

February 2025

Transit Fare Elimination Pilot Program Report



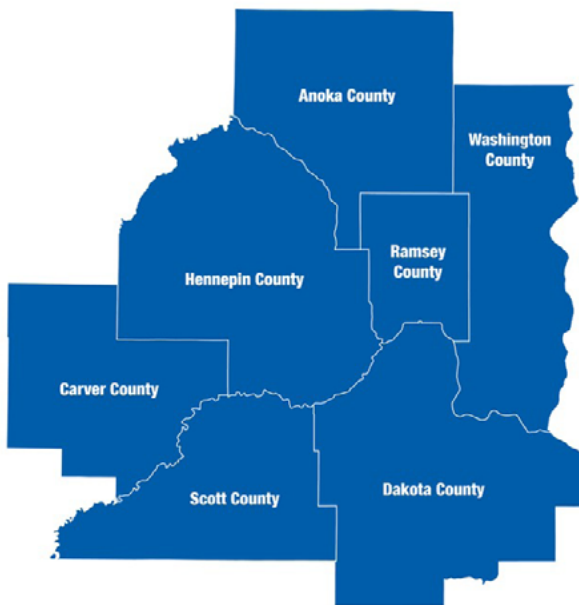
Transit Fare Elimination Pilot Program: A Report to the Minnesota Legislature

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The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

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About this report

The report on the Transit Fare Elimination Program is submitted to the Minnesota Legislature to satisfy the requirements of [Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 68 Article 4 Section 122, subd 4\(g\)](#), which requires the Metropolitan Council (the Council) to provide a report by February 15, 2025 on the pilot program to the chairs, ranking minority members, and staff of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over transportation policy and finance.

Introduction

Minnesota Statute, Chapter 68, Article 4, Section 122, Subd. 4 required the Metropolitan Council to implement a free fare pilot program from July 1, 2023 to December 31, 2024 for two regular route bus lines, on the entirety of each selected route and during both peak and nonpeak service hours. During the pilot, the Metropolitan Council was also required to provide regular route transit, free of charge to an individual who is (1) certified as disabled under the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements of the Federal Transit Administration or (2) certified as eligible for special transportation services by the Metropolitan Council under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.386, subdivision 2a.

By February 15, 2025, the Metropolitan Council must submit a report on the pilot program to the chairs, ranking minority member and staff of the legislative committee with jurisdiction over transportation policy and finance. At a minimum, the report must include:

1. an overview of pilot program implementation;
2. evaluation of the effects on (i) ridership, (ii) travel time, (iii) service equity, and (iv) rider experience and other measures of quality of life;
3. review of fiscal impacts, including foregone revenue, costs related to service changes, and potential cost efficiencies;
4. analysis of barriers, best practices, economic impacts, and other relevant considerations; and
5. any recommendations regarding any subsequent implementation of free or reduced-fare transit service.



Overview of Pilot Program Implementation

Legislative requirement: Provide an overview of pilot program implementation.

The Transportation Finance Omnibus Bill enacted during the 2023 legislative session required the Metropolitan Council (Council) to implement a transit fare elimination pilot program (“Pilot Program”) from July 1, 2023, to December 31, 2024. Transit service under the Pilot Program was required to be provided free of charge or at a reduced fare for two regular-route bus lines, on the entirety of each selected route and during both peak and non-peak service hours.

During the spring of 2023, Council staff engaged in a process to identify the two recommended routes for the free fare pilot program. Routes 32 and 62 were selected because they serve people who depend on transit, people of color, and people with low incomes. These two routes also represent a geographic balance as Route 32 serves the west metro and Route 62 serves the east metro. Both routes include a mix of core local and supporting local service. The selection of both of these routes will also help the Council evaluate how different routes and market areas respond to free transit services.

Metropolitan Council staff concluded free fares (rather than reduced fares) would provide the best incentive to increase ridership, meet the intent of the legislation, was the easiest to implement by the Legislature’s July 1, 2023, deadline, and provided for faster boarding with a simple, clear transfer policy. Transfers would not be provided on the free routes. Staff presented these recommendations and on June 28, 2023, the Council approved the pilot program through [business item 2023-129](#).

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires transit providers to evaluate the effects of fare policy changes (both increases and decreased) on low-income and Title VI-protected populations. The analysis completed on June 28, 2023, found the pilot would have no disparate impact on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) riders and no disproportionate burden on low-income riders.

During the pilot program, the legislation required the Council to provide regular-route transit service free of charge to individuals who are certified as disabled under the FTA’s Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements or certified by the Council as eligible for Metro Mobility service. The fare-free service to Metro Mobility riders applied to all regular route service; not just the two pilot program regular routes. The Council met with regional providers to coordinate implementation of this Council-established fare policy change for the metropolitan area. On June 28, 2023, with Business Item 2023-129SW, the Metropolitan Council authorized:

1. The implementation of the legislatively-mandated transit fare elimination pilot program on Metro Transit routes 32 and 62 from July 1, 2023, to December 31, 2024.
2. From July 1, 2023, to December 31, 2024, provide all regular-route service free of charge to individuals who are certified as eligible for Metro Mobility.

