

CITY OF BELOIT

BELOIT TRANSIT SYSTEM

FARE POLICY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES

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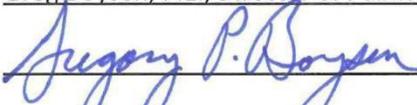
Beloit Transit System (BTS) Transfer Facility Completed May 2010

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APPROVALS:

This policy is hereby endorsed and signed by:

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Official Signature : 

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Beloit Transit System (BTS) Fare Policy Overview

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grantees are required to develop a local process to solicit and consider public comment prior to a fare increase or major service reduction. In addition, FTA grantees must solicit public input and consider public comment for its charter services program and for its Federal civil rights program (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Equal Employment Opportunity, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise, and Americans with Disabilities Act). Public meetings are not a mandatory requirement; however, an opportunity for a public hearing must be given. This Policy describes when an opportunity for a public hearing will be provided, how hearings will be conducted, and how the results of hearings will be considered in the decision-making process.

Fare Policy Goal

The goal of this Fare Policy is to support BTS's mission of providing high quality public transportation services.

Fare Policy Objectives

BTS has developed the following Fare Policy Objectives that are critical to achieving the Fare Policy Goal. The nature of these objectives reflects the complexity of developing a Fare Structure that will balance the desire to keep fares affordable for BTS customers with the need to maximize fare revenue to help maintain and expand transit operations for the benefit of the riders. These objectives were used to develop the Fare Structure described later in the policy. In the future, when changes to the Fare Structure are considered, strategies for meeting the *Customer/Community Related Objectives* and the *Financial & Privacy Objectives* will be developed and evaluated. The new Fare Structure that emerges will encompass the mix of strategies that are determined to best meet the Fare Policy Objectives, as described below, in the context of the conditions and needs at that time.

1. Customer/Community Related Objectives

The following three objectives directly support BTS's mission of operating high quality public transportation services. When a fare increase or restructuring is proposed, all fare strategies considered for achieving these three objectives should be carefully weighed in relation to each other, as some possible strategies may achieve one objective at the expense of another. BTS must strive to meet all of these objectives in an equitable and balanced way.

a. Increase Ridership Utilization and Occupancy

Increasing ridership supports the important societal goals of reducing traffic congestion and decreasing air pollution. It is important to adopt fare strategies that will encourage ridership by means of an affordable fare structure, yet will provide a sound funding mechanism to be able to maintain and expand services provided to the public.

b. Establish Equitable Fares

To be equitable, fares must take into account the needs of the citizens who use transit. The Fare Structure should, therefore, consider the requirements of transit riders.

c. Enhance Mobility & Access

The Fare Structure should enhance the ability of riders to access the system and move through it with ease. To do so, the Fare Structure should be easy to understand and should promote the

system by simplifying fares.

2. Financial & Privacy Objectives

All fare strategies that are seriously considered in the context of the three Customer/Community Objectives discussed above must also meet the following three Financial & Privacy Objectives to ensure the continued operation of BTS services and the right to privacy of its customers.

a. Maintain/Increase Fare Revenue Stream

Because fare revenue is a critical component of the BTS operating budget, any increase to or restructuring of fares should ensure that the total fare revenue stream is maintained at an appropriate level, consistent with the financial needs of BTS.

b. Maximize Fare Revenue Collection

To maximize fare revenue collection, BTS should take advantage of appropriate fare collection technologies and strategies.

c. Respect Customer Privacy

As BTS strives to implement fare collection technologies that are easy and convenient to use, BTS must remain cognizant of the need to respect customers' privacy and to ensure the security of personal information.

Fare Structure

Using the Fare Policy Objectives described above, BTS identified fare strategies to develop the following Fare Structure:

Tokens and Passes

The following will be available for use on the BTS system:

- Tokens, sold individually or in quantity
- 10 Ride Passes
- Cash

The following unlimited-ride passes will be available:

- Student Semester Passes for unlimited (school day only) rides on all in-town routes
- Student Summer Passes for unlimited travel during the regular school summer vacation, on all in-town routes

Within the context of this policy, a "student" is defined as any pupil enrolled full time at a public elementary, middle, junior-high school, or high school, or any pupil enrolled at a private school that provides substantially the same character and grade of instruction as the schools conducted at public expense.

Fare levels

Fares for children four (4) and under ride free, with a limit of two (2) children for each fare-paying adult. Seniors (age 65 or older), and persons with disabilities will not pay fares that exceed one-half the adult "base fares."

Transfer Privileges

Transfers will be issued at no charge and are limited to one transfer for each passenger per destination.

Overview of BTS's Public Participation Process

The Beloit Transit System (BTS) understands that active public participation is a necessary and integral part of transit planning and provision of service. BTS's public participation process provides:

- Early and continuing involvement
- Clear, accurate, and timely information
- Full public access to individuals, public agencies and segments of the community affected by transit service and planning

BTS's public participation process will actively seek public input through a variety of techniques and outlets which may include formal and informal public notices, informational meetings, comment periods, surveys, workshops, public hearings and through the newspaper and other media.

