

Ann Arbor Transportation Authority

# Public Input Policy for Service and Fare Changes

*This policy supersedes the previous policy which was most recently revised in July, 2009.*

The intention of this policy is to listen to and act on public input before the AATA makes a decision to change service or fares with the following goals:

1. To inform riders and others affected by a proposed change;
2. To provide affected people with opportunities to ask questions, and understand the reasons why changes are being proposed;
3. To provide AATA with a better understanding of how riders use service and the effects of a proposed change;
4. To encourage affected people to state objections to proposed changes and make suggestions for revisions;
5. To provide AATA with the opportunity to revise proposed changes based on public input to reduce negative effects.

The methods and level of effort to accomplish these goals depends on the size of the proposed change and the number of people affected.

## Types of Service Changes

### Major Service Change

- Change affecting more than 25% of riders of a route, or
- Change affecting more than 25% of the miles of a route, or
- Change on multiple routes affecting more than 10% of riders or route miles of overall fixed-route service.

### Minor Service Change

- A change which is less than a major service change, but exceeds the threshold of a service adjustment, as defined below.

## Service Adjustment

- Adjusting timepoints along a route by 5 minutes or less with no effect on coordinated transfers, or
- Change(s) in routing affecting a total of less than 100 daily riders.

## **Types of Fare Change**

### Major Fare Change

- Change in the base fare (i.e. full adult cash fare)
- Any change affecting the fare of more than 10% of fare-paying riders (i.e. not including riders whose fare is paid by a third party such as an employer or university)

### Minor Fare Change

- Any change in fare which is less than the threshold for a major fare change

## **Notification of Proposed Changes**

People must first know about proposed changes in order to have the opportunity to provide input. The public input period is a minimum of 30 days. The notification methods to be used include the following:

- MyRide email subscription. AATA riders subscribe to MyRide to receive information on specific routes. This provides a unique opportunity to inform them of any change which is proposed for their route, and how to provide input.
- RideLines – RideLines is AATA's printed brochure designed to provide information on service, events, and other news. Copies of RideLines are available on AATA buses, transit centers, libraries and other community outlets. A complete description of proposed changes and how to provide input are included in RideLines.
- AATA Website. The AATA website provides multiple opportunities to provide notification. Notice of proposed changes appear on the front page and in a section for rider notices. In addition, for service changes, visitors to the website who access the schedule or real-time information for a specific route are informed of proposed changes to the route, and for fare changes, riders who access fare information are informed of the proposed changes.
- Social Media. AATA regularly participates in social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Social media are used to get the word out about proposed changes and direct people to sources of complete information and how to provide input.
- Bus Stop Notices – AATA posts notices at bus stops which would be affected by proposed changes. This is particularly useful for service adjustments which affect only a small

number of bus stops.

- Press Releases – AATA issues a press release for all proposed major service changes and major fare changes which describe the proposed change and how to provide input. Press releases are distributed to all media outlets including those minority and non-English publications. Notification is also sent to more than 50 organizations including those serving housing, educational, civic, and social services, and senior, disabled, minority, and non-English speaking persons.
- Individual Notice – AATA evaluates locations affected by a proposed change and provides individual notice to significant generators such as high schools and colleges, senior citizen housing, apartment complexes, libraries, government offices, recreation centers and shopping centers.

All of these methods would be used for major service changes and major fare changes. For minor service and fare changes and service adjustments, the methods used will be tailored to the scale of the proposed change. In addition, paid media may be used for some proposed changes.

## **Opportunities for Public Input**

AATA's intention is to make it possible for people to choose how they wish to provide input and whether they want to only comment or whether they desire a response or to engage in a conversation. As part of the notification methods above, people are provided with several possibilities for making comments and asking questions including:

- E-Mail – E-Mail goes to a mailbox set up specifically to receive input. E-mail has been the most frequently used method.
- Telephone – A hotline is set up to receive comments with a callback by AATA staff upon request.
- Written – Letters provide a means for more formal communication.
- Social Media – Facebook, Twitter, and other media will be used.
- Face –to–Face – At meetings and by appointment. For major service changes and fare changes, meetings are provided at multiple times and locations, with an emphasis on meeting locations in the area(s) affected by the proposed change. Meetings are typically scheduled as drop-in sessions for a 2-5 hour period to permit people to attend at their convenience and to encourage dialogue.

Whatever method is used, AATA staff provides a response to all comments except those that request to not receive a response. The nature of AATA's response depends on the comments. AATA answers questions, explains the rationale for the aspects of the proposed change that is the subject of the comments, and replies to suggestions. In some cases, AATA's response includes questions to make sure staff understands the input and suggestions. In many cases, input and response is a dialogue, rather than a single communication.

In addition, public time is provided at all meetings of the AATA Board of Directors. For major service changes and fare changes, a specific opportunity will be provided on the agenda at the Board meeting that takes place during the public input period. While an opportunity for dialogue is not available at these meetings, staff follows up with people who comment about proposed service and fare changes.

## **Use of Public Input**

During the public input period, AATA staff, led by the Manager of Service Development, considers the input that is being received. Depending on both the quantity as well as the specific concerns that are raised, potential alternatives may be developed.

At the end of the public input period, the input is compiled. Recommended service or fare changes are developed taking into consideration the public input. The public input summary is provided to the decision makers along with the recommended changes.

For minor service changes and service adjustments, the CEO makes the final decision on implementation of the recommended changes. Major service changes and all fare changes are adopted by the AATA Board of Directors. Board meetings are open to the public and include a public comment period at the beginning of the meeting specifically for items on the agenda.

## **Revised Procedures for Exceptional Circumstances**

Under exceptional circumstances which require a service change or fare change to be adopted and implemented on short notice, the procedures above may be altered to the extent necessary. However, at a minimum, the public will be afforded an opportunity to be heard at the AATA Board meeting at which any action is taken and a notice of the proposed change with the date and time of the Board meeting will be published on the AATA website before the Board meeting. [NOTE: Such exceptional circumstances have never arisen in the past.]

*Adopted by AATA Board of Directors - November 2011*