Marketing & customer communications:

Metro Transit Marketing, Customer Relations, and Revenue Operations departments coordinated efforts for internal and external communication and logistical plans. Internal outreach efforts included operator training and videos that were disseminated to bus garages. Marketing staff created operator bulletins and provided detailed information in Metropolitan Council-wide newsletters and information packets.

Customer notifications were posted at bus stops along the affected routes, shared in electronic rider alerts and on Metro Transit’s website. Farebox hood covers were created to prevent customers from paying fares. Some customers attempted to remove the farebox hoods to attempt to pay fares, especially in the beginning days of the pilot. During the first two weeks of the program, survey teams rode buses on the two free routes to conduct an initial survey of customers and provide information on the free-fare pilot.



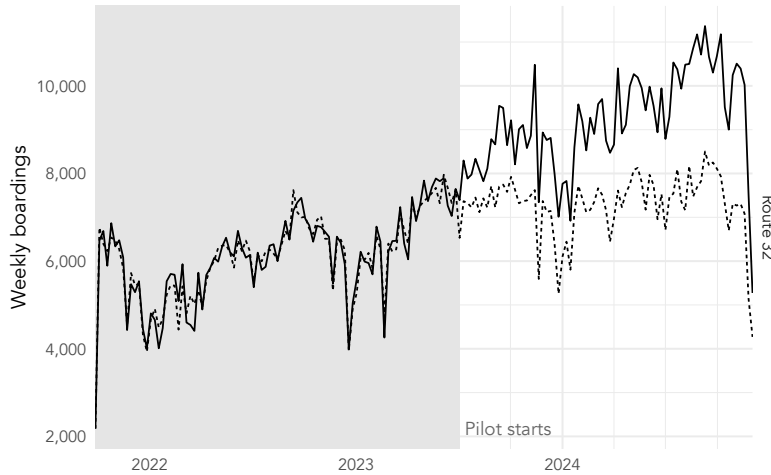
Evaluation

Legislative requirement: Provide an evaluation of the effects on (i) ridership, (ii) travel time, (iii) service equity, and (iv) rider experience and other measures of quality of life.

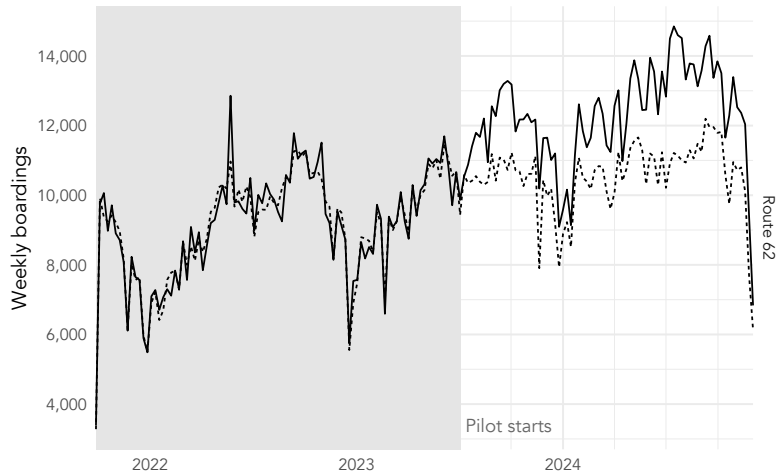
Ridership on routes 32 and 62

Weekly ridership was evaluated before and during the pilot on routes 32 and 62, with similar routes used as a baseline for comparison. This approach allowed staff to isolate ridership growth that was beyond the typical trends of routes operating in a similar environment with similar ridership trends over the same period. Both routes outperformed expectations, which we believe demonstrated ridership growth due to the free fare policy.

On Route 32, there were approximately 143,500 additional boardings¹ above and beyond the predicted performance if free fares had not been implemented. This represents a 26% increase in total boardings since the start of the pilot, when compared to peer routes. In the following graph, observed weekly boardings on Route 32 are shown by the solid line, with the dotted line in the plot showing predicted performance based on the ridership of similar routes not included in the free-fare pilot.



On Route 62, between the beginning of the pilot through December 5, 2024, there were approximately 130,000 additional boardings that are above and beyond the growth experienced by similar routes over the same time. This is a 16.5% increase in total boardings since the start of the pilot. Again, the following graph shows observed weekly boardings on Route 62 as the solid line, with the dotted line in the plot showing predicted performance based on the ridership of similar routes not included in the free-fare pilot.



¹ Ridership analysis was conducted from July 1, 2023-December 5, 2024.

Ridership of Metro Mobility customers

Metro Mobility customers were affected by this pilot program in two ways. First, all fixed routes were available to Metro Mobility-certified customers to ride at no cost. This could be an incentive for certified riders able to use fixed route at certain times of the year or under certain circumstances or when riding with a caregiver. Second, because routes 32 and 62 were offered at no cost, Metro Mobility was required (per federal regulation) to provide free rides on Metro Mobility trips that started and ended along the route 32 and 62 corridors.



