

*Santa Cruz Metropolitan
Transit District*



March 27, 2015

Good Morning,

METRO is seeking input from the community regarding the possibility of making changes to their current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) federally mandated paratransit program, ParaCruz. METRO staff has presented paratransit service efficiencies and fare options for consideration by METRO's Board of Directors, and the presentation has been conducted at the meetings of various Commissions, Boards, City Councils, Advisory Group Committees and at five public meetings across the county. Collecting information and concerns from these different meetings has contributed to clarifications and descriptions of changes in the options that have been presented.

In summary, the following options are what have been presented for consideration to our Board of Directors, all regarding possible changes to ParaCruz service. When scrutinizing our paratransit service, several efficiencies were identified along with several fare options.

The following efficiencies would be realized if METRO was to align the days and hours of paratransit service with the days and hours that METRO's fixed route operates:

First - According to ADA laws, transit districts are only required to perform paratransit services at the same time and on the same days as the transit district's fixed route service runs. For example, if the fixed route bus only runs once a day in a specific area, say from 9:00 to 9:45 in the morning, the transit district is obligated to run the paratransit service at the same time as that fixed route bus runs, 9:00 to 9:45 in the morning.

Second - If the fixed route bus does not run in specific areas on certain days, for example, a fixed route bus is not being run in a certain area during the time school is out of session, the transit district is not obligated to run paratransit in that same specific area, on those same days that the fixed route bus is not operating.

Third - Another efficiency identified for the paratransit operation is holiday service. At this time, ParaCruz provides paratransit rides on three holidays that the fixed route buses do not operate. Those holidays are Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day. Again, the district is not obligated to provide paratransit when the fixed route bus is not operating.

Two smaller efficiencies have also been mentioned at the meetings described above:

First, enforcing the eligibility category of trip-by-trip eligibility; For example, if a paratransit client has a visual disability that prevents them from travelling safely on the fixed route bus system at night, they would qualify for paratransit rides during those dark times. If the same client travels safely on the fixed route service during the light of the day, they would not qualify for a paratransit ride during the daytime, instead, they would be expected to ride the fixed route bus.

Second, small efficiency would be offering curb-to-curb service when requested. ParaCruz currently has a door-to-door policy, which we are **not** asking the Board to consider for changes, instead, we are suggesting that paratransit clients who are fully capable of getting from the vehicle to their destination, be

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allowed to request **not** to be escorted by a paratransit Operator. This efficiency would be realized in saving the amount of time the Operator currently takes to escort a client to their door.

The next two options presented for consideration by the Board of Directors are regarding fares. **The two options are the 'full fare' concept and 'premium fares' for paratransit rides provided that exceed the ADA minimum service requirements.**

'Full Fares' - ADA law states that fares charged for complementary paratransit service can be no more than twice the fare a 'comparable' trip made by a person without a disability on the fixed route bus system. For example, if a fixed route bus rider needed to take three buses to arrive at their destination, in our system, which does not have 'transfers', the 'full fare' paid by the non-disabled rider would be \$2.00 each bus, the total paid in fares would be \$6.00. A ride utilizing three different bus routes to arrive at a destination would translate to a single ride on paratransit that could cost the rider \$12.00, Route 1 = \$4, Route 2 = \$4, Route 3 = \$4 for a total of \$12.

The 'full fare' concept was presented with some examples of how other transit agencies use the concept in their fare structures. METRO staff proposed consideration of a mileage-based structure which was used to illustrate that districts do not completely double the fare for each 'bus' fare a non-disabled person would pay in fares, to get to their destination for paratransit rides of the same distance. The examples used in the presentation clearly generated much confusion, and the concept was lost behind what was seen as a concrete fare structure proposal, which was not our intent. METRO regrets the misguided attempt to clarify, and we hope the 'full fare' concept is considered without the mileage based fare examples we used to present it with, instead, keep the concept as 'a fare charged for each bus taken' as described above.

'Premium Fares' – In METRO's presentations, premium fares were discussed as options for the Board to consider. The types of premium fare rides proposed are types of rides that a transit district can perform at a level of service that exceeds the ADA minimum requirements.

First option – **Same Day Rides.**

Same day rides have been seen as an 'unmet need' in Santa Cruz County for quite some time, and currently this service does not exist as part of the service ParaCruz provides. ADA does not address same day rides; instead, it defines how a ride needs to be scheduled at least one day in advance of the ride being performed.

Second option – **Will-Call Returns.**

Will-call returns are paratransit rides that have been scheduled without having a time defined for when the return ride is to occur. For example, clients use will-call returns for when they are not sure what time they will be ready to travel after an appointment with a doctor. When the ride is booked, the return time is not specified, and after the appointment a will-call return is activated with ParaCruz that may include some wait time after the doctor appointment for the client.

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Third option – **Subscription Rides.**

This option was presented to the Board for consideration, but since subscription rides are convenient for both the clients and the paratransit operation, it is not a strong option for consideration of charging premium fares.

Fourth option- **Re-dispatching a vehicle for a client who has 'No-showed'.**

This option would place a premium fare for a re-dispatched vehicle to a client who has missed their return ride.

Fifth option – **Pick-ups and drop offs outside the current service area.**

This option would place a premium fare for rides that are requested that are outside the current service area. For example, if a person needed to go into town, but the fixed route bus only ran from 9:00 am to 9:45 am, the rider could book a regular base rate ride for the ride into town (between 9:00 and 9:45), but for a return ride that is scheduled to occur when fixed route is **not** running, say at 11:00 am, a return ride could be provided, but at a premium fare.

All of the premium fares and the amount to be charged for them are yet to be considered and decided on by METRO's Board of Directors. The examples used in the presentations were all 4 times (\$16.00) the amount of the base fare currently charged (\$4.00).

It is METRO's intent that this letter clarifies what options are being presented to the Board for consideration.

Please join us for one or two of the Public Hearings scheduled for April 10th, 2015.

9:00 am – Santa Cruz City Council Chambers -809 Center Street; Santa Cruz

6:30 pm – Watsonville Civic Center Council Chambers – 275 Main Street; Watsonville

If you are unable to attend, please send comments to:

Email – feedback@scmttd.com

Letter – SC METRO; 110 Vernon Street; Santa Cruz

Telephone – (831) 420-2582