

Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Policy Advisory Council Equity & Access Subcommittee

October 9, 2019

Agenda Item 2

Regional Means-Based Discount Transit Fare Pilot Program Update

Subject: Update on the implementation of the Regional Means-Based Pilot Program on BART, Caltrain, Golden Gate Transit and Ferry, and SFMTA.

Background: For most Bay Area households, transportation is the third-largest monthly expense—trailing only the cost of housing and food. In 2015, MTC launched a study to determine if a transit-reduced fare program based on household income would be feasible and effective. As a result of the study and in consultation with transit operators, the Commission approved the launch of the Regional Means-Based Transit Fare Pilot Program (“Pilot Program”) in May 2018. The key program elements for the end-user are listed below.

Pilot Program Elements

1. *Eligibility:* Adults who earn up to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (approximately \$50,000 per year for a family of four) are eligible to receive the transit discount.
2. *Available on Clipper®:* Pilot program participants will use Clipper cards to receive the new means-based transit fare discount. The discount will be granted automatically when a participant uses the card to pay a single cash value fare.
3. *Single-Ride Discount:* Pilot program participants will receive a 20 percent discount on each trip taken on BART and Caltrain and a 50 percent discount on each trip taken on Golden Gate Transit and Ferry and SFMTA.

The pilot program is scheduled to launch in spring 2020, but the schedule is still being finalized. The pilot will run for about 18 months. It is designed to:

- Make transit more affordable for the Bay Area’s low-income residents;
- Move toward a more consistent regional standard for fare discount policies; and,
- Define a transit affordability solution that is financially viable and administratively feasible and does not adversely affect the transit system’s service levels and performance.

Implementation Activities

1. *Clipper Discount:* Transportation Services (vendor for the Clipper program) is implementing the discount on Clipper. Development is on schedule to meet the launch date. Some testing has taken place, and it has been successful.

2. *Eligibility Verifier:* When people apply, they will need to provide proof that they live in the Bay Area as well as proof of income. The latter can be in the form of an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, a MediCal card, the first two pages of a tax return, or confirmation that the individual already participates in the Muni Lifeline program. Proof of residency and income documents will need to be reviewed and approved by an eligibility verifier, which will also provide customer service for the program. MTC is currently procuring the eligibility verifier.
3. *Application Website and Database:* People will apply through a website that is mobile optimized (a paper application will also be available). The eligibility verifier will manage and track applications and produce monitoring reports. Work on the website is proceeding at a fast pace, and developers tested usability of the site with low-income individuals as well as unhoused individuals.
4. *Outreach and Branding:* With the help of focus groups, the program has been branded Clipper START. Staff is currently working on plans for marketing the program, including outreach through community-based organizations and advertising using transit agency assets like interior/exterior and station ads.
5. *Evaluation:* The evaluation will determine whether and how well the pilot program has met its goals. MTC has issued a request for proposals for a firm to provide evaluation services.

Issues: None

Recommendation: None

Attachments: None