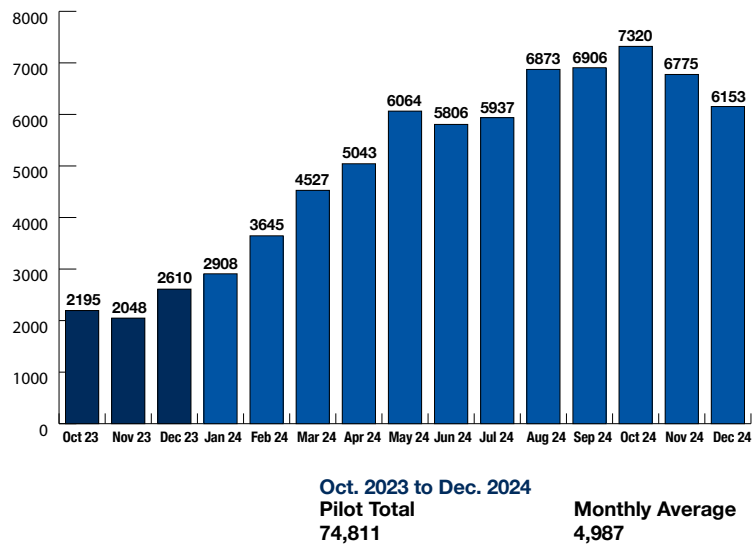
Metro Mobility free rides on fixed routes

Certified Metro Mobility customers using fixed-route service for free began on July 1, 2023. Pass modifications were needed to track these rides and were completed on October 1, 2023. When tracking began, ridership from Metro Mobility customers riding free on fixed routes continued to increase throughout the pilot. Ridership reports indicated more than 74,811 free rides taken by Metro Mobility customers October 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024 without wheelchair over-capacity reports on fixed-route buses throughout the system. Metro Mobility customers used all modes of fixed-route transit – bus rapid transit, light rail, and fixed-route bus service.

Metro Mobility free rides using paratransit service (Route 32 and Route 62 corridors)

Metro Mobility fares, under federal law, are capped at twice the local fixed-route fare. This means that the free-fare pilot on routes 32 and 62 required that Metro Mobility provide free fares for any trip that both started and ended within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on each side of Route 32 and Route 62. In the 18 months immediately preceding the pilot (January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023) Metro Mobility provided 30,598 total one-way trips completely within the 1.5-mile Route 62 corridor, and 12,289 rides completely within the 1.5-mile Route 32 corridor. Through December 5, 2024, the pilot has resulted in 30,778 free Metro Mobility trips within the 1.5 mile-Route 62 corridor, and 12,921 free Metro Mobility trips within the 1.5-mile Route 32 corridor. At an estimated cost of \$50 per Metro Mobility trip, and a total ridership increase in the corridors of 812, the two free fare corridors have resulted in additional operating costs of approximately \$41,000 to the Metro Mobility program.

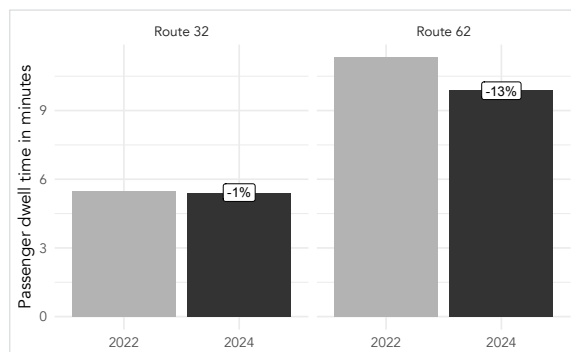
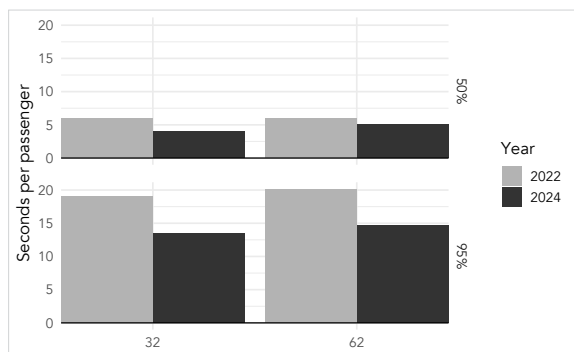
FREE-FARE TRIPS BY METRO MOBILITY CERTIFIED RIDERS ON REGULAR ROUTE TRANSIT



Travel time on routes 32 and 62

Boardings and alightings were about 25% faster on average for fixed routes. Customers typically (50th percentile) saved 1-2 seconds per boarding and saved up to 5 seconds per boarding in the slowest 5% of boardings.

Despite increases in boardings, travel time remained similar due to the vehicle spending less time boarding passengers. The total number of minutes boarding and alighting passengers stayed the same (-1% for Route 32) or decreased (-13% for Route 62) even as the number of passengers increased. This finding is like previous work highlighting the effect of off-board fare payment, a common characteristic of the METRO network (bus rapid transit and light rail).



