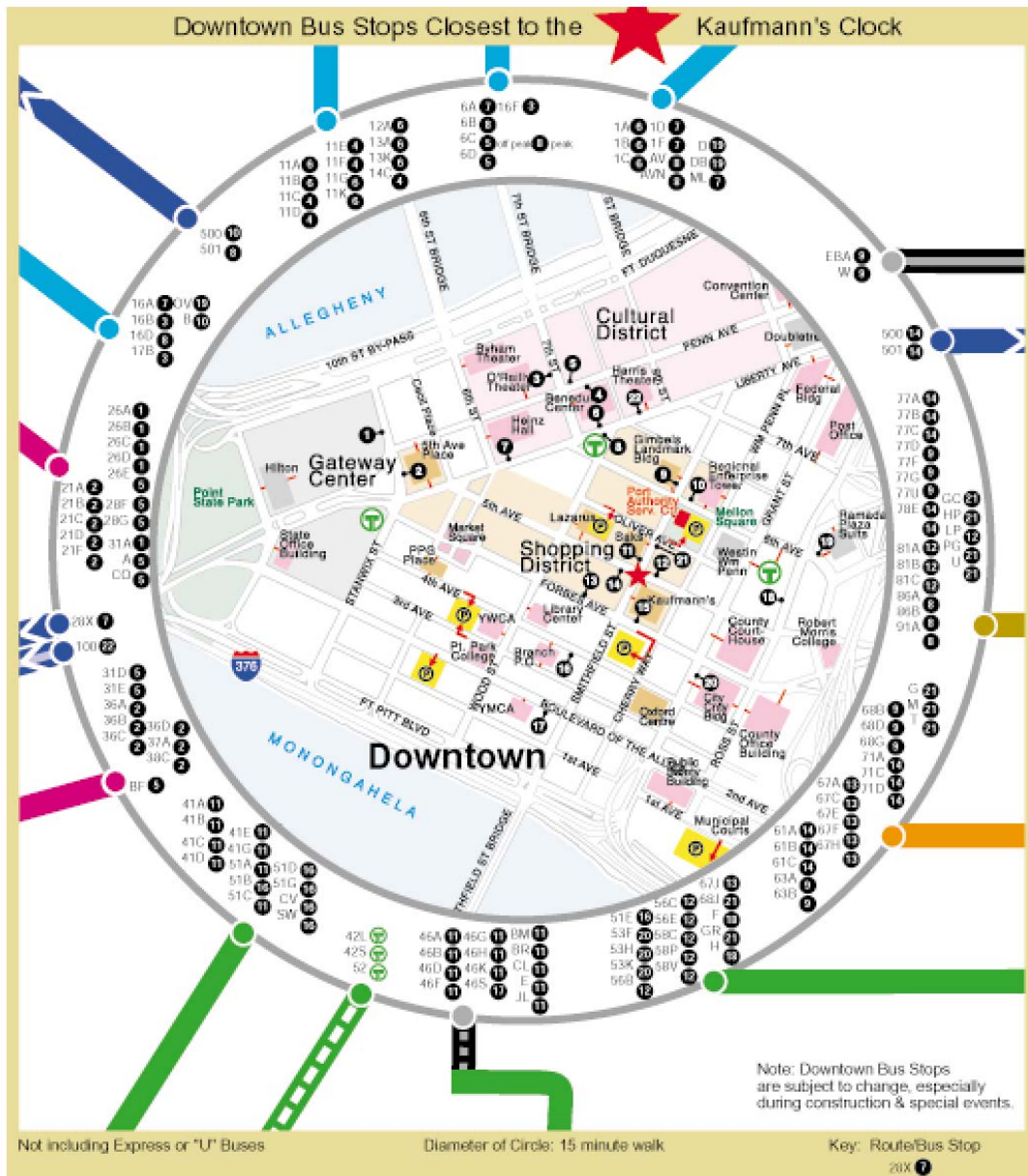
*Financial Impact:* No estimate has been made of its financial impact. The agency notes that there are operating savings from faster movement of buses downtown that compensate for the approximately \$8,750 in daily lost fare revenue. The agency does not believe that fare evasion is significant.

*Impact on Ridership:* About 4,000 riders/day are carried on rail and about 3,000 riders per day are carried on bus in the free fare zone. This compares with total ridership for the agency of approximately 230,000 per day. No estimate has been made of its impact on paid ridership.

*Impact on Operations:* The free fare zone has significantly sped movement of buses through the downtown. The pay on entry inbound / pay on exit outbound system reduces fare disputes.

*Intangible Impacts:* The public and the city have supported the free fare zone. Critics have complained that infrequent riders are confused by the multiple routes operating downtown and unlikely to use the free fare zone because it is difficult to make sure that the route selected will take the rider to the desired destination (and not accidentally travel outside the free fare zone).

*Environmental Justice:* This has not been raised as an issue at this agency.



Port Authority of Allegheny County Free Fare Zone



### ***Metro Transit (Minneapolis / St. Paul)***

Urbanized Area Population (2000 Census): 2,388,593

Service Area Population: 1,781,667

Service Area Square Miles: 596

*Setting:* The twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul are the core of the 15<sup>th</sup> largest metropolitan area in the United States. St. Paul is the capital of Minnesota, while Minneapolis is the county seat of Hennepin County. The economy of these cities is widely diversified, with five Fortune 500 companies based in Minneapolis and several more (including Travelers Insurance) based in St. Paul.

*Origin:* Metro Transit operates a deeply discounted downtown zone fare of \$0.50 compared with a regular fare of \$2.00 during rush hours and \$1.50 during other times. The downtown zone was implemented in 1977 to replace free circulators that had insufficient ridership, with the boundaries of the zone set to match the area served by the circulators. The agency had originally considered implementing a downtown free fare zone but opted to charge the minimal fare in an effort to avoid problems that they saw with the free fare zone, such as fare disputes, fare evasion, safety problems, and security problems.

*Financial Impact:* The agency believes that there is no significant fare evasion problem. The foregone revenue from the downtown zone is at most \$2,500 per day, but as at least some of the downtown zone riders would not ride if paying full fare, the actual financial impact is believed to not be a significant issue.

*Impact on Ridership:* There are about 2,200 boardings per day which pay the downtown zone fare. The agency's total average weekday boardings are about 240,000. There has been no evaluation of whether the downtown zone has an impact on full fare ridership.

*Impact on Operations:* The lower fare for the downtown zone is an operating issue, but the low ridership using the downtown zone fare makes it a minor issue.

*Intangible Impacts:* The city and the public strongly support the downtown fare. There have been concerns by the public and agency critics that service within the downtown fare zone is confusing, and that riders can easily board the wrong bus only to find themselves outside the downtown fare zone. The agency responded by developing a new map of the downtown zone showing the major paths used by buses in the zone and the routes traveling along each path.

*Environmental Justice:* This has not been raised as an issue.

*Modifications:* Metro Transit regularly receives requests to expand the downtown fare zone and has responded in the past in an ad hoc fashion. The agency is currently undergoing an effort to set formal rules for determining the boundary of the downtown fare zone and for responding to requests to modify the boundary.





## **King County Metro**

Urbanized Area Population (2000 Census): 2,712,205

Service Area Population: 1,788,300

Service Area Square Miles: 2,134

*Setting:* Seattle is the county seat of King County and the core of its metropolitan area. It is home to five Fortune 500 companies, with several more based elsewhere in the service area. The economy is diverse, driven by companies such as Boeing, Microsoft, Amazon.com, Washington Mutual, and Safeco, as well as numerous other tech and biotech firms. Tourism is also an important part of the local economy. It is also home to the University of Washington, as well as several other colleges and Universities.

*Origin:* In 1973, Metro Transit implemented a free fare zone (the "Magic Carpet" service) in downtown Seattle as part of a restructuring of its fare collection system – fares were collected on boarding entering the city and on disembarking exiting the system. At the same time, Metro Transit eliminated the Dime Shuttle, a reduced fare downtown circulator that operated between 10 AM and 3 PM. The Mayor of Seattle had requested the free fare zone to increase transit use downtown and facilitate people's movement through the area. The transit agency was in favor of the new system to speed movement of the buses through the narrow, congested downtown, since this fare structure would allow boarding and disembarking riders to use both doors of the buses downtown.

