

County of Milwaukee Interoffice Communication

DATE: 2/20/2017
TO: Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Brian Dranzik, Director, Department of Transportation
SUBJECT: GO Pass Implementation Plan

POLICY

The 2017 adopted transit budget requires Milwaukee County Transit to convene a workgroup to finalize a plan to implement changes in eligibility requirements while minimizing impacts on GO Pass holders. The budget also required that the workgroup report to the County Board the results of the final implementation plan. This report is requesting approval of the plan for GO Pass implementation as outlined below.

BACKGROUND

The GO Pass program began on March 31, 2015 when the first cards were issued. Initially, there were two primary groups of individuals that were eligible for GO Pass: (a) those of age 65+; and (b) persons with disabilities.

The 2017 adopted transit budget changed the GO Pass program in several ways:

- A fiscal means test was added to the eligibility requirement for GO Pass;
- The eligibility screening process is to be done by the Aging Resource Center and the Disability Resource Center;
- A \$5.00 fee is to be charged for the issuance of each new GO Pass;
- The eligibility period is to be limited to three-years; and
- A fare of \$1.00 for a 1 day-pass will be charged for use of a GO Pass.

MCTS began to implement some of the changes in January as described in an email to the Board that month:

- On January 3rd, we started charging \$5 to new users who come in and receive a GO Pass.
- On January 17th, MCTS began working with the Department on Aging and Disability Services Division to add the financial means testing for new users. Each day, MCTS calls the ADRCs to ensure applicants are enrolled in the programs identified in the Adopted Budget:
 - For residents 65 and over Medicaid or FoodShare benefits; or for residents under 65: a). Must be receiving Social Security income through SSI or SSDI, or have a Veterans Disability designation; and b). Must receive Medicaid benefits including traditional Medicaid, EBD Medicaid, long-term care through Medicaid, or participate in a Medicare Savings program.
 - Applicants for the GO Pass who are not currently participants in the income based programs described above, are provided with an ADRC 'hotline' to call to get more information. That number is 414-289-5800.

Work Group Composition and Plan

The GO Pass workgroup includes representatives from MCTS, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation, Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services, the Milwaukee County Department of Aging, the Milwaukee County Department of Administrative Services, the County Board, GO Pass users, and representatives of advocacy groups for persons with disabilities and seniors. Meetings of the workgroup began in February 2017.

The workgroup discussed and has endorsed the following plans to implement the adopted changes to the GO Pass:

- Determine eligibility of current GO Pass participants
 - All existing GO Pass holders will be reviewed for ability to participate in the GO Pass program based on the eligibility guidelines as adopted in the County budget.
- Communicate with current passholders
 - Individuals who are determined to be no longer eligible will be informed by a mail that there are new eligibility guidelines for the program, and that they will no longer be able to use the bus for free as of the designated go-live date. The letter will also explain that reduced-fares are available to them, and that if they think they might be eligible for Medicaid, Foodshare, SSI, SSDI, etc., they should contact Aging Resource Center (ARC) or Disability Resource Center (DRC) to discuss.
 - Individuals who are determined to remain eligible under the new GO Pass criteria will receive a letter explaining that beginning on the go-live date they are eligible for a significantly reduced fare of \$1 for a 1-day pass. The letter will also include information about how to locate M-CARD Recharge Units (MRUs) where money can be loaded onto their GO Pass and used to purchase a 1-day pass at the farebox. An easy to read one-page infographic document showing how to use the GO Pass ID to request a 1-day pass for \$1 from the bus operator will also be included in the letter.
 - Outreach efforts to individuals who may have relocated/changed addresses can be done through other contact information (e.g. phone number).
- Communication to the community – Information will be spread throughout the community using many tools, including but not limited to:
 - Media – television, radio, newspapers, social media
 - Speaking engagements – County staff speaking on the program’s changes and promoting how to use the GO Pass. The workgroup members identify targeted audiences (ex: agencies like Grand Avenue Club and Disability Rights Wisconsin as well as gathering sites like senior centers).
 - One-on-one trainings – MCTS staff will host training sessions for service agencies’ staff on how to use GO Pass to purchase a 1-day pass so the agencies’ staff can practice with their clients.
 - Electronic communication – newsletters and announcements through the networks of the workgroup members (ex: Mental Health Task Force’s email list).
- Update to the eligibility requirements
 - The workgroup recommends that participation in Foodshares be included as a qualifying program of the financial eligibility guideline for people with disabilities. This change means that the guidelines for people with disabilities matches those for seniors.
- Timeline
 - The implementation process is on track to go-live mid-year. MCTS and the workgroup will communicate with the County Board when an official go-live date is set and will also communicate any unanticipated challenges.
 - There will be a minimum of one month between when letters are received by current passholders and the go-live date. This is to allow time for (1) current users who are not eligible under the new guidelines but feel they ought to be to communicate with ARC or DRC and begin the process of enrolling in qualifying programs, and (2) current users who remain eligible to practice and become comfortable with the new process for using the GO Pass.

Other Considerations

It is anticipated that all current GO Pass holders who are determined to be ineligible for a GO Pass under the new eligibility requirements will be eligible for a half-fare card. This will allow them to ride for \$1.10 fare.

As a result of administering the GO Pass, the ARC and DRC anticipate they will identify many residents who may be eligible for services such as Medicaid and Foodshares but who are unaware today they could receive those benefits.

The ARC and DRC are also planning to install an MRU in the Coggs Building near where individuals will apply for and receive a GO Pass. This will allow for GO Pass holders to load value on their cards immediately after they receive their cards as a convenience.

FISCAL EFFECT

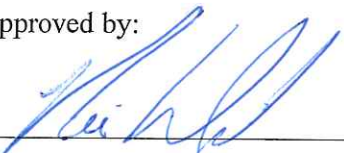
The changes outlined in this report are included in the 2017 Milwaukee County Adopted Budget. There is no fiscal impact (see attached Fiscal Note).

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the County Board approve the implementation plan as outlined above and in the accompanying resolution as proposed and endorsed by the GO Pass workgroup established by the 2017 budget.

Prepared by:
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Approved by:



Brian Dranzik
Director, Department of Transportation

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