Metro Transit also conducted a survey (see Appendix A) throughout the pilot period and heard similar observations from customers on travel times.

Service Equity for routes 32 & 62

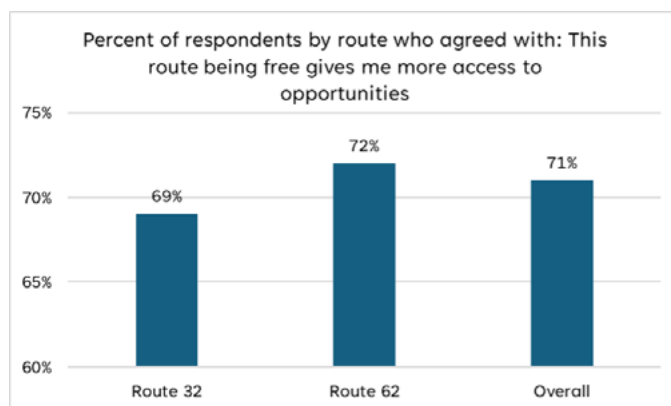
Measuring access to opportunities like school, work, and medical services is one way we evaluate our impact on our region’s residents. The largest increase in access to opportunities is when we increase service by improving frequency or introducing faster service that allows people to travel to more places in less time, making transit more competitive to a personal vehicle. We also know that cost can be a barrier to riding even if service is available, so we surveyed riders and asked them about their ability to make essential trips to evaluate service equity.

We also wanted to understand who benefits from increased access to opportunities and how that compares to known disparities in the region based on income, race or (dis)ability. Surveyed, the riders reported an increase in access to opportunities due to the free fares offered.

The range for Route 32: 56% to 76% over 5 time points

- Range for Route 62: 53% to 87%
- Range for overall: 56% to 78%
- *Was not asked as a multiple-choice question in first round of surveying in summer 2023

Themes from customer open ended comments include: an increase in access to essential trips and increased mobility for pilot riders; essential trips are the most critical to a person’s wellbeing; transportation is not only a ‘lifesaver’ but it also creates opportunities for a more complete and fulfilling life.



Surveyed riders were more likely to belong to underrepresented groups compared to the Twin Cities region and other transit riders, on average. The surveys conducted during the pilot period onboard routes 32 and 62 demonstrated that riders were more likely to have lower incomes and less likely to be able to drive. This demonstrates the routes selected for the pilot project were aligned with the requirements of the pilot.

Household Income

Almost half of riders surveyed on routes 32 and 62 had household incomes of less than \$30,000. According to the most recent comprehensive demographic survey of transit riders (source: Travel Behavior Index (TBI) onboard survey), 33% of Metro Transit trips are made by riders with household incomes less than \$25,000, and 43% of trips are made by those with less than \$35,000. This means the free-fare pilot served low-income riders at a higher rate than Metro Transit service overall. This also supports that any reduction of fares will have a more positive effect on pilot riders compared to other riders.

Household Income	Both Routes		Route 32		Route 62	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Less than \$30,000	348	49%	223	53%	125	44%
\$30,000-\$49,999	169	24%	96	23%	73	25%
\$50,000-\$79,999	119	17%	56	13%	63	22%
\$80,000-\$99,999	30	4%	18	4%	12	4%
\$100,000-\$149,999	24	3%	16	4%	6	3%
\$150,000 or more	17	2%	11	3%	6	2%

More than half of all Metro Transit trips are made by riders whose household income is less than \$60,000 (TBI onboard survey). The median household income of the region is around \$83,000 (ACS 2016-2020). Keeping transit fares low benefits those most in need of affordable transportation.

Vehicle access

More than half (63%) of riders surveyed on Routes 32 and 62 did not have a valid license or were unable to drive. An additional 17% did have a license but did not have a vehicle regularly available to drive. Therefore, only about 20% of survey respondents could reliably drive a personal vehicle for their transportation.

	Both Routes		Route 32		Route 62	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
No license or unable to drive	531	63%	305	63%	226	63%
License/able to drive	311	37%	180	37%	131	37%
No car available	147	17%	91	19%	54	15%
1 car	116	14%	61	13%	55	15%
2 cars	34	4%	19	4%	14	4%
3 cars or more	14	2%	8	2%	6	2%
No answer	3	0%	1	0%	2	1%

Race

We asked survey respondents to self-identify their race. Approximately two-thirds (66%) of riders surveyed were people of color. Half of these respondents (33%) identified as Black, African, or African American. According to the most recent comprehensive demographic survey of transit riders, 55% of Metro Transit trips are made by riders of color. According to the American Community Survey (ACS 2017-2021), 29% of regional residents are people of color. This means the free-fare pilot served riders of color at a higher rate than Metro Transit service overall.