*Financial Impact:* The City of Seattle provides a partial subsidy of the cost of operating the downtown free fare zone. When the service was implemented, the City and Metro Transit had no idea how to estimate a reasonable subsidy. The final agreement was for the City to pay the cost of operating the old Dime Shuttle, about \$64,000 per year. The subsidy has now increased to approximately \$325,000 per year.

*Impact on Ridership:* A month after implementing the downtown free fare zone OPEC imposed an oil embargo. As a result of these two factors (primarily the oil embargo) daily ridership increased by approximately 10%. Currently there are about 24,000 trips a day taken in the downtown free fare zone compared with about 340,000 taken systemwide.

*Impact on Operations:* The pay on enter inbound / pay on exit outbound system eliminates disputes over whether or not a rider needs to pay a fare when exiting a bus and thus removes a major issue for operators in dealing with a free fare zone – remembering which passengers boarded in the free fare zone and haven't paid a fare. It does increase the potential for fare disputes where a passenger is unable, or unwilling, to pay a fare when exiting outbound. However, fare disputes and fare evasion are still infrequent.

The free fare zone is seen as successful speeding operations through the downtown. According to a 1989 Seattle Metro study, boardings in free-fare zones took 18 percent less time than in full-fare zones.

*Intangible Impacts:* The general public and the city of Seattle strongly support the downtown free fare zone, and the city provides financial support to continue the service.

*Environmental Justice:* This has not been raised as an issue.

*Modifications:* The downtown free fare zone has been renamed the Ride Free Area (RFA). There have been numerous requests to expand the boundaries of the downtown free fare zone. It was expanded north in 1978 as part of an agreement with a developer, under which it paid for the lost fare revenue for a few years. There is no specific policy relating to boundary modifications, other than a general opposition to modifications.

The RFA was originally offered all day and even on Metro's Night Owl service. After several incidents involving threats to and assaults on operators, the RTA was limited to the period from 6 AM to 7 PM.

### Downtown Metro Service

FREQUENT ROUTES TO HELP YOU GET AROUND DOWNTOWN

**LEGEND**

- Routes shown provide 15-20 minutes/over 15-30 minutes overruns, Sunday and holidays, with less frequent/through downtown area only.
- Routes 1, 2, 13
- Routes 3, 4
- Routes 11, 14, 38, 43, 49
- Routes 10, 12
- Routes 15, 18, 21, 22, 56
- Route 16
- Routes 28, 28, 39, 42
- Route 70
- Route 99
- Route 589
- Metro CustomerCenter
- Ride Free Area (6 a.m. - 7 p.m.)
- Seattle Center Monorail
- Accessible Route
- State Access
- Parklets

**CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE**  
All phone numbers, unless otherwise noted, are in the 206 area code.

|                   |          |                    |          |                   |              |
|-------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|--------------|
| Rider Information | 863-3000 | Accessible Service | 263-3113 | Ridematch/Vanpool | 625-4600     |
| TTY               | 684-1739 | TTY                | 263-3116 | TTY               | 684-1666     |
| Customer Service  | 563-3060 | Lost and Found     | 523-3090 | Community Transit | 800-562-1375 |
| TTY               | 684-2029 | Pass Sales         | 624-PASS | Pierce Transit    | 800-562-8109 |
| BUS-TIME          | 287-8463 | Ferry Service      | 464-6400 | Sound Transit     | 888-889-6368 |

Make your connection with Metro Online <http://transit.metrokc.gov/>

### Easy Guide

For Downtown Bus Service

Ride FREE Area

**How To Use This Map**

Use this map to find routes that travel the main avenues through the downtown Seattle core.

- Bus routes shown on the map travel in the direction indicated by the arrows on each avenue.
- On 2nd, 3rd and 4th avenues, buses make alternating stops. Look for the route number on the bus stop sign. Walk to the next stop if you don't see your bus route number.
- On 5th and 6th avenues, buses serve every bus stop. Ride FREE Area noted on the map.

**Legend**

- 1st Avenue
- 2nd Avenue
- 3rd Avenue
- 4th Avenue
- 5th Avenue
- 6th Avenue
- 7th Avenue
- 8th Avenue
- 9th Avenue
- 10th Avenue
- 11th Avenue
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- 99th Avenue
- 100th Avenue

**Downtown Destinations & Buses**

**Step 1** Find your destination below.

**Step 2** Note the corresponding Cross Streets.

**Step 3** Locate the area on the Map, using the Grid numbers and letters.

**Step 4** Choose a Bus Route listed on the Avenue (Ave) shown.

**Note the Direction of the Arrows on the Map**

- Buses on 1st and 3rd Avenue travel north and south.
- Buses on 2nd and 5th Avenue travel south only.
- Buses on 4th Avenue travel north only.

**Check Bus Stop sign** - Buses make alternating stops on 2nd, 3rd and 4th avenues. If you don't see your bus route number on the bus stop sign, walk to the next stop.

