



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Agenda Item 10

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Memorandum

TO: Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee DATE: Dec. 30, 2009
FR: Jacob Avidon, MTC Staff
RE: TransLink[®] Program Status Report

The TransLink[®] fare payment system is currently operating on five transit systems: AC Transit, BART, Caltrain, Golden Gate Transit bus and ferry, and San Francisco Muni (with the exception of cable cars). For the week ending December 18, 2009, the average weekday TransLink[®] transaction volume was 44,325 transactions per day — more than double the transaction volume from one year ago. Transaction volume has increased by about 50 percent since August 2009, when BART and Caltrain began accepting TransLink[®]. Transaction volume in a single month exceeded one million transactions for the first time in October 2009.

Since 2007, the Regional Transit Connection (RTC) Discount Card Program has provided customers with TransLink[®]-compatible cards that automatically deduct lower fares. As of December 28, 2009, the program had issued more than 68,000 cards to qualifying customers through the RTC Discount Card Program; about 1,700 or 2.5 percent of the cards are being used for fare payment with the TransLink[®] system. The seemingly low utilization rate reflects the program's provision that all customers receive a TransLink[®]-compatible RTC Discount card even if the customer applied through a transit agency that does not yet offer TransLink[®]. The utilization rate, however, has increased by about 40 percent in just the past two months.

As systemwide transaction volume has increased, the TransLink[®] contractor's performance has declined in some areas. In October, the contractor failed to meet several customer service-related performance requirements, such as the percentage of customer phone calls answered

within 20 seconds, the percentage of calls answered within three minutes and the processing time for replacement cards. The contractor has responded by hiring additional personnel and automating certain customer service-related processes. Staff is working closely with the contractor to ensure improved performance.

Upcoming Initiatives

The fare payment system will expand to SamTrans and VTA in 2010. The implementation contractor has installed card readers on 88 SamTrans buses as of November 5, 2009. The contractor will begin installing equipment on VTA vehicles in January. The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) is installing new smart card-compatible faregates and vending machines at all Muni Metro stations; this project will be completed in late 2010.

MTC is working with transit agencies on plans for the transition of existing pre-paid paper transit passes and tickets to smart card-only availability. Once the transition is complete, customers will still have access to all the benefits of prepaid tickets, passes and stickers, e.g. unlimited rides on a specific agency for a calendar month, but customers will load passes to their TransLink® card every month instead of purchasing a new paper pass, ticket or sticker. This new policy will also provide customers with the benefits of using a smart card, such as the ability to replace a lost or stolen card and the ability to use electronic cash (e-cash) value loaded on the card to ride on any participating transit agency's vehicles. MTC has worked closely with transit agencies in developing a specific agency-by-agency plan for the transition of fare media to smart card-only availability; the planned schedule will allow transit agencies enough time to inform the public about the transition and the benefits of paying fares with a smart card and customers enough time to acquire their smart cards. MTC staff will recommend approval of this plan to the Operations Committee at their meeting on February 12, 2010.

In December, MTC's Operations Committee and the TransLink® Management Group approved changing the program's name to "Clipper." Beginning in mid-2010, all customers receiving cards will receive Clipper

cards, and the program will update the TransLink® website and equipment to show the Clipper name and logo. Following the transition to the new name, TransLink® cards will continue to work without interruption; customers will not need to replace their TransLink® cards. MTC will begin a marketing and communications program to announce the new name in mid-2010.