Race	Both Routes		Route 32		Route 62	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
American Indian or Alaskan Native	27	3%	16	3%	11	3%
Asian or Asian American	48	6%	23	5%	25	7%
Black, African, or African American	275	33%	160	33%	115	32%
Hispanic, LatinX, or Latino	90	11%	52	11%	38	11%
Middle Eastern or North African	8	1%	5	1%	3	1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	5	1%	4	1%	1	0%
White	277	33%	158	33%	119	33%
Other	3	0%	2	0%	1	0%
Multiple	96	11%	58	12%	38	11%
Prefer not to answer	9	1%	4	1%	5	1%

Disability

Similar to other demographic variables measured, the free-fare pilot served riders with disabilities at a considerably higher rate than Metro Transit service overall (13% of Metro Transit trips were made by people with at least one disability).

Over a third (35%) of riders who completed the pilot survey identified as having at least one disability, and there was a slightly higher rate on Route 32 than on Route 62. In addition, 12% of respondents (n=103) were Metro Mobility users, which strongly supports that implementation of lower fixed-route fares can reduce ADA trip demand.

Disability	Both Route		Route 32		Route 62	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
One (most common: mental health, vision, learning)	181	24%	110	26%	71	22%
Multiple	84	11%	52	12%	32	10%
None	485	65%	264	62%	221	68%

Language

The survey was available in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong. About 14% of riders who completed the survey used a language other than or in addition to English, which is comparable to the most recent demographic survey that found 18% of trips were made by riders who spoke a language other than English at home.

Language	Both Routes		Route 32		Route 62	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
English	700	86%	396	86%	304	86%
Arabic	2	0%	2	0%	0	
Hmong	2	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Karen	2	0%	0		2	1%
Russian	1	0%	0		1	0%
Spanish	26	3%	22	5%	4	1%
Other	1	0%	0		1	0%
Multiple	79	10%	39	8%	40	11%
Multiple	96	11%	58	12%	38	11%
Prefer not to answer	9	1%	4	1%	5	1%

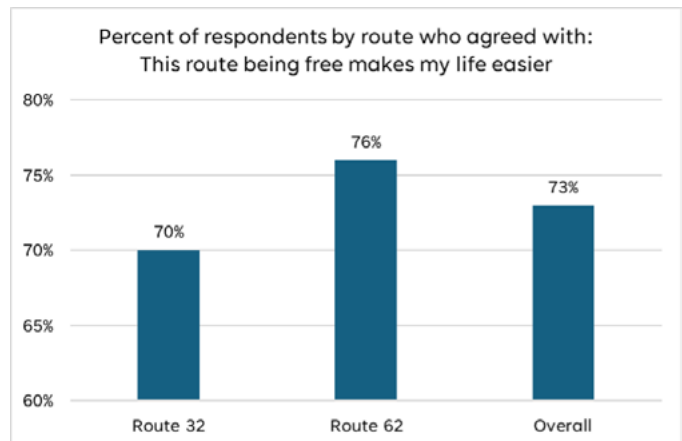
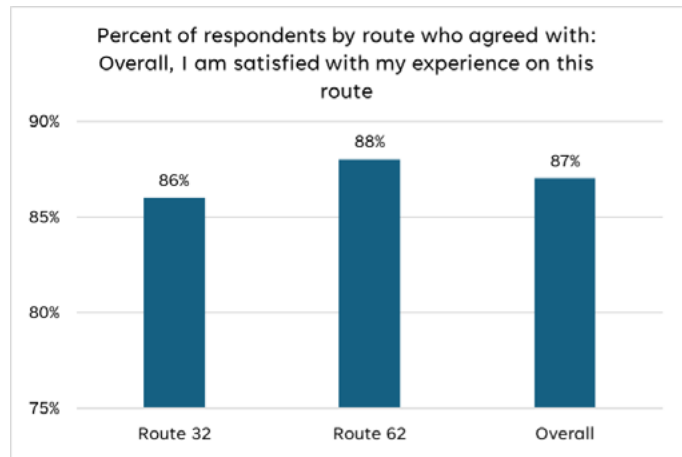
Rider Experience and Other Measures of Quality of Life

The demographic trends of transit riders and these specific route riders would indicate that there would be a high agreement with the impact of free fares, and this was reported through the survey questions and open-ended comments. Reducing the financial burden of riders does increase satisfaction and have positive impacts on their experience. Riders surveyed reported high satisfaction on both routes over time, ranging from 78% to 97% of respondents across the six survey times for Route 32, and from 75% to 94% for Route 62.