| Destination                              | Cross Streets          | Map Grid | Ride these Bus Routes  | Avenues |
|--|------------------------|----------|--|---------|
| <b>Retail Businesses</b>                 |                        |          |  |         |
| <b>Shopping</b>                          |                        |          |  |         |
| Macy's                                   | Pine, 3rd-4th Aves     | D7       | 1, 13, 16, 26, 28, 41, 66, 70, 71, 72, 73, 358 north                             | 3rd     |
| Nordstrom                                | Pine, 5th-6th Aves     | E7       | All 4th Ave buses  | 4th     |
| Pacific Place                            | Pine, 6th-7th Aves     | F7       | All 4th Ave buses  | 4th     |
| Pioneer Square                           | 1st & Taylor           | B12      | 15, 18, 21, 22, 56*  | 1st     |
| Rainier Square                           | 4th & University       | D9       | All 3rd & 4th Ave buses  | 3rd     |
| Westlake Center                          | Pine, 4th-5th Aves     | D7       | All 3rd & 4th Ave buses  | 3rd     |
| <b>Cultural Sights</b>                   |                        |          |  |         |
| <b>Museums</b>                           |                        |          |  |         |
| Seattle Art Museum (opens 2007)          | 1st & University       | C9       | 15, 18, 21, 22, 56   | 1st     |
| Seattle Police Museum                    | 3rd & S Jackson        | C12      | 23, 131, 132, 134, 174, 194, 991   | 3rd     |
| <b>Theaters (Live Performance)</b>       |                        |          |  |         |
| ACT Theater                              | 7th & Union            | E8       | All 4th Ave buses  | 4th     |
| Benaroya Hall                            | 3rd & Union-University | C9       | All 3rd & 4th Ave buses  | 3rd     |
| Fifth Avenue Theater                     | 5th & University       | D9       | All 3rd & 4th Ave buses  | 3rd     |
| Moore Theater                            | 2nd & Virginia         | C6       | 1, 13, 16, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49  | 2nd     |
| Paramount Theater                        | Pine & 9th Ave         | E7       | All 4th Ave buses  | 4th     |
| <b>Government Agencies &amp; Offices</b> |                        |          |  |         |
| Department of Learning                   | Union, 3rd-4th Aves    | D8       | All 3rd & 4th Ave buses  | 3rd     |
| Employment Security Department           | 2nd & Bell             | B4       | 1, 13, 16, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49  | 2nd     |
| Environmental Protection Agency          | 6th & University       | E9       | All 3rd & 4th Ave buses  | 3rd     |
| Federal Building - Henry M. Jackson      | 2nd & Marion           | C10      | 1, 7, 13, 14, 16, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 101, 106, 150, 358         | 2nd     |
| Federal Courthouse - US Dist. Court      | Stewart & 7th Ave      | E6       | 17, 24, 33, 35, 51, 54, 55   | 4th     |
| Federal Reserve Bank                     | 2nd & Spring           | C9       | 1, 7, 13, 14, 16, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 101, 106, 150, 358         | 2nd     |
| Housing & Urban Development              | 2nd & Spring           | C10      | 1, 7, 13, 14, 16, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 101, 106, 150, 358         | 2nd     |
| Justice Department - US Attorney         | Stewart & 7th Ave      | E6       | 17, 24, 33, 35, 51, 54, 55   | 4th     |
| King County Administration Building      | 4th & Cherry           | D11      | 1, 7, 13, 14, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 72, 73, 101, 106, 150, 358     | 4th     |
| King County Adult Correctional Facility  | 5th & Cherry           | D11      | 1, 7, 13, 14, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 72, 73, 101, 106, 150, 358     | 5th     |
| King County Courthouse                   | 3rd & Cherry           | D11      | 1, 7, 13, 14, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 72, 73, 101, 106, 150, 358     | 3rd     |
| King Street Center - King County         | 2nd & S Jackson        | C14      | 23, 131, 132, 134, 174, 194  | 2nd     |
| National Park Service                    | 1st & Spring           | B10      | 15, 16, 21, 22, 56   | 1st     |
| Post Office - Central                    | 3rd & Union            | D8       | All 3rd Ave buses  | 3rd     |
| Post Office - Pioneer Square             | 5 Jackson & 1st Ave    | S13      | 15, 18, 21, 22, 56, 991  | 1st     |
| Seattle Central Library                  | 4th & Madison          | D10      | 1, 7, 13, 14, 16, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 72, 73, 101, 106, 150, 358 | 4th     |
| Seattle Chamber of Commerce              | 7th & Stewart          | E6       | 17, 24, 33, 35, 51, 54, 55   | 4th     |
| Seattle City Hall                        | 5th & Cherry           | D11      | 1, 7, 13, 14, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 72, 73, 101, 106, 150, 358     | 5th     |
| Seattle City Light                       | 5th & Marion           | D10      | 1, 7, 13, 14, 16, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 72, 73, 101, 106, 150, 358 | 5th     |
| Seattle Municipal Building               | 4th & Columbia         | D11      | 1, 7, 13, 14, 16, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 72, 73, 101, 106, 150, 358 | 4th     |
| Seattle Municipal Court                  | 5th & James            | D12      | 1, 7, 13, 14, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 72, 73, 101, 106, 150, 358     | 5th     |
| Social Security Office - Downtown        | 5th & Columbia         | D11      | 1, 7, 13, 14, 26, 28, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 70, 71, 72, 73, 101, 106, 150, 358     | 5th     |
| <b>Transportation</b>                    |                        |          |  |         |
| Amtrak                                   | 3rd & S Jackson        | C14      | 23, 131, 132, 134, 174, 194, 991   | 3rd     |
| Greyhound Bus Depot                      | Stewart & 8th Ave      | E6       | 17, 24, 33, 35, 51, 54, 55   | 4th     |
| Metro Transit - King Street Center       | 2nd & S Jackson        | C14      | 23, 131, 132, 134, 174, 194, 991   | 2nd     |
| Monorail - Westlake Center               | 5th & Pine             | D7       | All 4th Ave buses  | 4th     |
| Seattle Sounder Station                  | 3rd & S Jackson        | C14      | 23, 131, 132, 134, 174, 194, 991   | 3rd     |
| Transportation Connection                | 4th & University       | D9       | All 3rd & 4th Ave buses  | 3rd     |
| Washington State Ferries                 | Piers 50 & 52          | A11      | 15, 18, 21, 22, 56, 991  | 1st     |
| <b>Tours &amp; Attractions</b>           |                        |          |  |         |
| Argoy Cruises                            | Pier 56                | A9       | 15, 18, 21, 22, 56, 991  | 1st     |
| International District/Chinatown         | 5 Jackson & 6th Ave    | S14      | 7, 14, 36 southbound, 991  | 5th     |
| Klondike Gold Rush National Park         | 2nd & S Jackson        | C14      | 23, 131, 132, 134, 174, 194, 991   | 2nd     |
| Pike Place Market                        | 1st & Pike             | B7       | 15, 18, 21, 22, 56   | 1st     |
| Smith Tower Observation Deck             | 2nd & James            | C12      | 23, 131, 132, 134, 174, 194  | 2nd     |
| The Underground Tour                     | 1st & Taylor           | B11      | 15, 18, 21, 22, 56, 991  | 1st     |
| The Seattle Aquarium                     | Pier 59                | A7       | 15, 18, 21, 22, 56, 991  | 1st     |

**For complete transit information and Trip Planner:**  
<http://transit.metrokc.gov>  
King County Metro Transit Information: 206-553-3000

\*Local service only. Do not board Express bus. <sup>1</sup>WashState Streetcar Line is not on 1st St. Map.

**King County METRO**  
We'll Get You There

Seattle Metro Ride Free and Downtown Transit Information



### ***People Mover (Anchorage)***

Urbanized Area Population (2000 Census): 225,744

Service Area Population: 218,154

Service Area Square Miles: 77

*Setting:* Anchorage is the largest city in Alaska with more than 40% of the population of the entire state. Major industries include government, military, petroleum (local headquarters for several petroleum companies), tourism and trade.

*Origin:* A downtown free fare zone (the Downtown Area Short Hop or DASH area) was implemented after the agency built its transit center on the west side of town, as riders on these routes needed to transfer to reach downtown. Initially the agency used regular transfers, but there were concerns about fare abuse with the large number of transfers.

*Financial Impact:* The agency did not anticipate any financial impact, as it was initially designed to primarily serve riders who were transferring at the transit center and would have used transfers. There was some foregone revenue as new trips were taken within the DASH area, and more revenue lost as fare evasion became a problem on trips departing the DASH area.

*Impact on Ridership:* There was significant ridership in the DASH area, although the agency did not provide specific figures. There was no significant increase in paid ridership.

*Impact on Operations:* The DASH area was seen as resulting in a significant increase in fare disputes between operators and riders, regarding whether the rider boarded in the DASH area or had already paid a fare. Specific numbers were not available, but this became a major issue for operators.

*Intangible Impacts:* The city and local businesses strongly supported the DASH area.

*Environmental Justice:* This issue was not considered by the agency.

*Modifications and Termination:* The DASH area was eliminated effective July 2002 because of tight agency finances and the perception of significant lost revenue, and partially replaced with a free downtown shuttle subsidized by local businesses and the City of Anchorage. In addition, the agency implemented day passes which are sold in advance and on the buses for \$4.00 (compared with the base cash fare of \$1.75) to encourage riders to take the bus to and from downtown and then travel for within Anchorage for a single low fare.





### ***Tri-Met (Portland, OR)***

Urbanized Area Population (2000 Census): 1,583,138

Service Area Population: 1,253,502

Service Area Square Miles: 574

*Setting:* Portland is the core of its metropolitan area, the 23<sup>rd</sup> most populous in the United States. It is the county seat of Multnomah County. It is generally considered to have some of the strongest land use planning and controls in the United States. It is the home to numerous corporations and regional headquarters for many multinational corporations. It is also home to many colleges and universities. Its economy is founded on government, trade, high technology, and tourism (including conventions).

*Origin:* TriMet's downtown free fare zone is called the Fareless Square. It was developed in 1975 as part of an agreement with the city, with the objectives of:

- reducing auto generated air pollution by eliminating short auto trips within the free fare zone,
- promoting transit riding by encouraging people who do not currently use transit to try it,
- helping provide higher mobility and coordination for travel between government centers and offices in downtown and
- providing more opportunities to travel within downtown to retail, financial, hotel and entertainment areas.

The city supported these objectives by implementing parking and land use restrictions in and around the Fareless Square. The boundary was defined by a TriMet ordinance and generally aligns with major streets and physical features of what TriMet considered the central business district to be. Trips within the Fareless Square are free 24 hours a day.

*Financial Impact:* Part of the foregone revenue from the Fareless Square is subsidized by the city of Portland. In addition, TriMet is primarily funded by a tax on employers in its service area, and the Fareless Square is considered to have had a significant impact on the growth of convention and tourism business in Portland, and thus, indirectly, on TriMet's tax revenue. The areas are adjacent to the Fareless Square are thought to have higher fare evasion rates than other areas in the system.

*Impact on Ridership:* Approximately 86,400 weekday boardings occur in the Fareless Square of which 11,400 are "free" trips exclusively within the Fareless Square. This is about 3.7% of the 310,000 total weekday boardings. As mentioned above, the Fareless Square is considered to have had a significant impact on the growth of convention and tourism business in Portland, and thus, indirectly, on TriMet's ridership. Ridership in and around the Fareless Square has also been increased by the transit supportive measures taken by the city of Portland as part of the establishment of the Fareless Square.