In addition to receiving public comments from and informing those already interested and involved in transit planning and service, BTS will seek innovative and creative strategies to reasonably assess the general public sentiment, as well as to solicit helpful public input and educate those individuals unaware of the services provided by BTS. Some examples of outreach efforts may include interaction with neighborhood associations, schools, social service agencies, and presentations to community civic groups.

Public involvement is especially crucial when significant changes to the current service provided by BTS are being considered. Specifically, those significant changes include:

- 1. Fare Increases**
- 2. Major Service Reductions**
- 3. Major Route Modifications**

Definitions and Procedures

Fare Increase

A fare increase is defined as an increase in the basic fare structure. Any increase in fares shall be approved by the City of Beloit Council as detailed in the Public Participation Efforts below. Fare decreases are specifically excluded.

Major Service Reductions

In determining whether this procedure applies to a specific service reduction, the Beloit Transit System shall calculate and compare the total current service miles or hours to the proposed estimated total service miles or hours to be provided after reduced service would be implemented.

A major service reduction shall be any reduction in service miles or hours exceeding twenty-five (25%) percent of the total service miles or hours provided, excluding tripper service. All other service reductions are considered routine and minor, and are not subject to these procedures. Any major service reduction shall be approved by the City of Beloit Council as detailed in the Public Participation Efforts below.

Major Route Modifications

A major route modification shall be a change in any fixed-route transit service that exceeds twenty-five (25%) percent of the total inbound and outbound trip mileage of a route, excluding tripper service. All other route modifications are considered routine and minor, and are not subject to these procedures.

Route and/or schedule modifications occur primarily for several reasons:

- Public complaints
- Employee/operator complaints
- On-time performance
- Overcrowding /diminished ridership

Route modifications are reviewed by BTS's Director of Transit and Transit Supervisor. If the recommendation is to move forward with a major route modification, such modification shall be approved by the City of Beloit Council as detailed in the Public Participation Efforts below.

Public Participation Efforts

Public Hearing Required

A Class 2 Public Notice published in the legal section of the official City newspaper (Beloit Daily News) shall be required for **fare increases, major service reductions and major route modifications**. The first notice shall be advertised at least thirty (30) days in advance of a public hearing on the proposed change to be held at a regular City Council meeting, which is held at City Hall, 100 State St., Beloit, WI. This location is accessible to all interested persons including persons with disabilities and easily accessed by public transportation. BTS staff will be present to provide additional information and answer questions of the Council and public during the public hearing.

In addition to the formal Public Notice, at a minimum, notices will be posted on the Beloit Transit System website, www.beloittransit.com, public areas of the administrative office, inside vehicles, at the Transfer Center, at downtown bus shelters, at City Hall, at the Beloit Public Library and will be provided to the SLATS MPO Office indicating when and where the meeting will take place, at least thirty (30) days in advance of the scheduled City Council meeting.

An explanation of the content, along with the date, time, and location of the meeting(s) and public hearing will be published along with the instructions for submitting comments, contact information for questions or additional information, any due date for the comments and a note regarding where to find additional information on the website, www.beloittransit.com.

Notices may also be directly provided to interested persons, neighborhood groups, area colleges, area schools, service organizations, local advocacy groups, businesses, senior centers or other organizations, particularly those deemed by the Transit Director to be directly affected by the proposed change. BTS will compile and maintain such a list of potentially interested persons or organizations for direct notice to serve as a base of interested parties for input and comment. This list will be expanded as additional persons attend public meetings and provide input. If deemed appropriate and effective by the Transit Director, other means of noticing potentially interested persons or organizations may be pursued such as announcements on local radio stations, other media outlets or community forums.

Comment cards will also be provided at the Transfer Facility when BTS proposes fare increases, major service reductions and major route modifications. BTS staff will also make efforts to include maps, photos, or other visual tools to aid in assisting passengers in understanding the proposed changes. When transit plans, maps, or programs are proposed to change, copies of the existing document and proposed changes will be made available as well. All information provided (along with comments cards) will be done so at least thirty (30) days in advance of the scheduled public hearing date. Information will be available at the Transfer Facility, as well as on BTS's website, www.beloittransit.com.

While written comments will be encouraged, BTS staff will also chronicle verbal comments. Following receipt of a relevant verbal public comment, the Director of Transit will document his or her written response per the Documentation of Public Comment and Responses procedures outlined below. Comments received prior to the City Council meeting in which a proposed change (fare, service or route) is scheduled for Council action will be summarized and provided to the City Council prior to Council action.

Public Information Meetings

In addition to the formal public hearing on a proposed fare, service or route change scheduled at a Beloit City Council meeting as described above, BTS will seek to involve the public early and often through various public information meetings, which will be noticed through the same procedures outlined above (Class 2 newspaper and posted at various locations). BTS makes efforts to ensure that scheduling and locations of public information meetings are accessible to the public. This includes a location near public transportation, a time when public transportation is available, as well as an accessible building/room for individuals with disabilities.

