



Columbia County Public **TRANSPORTATION**

COLUMBIA COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FARE POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Fare Policy is to establish guidelines for setting and/or restructuring public transit fares for Columbia County Public Transportation (CCPT). CCPT staff will utilize this policy to monitor fare collection and make future decisions about adjusting fares. The information outlined in this policy includes:

- **FARE POLICY GOALS:** describing the overall intent of this policy;
- **FARE PAYMENT:** including the types of fare media and passes that will be used;
- **FARE STRUCTURE:** establishing fares for various services and ridership groups;
- **FARE BOX RETURN:** determines the portion of operating costs that will be supported by users of the system;
- **Public Notice and Solicitation of Comment:** outlining the procedures that will be used to ensure adequate public input is provided to support decisions regarding fares.

FARE POLICY GOALS

The goal of this Fare Policy is to identify a prudent balance between the various factors influencing public transit. The policy is also intended to support CCPT's mission to identify and safely meet the mobility needs of the Columbia County and surrounding area with a courteous, dependable, and environmentally sound commitment to quality service.

Fare Policy Objectives

The objectives are classified as those that focus on consumer issues and those that support business related matters. The nature of these objectives reflects the desire to develop a Fare Structure that balances affordability for our customers with the need to generate sufficient fare revenue to help maintain and expand transit operations.

CCPT has established the following Fare Policy Objectives that are considered necessary for achieving the Fare Policy Goal: Customer/Community Related and Financial/Administrative.

¹ Adopted by CCPT Board at the June 9th, 2022 meeting to replace POL-500-1

Customer/Community Related Objectives

The following three (3) objectives directly support CCPT's mission of operating high quality public transportation service. When a fare increases or restructuring is proposed, all fare strategies considered for achieving these three objectives should be carefully weighed in relation to each other, as some possible strategies may achieve one objective at the expense of another. CCPT must strive to meet all objectives.

1. **Increase Utilization of Public Transportation:** CCPT exists to provide transportation solutions that meet the mobility needs of the public. Our success in this regard, is somewhat reflected through increases in ridership. Increased use of public transit also supports the broad social efforts of improving economic competitiveness, ensuring a reasonable quality of life for residents, reducing traffic congestion and decreasing air pollution. It is, therefore, important to adopt fare strategies that will encourage ridership by making public transit more attractive and convenient to use.
2. **Establish Equitable Support from Local Interests:** Columbia County and surrounding areas, realizes the benefits of providing accessible transportation options to our citizens. To ensure a level of equity, fares must take into account the needs of various populations of users – local and tourists. To this extent, a fare structure should be established that supports, encourages and enables travel choices for our most disadvantaged citizens. In addition, CCPT has an obligation to be responsible to the taxpayers of Columbia County area that help fund the system. Equity between users and non-users that help support the system must be considered when determining fare policies.
3. **Enhance Mobility and Access:** The fare payment system should enhance the ability of riders to access the system and move through it with ease. To do so, the fare structure should be easy to understand. It should also provide adequate choices for customers to select the payment option that suits their travel needs.

Financial and Administrative Objectives

All fare strategies under consideration must also meet the following three (3) financial and administrative objectives to ensure the continued operation of CCPT services.

1. **Maintain/Increase Fare Revenue Stream:** Fare revenue is a component of the operating budget. Any increase or restructuring of fares should ensure that the total fare revenue stream is maintained at an appropriate level to meet the economic needs of the system.
2. **Increase the Efficiency of Fare Revenue Collection:** To improve efficiencies, a fare collection system should reduce opportunities for fare abuse, minimize the costs associated with fare collection and reduce the associated administrative costs. CCPT can accomplish this by taking advantage of developments in fare collection technologies.
3. **Streamline Fare Collection Process:** A process should be established that minimizes the fare categories to eliminate confusion between the customers and CCPT staff (i.e. Drivers). In addition, fare collection should allow drivers to track and regulate inequities and expedite the boarding process.

FARE PAYMENT

Based on the existing equipment available on CCPT vehicles, the following fare payment options will be available for use on the demand response system:

- Cash or Checks
- Credit or Debit cards
- Passes
- Miscellaneous coupons and passes may also be introduced periodically as part of a special promotion or service. These will generally be specially printed fare passes associated with a specific event and will only be accepted during a limited time span.

FARE STRUCTURE

It is recognized that CCPT primarily serves a transit dependent population within the Columbia County area for both locals and tourists. The fare prices are developed with sensitivity to the needs of the transit ridership and with particular consideration of specific subgroups. The following appendices describe the various fare types:

APPENDIX A: Fares by Service

FARE BOX RETURN

A relationship exists between the amount of government support (or other) provided for operating CCPT and the amount of revenue collected from the actual users of the system. The relationship of subsidy verses user fee varies in each community and is based on policy decisions made by the local governing board. This relationship is measured by comparing the revenue collected from the fare box relative to the operating expenditures of the system and is known as the “fare box recovery” or “fare return rate”.