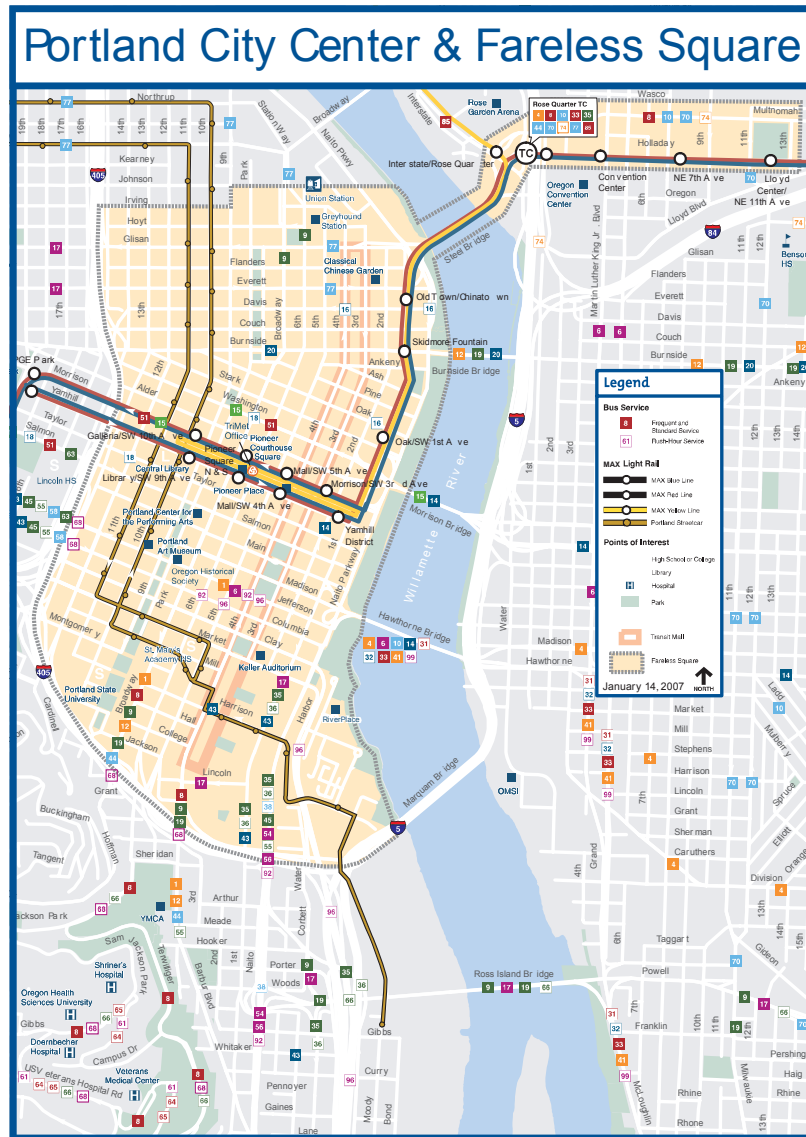
*Impact on Operations:* As with almost all other downtown free fare zones, the Fareless Square is believed to have resulted in an increase in fare disputes between operators and riders. In addition, there has been a series of criminal attacks on TriMet's light rail system in and around the Fareless Square, which has led to a reexamination of the rules for the Fareless Square. On December 7, 2007, Tri-Met General Manager Fred Hansen was quoted as saying: "The fact is, Fareless Square provides a free ride for panhandlers, who go back and forth between downtown and the Lloyd Center, and drug dealers and rowdy gangs of young people, homeless people and drunks who are using the train as a shelter and a place to do their business."

*Intangible Impacts:* TriMet's Fareless Square is recognized for having greatly contributed to the development of Portland's tourism and convention business. Furthermore, in conjunction with steps taken by the city, it is seen as

having reduced automobile use downtown, contributed to the growth in downtown residents, and increased the viability of downtown retail establishments. The city and the public strongly support the Fareless Square.

*Environmental Justice:* This has not been seen as an issue

*Modifications:* In 2000, the zone was expanded to include the Lloyd's Center area, across the Willamette River from downtown Portland. Income from the city's hotel-motel tax was pledged to pay part of the cost of the extension. The free fare zone now encompasses over 330 square blocks of Portland. There have been numerous requests for TriMet to expand the Fareless Square or to establish free fare zones in outlying areas. In 1991, TriMet adopted a guide for evaluating these requests, which is provided as an attachment to this memorandum.





## **Annapolis Transportation Department**

Urbanized Area Population (2000 Census): 2,076,354

Service Area Population: 80,000

Service Area Square Miles: 60

*Setting:* Annapolis is the capital of Maryland and the county seat of Anne Arundel County. It is part of the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area and the site of the United States Naval Academy and St. John's College. Its economy is primarily based on government and tourism.

*Origin:* The Annapolis free fare zone was implemented in Fall 2006 after the Mayor called for improved downtown transit service to support efforts to redevelop parts of downtown. As the transit agency is a department of city government, the focus was on how to most effectively and efficiently achieve the city's goals. At that time, Annapolis already had two free shuttles, one of which is focused on serving the tourist market and one of which focuses on serving fringe parking locations, and the cost of implementing a third shuttle would have been prohibitive. The city estimated that the fare revenues lost by implementing a free fare zone would be approximately \$27,000 per year, a much cheaper alternative.

*Financial Impact:* The agency anticipated losing \$27,000 in fare revenue each year (about 2% of total fare revenue), but has not actually seen any decline in fare revenue. Fare evasion is believed to be minimal.

*Impact on Ridership:* Since 2000, total system ridership has increased by approximately 3% - 5% per year, and the increase from Fall 2006 to Fall 2007 was approximately 3%. It is therefore unclear if the free fare zone had a positive impact on total ridership. Since fare revenue was approximately the same in 2007 and 2006, while ridership increased approximately 3%, it appears that about 3% of the agency's riders are using the free fare zone, or 45,000 riders per year.

*Impact on Operations:* There has been no significant impact on operations and no complaints by drivers with regard to increased fare disputes.

*Intangible Impacts:* The city is happy with the free fare zone as an effort to support the redevelopment in that it allows the city to emphasize how connected the redevelopment area is with the major city facilities and tourism areas. The general public appears to be strongly in favor of the free fare zone, whether or not the individual uses transit.

*Environmental Justice:* No environmental justice concerns were raised by the public, but some operators were concerned that there could be the perception that the city was subsidizing those who could afford to pay fares (the tourists and downtown workers) at the expense of those who had to take transit. This concern has been mitigated somewhat as the area served includes the Social Service Agency and other key locations used by economically disadvantaged individuals and also some lower income housing.

*Modifications:* As the service is so new, no changes are planned.



***Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA):***

Urbanized Area Population (2000 Census): 1,786,647

Service Area Population: 1,412,140

Service Area Square Miles: 458

*Setting:* Cleveland is the county seat of Cuyahoga County and the 33<sup>rd</sup> largest city in the United States. While its economy was originally based on manufacturing, it has diversified into financial services, insurance, and healthcare. It is the home to many large companies and to Case Western Reserve University (as well as other colleges and universities).

*Origin:* In 1991, the GCRTA implemented the "Easy Ride Zone"(ERZ). The fare was 35¢ compared to the local fare of \$1.00. The zone area was bounded by Lake Erie, the Cuyahoga River and 30th St. East and encompassed approximately 1,280 acres. The ERZ functioned as a replacement for two eliminated downtown circulators that had a lower fare and duplicated regular route service. Upon implementation, GCRTA changed their fare collection policy for trips originating in the ERZ to pay-leave to make it easy for drivers to determine the necessary fare.

*Financial Impact:* No precise numbers were available regarding lost revenue from implementing the ERZ, but this revenue (including that lost to fare evasion) was considered significant.

*Impact on Ridership:* Most of the patrons riding boarding and alighting within the ERZ were found to be transfers from other routes or pass holders, who in either case did not benefit from the reduced fare.

*Impact on Operations:* The agency determined that a significant number of passengers were exiting the bus without paying the correct fare both inside and outside the ERZ, resulting in increased fare disputes between operators and passengers.

*Intangible Impacts:* The general public and the city supported the ERZ, but not to the extent of providing a new funding source to compensate for the lost revenues.

*Environmental Justice:* This was not raised as an issue with regard to the establishment or elimination of the ERZ.

*Modifications and Termination:* In 1993, GCRTA raised the base fare to \$1.25 and returned to pay-enter fare collection. The ERZ was eliminated and there was insufficient political pressure to reinstate the circulators even though customers who paid 35¢ on the old circulators were now required to pay the full local fare.