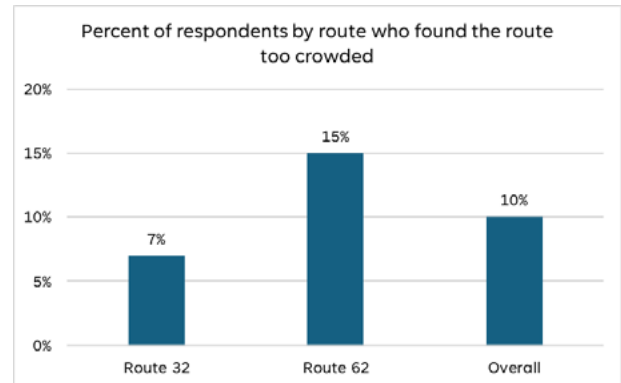
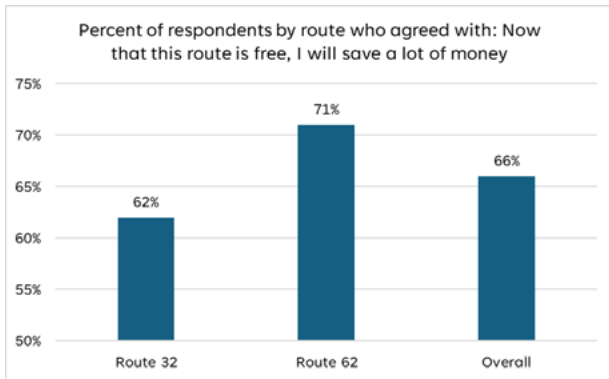
Most respondents reported that the routes being free made their lives easier. Across the five* survey times for Route 32, 53% to 79% of respondents agreed, and from 59% to 88% for Route 62. With each survey, there was higher agreement among Route 62 riders.

- *Question was not asked as a multiple-choice question in first round of surveying in summer 2023

Survey respondents consistently agreed that the pilot saved them money and allowed them to invest more in other essentials like groceries and caring for children. Agreement was consistently higher for Route 62 riders relative to Route 32 riders throughout the pilot on this question.



There were relatively few negative attitudes towards the free fares. Generally, agreement that the pilot routes were too crowded was low. Between 3 and 12% of respondents agreed Route 32 was too crowded over the pilot period. A higher range, between 10 and 26% of respondents agreed Route 62 was too crowded.



Fiscal Impacts

Legislative requirement: Provide a review of fiscal impacts, including foregone revenue, costs related to service changes, and potential cost efficiencies.

Foregone Revenue

Based on the Ridership Forecasting Model, free rides on Route 32 and 62 reduced fare revenue by \$1,110,000. This only includes the revenue of the rides that would have been collected if the routes were not free.

An additional \$185,725 was lost in fares for 43,000 Metro Mobility customers offered free rides on paratransit service due to federal regulations requiring free rides on paratransit within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile on each side of free fixed-route rides. Systemwide, 74,811 customers took advantage of free rides on fixed routes with a potential loss of fixed-route revenue of \$74,811 at the \$1 reduced-fare rate for customers with disabilities. While it's unknown how many trips would have otherwise been taken using Metro Mobility service, the potential maximum lost fare revenue in the program is \$317,199.

Costs related to service changes

Additional fixed-route service was not provided to support the Free Ride Pilot, so no incremental operational costs were incurred for the fixed-route system.

Federal regulations require free paratransit service for corridors within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on both sides of free fixed routes. This 1.5-mile corridor for free Metro Mobility rides along routes 32 and 62 increased demand by less than 2%, resulting in increased operating costs of approximately \$41,000.

Additional expenses included marketing and informational materials, training for staff, fare equipment covers, and resources for surveying the effects of the routes. These additional expenses were approximately \$75,000.

Potential cost efficiencies

The free rides on fixed routes for Metro Mobility customers resulted in the most significant cost efficiency. Metro Transit logged 74,811 Metro Mobility riders taking advantage of free rides on fixed-route service. This evaluation did not include significant efforts that would be required to evaluate how many fixed-route trips may not have been taken, or taken using Metro Mobility, so it is not possible to infer specific cost savings to the Metro Mobility program. As a maximum (albeit unlikely) total, if every trip taken on fixed route was a 1:1 replacement of Metro Mobility ride, a cost savings to Metro Mobility would total approximately \$3,740,550. Metro Mobility riders took advantage of the free rides on all modes including bus rapid transit, light rail, and regional provider service with 75% of these rides using Metro Transit fixed-route buses.

Metro Transit and Metro Mobility experienced minimal additional cost efficiencies with minimal increases or decreases in service costs, maintenance, or fare collection expenses.

Barriers, Best Practices, Economic Impacts

Legislative requirement: Provide an analysis of barriers, best practices, economic impacts, and other relevant considerations.

Barriers for the agency

Free rides for all customers on fixed routes triggered the need for Metro Mobility to provide trips fare-free within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on both sides of each route. Overall demand increased around 2% in comparison to the period prior to free Metro Mobility fares for these trips. While the observed increase was modest, a large-scale deployment could strain operational capacity and require increased state subsidy as the result of increased demand and reduced fare revenue. Increased demand on Metro Mobility could risk jeopardizing federal compliance due to a lack of adequate vehicle and driver resources.

In addition, free fares, and the resulting loss in passenger fare revenue, would represent a significant impact to funding to support agency operations. If this revenue loss was not off-set by new or additional sources, the agency would be forced to evaluate on-going investments such as the level of service and frequency provided across the system.