Fare Box Recovery is influenced by three (3) main factors:

1. **Fare levels** – The fare levels or structure influence the average fare collected per passenger and, in turn, the overall fare revenue collected. By increasing the fares (or reducing the discounts) set for each of the rider categories, fare revenue can be increased. Similarly, reductions in fares will result in a net loss of revenues. Changes in the fare structure also impact riders, with increased fares reducing ridership and reduced fares increasing ridership. Given this, fare adjustments should be made with consideration to transit customers affected.
2. **Productivity** – The productivity of transit service is typically measured in terms of ridership per mile or ridership per hour of service. Transit systems like CCPT typically attempt to balance the obligation to maximize route productivity with service policies aimed at developing new markets, serving remote communities, or accommodating disadvantaged populations. Decisions regarding route productivity should be made with consideration to social needs of the community and the transit customers affected.
3. **Efficiency** – Operational costs (fuel, labor, scheduling) are partly within control of CCPT and partly a result of prevailing economic conditions. Cost efficiencies are achieved through careful budgeting,

¹ Adopted by CCPT Board at the June 9th, 2022 meeting to replace POL-500-1

monitoring, and controlling of expenditures. Cost efficiencies can be measured by operating costs per hour.

The predominant funding source used to support CCPT public transit operations comes from federal, state, and local government. A smaller portion comes from user fees in the forms of fares. Fare box return, which is the fare box revenue collected/operating expenditures, is influenced by several factors including the overall ridership on the system and the fare structure as outlined in the previous section. To ensure consistent decision-making is applied over time, CCPT will:

- Monitor the overall fare box return annually and present this information for during the budget development and review process.
- Monitor efficiency of the operations.

The CCPT Board recognizes the value of setting a threshold for fare recovery. However, the Board also recognizes that a base recovery standard that is set too high may limit the ability to introduce new services. Given this balance of system performance and policy-oriented decisions, the Board reserves the option for flexibility in responding to actual market conditions, community needs, and service when the fare box returns are reported.

FARE CHANGE PROCESS AND PUBLIC COMMENT CONSIDERATIONS

A comprehensive public outreach effort is essential to ensure that the decisions being made about transit fares reflect the needs and desires of the community. A well-rounded public involvement effort consists of notifying the public as well as soliciting feedback regarding the proposed changes. It shall be the policy of CCPT that no significant changes in service or fares shall be made without having afforded an adequate opportunity for the public to express views regarding such changes. The following procedures shall be followed to ensure that adequate public comment is solicited and incorporated into the CCPT's decisions.

A hearing shall be required when :

1. There is an increase in any rate of fare (a temporary reduced fare or free fare promotion is not a fare change) or:
2. There is any change in service that directly affects our community ridership.

Standard seasonal variations and/or temporary changes are exempt from the hearing requirement.

In an emergency situation, a service change may be implemented immediately without a public hearing being held. A public hearing on the changes will be held within 60 days of the implementation, unless the change is to be in effect for 90 days or less.

Hearing requirements:

1. Notice of a public hearing will be published in the largest newspaper of general circulation in the effected CCPT service area. The notice may also additionally be published in other newspapers, newsletters, or media oriented so as to notify specific groups or neighborhoods that may be

affected. Information regarding a public hearing and proposed changes may also be disseminated aboard buses.

2. The notice will be officially published at least 15 days prior to the public hearing.
3. The notice will contain a description of the proposed service changes or fare changes and time and place of the hearing.
4. At the hearing, proposed changes will be described and sufficient time will be given for public comment. All comments will be recorded in the meeting summary, meeting minutes, or transcript. Any written comments will be included in the record.
5. CCPT will consider public comments in making fare increase or service decrease decisions.

Documentation:

Documentation for fare increases or service decreases will include such things as published public notices, postings, summaries or minutes of public meetings, letters from the public, and plans and documents describing the changes.

APPENDIX A: Fares by Service

LOCAL IN-TOWN RATES (INCLUDING VALLEYVIEW):

<u>AGE</u>	<u>FARE</u>
0-18	Free
19+	\$1.00
Monthly	\$10
Yearly	\$50

OUT OF TOWN RATES:

<u>AGE</u>	<u>FARE</u>
0-18	Free
19+	\$5
Monthly	\$20
Yearly	\$100

Paid fares are non-refundable and non-transferable.