## 2. Evaluation

### *Objectives*

Downtown free fare (or reduced fare) zones are implemented for a variety of reasons and, in many cases, for more than one reason. The most common reasons are:

- To improve the circulation of people in the downtown area
- To replace a downtown circulator
- To improve the flow of buses through the downtown area by decreasing boarding times
- To support development or redevelopment efforts including promotion of tourism
- To reduce automobile use in the downtown area

In every case downtown free (or reduced fare) zones have been successful in improving the circulation of people in the downtown area. None of the agencies established specific measures to determine the extent to which circulation improved, but the agencies have generally seen some increase in ridership. In addition, the agencies reported that the public generally believes that they are doing a better job of circulating people in the downtown area.

Minneapolis Metro Transit, Seattle Metro Transit, and the GCRTA replaced downtown circulators with free fare or reduced fare zones. Reasons varied from inadequate ridership, to speed operations, or to eliminate duplicate service. In Annapolis, a free fare zone was used in place of establishing a third circulator as a cheaper option. On the other hand, Anchorage replaced a free fare zone with a circulator, and UTA is considering doing the same.

A few agencies have implemented downtown free fare zones to improve the flow of buses through the downtown area. The only agency to actually study the impact of a free fare zone on boarding times was King County Metro, which found an 18% decrease in boarding times. As there would be little or no change in the boarding time of riders using passes, the overall change in boarding times would result from significantly faster boarding by riders paying cash, and especially from eliminating the possibility that riders have problems with the farebox. As a result, the agencies reported that buses have moved more reliably through downtown. Encouraging riders to use passes and implementing new fare media, especially smartcards, also have been shown to decrease boarding time and should be an alternative to improve reliable operation.

TriMet and Annapolis both had objectives related to development or redevelopment of the city. For TriMet, the focus was on working with Portland to increase the economic health of the city and encourage downtown residential development, and the Fareless Square is believed to have contributed greatly to these and to the growth of its tourism and convention business. Annapolis is seeking to support its tourism business and to support the redevelopment of part of the city by facilitating travel between it and the city's major employment and cultural sites. Both cities reported that the free fare zone has been very successful in accomplishing these goals.

TriMet was the only agency to include reducing automobile usage as a goal, but this is closely related to the goal of improving the circulation of people in the downtown. For TriMet, success has been shown by the fact that there have been both residential and employment growth in the Fareless Square area, despite Portland implementing substantial restrictions on the availability of parking in and around Fareless Square.

Generally free fare zones have been politically popular. In several of the examples cited above (UTA, Metro Transit, Seattle Metro and Trimet), there has been political pressure to expand the zone or to establish a similar zone in outlying areas. Agencies have needed to develop criteria to evaluate requests for expansion.



**Applicability to Hartford:** If Hartford were to implement a free fare zone, it would be important to establish clear goals for what the free fare zone should accomplish. Such criteria could also help to determine the merits of other free fare zones or expansion of a downtown free fare zone. Is the purpose to improve circulation of vehicles, buses or people? Is it to support the Convention Center and other tourist attractions? Is it to support downtown businesses by providing a convenient way for people to get around? Is it to save money by eliminating the Star Shuttle? If the goals are understood for Hartford, then analysis can be done to determine how to design the free fare zone to maximize the likelihood that the goals might be accomplished.

Some observations can be made about the applicability of some common objectives for a free fare zone if applied to Hartford:

*To improve the circulation of people in the downtown area.*

It is likely that a free fare could improve the circulation of people in the downtown area. It might attract the portion of existing riders who think that the fare is too high for short downtown trips and it might encourage those existing riders who walk to downtown destinations to venture further. Elimination of a fare could make travel by bus simpler for downtown employees who are not regular transit users and for visitors, thus inducing more downtown circulation by bus by these groups. Note that the small survey of bus riders found only 7 percent didn't take the bus for short trips downtown as it was too expensive. This was slightly less of a problem than not knowing which bus to take (9 percent) and those not knowing the schedule (10 percent).<sup>2</sup> It is likely that the problem of knowing which bus to take and the schedule would be magnified for residents or employees who are infrequent users and for tourists. Thus improved information would be as important as fare elimination to improve downtown circulation of people. Better marketing and branding to show how to use bus routes to reach popular downtown destinations would also be needed. Improved information could be tested as a means of increasing circulation independent of a free fare zone.

*To replace a downtown circulator.*

In several examples given, a free fare zone was used to replace a downtown circulator. However, since the CTTRANSIT buses do not serve the Convention Center and other destinations served by the Star Shuttle, it is unlikely that the Star Shuttle could be replaced by a free fare zone. Going forward, a free fare zone might substitute for a second Star Shuttle.

*To improve the flow of buses through the downtown area by decreasing boarding times.*

Because those using CTTRANSIT for short downtown trips are expected to be a small portion of downtown boarders, a free fare zone wouldn't be expected to reduce dwell times significantly. Dwell times could be improved if CTTRANSIT changed fare collection to pay on exit for buses leaving the downtown. In that case the improved dwell times could relieve the scarce resource of curb space on Main Street—Seattle Metro found an 18% improvement in dwell times. If this is a goal of a free fare zone, then an effort should be made to determine the likely improvement in boarding time given the breakdown between cash and pass users. A means would have to be developed to provide for those through riders who do not pay a second fare—perhaps by providing them with a transfer on boarding.

*To support development or redevelopment efforts.*

Other cities, particularly Portland, found a free fare zone helpful in encouraging development. However, Portland implemented multiple policies to encourage development—including implementation of light rail and parking restrictions. A free fare zone in Hartford might be attractive as a marketing tool for tourism or for developers of

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<sup>2</sup> See Table 8 in CRCOG Northwest Corridor Study Task 3.2.1/3.2.2 Draft Technical Memorandum: Downtown Circulation - Existing and Future Conditions

downtown residences. On the other hand, developers could be encouraged to provide passes to potential buyers as an alternative to a free fare zone.

*To reduce automobile use in the downtown area.*

While there are some areas and periods of congestion in downtown Hartford, CT Transit indicated that downtown bus operations work reasonably well. So while a free fare zone might entice some out of their cars for short trips, this might not be a great advantage for Hartford.

### **Operating Issues**

In evaluating operating issues, it is necessary to divide the agencies into two groups based on fare payment. GCRTA, King County Metro, and the Port Authority all adopted a policy of paying on exit for outbound trips. Of these three agencies, only GCRTA reported that fare evasion and fare disputes were a significant concern, and this concern led to the elimination of the free fare zone. The other two agencies do not consider that fare evasion is significant. We note that King County Metro has a very high share of riders paying with passes, which will reduce the probability of fare evasion.

Of the other agencies, Salt Lake City, Anchorage, and TriMet consider fare evasion to be a significant issue, while the smallest agency, Annapolis, considers fare evasion to be insignificant. Minneapolis Metro Transit and RGRTA are special cases as Metro Transit charges a small fare on its downtown zone while RGRTA was reimbursed for all free trips (including those resulting from fare evasion). Significant fare evasion and fare disputes should therefore be anticipated for any free fare zone, with a less evasion expected if the agency implements payment on exit for outbound trips.

Several agencies reported concerns about safety and security with respect to the free fare zone. These concerns led to Port Authority and King County Metro providing the free fare zone roughly from the beginning of the morning peak period to the end of the evening peak period. TriMet is considering a similar change in operations. Because of the potential safety and security issues, the best practice appears to be limiting operation of the free fare zone to the midday and peak periods.

**Applicability to Hartford:** In Hartford it is likely that there would be problems with fare evasion given the experience in Cleveland, Portland, Salt Lake City and Anchorage. Of those not using a pay upon exit scheme, only Annapolis found fare evasion to be insignificant. Thus if a free fare zone were adopted, Hartford should consider a scheme to pay upon exit for routes leaving the downtown area—perhaps by providing through riders with transfer slips on entry. If safety and security become an issue in Hartford, the free-fare period could be limited to peak and midday periods. Safety and security have not appeared to be a large problem for the Star Shuttle.

### **Ridership and Revenue Impacts**

Most of the agencies were not able to identify a specific impact on ridership due to the free fare zone, however free fare zones were generally believed to have resulted in some increase in ridership. Total ridership in the zone and the potential foregone revenue depends on the size of the zone, the hours of operation, whether it is a free or reduced fare zone, the size of the agency, and the size of the tourism/convention market. Ridership occurring completely in the free fare zones ranged from just under 1% (King County Metro) to possibly 5%-8% (UTA, although staff believes that this overstates actual ridership) of total system ridership.

