

Policy Statement 172
Public Comment for Proposed Transit Fare and Service Changes

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Supersedes: October 1, 2016

Adopted by Council: November 16, 2017

Effective: December 1, 2017

PURPOSE:

The Town of Cary is a direct recipient of federal formula transit grants from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Consequently, the Town is required to comply with 49 U.S.C. 5307, which requires the Town to have a “locally developed process to solicit and consider public comment before raising a fare or carrying out a major reduction of transportation.” Further, guidance provided in FTA Circular 9030.1E, “Urbanized Area Formula Program: Program Guidance and Application Instructions” (effective January 16, 2014) requires direct recipients of federal formula transit grants to, by written policy, provide an opportunity for a public hearing or public meeting for any fare increase or major service reduction, and describe how those meetings will be conducted and how the results of those meetings will be considered.

Policy Statement 172 is designed to comply with these requirements by defining a major service reduction, detailing the opportunities for public input through a public hearing or public meeting for fare increases or major service reductions, and detailing how the results of public input received will be considered in the Town’s decisions on increasing fares or reducing service.

COVERAGE:

This policy shall be applicable to all public transit services provided by the Town’s system.

CRITERIA:

It shall be the policy of the Town that no significant change in transit service will be made without having afforded an adequate opportunity for the public to provide feedback regarding the proposed changes. A public participation process will be completed for all proposed “major” service changes and all fare increases, and any public feedback received will be compiled and shared with the Town Council before its consideration of any fare increases or “major” service changes.

Major Service Changes:

For the purposes of this Policy, a “major” service change shall be defined as:

- 1) A twenty-five percent (25%) or greater reduction or addition in the number of route revenue miles or route revenue hours associated with a specific fixed route;
- 2) Any systemwide change(s) concurrently resulting in a fifteen percent (15%) or greater reduction or addition in the number of route revenue miles or route revenue hours for fixed-route services;
- 3) A twenty-five percent (25%) or greater reduction or addition in scheduled stops associated with a specific fixed route; or
- 4) Establishment of a new fixed route or elimination of an existing fixed route that has been in existence for a duration exceeding 12 months without an alternative comparable service or replacement route within three-quarters of a mile of the existing route.

For the purposes of this Policy, the following service changes shall not be classified as “major” service changes:

- 1) Temporary route detours caused by road construction, maintenance, closures, emergencies, labor strikes, fuels shortages or safety concerns;
- 2) Any temporary service addition, change, or discontinuation of a route with less than twelve months of operation;
- 3) Changes on special service routes serving sporting events, special events, or service contracted through other cities or agencies;
- 4) Seasonal service changes; or
- 5) Any service change that does not meet the conditions of a major service changes as defined above.

PUBLIC NOTICE AND HEARING REQUIREMENTS:

Any proposed fare increases or major service changes, as defined above, shall be approved by the Town Council after collection and careful consideration of any public input related to the proposed changes following the process described below:

- 1) A public notice shall be published in the local newspaper(s) (including LEP language newspapers), on the Town website, in Town transit vehicles, major transfer stops within the system, and in mobile applications for real-time bus information at least fourteen (14) days in advance of a public hearing on a proposed change. Notices may also be directly provided to interested persons, neighborhood groups, area colleges, area schools, service organizations, local advocacy groups, businesses, senior centers or other organizations, particularly those deemed by the Transit Services Administrator to be directly affected by the proposed change(s). If deemed appropriate and effective by the Transit Services Administrator, other means of noticing potentially interested persons or organizations may be pursued such as announcements on local radio stations, other media outlets or community forums.
- 2) The public notice shall also function as the opening of a 14-day public comment period, allowing an opportunity for public feedback to be provided by the public to Town staff for compilation and consideration by the Town Council before or at the time of the Council’s consideration of the change(s).
- 3) The public hearing will be held before the Town Council.
- 4) Public notices will contain a description of the proposed service change(s) or fare change; the date, time and location of the public hearing; and contact information for Town staff to receive questions and comments from the public.
- 5) Translations of the public notice will be provided in accordance with the transit system’s Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plan.
- 6) At the public hearing, the proposed changes will be described in detail by Town transit staff, and sufficient time will be given for public comments to be provided to the Town Council.
- 7) The Town Council will consider any public comments before rendering a final decision for any fare increase or major service change.

The Town Manager reserves the right to seek Town Council consideration of approval for any changes that are not defined as major.

While written comments will be encouraged and are preferred to be submitted to an advertised transit staff member’s email address or to the customer service email address (yourridematters@townofcary.org), Town transit staff will also chronicle verbal comments. Any comments received prior to the Town Council meeting/public hearing in which a proposed major

change (fare, service or route) is scheduled for Council action will be summarized and provided to the Town Council prior to Council action.

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS:

In addition to a formal public hearing on a proposed fare increase or major service change scheduled to occur before the Town Council as described above, Town transit staff will seek to involve the public early and often through public information meetings as deemed necessary by the Transit Services Administrator or if requested by any member of the public. Town transit staff will make efforts to ensure that the scheduling and locations of public information meetings are accessible to the public. This includes a location near public transportation, a time when public transportation is available, as well as an accessible building/room for individuals with disabilities.

DOCUMENTATION OF PUBLIC COMMENT AND RESPONSES TO PUBLIC COMMENT:

The Town's transit system staff shall document comments received during the course of the public input process. Transit staff shall also document any responses provided to the public comments.

Documentation of comments may be accomplished in a manner appropriate to the project and the nature of the comments. Documentation may consist of meeting minutes, meeting summaries, files of letters, transcripts, presentations, and/or special memo that summarizes the comments. A written summary of comments and responses shall be prepared to provide to the public. Comments received prior to the Town Council meeting in which a proposed change (fare, service or route) is scheduled for Council action will be summarized and provided to the Town Council prior to Council action.

Town transit staff will respond to questions or comments from the public concerning the public participation process in a timely manner. A summary of analysis and report on disposition of comments may be made a part of the final plan (if applicable). Although Town transit staff are required to consider each suggestion made in the public participation process, they are not required to implement each suggestion. Thus, if the Town's transit staff does not think it appropriate to implement a suggestion, documentation will indicate the reason the suggestion should not be implemented at time of comment.