

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

June 20, 2008

AGENDA ITEM NO.: **1A**

Action Requested: APPROVE

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND ACTIONS MEETING OF MAY 30, 2008

The meeting of the Transportation Committee was called to order by Acting Chair Lori Holt Pfeiler (North County Inland) at 10:02 a.m. See the attached attendance sheet for Transportation Committee member attendance.

1. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS/MEMBER COMMENTS

Thomas Arvin, a member of the public, spoke regarding the difficulty of the public to attend public hearings scheduled at 10:00 a.m. on a weekday. He suggested that the transit agencies set up booths at the transit stations to talk to the public on site.

Pat Berry, a member of the public, stated that she is an AARP safe driver instructor and commented that her agency encourages their students to learn about public transit before they lose their driving privileges. She stated that the SPRINTER and BREEZE services are clean and the safety and security are excellent but that the schedules are difficult to read and ticket agents are not always educated about selling passes for transit.

2. PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE FARE ORDINANCE TO MODIFY EXISTING TRANSIT FARE STRUCTURE

Dan Levy, Senior Planner, presented the item. He stated that this is the first of two public hearings for establishing transit fares for Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and North County Transit District (NCTD). The fare changes being proposed at this time are needed in order to meet the financial needs of the transit agencies, and make the Regional Comprehensive Fare Ordinance (Ordinance) consistent with the provisions of the *TransNet* Extension Ordinance. Federal regulations require SANDAG to prepare a Title VI analysis to assess the impacts of the proposed fare changes on minorities and low income persons. The Title VI Report will be provided at the June 6, 2008, public hearing, along with a complete projection of the revenue impacts from the proposed changes.

SANDAG is responsible for establishing all public transit fares within San Diego County. SANDAG Board Policy Nos. 025 (Public Participation) and 029 (Regional Comprehensive Fare Policy), as well as federal regulations, require SANDAG to hold hearings to receive public comment whenever fare changes are being considered.

Both MTS and NCTD have requested a number of fare changes to address FY 2009 budget shortfalls. Mr. Levy briefed the committee on the proposed fare changes for NCTD and MTS. Proposed changes for NCTD include for the COASTER increasing adult cash fares by \$0.50 per zone on July 1, 2008, and an additional \$0.50 per zone on January 1, 2009, with

Senior/Medicare/Disabled (S/M/D) fares increasing to equal 50 percent of the adult cash fare, increasing adult monthly pass by \$14.00-\$15.00 on July 1, 2008, and an additional \$14.00-\$15.00 on January 1, 2009, increasing S/M/D monthly pass by \$3.50 on July 1, 2008, and an additional \$3.50 on January 1, 2009, and increasing youth monthly pass by \$7.00 on July 1, 2008, and an additional \$7.00 on January 1, 2009. Proposed changes for the BREEZE and SPRINTER include increasing NCTD day pass by \$0.50 on July 1, 2008, increasing NCTD S/M/D day pass by \$0.25, increasing NCTD adult monthly pass by \$5.00 on July 1, 2008, and increasing NCTD College Monthly Pass by \$5.00 on July 1, 2008. The proposed change for LIFT (Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] service) is to eliminate fares for passengers riding Lift who also ride BREEZE or SPRINTER on July 1, 2008. In addition, SANDAG also is proposing as an alternative that the BREEZE/SPRINTER day pass be phased out in December 2008, and be replaced with the Regional Day Pass at \$5.00. Elimination of the BREEZE/SPRINTER Day Pass will only be feasible if the current revenue sharing agreements are also modified in the Ordinance. Discussions with the MTS and NCTD are currently underway to see if these changes can be made as part of these proposed fare changes.

Proposed changes for MTS include implementation of an adult cash fare of \$1.00 and an S/D/M fare of \$0.50 on September 1, 2008, for the Sorrento Valley Coaster Connection (SVCC) and implementation of adult monthly passes as a supplement to 2 and 3 Zone COASTER passes of \$40.00 per month, an S/D/M pass of \$10.00 per month, and Youth passes of \$20.00 on September 1, 2008.