Revenue impacts also depend on the degree of support provided by local government. King County Metro's free-fare zone is subsidized by the city of Seattle, and RGRTA's was subsidized by the city of Rochester and local merchants. TriMet's Fareless Square does not receive a direct subsidy, but was part of a joint plan with the city of Portland

discourage automobile use and encourage transit use. In Annapolis, the free fare zone was developed to achieve a city goal of supporting redevelopment and tourism—and it was considered cheaper than adding a third downtown circulator.

**Applicability to Hartford:** A free-fare zone could be expected to increase ridership and decrease fare revenues in downtown Hartford—but by an amount on the lower end of what was observed by Utah Transit (probably less than 5%). There would be a revenue impact of the loss of fares currently obtained from downtown employees and visitors who currently use CTTRANSIT for short trips. However the small rider survey indicated that only a small percentage of riders found the fare a reason not to use the bus for short trips.

### ***Environmental Justice***

None of the agencies reported that this had been a public concern with the establishment of a free fare zone.

**Applicability to Hartford:** To the extent that the benefit of the free fare zone would accrue to workers in the small downtown area of Hartford, the implementation of such could be seen as having a negative effect on Environmental Justice. There are few residents in downtown Hartford, but a downtown free fare zone would therefore provide no benefits to poorer neighborhoods in the city.

### ***Summary of Findings***

Many cities including Salt Lake City, Seattle, Portland, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, and Annapolis all consider their free fare zones to be successful, but they have different definitions of success. Free fare zones can:

- Speed boardings in the downtown and therefore improve the flow of buses through downtown;
- Support urban development and redevelopment initiatives, including efforts to limit automobile use;
- Support efforts to increase tourism by addressing the issue of how tourists travel between venues;
- Increase public support for transit, as all of the cities reported that the free fare zones are well liked.

In Hartford a free fare zone could be expected to increase public support of transit and improve downtown circulation of people by bus. It could also be a tool for promoting tourist destinations and supporting downtown development. Since a pay on exit scheme will not be easy to implement in Hartford, a free fare zone would not significantly speed downtown operations.

Once a free fare zone is implemented, it is rarely eliminated. City government and the general public almost always love them. In the two cases discussed above where free fare zones were eliminated, the decision came down to finances and operating issues. In Anchorage and Cleveland, the free fare zone was eliminated because of perceived fare evasion and fare disputes during a time of tight agency finances. In Rochester, the free fare zone was eliminated when local financial support was no longer feasible and ridership was simultaneously falling. The local financial support had allowed Rochester to ignore the revenue loss caused by the free fare zone and related fare evasion, and its termination brought the financial issues to the forefront.

Where free fare zones are considered successful, there is public pressure to expand them or to develop them in other locations. If such a zone were implemented in downtown Hartford, criteria should be established to clarify the boundaries of the zone and to say where a zone would be merited.

Although a limited free fare zone in Hartford would cause revenue loss from those currently paying for short trips, this effect should be minor. The more difficult problem would be fare evasion and the resulting stress on bus drivers. Fare disputes and evasion appear to be reduced with a pay on exit outbound system, and by limiting the hours of the free fare zone to the peak periods and the midday, specifically excluding late evening and night service. Given that



conversion to a pay on exit system is problematic for Hartford, fare evasion could be expected to be a bigger problem than in cities able to implement such a scheme. Minneapolis's experience with a deeply discounted, but not free, downtown fare zone indicates that this might also reduce fare evasion.

To maximize the use of CTTRANSIT buses for downtown circulation, it may be as important to improve information for customers through branding and marketing as it would be to implement a free fare zone. It might be worthwhile to test whether a program of improved branding and marketing could by itself improve downtown circulation, before committing to implement a free fare zone.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For example, CTTRANSIT is considering development of a brochure to show how to reach the Mark Twain home by bus



## Attachment

Tri-Met  
Fairless Square  
Public Policy Issues



FARELESS SQUARE  
PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES  
(1991)

Over the years, Tri-Met has received many requests to either extend Fareless Square or to create new free fare zones. These requests have come from cities, business associations and neighborhood associations who feel the benefits of Fareless Square provided to downtown Portland should be extended to their area.

Free fare zones, by nature, entail a series of public policy choices. No discussion of extending Fareless Square or adding new free fare zones can progress very far without recognizing and addressing some of the relatively complicated trade-offs. This sub-section identifies and defines these policy questions. The following sub-section discusses how each issue is affected by the extension of Fareless Square or the creation of new free fare zones. The policy questions include:

1. Will a free fare zone impact regional AIR QUALITY goals? If the change causes a degradation of air quality in the air basin, it would affect the region's compliance with federal air quality standards.
2. Will a free fare zone support LOCAL and REGIONAL PLANS? Local jurisdictions and the region have adopted comprehensive plans to guide development and livability. New free fare zones and changes to Fareless Square should be evaluated to be sure they support the goals of both the local jurisdiction and the region.
3. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on the surrounding NEIGHBORHOOD? The positive and negative impacts on neighborhoods surrounding the free fare zone would need to be addressed, including improved mobility, on-street parking, traffic congestion, air quality, etc.
4. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on existing RIDERS and the overall level of RIDERSHIP? Analysis is necessary to determine the impacts of changes on current and future fare paying riders and the expected increase in total ridership.
5. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met fare and non-fare REVENUES? The impact on fare revenue and the ability to secure additional non-fare revenues will be of critical concern. Fare revenue can be impacted in two ways: a) fares from riders, and b) fare evasion. Negative public reaction to the elimination of fares for certain areas may add to the complexity of securing new revenues.
6. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met's OPERATING and CAPITAL COSTS? Expected changes in ridership will need to be evaluated in terms of potential increases in service to provide those rides. If service is increased, it may require additional bus and train operators, bus and rail vehicles, and vehicle maintenance. Also

included in operating costs would be any need for increased fare inspection commensurate with potential increases in fare evasion.

7. Are there non-fare REVENUE OPTIONS to off-set Tri-Met's costs of a free fare zone? Opportunities may exist for obtaining non-fare revenue to off-set revenue losses and increased operating and capital costs. These options could be exercised by Tri-Met or other entities.
8. Who are the BENEFICIARIES of a free fare zone? Identifying direct and indirect beneficiaries of free fare zones will be helpful in assessing public policy choices. Beneficiaries include riders, non-riders, payroll taxpayers, the local jurisdiction, businesses, nearby residents, out-of-town visitors, etc.
9. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met's SERVICE PHILOSOPHY? Free fare zones may have a direct impact on Tri-Met's service and service philosophy. Should transit serve trips from the riders' home to their destination, or should it serve the role of a shuttle from close-in parking? What level of service should Tri-Met provide to non-paying passengers versus fare-paying passengers?
10. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met's FARE POLICY? Free fare zones need to be considered in the context of Tri-Met's overall fare policy. Who should pay, who should receive a discount and who should ride for free are important issues. (For a description of the current fare policy refer to Chapter II, Tri-Met's Current Fare Policy.)

### IMPACT OF PUBLIC POLICY CHOICES

Periodically, Tri-Met has received requests from cities and associations requesting free fare zones be created in their areas. To date, Tri-Met has not implemented these requests, citing:

- (1) the creation of Fareless Square was tied to stringent public policies that restrict auto use in downtown Portland,
- (2) the costs of extending Fareless Square or creating new free fare zones outweigh the benefits to Tri-Met and the region.

This segment discusses the costs and benefits of extending the existing boundaries of Fareless Square or creating new free fare zones in other areas of the region, from a Tri-Met perspective. It also addresses the elements that would need to be considered in the context of state, regional, and local goals, as well as existing Tri-Met policies.

#### **1. Will a free fare zone impact regional AIR QUALITY goals?**

Extension. Extending Fareless Square would need to be evaluated to determine if it has an impact on air quality in the area. Currently, parking is not restricted in areas surrounding the central city. In general, parking is free with no restrictions on the amount that can be provided. The effect of extending the Fareless Square boundaries, without parking and land use regulations, would encourage commuters to park on the fringe of downtown where parking is more abundant and less expensive. Rather than discouraging auto commuting, this may actually increase the number of cars coming into the core area, thereby potentially impacting air quality. Conversely, the presence of a larger free fare zone may encourage more commuters to take transit to work, reducing the number of cars coming into the core area, thereby potentially impacting air quality.