Public information meetings will be held at various locations to inform the public of the planning process, solicit ideas, input, and feedback. At least one meeting would take place in the evening and/or on a weekend to accommodate those with traditional work schedules to attend. At least one meeting will be held during a traditional work day to allow those who work in the evenings or weekends to attend. The intent of holding public informational meetings at diversified locations is to solicit broad public comments.

Special services should be available when practical, and subject to the availability of services and resources. These services may include interpreters for those who do not speak English, materials for individuals with visual impairments, and sign language interpreters. The availability of these services would be mentioned in public notices. An example of such notice may be the following:

This meeting is accessible to disabled individuals. Persons planning to attend this meeting who will need a sign language interpreter or other similar accommodations should notify, either by telephone, letter or e-mail, the Director of Transit, 1225 Willowbrook Road, Beloit, WI 53511, telephone 608-364-2870, email gavinm@beloitwi.gov or the administrative office at least five days prior to the meeting so that reasonable accommodation can be made. Please make sure you get a positive response from someone and your request doesn't get left on voicemail or in an e-mail mailbox. Thank you for your cooperation. We want to assure we are responsive to people's needs.

Surveys

In addition to public information meetings, BTS conducts periodic route surveys on the fixed-route system to gather additional input from transit users to assist BTS in providing the best service possible. Passengers are encouraged to provide comments about the service.

Documentation of Public Comment and Responses

The Beloit Transit System shall document comments received during the course of the public input process. BTS shall also document how they responded to the public comments.

Comments received

Documentation of comments may be accomplished in a manner appropriate to the project and the nature of the comments. Documentation may consist of meeting minutes, files of letters, transcripts, PowerPoint presentations, and/or a special memo that summarizes the comments. A written summary of comments and responses shall be prepared to provide feedback to the public. A recording and Transcript of the major points made during public meetings will be made part of the written record. Comments received prior to the City Council meeting in which a proposed change (fare, service or route) is scheduled for Council action will be summarized and provided to the City Council prior to Council action.

Response to comments

BTS will respond to questions or comments from the public concerning the public participation process in a timely manner. A summary analysis and report on disposition of comments may be made a part of the final plan (if applicable). Rationale for policy decisions will be available to the public in writing, if requested. Although BTS is required to consider each suggestion made in the public participation process, BTS is not required to implement each suggestion. Thus, if BTS staff does not think it appropriate to implement a suggestion, documentation will indicate the reason the suggestion should not be implemented.

Additional Procedures

If implementation of minor route or service changes are to take place, then at least one (1) week prior to the change, new route schedules will be made available to the public via BTS's website www.beloittransit.com. They will also be available at the BTS Transfer Facility and buses as soon as practical.

When minor changes take place, BTS staff will be made available to provide travel assistance to passengers who may not be aware of the modifications.

Information regarding the changes will remain available to the public for a 30-day period beyond the implementation of the changes.

Coordination with the Stateline Area Transportation Study - Metropolitan Planning Organization (SLATS MPO)

BTS has coordinated with the Stateline Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization (SLATS MPO) to develop these procedures which are separate from and in addition to procedures outlined in the SLATS Public Involvement Plan (PIP) dated November 5, 2012. BTS follows the MPO's public participation process for transit-related transportation plans and programs, as indicated in the SLATS PIP, including the Long-Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and amendments, Unified Planning Work Program, the Title VI Program and special planning studies managed or funded through SLATS. These plans are typically reviewed and approved by the SLATS Policy Committee following a recommendation by the Technical Advisory Committee, on which BTS is a member. Fare increases, major service reductions and major route modifications for BTS do not go through SLATS, rather the City of Beloit only. As such, the procedures outlined in this document as opposed to the PIP, apply to fare increases, major service reductions and major route modifications.

Note that the TIP development process is used to satisfy the public hearing requirements of Section 5307. Public notice of public involvement activities and time established for public review of the TIP will satisfy the Program-of-Projects (POP) requirements of the Urbanized Area Formula Program. The public involvement procedures associated with TIP development were used to satisfy the Program-of-Projects requirements of Section 5307.

Title VI

Policy Statement

The City of Beloit, as a recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant dollars directly from FTA will comply with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d) and the U.S. Department of Transportation implementing regulations. The BTS operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, and national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Any person who believes she or he has been aggrieved by any unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint with the BTS.

BTS's Title VI program is available for review on the BTS website and administrative office. For more information on the BTS's civil rights program, and the procedures to file a complaint, contact the Director of Transit at 608-364-2870, email gavinm@beloitwi.gov or visit our administrative office at 1225 Willowbrook Road, Beloit, WI 53511 or the BTS Transfer Center located at 225 Shirland Avenue, Beloit, WI 53511. For more information, visit www.beloittransit.com

A complainant may file a complaint directly with the Federal Transit Administration by filing a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights, Attention: Title VI Program Coordinator, East Building, 5th Floor-TCR, and 1200 New Jersey Ave., SE Washington, DC, 20590. If information is needed in another language, contact 608-364-2870. Si se necesita informacion en otro idioma de contacto, 608-364-2870.