

**SOUND TRANSIT  
STAFF REPORT**

**MOTION NO. M2004-54**

**ST Express Route 550 Fare Structure Alignment**

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Type of Action:</b>	<b>Staff Contact:</b>	<b>Phone:</b>
Board Board	6/10/04 6/17/04	Deferred Discussion/Possible Action	Paul Matsuoka, Policy and Planning Officer Sheila Dezarn, Policy and Planning Program Manager <b>Christie Parker, Project Coordinator</b>	(206) 398-5070  (206) 398-5071  (206) 398-5405

**OBJECTIVE OF ACTION**

To align ST Express Route 550 fares with the regular Sound Transit fare structure.

**ACTION**

Aligns the ST Express Route 550 fare structure with all other Sound Transit bus fares, to discontinue charging King County Metro fares, and to discontinue accepting fare media unique to ST Express Route 550.

**KEY FEATURES**

- In June 2002, the Board adopted a revised fare policy, Resolution No. R99-2-2, which included the following footnote: "Fares on Route 550, which will operate in substantially the same form as King County Metro's former Route 226, will remain at applicable King County fare levels, until such time as significant improvements in service levels are made or significant speed and reliability enhancements are made along the route. At such time, the Executive Director shall recommend for Board approval an increase in fares for this route." Service frequency and connections have improved significantly and new buses will be deployed on this route; this serves as the basis for seeking Board approval to align the Route 550 fares with the regular Sound Transit fare structure.
- Aligning the fare structure will discontinue the practice of charging King County Metro fares. Fares for senior/disabled and youth passengers will increase, but will be the same as on all other Sound Transit routes.
- The fare alignment action would discontinue accepting Metro fare media unique to Route 550. This means that Metro's senior/disabled monthly and annual stickers would no longer be valid on the 550, as the sticker is not valid on any other Sound Transit service. The Sound Transit Citizens Accessibility Advisory Committee has recommended that King County Metro's senior/disabled sticker continue to be accepted on Route 550.
- This action would reduce the administrative burden associated with having inconsistent bus fare structures and increase Sound Transit's branding and marketing efficiency by having a consistent, Sound Transit-specific fare structure for all bus routes.

## **BUDGET IMPACT SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND TABLE**

Not applicable for this action.

## **REVENUE, SUBAREA, AND FINANCIAL PLAN IMPACTS**

The Route 550 fare alignment will result in a positive revenue impact to the East King County subarea. Although 2005 boardings are estimated to decrease by 68,000, Sound Transit is projected to receive an additional \$330,000 in revenue.

## **M/W/DBE – SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION**

Not applicable for this action.

## **HISTORY OF PROJECT**

### **Prior Board or Committee Actions and Relevant Board Policies**

<b>Motion or Resolution Number</b>	<b>Summary of Action</b>	<b>Date of Action</b>
R2003-18	Approving the 2003 Service Implementation Plan.	12/11/03
R99-2-2	Revision to Resolution No. R99-2-1, Sound Transit's fare policy, updating fare zone boundaries along the SR 522 corridor, and changing definition of "children" to those under the age of 6.	6/13/02
R99-2-1	Revision to Resolution No. R99-2, Sound Transit's fare policy, to describe transfer rules.	7/27/00
R99-2	Establishing fare policy and establishing pricing for fares related to Sound Transit public transportation services.	2/11/99
M98-54	Supporting the fare integration framework developed by elected officials from Pierce Transit, King County Metro Transit, Community Transit, Everett Transit, and Sound Transit through a series of Fare Policy Forums.	7/23/98

Sound Transit began operating the King County Metro Bellevue-Seattle Route 226 in September 1999. The route name was changed to ST Express Route 550, but the Metro Breda buses were not replaced. Sound Transit kept the Metro fare structure in place with the understanding that the route would change to ST Express fares once significant service improvements were made. Service frequency and connections have improved significantly since Sound Transit took over the route. Since 1999, Sound Transit has added 75 trips weekly to Route 550.

In addition, the new fare structure would be effective February 1, 2005, and would coincide with the full deployment of new state-of-the-art hybrid buses on Route 550. Sound Transit will begin receiving its new electric/diesel hybrid coaches later this year, phasing them into service on Route 550 from September 2004 through early 2005. All of the new electric/diesel hybrids are quiet, low-floor, comfortable, and climate controlled and will be running by February 2005. The 2003 Service Implementation Plan (SIP) notes that "With the delivery of new air conditioned hybrid buses in 2005 and the cumulative effect of a number of small service improvements implemented since 1999, it may be appropriate to consider making the Route 550 fare structure

consistent with the rest of the ST Express system. Staff recommends that this issue be evaluated as part of the 2004 SIP work plan.”

The current fare structure is very confusing. Passengers frequently do not understand what to pay on Route 550. The public does not know why Route 550 fares are different from other Sound Transit fares. Transfer values are confusing because a two-zone Metro transfer is worth only one zone on Route 550 despite the fact that the fare prices are the same; similarly, a two-zone Route 550 transfer is only worth one zone on Metro. For these reasons, Route 550 experiences more fare disputes with drivers and customers than any other Sound Transit route.

Because Route 550 operates on the Metro fare structure, Sound Transit accepts various Metro fare media, notably senior/disabled stickers, which are not valid on other Sound Transit service. Converting to the standard Sound Transit fare structure would eliminate inequities and streamline all ST Express route fares.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF DELAY**

The proposed fare alignment has been timed to correspond with the full implementation of new low-floor hybrid buses on the Sound Transit Route 550 and the February 2005 service change.