New Free Fare Zones. An environmental assessment would need to be conducted to determine whether the proposed area would be in an air shed separate from downtown Portland and/or whether the area would affect auto congestion to the point it would have a significant impact on air quality in the area. Depending on the location of a proposed free fare zone, there may be no impact on air quality.

## **2. Will a free fare zone support LOCAL and REGIONAL PLANS?**

The Central City Plan was developed by the City of Portland to promote and maintain a strong and liveable core area. Parking regulation is a key element to the plan. Parking spaces in downtown Portland have an absolute limit for air quality reasons and to encourage transit use. Specifically:

- a. A parking lid limits the total amount of parking available in the downtown area. Unlike most zoning regulations, there is no minimum amount of parking required for buildings downtown.
- b. All on-street parking is metered.
- c. All parking garages and lots are pay-to-park (unless privately owned and subsidized by a business).
- d. According to City of Portland policy, all future growth in downtown home-based work trips would be on transit, through the year 2005.

In conjunction with the limits on parking, transit improvements, including the creation of Fareless Square and the transit mall, were implemented in the downtown. This cooperation between Tri-Met and the City of Portland has helped make the Central City Plan successful.

Extension. Because the existing Fareless Square is operating in conjunction with parking controls, any extension needs to be evaluated by comparing the likely outcomes with or without parking controls in the expansion area. Without parking controls, an extension could encourage auto travel and parking in the Central City. Since travel between the extension area and the core would be free, it could encourage people to park in the extension area and ride transit for free to the downtown. This could, in turn, increase the demand for new parking structures. An increase

in parking could effect air quality in the area as well as the overall efficiency of transit service, since commuters might not start their transit trip near their home, preferring to drive to the edge of Fareless Square and take a short free trip on transit to the core. This is less of a concern with the existing boundaries of Fareless Square because of the natural barriers surrounding Fareless Square (the Willamette River and I-405).

New Free Fare Zones. Fareless Square was developed in conjunction with the City of Portland's transit supportive parking restrictions and other regional goals. It can be argued that new free fare zones should not be implemented without similar policies in place to promote transit in the area. In addition, the existing Fareless Square is supportive of the City and regional goal of a strong central business district as the primary economic center. It may be appropriate to discuss a relationship between new free fare zones and regional growth nodes (mini-downtowns), as they are being proposed through the Regional Urban Growth Goals and Objectives.

### **3. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on the surrounding NEIGHBORHOOD?**

Natural and man-made barriers easily define the existing Fareless Square. There is minimal interface with residential areas because Fareless Square boundaries are not residential streets.

Extension. There are several established nearby residential and commercial areas that would be impacted by an extension of the Fareless Square boundaries in any direction. Parking permit programs have already been established in some of these areas to help reduce the number of commuters who use the residential streets for free parking. Any extension of Fareless Square would benefit the neighborhoods by providing access to free transit. However, the extension could exacerbate existing traffic and parking problems and detract from the quality of life in inner-city neighborhoods. A separate process would probably need to be developed by local jurisdictions to permit affected residents and businesses to voice their thoughts about possible impacts on their neighborhood and to assess the trade-offs of free transit to the neighborhood.

New Free Fare Zones. The impact of providing free fare zones in other areas could have significant impacts on the quality of life in adjacent and nearby neighborhoods. Positive impacts include free transit within the area for nearby residents, shoppers, employees, and businesses. Potential negative impacts include increased traffic on local streets, parking problems for residents as streets fill up with free riders, and increased air pollution. A separate process would probably need to be developed to permit affected residents and businesses to voice their thoughts about possible negative impacts on their neighborhood as well as the benefits.

### **4. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on existing RIDERS and the overall level of RIDERSHIP?**

Extension. Extending the boundaries of Fareless Square would attract two types of riders: 1) free riders, and 2) fare paying riders. It is certain that non-fare paying ridership will increase, both from existing cash and ticket riders who ride more frequently, and new riders who start riding Tri-Met because their trip is free. The new riders could be people who work or shop in the area, or could be nearby residents who walk to the extended Fareless Square to use free transit. The impact on fare paying ridership is less certain. Because of the extended free fare area,

people destined for Fareless Square or the extension area could be encouraged to leave their cars at home and use transit. Conversely, current fare-paying riders could be encouraged to drive their cars to the free fare area, completing their trip on transit for free. The ability of an extension to attract new, paying riders to transit is unknown and should be evaluated.

Tri-Met is currently reaching capacity in the peak hours on service entering and leaving Fareless Square. Many routes have heavy loads even in the off-peak. Adding ridership at the peak load point on the system could produce overcrowded vehicles. Since paying riders will already be on the vehicles when they reach Fareless Square in the morning, an extension of the boundaries would not have a significant impact on paying riders at that time. However, in the evenings, paying riders will board at the same time as Fareless Square riders. It is possible that this increase in ridership may be significant enough to discourage fare paying riders who may have to stand due to the crowding on the vehicles. Adding more vehicles would mitigate the problem, but the additional cost would need to be evaluated against the number of new paying riders attracted to the extended Fareless Square.

New Free Fare Zones. Depending on where the free fare zone would be located, free ridership may occur at points where service has existing capacity. If that were the case, there would be little impact on existing ridership. Downtown is a unique area. New free fare zones may not share the same characteristics as downtown. This may reduce acceptance by the public of the free fare zone because riders in one area have to pay to make a trip on transit while riders in another can make the same type or distance trip for free.

## **5. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met fare and non-fare REVENUES?**

Free fare zones can impact revenues in two areas: non-fare revenue and fare revenue. The fare for riding transit amounts to a user fee. An extension of Fareless Square may be viewed as inequitable because it eliminates this user fee for riders in a certain area of the region. Public perceptions of inequity will likely have adverse consequences should Tri-Met pursue additional funding measures, or even fare increases.

By definition, free fare zones tend to have an adverse effect on Tri-Met fare revenues. Farebox revenue loss occurs in three areas: existing fare paying riders who now ride for free, future ridership growth that would have become paying passengers, and increased fare evasion. Fare revenues can be increased if the free fare zone attracts new fare paying riders to transit. These would be people who choose transit to travel to the free fare area because travel within the zone is free.

Extension and New Free Fare Zones. In addition to the revenue impacts cited above, further fare revenues could be lost if overcrowding caused by new non-paying riders discouraged existing paying riders from using transit. The actual revenue impact would depend on the location of the free fare zone or the extension. The impact on Tri-Met's ability to secure additional non-fare revenue is uncertain.



**6. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met's OPERATING and CAPITAL COSTS?**

Natural and man-made barriers easily define the existing Fareless Square. This helps fare inspectors control fare evasion by limiting the number of inspection points. If the free fare zone results in an increase in the number of fare inspection points, this could increase the potential for fare evasion requiring increased fare inspection resources. If additional service were added because of increased passenger loads, this would increase costs related to bus and MAX operators, vehicles, vehicle maintenance, and fuel. (A bus can be added rather quickly, within a year. It takes several years to procure and take delivery of a rail vehicle.)

Extensions and New Free Fare Zones. Because service into downtown is already at or near capacity, an extension of the Fareless Square boundaries would incur all of the increased operating and capital costs cited above. Any new fare zone would incur some operating costs, as cited above. The actual operating costs and impact on capital costs would depend on the location of the new free fare zone or extension.

**7. Are there non-fare REVENUE OPTIONS to off-set Tri-Met's costs of a free fare zone?**

Extensions and New Free Fare Zones. To off-set the potential reductions in fare and non-fare revenues and increased operating and capital costs, several non-fare financing options could be considered by jurisdictions requesting an extension to Fareless Square or the creation of a new free fare zone. The revenue option selected would depend on the intended beneficiaries of the free fare zone. Options include:

- o Impact fees
- o Special assessment district
- o Various auto-related fees
- o New or existing taxes

Recent trends in financing transportation options have included user fees, such as toll roads and toll bridges. Because free fare zones do not require a fare payment, there is no user fee for this service. Additional consideration would need to be given to proposed free fare zones since they would eliminate the user fee as an option for paying for transit service within specific areas.

**8. Who are the BENEFICIARIES of a free fare zone?**

The existing Fareless Square was implemented in conjunction with parking restrictions. By limiting parking in downtown Portland, more land is available for dense development of business establishments. Dense development directly benefits the City of Portland through increased tax revenues. The City of Portland also benefits because Fareless Square provides free transportation to people within the core area and lowers auto congestion. Tri-Met benefits from the existing Fareless Square through parking and zoning restrictions imposed by the City which encourage transit ridership. The region benefits in terms of better air quality, reduced congestion on the transportation system, and a strong central business district.