Barriers for Customers

Providing select fare-free routes added complexity to communicating and maintaining an accessible and simple network. Riders saw and heard conflicting messages on a single trip. Riders on free routes still had to pay full fares if they transferred to another route limiting the benefits of ease of pay and cost saving.

Customers not living near the free routes did not benefit, reducing overall equity, and increasing confusion about whether they need to pay.

Some customers reported that they observed increased inappropriate behavior attributed to free fares. Although the reports were not widespread, customers were aware of increased inappropriate behavior.

*Source: Fall 2023 Metro Transit Customer Satisfaction and Security Survey

Best Practices

The 18-month Transit Fare Elimination Pilot Program which included routes 32 and 62, grew ridership 26% and 16.5% respectively above the overall system ridership increase during this period. Although free rides attract more ridership,* best practices most effective for improving and maintaining increased ridership include: service frequency, accessibility, simple fare structure, community engagement, marketing and communication, infrastructure improvements, and sustainability.

**Sources: Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Urban Institute- Transportation Success, TransitCenter – Fare Framework, Miovision: Strategies for getting more people to use public transit in your city*

Economic Impacts

Approximately 60% of survey respondents agreed that the free-ride pilot would save them money. Survey respondents appreciated the extra money available to them for other needs. This was minimized if the customer transferred to another route requiring full fare payment.

Recommendations

Legislative requirement: Provide any recommendations regarding any subsequent implementation of free or reduced-fare transit service.

Council staff make the following recommendations based on the impacts and survey results of the 18-month Transit Fare Elimination Pilot Program.

Continue incentivizing Metro Mobility-certified customers to use fixed-route services

Reducing or eliminating fares for paratransit customers using regular-route buses and trains provided additional mobility options, reduced customer costs, and simplified use of the system. Metropolitan Council staff are committed to making it easier for all customers to pay their fares. While the Council does not have authority² to continue free fares, a significantly reduced pilot fare will take effect across the first half of 2025. As described below, effective January 1, 2025, the Council implemented a 1-cent ride pilot program for regular-route rides by certified Metro Mobility customers. This pilot will conclude June 30, 2025, and provides time for the legislature to consider 2023-2024 pilot results. Use of regular-route buses by certified Metro Mobility customers steadily increased across the pilot program, increased use did not result in increased transit operating costs, and only modestly reduced fare revenues.

Fare-free rides were required on Metro Mobility services in the pilot program for paratransit trips along the Route 32 and Route 62 corridors. This resulted in modestly higher demand for Metro Mobility, increased costs, and decreased program revenue. As the Metro Mobility program transitions to a state forecast base program in state fiscal year 2026, additional costs in future pilots or expansions of the Metro Mobility program would be a state cost responsibility. Larger increases in demand could also strain Metro Mobility operating capacity and risk reduced service quality due to potential operator and vehicle shortages.

² Minnesota Statutes Section 473.408 requires the Council create and enforce uniform fare policies, with two narrow exceptions (one permissive, one mandatory) outside of the 2023 pilot. State law does not provide the Metropolitan Council broader authority to waive fares for other individuals. Therefore, under the canon of statutory construction (Minnesota Statutes section 645.19) the Council must conclude it does not have authority to extend or continue free fares except by specific legislative authorization.



Simplification of fare policy

Ease of use and faster boarding times were just a few of the benefits documented during the 18-month free fare pilot. To further improve the overall customer experience, while providing consistent and clear communication, Council staff recommend implementing fare simplification policies and improving fare payment technology.

On October 28, 2024, the Metropolitan Council adopted a package of fare policy changes with the goal of simplifying the fare structure and improving the overall customer experience. The details of these changes are included in the following table. These changes went into effect on January 1, 2025.

Regional Fare Policy Changes		
	Prior to Jan. 1, 2025	Jan. 1, 2025, All Day
Adult Fare on Local Bus/METRO	\$2.50	\$2.00
Reduced Fare (youth, seniors & Medicare)	\$2.50	\$1.00
Metro Mobility Peak Fare	\$4.50	\$4.00
Metro Mobility Off Peak Fare	\$3.50	\$3.50
Transit Link Circulator Fare	-	\$1.00
Metro Mobility Certified rider on regular route bus/train	\$0.00 legislatively required through 12/31/2024	\$0.01 six-month pilot, 1/1/2025 – 6/30/2025

To continue to increase the impact of fare policy changes, staff recommends continuing to expand awareness and use of the low-income Transit Assistance Program (TAP). In addition to on-going efforts to raise awareness of the program, as part of the approved fare policy changes, the Metropolitan Council extended the eligibility period for the pass from one to two years. This policy change removes the barrier of participants having to re-apply annually for this program and frees up staff time to improve and manage the program. Improving the TAP partnerships of non-profit organizations in the Twin Cities region builds transit connections to the communities and expands outreach beyond the Council's capabilities.