Proposed changes to San Diego Trolley fares involve eliminating the existing zone structure and replacing it with a flat fare structure. Two possible options are proposed: Option 1 – a flat fare of \$2.25 with no transfers between trolley lines; and Option 2 – a flat fare of \$2.50, with free transfers between trolley lines. Both options produce the same amount of revenue and would retain the existing downtown fare zone with a fare of \$1.25, but each has advantages and disadvantages relative to the issue of transfers between bus and trolley routes. The first option creates consistency between the bus and trolley system in terms of eliminating transfers between routes (bus transfers were eliminated as of January 1, 2008), and having the same \$2.25 cash fare. The \$2.25 cash fare also minimizes the cost for passengers using the buses or trolleys for shorter distanced travel. Passengers traveling on multiple trolley and bus routes have the \$5.00 Regional Day Pass available that allows for unlimited use. The second option charges a higher fare of \$2.50 but allows for travel anywhere on the trolley system, including free trolley to trolley transfers (but does not allow transfers to/from the bus system). This option responds to concerns over the “forced transfer” between the Blue and Green Lines at Old Town due to the fact that the new low-floor trolley vehicles used on the Green Line cannot operate south of Old Town until such time as the stations are modified to accept the low-floor vehicles. However, since most passengers make roundtrips, the price of a roundtrip under this option ($2 \times \$2.50 = \5.00) is the same as the Regional Day Pass that passengers would already use under the first option. MTS is currently evaluating the merits of the two options. Their recommendation, along with public input received to date, will be used to develop a SANDAG staff recommendation that will be outlined at the May 30, 2008, Transportation Committee meeting.

It also is proposed that new S/M/D and Youth monthly passes be introduced for the Premium Express Service to be consistent with the *TransNet* Extension Ordinance and regional practice. The new Premium Express youth pass would sell for \$45.00 and the new S/M/D monthly pass would sell for \$22.50 beginning on September 1, 2008.

Proposed fare changes affecting both NCTD and MTS include amending the Ordinance to better reflect the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidance and regulations for the ADA Paratransit services operated by NCTD (Lift) and MTS (Access). Two options are to be considered by the Transportation Committee. The first option uses the specific wording from the FTA guidance that up to double the fixed-route fare can be charged, while the second option proposes uses the same wording but adds that the fare be capped at \$5.00 or twice the maximum regular fare for corridor service. The purpose of the cap is to ensure that ADA systems users are not faced with an excessive fare increase as a result of changing the language of the Ordinance.

Regarding the current Regional Monthly Pass, two changes are proposed: (1) transition the current calendar monthly pass to a 30-day rolling pass; and (2) introduce a 14-day rolling pass. A rolling pass allows the user to purchase the pass on any day of the month and is valid from the first day of use for either 14 or 30 days. The proposed changes are in response to issues raised during the last fare change hearing process in 2007 when many people commented on the difficulty of paying for a monthly bus pass at the beginning of the month when rent and other expenses are due. At that time, the Transportation Committee asked that staff evaluate how passes could be made easier to purchase by low income riders. The combination of a rolling pass along with the ability to purchase either a 14-day or 30-day rolling pass will provide a much higher level of convenience and flexibility for transit riders. Both rolling passes are proposed to be introduced in January 2009, in conjunction with the full implementation of the Compass Card. The 14-day pass would be priced at 60 percent of a 30-day pass to ensure that there is no revenue loss for MTS and NCTD.

For the Regional Premium Day Pass, the proposed change would extend the use of the Pass to the COASTER and increase the fare \$3.00 to \$14.00 effective July 1, 2009. Extending the validity of the Regional/Premium Day Pass to include the COASTER is highly desirable, but could not be implemented until July 1, 2009, when the Compass Card is fully deployed.

