

February 25, 2022

Dear Chair Limmer and Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee members,

On behalf of the MN350 Transit Justice team, I'd like to thank the committee for hearing SF 1513 and continuing the conversation around transit ambassadors and administrative citations for transit fare non-payment. MN350 is a climate justice organization seeking to end the pollution damaging our climate, speed the transition to clean energy, and create a just and healthy future for all. Our Transit Justice team advocates for guaranteed transit funding and connecting communities through frequent, reliable public transit.

In fall 2021, our Transit Justice team led 10 transit canvasses, talking to more than 200 transit riders, mostly on Blue and Green Line trains. We heard overwhelmingly positive feedback when we asked riders if they would support transit ambassadors for Metro Transit. We define a transit ambassador as an unarmed, non-sworn staff person; someone riders can ask for directions, or how to transfer between lines; someone who can explain how to pay for a ticket; someone who creates an atmosphere of safety by being an authority presence on trains and at platforms; someone who helps to keep trains and platforms clean and welcoming. If the penalty for fare non-payment is reduced to an administrative citation, a transit ambassador would also be able to check fares, issue citations, and help connect transit riders with services like Metro Transit's reduced fare program, which would reduce the responsibilities of Metro Transit police officers.

The current penalty for fare non-payment, a \$180 fine and/or a misdemeanor is disproportionately harsh. Imagine receiving a \$180 ticket for an expired parking meter. Even though the lost revenue is comparable, we punish those riding transit more harshly than people driving cars. Not only is this difference unfair, the data shows that people almost always pay their fares. The Metropolitan Council's 2019 Fare Evasion report found on average that out of every 1,000 fare checks, just 2 riders hadn't paid for a fare. We support lowering the penalty from a misdemeanor to an administrative citation and reducing the fine.

Thank you,

-Adrianna Jereb (she/her)
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