Appendix A

Customer Survey

Riders of routes 32 and 62 were surveyed at six points during the pilot: Summer 2023, Fall 2023, Winter 2024, Spring 2024, Summer 2024, and Fall 2024. Surveyors intercepted people onboard these routes to ensure Metro Transit was hearing directly from riders of routes 32 and 62. At each point, intercepts were conducted over several weeks on different days of the week and at different times of day. The survey was also advertised on signs at bus stops for these routes. The survey was available in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong.

Customer Survey	Number of Completed Surveys
Summer 2023	219
Fall 2023	96
Winter 2024	222
Spring 2024	141
Summer 2024	221
Fall 2024	46

Free Fares on Routes 32 and 62

In July 2023, Metro Transit bus routes 32 and 62 became free for all riders. We'd like to hear from riders about how these free fare programs are going.

Giving your feedback should only take about 5 minutes. Your responses are anonymous and will be kept confidential.

1. Which bus are you riding right now?

- Route 32
- Route 62

2. If #1 = Route 32. Which direction are you taking Route 32?

- Eastbound to Rosedale Transit Center
- Westbound to Robbinsdale Transit Center

2. If #1 = Route 62. Which direction are you taking Route 62?

- Northbound to Shoreview/Little Canada
- Southbound to Saint Paul

3. Did you know this route was free before you got on the bus today?

- No
- Sort of/Not sure
- Yes

4. Have you taken a Metro Transit survey since July 2023 about free fares on this route?*

- No, never
- Yes, earlier today [Respondent disqualified]
- Yes, in the past few days or weeks
- Yes, months ago

5. Did you ride this route before it became free in July 2023?

- No
- Yes

6. [If #5 = No] Is the main reason you started riding this route because it is free?*

- No, I started riding for a different reason
- Yes, I started riding because it is free

7. How often do you ride this route these days?

- Once or twice a year
- A few times a month
- A few times a week
- Almost every day

8. What is the purpose of your trip on this route today? Where are you going right now? I'm going to (a/an)...

- Entertainment/recreation activity (e.g., movie, park, shopping for fun)
- Escort someone else (e.g., drop off, pick up, accompany someone)
- Get a meal (e.g., restaurant, coffee shop, pick up food)
- Home or where I am staying
- Medical/health appointment or pharmacy
- Religious, civic, or volunteer activity
- Run errands
- School or something for school
- Social activity (e.g., visit friends or relatives)
- Work or something for work
- Other (Please explain: _____)

9. Does your current trip include a transfer to or from another Metro Transit route/service? (On this trip, did you transfer to this route from another Metro Transit route/service, or will you transfer from this route to another Metro Transit route/service?)

- No
- Yes (Which route?: _____)

10. How would you have made this trip today if this route were not free?

- I would still take this route (and pay)
- I would NOT make this trip
- Drive myself
- Get a ride from someone I know (e.g., friend or family member)
- Metro Mobility
- Uber, Lyft, taxi, or another paid ride service
- Walk, roll in a wheelchair, or bike
- A different Metro Transit service (e.g., bus, light rail, micro)

Rider Experience

How much do you agree with the following statements?

11. This route is too crowded.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

12. Now that this route is free, I will save a lot of money.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

13. Overall, I am satisfied with my experience on this route.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

14. This route being free makes my life easier.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

15. This route being free gives me more access to opportunities.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

16. How does this route being free make your life easier or give you more access to opportunities?

17. How does this route being free make your life harder, if at all?

Demographics

18. How often do you ride Metro Transit?

- Never
- Once or twice a year
- A few times a month
- A few times a week
- Almost every day

19. Are you a Metro Mobility user?

- Yes
- No

20. How old are you?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 or older

21. How do you describe your race, ethnicity and/or origin? Select all that apply.

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black, African, or African American
- Hispanic, LatinX, or Latino
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other race/ethnicity/origin or prefer to self-describe (Please describe: _____)

22. What is your gender?

- Man
- Non-binary
- Woman
- Other gender or prefer to self-describe (Please describe: _____)

23. Do you have a valid driver's license?/Are you able to drive?

- No
- Yes

24. [If 23 = Yes] How many vehicles in your household are regularly available for you to drive?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3 or more

25. What is your home ZIP Code?

26. How many people live in your household, including you?

27. What was the income of your household in 2022?

- Less than \$30,000
- \$30,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$79,999
- \$80,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

28. How do you describe your disability/ability status, regardless of whether you identify as being disabled? Select all that apply.

- Blindness or low vision
- Deafness or hearing loss
- A learning disability (such as ADHD or dyslexia)
- A developmental disability
- A mobility impairment
- A mental health disability
- A temporary impairment due to illness or injury (such as a broken ankle or surgery)
- A disability not listed above (Please describe your specific disability/ability status: _____)
- I do not identify as having a disability or impairment

29. Which language(s) do you prefer to use? Select all that apply.

- English
- Arabic
- Chinese
- French/Français
- German/Deutsch
- Hmong/Hmoob
- Karen
- Lao
- Russian
- Somali/Soomaaliga
- Spanish/Español
- Vietnamese
- Other: _____

* These questions were not asked during the first round of surveying in July 2023



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