Mr. Levy briefed the committee on the Title VI analysis and stated that SANDAG received a number of public comments by letter and email and staff will prepare a summary of the comments and responses with the June 6, 2008, Transportation Committee agenda item.

The draft final report for the Comprehensive Regional Fare Structure and Revenue Sharing Study will be available later this summer. The aim of the study is develop a new simplified and consolidated fare structure for MTS and NCTD that takes advantage of Compass Card and fairly shares revenue between the systems. The goal of SANDAG and the consultants is to meet or exceed the revenue needs of the operators with the least impact on ridership. As part of the study process, SANDAG and the fare consultant held a series of five public open houses to discuss fare issues with members of the public. Organizations representing minorities and people of limited means were invited to participate and notices were placed on all transit vehicles, and advertised in local newspapers. More than 125 people turned out and discussed what they like and dislike about the existing fares and provided input on some of the proposed structural changes. The draft report will factor the comments received into the consultant's recommendations on changes to the fare structure and revenue sharing. The draft report, along with a detailed listing of the comments made at the open houses, will be brought to the MTS and NCTD Boards and Transportation Committee for review later this summer. Based on that review, staff will then develop recommendations on

a new ordinance for consideration by the Transportation Committee and Board of Directors that would supersede the existing Ordinance and go into effect in January 2009.

Councilmember Jerry Rindone (South County) stated the MTS Board of Directors does not support Option A because it doubles the cost of transfers from trolley to trolley unless the passenger purchases a day pass. The MTS Executive Committee supports Option B.

Don Betts, a member of the public stated his opposition to the proposed fare changes.

Christine K. Faschini, a member of the public submitted the following written questions and read them into the record: (1) where can the annual financial reports for the COASTER and shuttle programs be obtained?; (2) How much of the annual shortfall in revenue is estimated to be due to nonpaying COASTER passengers?; (3) Where did this basically honor system of passenger ticket usage come from? Can you identify a prior successful model and why didn't other systems like in Los Angeles or D.C be used as a model?; (4) Assuming the price of gas will not go down and the COASTER ridership will go up, what provisions are being made to expand park and ride capabilities at the various stations? For example, the parking lot at Poinsettia is maxed out yet building is going up all around it ensuring that there will be no room for expansion. Passengers going to afternoon Padres games have to park on the dirt embankments next to the tracks due to lack of parking space.

Mr. Levy replied that financial statements can be found in the NCTD budget and SANDAG is working with NCTD on a Smart Parking Study and is working on other options to increase parking at transit stations. He stated that the honor system is used universally for rail systems throughout the country and he was not sure what the rate is for fare evasion.

Karen King (NCTD) commented that fare evasion is under 5 percent, and that she could not recall for certain, but thought it was approximately three percent.

Mike Winter, a member of the public, commented that the public outreach on the COASTER regarding the fare changes did not allow enough time for the public to respond. He stated that holding the public hearing at 10:00 a.m. did not allow for the public to attend and the meeting should have been held in the evening to allow for more public attendance. He stated his opposition to the fare increases.

Ann Balancio, a member of the public, stated her opposition to the fare increases in the Sorrento Valley area and the implementation of a fee for the shuttle. She stated that many riders on her route have expressed that they would not be riding transit anymore but would be taking their cars and asked if staff considered loss of ridership with the fee increase.

Kurt Luhrsen, representing NCTD, stated that the NCTD Board of Directors supports a fare increase for the day pass to \$4.50 and have used that number in its budget planning process. NCTD feels that increase will provide sufficient funding and any further increase is not warranted and so they do not support an increase to \$5.00. He stated that NCTD has reviewed the implementation of a surcharge for the Sorrento Valley Coaster connection and the Board believes this is a stop gap measure for nine months and that SANDAG needs to find a permanent funding source for this service. Additionally, the Board feels that the smart card must be fully functional by the time the surcharge is implemented so passengers can pay the surcharge with the smart card. NCTD would like a survey of passengers before

and after the surcharge to monitor the success or failure of the surcharge and to garner public comments.