### **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Although staff is not recommending an increase in the basic fare structure, the proposal to align the Route 550 fare structure is the first Sound Transit fare adjustment. Therefore, staff has used public outreach processes that are similar to those for service changes. Staff has coordinated activities with the 2004 SIP public outreach process.

Information about the proposal was included in the May 1, 2004, issue of *Regional Transit News*. The 20,000 newsletters include a postage-free comment card to solicit public input regarding the proposed alignment by no later than May 28, 2004. Since Route 550 provides express bus service between downtown Bellevue, Mercer Island, and downtown Seattle, 5,480 newsletters were mailed directly to households in Bellevue and Mercer Island. Other newsletters were distributed by street teams aboard the 550. Additional newsletters were distributed to senior centers, libraries, and other facilities, as well as individuals on Sound Transit's standard mailing list. *Regional Transit News* and the public comment card were also posted on the Sound Transit website on May 7, 2004. A "Rider Notice" poster about the proposed change was posted on board 550 vehicles on May 19, 2004, and stayed on board the coaches for about a week.

A presentation was made to the Citizens Accessibility Advisory Committee (CAAC) on March 23, 2004. The CAAC reluctantly endorsed the recommendation to align the Route 550 fares and requested that the King County Metro senior/disabled sticker continue to be accepted on this route. The proposed alignment would result in a fourfold increase for senior/disabled riders riding two zones during off-peak (from 25 cents to \$1.00).

Frequently asked questions regarding Route 550 fare alignment were posted on the Sound Transit website on May 7, 2004. An open house was held in Seattle on May 18 and in Bellevue on May 19, 2004. A public hearing was held June 3, 2004. Notice about the public hearing was provided at the Metro customer service office, Bellevue Transit Center, aboard Route 550, and in the May 20, 2004, issue of the *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce*.

## **FACTORS TO CONSIDER**

- Improving clarity and increasing simplicity for passengers and drivers.
- Charging consistent amounts for all Sound Transit bus riders.
- Reducing customer complaints and fare disputes.
- Reducing the administrative burden associated with having two inconsistent bus fare structures within the same agency.
- Increasing Sound Transit branding and marketing efficiency by having a consistent, Sound Transit-specific fare structure for all bus routes.
- Fares for senior/disabled and youth passengers on route 550 will increase significantly, but will be the same as on all other Sound Transit routes.
- CAAC has recommended that King County Metro's senior/disabled sticker continue to be accepted on the 550. Staff notes that the sticker is not accepted on any other Sound Transit route and results in inequity and confusion.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends aligning the Route 550 fare structure with all other Sound Transit routes. Staff does not recommend that Sound Transit continue to accept Metro media unique to Route 550 because this practice results in inequity and confusion.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

Sound Transit could continue to charge Metro fares on Route 550.

## **LEGAL REVIEW**

MMB 6/3/04

## SOUND TRANSIT

### MOTION NO. M2004-54

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority to align the ST Express Route 550 fare structure with all other Sound Transit bus fares, to discontinue charging King County Metro fares on the Route 550, and to discontinue accepting fare media unique to ST Express Route 550

#### Background:

In June 2002, the Board adopted a revised fare policy, Resolution No. R99-2-2, which included the following footnote: "Fares on Route 550, which will operate in substantially the same form as King County Metro's former Route 226, will remain at applicable King County fare levels, until such time as significant improvements in service levels are made or significant speed and reliability enhancements are made along the route. At such time, the Executive Director shall recommend for Board approval an increase in fares for this route." Service frequency and connections have improved significantly and new buses will be deployed on this route; this serves as the basis for seeking Board approval to align the Route 550 fares with the regular Sound Transit fare structure.

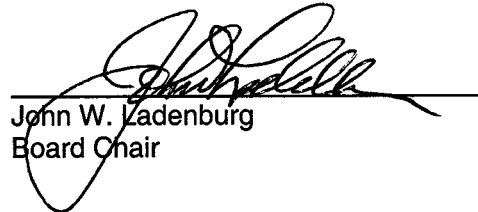
Aligning the fare structure will discontinue the practice of charging King County Metro fares and selected Metro fare media on Route 550. Fares for senior/disabled and youth passengers will increase significantly, but will be the same as on all other Sound Transit routes. The fare alignment action would discontinue accepting Metro fare media unique to Route 550. This means that Metro's senior/disabled monthly and annual stickers would no longer be valid on the 550, as the sticker is not valid on any other Sound Transit service. The Sound Transit Citizens Accessibility Advisory Committee has recommended that King County Metro's senior/disabled sticker continue to be accepted on Route 550.

This action would improve clarity and simplicity regarding Sound Transit fares. It would also reduce the administrative burden associated with having inconsistent bus fare structures within the same agency and increase Sound Transit branding and marketing efficiency by having a consistent, Sound Transit-specific fare structure for all bus routes.

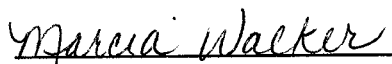
#### Motion:

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority to align the ST Express Route 550 fare structure with all other Sound Transit bus fares, to discontinue charging King County Metro fares on Route 550, and to discontinue accepting fare media unique to the ST Express Route 550.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on June 24, 2004.

  
John W. Vadenburg  
Board Chair

ATTEST:

  
Marcia Walker  
Board Administrator