Extension and New Free Fare Zones. Extending Fareless Square or creating new free fare zones would need to be evaluated to determine the benefits it would provide, and who would receive the benefits. It is likely that extending Fareless Square or creating new free fare zones benefit businesses in the free fare zone. Area residents and employees would be provided free transportation to their local destinations. Out-of-town visitors would have an extended area in which they could travel during their stay without paying a fare. The local jurisdiction may benefit if developers consider the free fare zone attractive. As a regional transit district, however, Tri-Met needs to carefully assess who benefits from (and who pays for) a new or extended free fare zone, to avoid an inequitable distribution of transit benefits in the region.

## **9. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met's SERVICE PHILOSOPHY?**

Tri-Met operates a multi-destinational transit system in order to maximize patronage, productivity, and regional mobility. The service is designed for easy travel within sectors of the region as well as to the downtown area, relying on a grid system and timed transfers. Tri-Met's current service philosophy encourages riders to board buses near their trip *origin* and ride to their destination on transit thereby limiting the number vehicle miles traveled. Transit service and park and ride facilities are provided in outlying areas to serve commuters to the downtown. The intent is to encourage people to board transit as soon as possible, limiting auto use. Key to the success of this service design is the integration of the service types, feeder bus, trunk routes, express service, MAX, and other transit districts. Tri-Met's service concept is outlined in the Board adopted Service Standards.

Although the current Service Standards do not call for increasing service within free fare zones based on passenger loads, this policy may need to be reviewed if the current Fareless Square is changed significantly. In addition, the Service Standards do not address the level of service necessary to successfully operate a Fareless Square. The current Fareless Square is successful because service is more frequent than the time it takes to walk through the area. Additional analysis may need to be undertaken to determine a service frequency standard for free fare zones.

Extension. Extending the boundaries of Fareless Square could have an adverse impact on Tri-Met's overall service and service philosophy if parking and land use regulations similar to downtown are not enacted. Tri-Met's success in carrying passengers to downtown relies on the limited amount of parking available in the core area. There is already a significant amount of informal, on-street park and riding from inner-city neighborhoods by persons who wish to limit the cost of the transit portion of their trip and lower the travel time for their trip. This phenomenon is currently limited by the natural boundaries of the existing Fareless Square (the River, I-405, and the West Hills) and the limited amount of free parking available adjacent to Fareless Square due to the density of existing development. Without these constraints, more downtown commuters would opt to minimize their financial and travel time costs by driving to the boundaries of Fareless Square and making the remainder of their trip free on transit.

New Free Fare Zones. Depending on the location, a new free fare zone would not likely have an impact on Tri-Met's overall service and service philosophy. There could be some encouragement for people to drive from their homes to the edge of the free fare zone in order to ride for free

within the area. The degree of impact would depend on the density of development in the area, any parking and land use regulations, and level of transit service.

#### **10. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met's FARE POLICY?**

A goal of the fare system is to encourage transit ridership and increase fare revenue. This is accomplished by providing a simple, yet equitable fare structure. Tri-Met adopted a distance-based, three-zone fare structure as the most equitable fare system for our region. Long distance trips, which cost more to provide, are charged more. Short distance, discretionary trips are encouraged through a discounted Short-Hopper ticket. Discounts are provided to youth, the elderly, and disabled citizens, and for those pre-purchasing their fares as discounted tickets or a monthly pass.

An integral part of the simplicity of the fare structure is the integration of fares with the service. There is no distinction between types of service (crosstown vs. downtown), between bus and MAX, or between different transit districts. Since transferring is a part of the service design, there is no penalty for transferring. The intent is to encourage ridership by making the payment of a fare and the use of the service as simple as possible. The fare structure is the same for all service throughout the district.

Over the past five years, several modifications have been made to simplify the fare system. Time based fares were considered confusing. Tri-Met therefore eliminated the family pass (good only certain days at certain hours,) the 24-hour ticket was changed to the Day Pass, the transfer policy was changed so that riders no longer could "buy time", and the peak hour surcharge for Honored Citizens was eliminated.

A second fundamental change to simplify the system was reducing the number of fare zones from five to three. Public opinion surveys indicated that knowing the location of zone boundaries was the most confusing aspect of the fare system. Changing the boundaries would only to this confusion. Therefore, when the two zones were eliminated, no changes were made to the remaining zone boundaries. Another change took place in 1988 when pay-as-you-enter, front door boarding only was instituted for the entire system, even in Fareless Square. (Previously, passengers could enter through the rear doors only within Fareless Square.) These changes have been well received by the public.

A central fare policy issue with the existing Fareless Square is that the intent is to provide mobility for people once they have arrived downtown. The intent was not to provide free trips from home to work. The limited amount of housing downtown and barriers between Fareless Square and residential areas helped ensure that free trips were predominantly business related. However, regional growth goals encourage mixed use development, such as housing and retail, and densities that support transit and lower automobile usage. Although it was not a primary goal when creating Fareless Square, those who choose to live in or adjacent to downtown are rewarded with free transit within the core area. Tri-Met's existing fare policy does not promote the objective of free fares to promote mixed-use development, however. This policy may need to be reviewed to determine the role of free fare zones in supporting mixed use development centers, as described in the Regional Urban Growth Goals and Objectives.

Extension. An extension of the existing Fareless Square would be in conflict with the fare policy in two primary areas, equity and simplicity.

The fare for riding transit amounts to a user fee. An extension of Fareless Square may be viewed as inequitable because it eliminates this user fee for riders in a certain area of the region. Public perceptions of inequity will likely have adverse consequences should Tri-Met pursue additional funding measures, or even fare increases. In addition, any extension of the Fareless Square boundaries would provide more access to residential communities allowing free travel to downtown, a trip that currently results in a fare for Tri-Met. In effect, central city residents would be able to ride to downtown Portland for free while others would have to pay to make the same trip.

Natural and man-made barriers easily define the existing Fareless Square. This makes the boundaries easily understood by the public. Extending the boundaries would cause confusion because of the change itself and because boundaries may no longer follow natural barriers.

New Free Fare Zones. The fare for riding transit amounts to a user fee. Creating new free fare zones may be viewed as inequitable because it eliminates this user fee for riders in a certain area of the region. Public perceptions of inequity will likely have adverse consequences should Tri-Met pursue additional funding measures, or even fare increases. The existing Fareless Square does not exist exclusively for the benefit of downtown merchants and the City of Portland. The free fare zone is a part of a regional commitment to air quality and a strong central city. New free fare zones would also need to have a strong regional benefit and regional commitment.

Additional free fare zones would be in conflict with the fare policy in that they would create additional zone boundaries, the most confusing aspect of the fare system. This would be a complication of the fare structure and could compromise one intent of the 1988 fare simplification.

Table 1 attempts to summarize the relative impact of the Fareless Square options within this policy framework. The table is meant to be a point of departure for subsequent discussions.

TABLE 1

| Public Policy Issue  | Extend Existing Fareless Square | Create New Free Fare Zones |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Will a free fare zone impact regional AIR QUALITY goals?  | +/-                             | +/-                        |
| 2. Will a free fare zone support LOCAL and REGIONAL PLANS?   | -                               | +/-                        |
| 3. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on the surrounding NEIGHBORHOOD?                      | -                               | -                          |
| 4. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on exiting RIDERS and the overall level of RIDERSHIP? | -                               | +/-                        |
| 5. Will the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met fare and non-fare REVENUES?                        | --                              | --                         |
| 6. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met's OPERATING and CAPITAL COSTS?             | --                              | --                         |
| 7. Are there non-fare REVENUE OPTIONS to off-set Tri-Met costs of a free fare zone?                  | ++                              | ++                         |
| 8. Who are the BENEFICIARIES of a free fare zone?  | +                               | +                          |
| 9. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met's SERVICE PHILOSOPHY?                      | -                               | +/-                        |
| 10. What will be the impact of a free fare zone on Tri-Met's FARE POLICY?                            | --                              | --                         |

KEY: ++ = Definite Positive Impact  
 + = Possible Positive Impact  
 +/- = Uncertain/Mixed Impact  
 - = Possible Adverse Impact  
 -- = Definite Adverse Impact