Mayor Art Madrid (East County) stated that if the greater number of passengers is those that purchase day passes because the passengers can't afford the upfront cost of a monthly pass why hasn't NCTD considered implementing an income based program.

Mr. Luhrsen stated that NCTD has not considered an income-based fare structure in the past but in his experience the administrative costs to support an income-based program would be high and it may be burdensome to maintain the database necessary to support the program due to high turnover rate in passengers.

Mayor Madrid stated that NCTD has conducted numerous surveys and asked Mr. Luhrsen what their survey shows for the reasons why people ride public transit and Mr. Luhrsen replied that people ride transit for many different reasons. He stated that some passengers can't drive for one reason or another, or prefer to ride to avoid parking costs or other associated costs of driving, or transit may be more reliable or less time consuming. He stated that there is a wide range of reasons why people take public transit.

Mayor Madrid asked Mr. Luhrsen if he would take the idea of an income-based program to his Board for consideration and Mr. Luhrsen replied that that he believed that a regional study would need to be done that would look at impacts, costs, and benefits prior to the NCTD Board consideration of this type of income-based program.

Supervisor Ron Roberts (County of San Diego) commented that there appears to be a large number of passengers who purchase the more costly day pass because they can't afford the large outlay for a monthly pass. He stated that he has been working with local agencies to put a revolving loan program in place that would provide a method for passengers to buy a less expensive monthly pass instead of a more expensive day pass. Supervisor Roberts asked if there was a method to allow the smart card to process the cost of a monthly pass for a day pass user; in effect SANDAG would sell a monthly pass in payment increments of the cost of a daily pass. A user would use the smart card daily and at the point where the cost reaches the cost of a monthly pass, the card would no longer charge the passenger for riding transit.

Samuel Johnson, Chief Technology Officer replied that the smart card or Compass Card does have that capability and SANDAG is working on incorporating that type of program. The program is being used overseas and is called "The Fare's Fair." Basically, the card monitors the individual's usage and once a passenger reaches a certain level, the card will give them the best value for their money.

Supervisor Roberts commented that this program is important and would achieve the goal of providing a method for passengers to afford a monthly pass at the cost of a daily pass. He requested that staff bring forward all of these types of options to the Committee for review.

Ed Gallo (NCTD) commented that the fare increases will not solve the funding problems for public transit. He stated that public transportation will always be subsidized and the State of California needs to make the determination that funding needs to be available to the agencies to continue to provide public transportation and to continue to provide this

necessary service to the public. He stated that both transit agencies are working diligently to provide the maximum amount of service with the funding available.

Thomas Arvin, a member of the public stated his support for the 14-day pass but commented that it was not available in North County and asked why those who did not have the 14-day pass available would be penalized by paying 60 percent more due to the fare increase. He commented that the \$5 day pass supported by SANDAG instead of the \$4.50 supported by NCTD would be implemented July 1, 2008, not in August as supported by NCTD.

Mr. Levy responded that the 14-day pass would be valid in North County; the fare level was set at 60 percent so that the transit agencies do not lose money, and the increase for the day pass would be to \$4.50 in July, 2008, and to \$5.00 in January, 2009.

Misty Nicol, a member of the public, stated that the public hearing should be held in the evening so that more public can attend and provide comments and she asked why a student discount is not offered for the COASTER.

Susan Frank, a member of the public commented that she is a COASTER rider because the COASTER shuttle provides transportation from the station to her place of work. She stated her opposition to the cost increase for the COASTER shuttle connection. She commented that the shuttle service is contracted and that is unfortunate that the contractor underbid the service and can't fund the cost without the fare implementation but in her opinion, passengers should not be penalized for the contractor underbidding for the service.

Bob Emery (MTS) asked for staff to provide an explanation for the cost increase for the COASTER connection because it is not a contracted service or due to underbidding but due to loss of revenue sources. Mr. Levy stated that the COASTER connection costs approximately \$1 million per year and the cost increase is due to the fact that the COASTER connection has lost significant funding sources from the Air Pollution Control District, decreased sales tax revenues, and Caltrans funding from the Interstate 5 (I-5) mitigation impact which has created a funding gap that must be filled and a portion of it will be filled by the fare. The fare is a temporary solution for nine months and SANDAG is working at finding a more permanent solution to fund this service.

Mayor Madrid commented that the public needs to be better informed regarding the reason for the implementation of this fare.

Acting Chair Pfeiler reiterated that the fare did not have anything to do with underbidding of contracted services but was being caused by the loss of funding sources.

Patrick MacIntosh, a member of the public asked if disabled fares would be available for the SPRINTER and local buses and asked if the COASTER pass would also cover the SPRINTER or would he need to purchase an additional monthly pass for the SPRINTER. He stated that the fare structure is difficult to understand. Mr. MacIntosh also commented that the fare machines do not recognize the new bill currency and need to be updated.

Mr. Levy stated that the senior disabled increase is to \$42 in July and \$45.50 in January and that pass covers every transportation service in the county including MTS rural services.

Acting Chair Pfeiler commented that SANDAG is working to clarify the fare structure and reiterated that the disabled monthly pass would cover any transit service he would take.

Renee Stanton, a member of the public, stated her opposition to the fare increase. She expressed her difficulties in making her connection from the bus to the SPRINTER. She stated that the schedule needs to be adjusted to meet passenger needs before any fare increases are made.

Acting Chair Pfeiler closed the public hearing at 11:04 a.m. and called for additional public comments at this time.

R. Algee, a member of the public, expressed his desire to attend the NCTD public meetings and alleged that NCTD security always turns him away.

3. UPCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Transportation Committee is scheduled for Friday, June 6, 2008, at 9 a.m. at SANDAG.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Acting Chair Pfeiler adjourned the meeting at 11:08 a.m.

Attachment: Attendance Sheet

**CONFIRMED ATTENDANCE
SANDAG TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING
MAY 30, 2008**

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA/ ORGANIZATION	JURISDICTION	NAME	MEMBER/ ALTERNATE	ATTENDING	COMMENTS
North County Coastal	City of Carlsbad	Matt Hall	Member	No	
	City of Del Mar	Dave Druker	Alternate	No	
North County Inland	City of Escondido	Lori Holt Pfeiler	Member	Yes	
	City of Vista	Bob Campbell	Alternate	Yes	
East County	City of Santee	Jack Dale (Vice Chair)	Member	No	
	City of La Mesa	Art Madrid	Alternate	Yes	
South County	City of Coronado	Phil Monroe	Member	No	
	City of Chula Vista	Jerry Rindone	Alternate	Yes	
City of San Diego	----	Jim Madaffer (Chair)	Member	No	
	----	Toni Atkins	Alternate	No	
	----	Ben Hueso	Alternate	No	
County of San Diego	----	Ron Roberts	Member	Yes	
	----	Greg Cox	Alternate	No	
	----	Bill Horn	Alternate	No	
Metropolitan Transit System	City of Poway	Bob Emery	Member	Yes	
	MTS	Harry Mathis	Alternate	No	
	City of Chula Vista	Jerry Rindone	Temp Alternate	Yes	
North County Transit District		Ed Gallo	Member	Yes	
		Jerome Stocks	Alternate	No	As ex-officio 2 nd Chair
		Dave Druker	Alternate	No	
San Diego County Regional Airport Authority		Charlene Zettel	Member	Yes	
		Jim Desmond	Alternate	No	
		Ramona Finnilla	Alternate	No	
ADVISORY/LIAISON Caltrans	----	Pedro Orso-Delgado	Member	No	
	—	Bill Figge	Alternate	Yes	
SCTCA	—	Albert Phoenix	Member	No	
		Shane Chapparosa	Alternate	No	