



## Fare Proposal for Public Comment

### Overview:

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Urban local, commuter, and LINK Express bus routes will return to fare collection in January 2024. GMT will use a new fare management system, named Genfare Link, that will greatly improve payment options for both riders and organizations that support riders. The new options of this system will allow us to simultaneously adjust fare rates to match higher operating costs while also limiting the impact of fares on individual users. The draft fare plan below was developed with the following factors in mind:

- Limiting the financial impact of fares, especially frequent users reliant on public transit.
- Offering a simple and easily understandable fare structure.
- Increasing opportunities for organizations to support riders.
- Creating a system that has greater reliability and decreased maintenance requirements.
- Providing GMT with critical local match funding to help sustain operations.

### Changes in Fare Technology Drive Fare Adjustments

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#### How will Genfare Link be different?

In addition to accepting cash payment for fares on buses, the Genfare Link system provides:

- The ability for riders to pay via debit/credit card/smartphone on the bus.
- The ability to cap costs for individual users.
- Improved options for organizations to pay for service, partially or in full.

#### The Role of Individual Rider Accounts for GMT's Fare System: Caps and Organizational Support

Individual rider accounts will allow GMT to establish cost caps for riders. These caps are critical for ensuring financially vulnerable riders can use public transit. GMT will have daily and monthly caps for each rider. Once the rider reaches the cap, additional rides are provided at no additional cost. Importantly, caps do not require an upfront payment.

Individual accounts will also allow organizations to directly manage the support they provide to riders. Participating organizations will have their own portal in the Genfare Link system that will allow them to add funds to specific riders. Organizations will have access only to the riders they support. This will vastly simplify the way employers, schools, and human service agencies administer programs to support riders.

### **Will it be Difficult to Create Rider Accounts?**

No. Most riders will create their own accounts. Both from our own experience on our buses and in collaborating with human service providers in the area, we know roughly 90% of our riders have a smartphone. These riders can install the Genfare App on their smartphone and create their own account in less than 5 minutes without GMT's assistance. When they enter a bus, they will wave their smartphone over the farebox to pay for their ride.

Riders without a smartphone will be able to create an account and receive a physical smart pass in about 5 minutes at our transit centers. The smart pass is the size and shape of a credit card. The rider will then wave the smart pass over the farebox when they enter the bus.

From November 2023 through January 2024, GMT will have pass creation events in the area that will provide a convenient way for riders to receive assistance in setting up an account, whether they use their smartphone or prefer a smart pass. As we do with the annual ride check, we will bring on temporary staffing to help us with these account creation events.

### **Will Riders be Required to Create an Account?**

No. Riders who do not wish to create an account can still pay by cash on the bus. They will not, however, benefit from fare caps or the ability to have their rides paid for by another organization.

## **Proposed Fares, Passes, and Caps**

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### **\$2.00 Fare for Urban Local, Commuter, and LINK Express Routes**

GMT proposes a \$2.00 fare for urban local, commuter, and LINK Express routes. This is a 33% increase over the previous urban local fare (\$1.50), no change to the commuter fare (\$2.00), and a 50% reduction to LINK Express fare (\$4.00).

- Urban local routes have returned to their pre-pandemic levels.

- Commuter and LINK Express routes are still significantly below pre-pandemic ridership levels. Furthermore, there has been a shift in our perception of who uses these routes, with more riders using commuter and LINK Express for medical and human services related travel.

GMT will continue to provide a 50% discount fare for riders ages 6 to 17, over 60, or with a disability. Discounted urban local, commuter, and LINK Express routes will be \$1.00.

### **Creation of Daily Pass**

GMT will offer a day pass for \$4.00. GMT had not previously offered day passes. A day pass will allow for unlimited rides for a single day. These passes will be for sale at the transit center, and to organizations that want to provide day passes to individuals they serve.

### **Elimination of Monthly and 10 Pass Rides**

GMT previously sold a monthly pass for \$40.00 and a 10 ride pass for \$15.00. Both of these products will not be necessary with an account-based system that offers caps and with the ability to pay on the bus with a credit/debit card.

### **Elimination of Transfers**

With the creation of a daily cap that is the equivalent of two rides, free transfers will be eliminated.

### **\$4.00 Daily Cap and \$50.00 Monthly Cap**

The daily cap for full-price riders will be \$4.00. After a rider pays for two full-price rides at \$2.00, their remaining rides for the day will be free of charge. The daily cap for our discounted rate will be \$2.00.

The monthly cap for full-price riders will be \$50.00, the same price as the discontinued monthly pass. The monthly cap for our discounted rate will be \$25.00.

Caps are not purchased separately. They will automatically apply when the rider reaches that threshold.

### **Elimination of Separate Monthly Passes for Commuter and LINK Express**

Previously, urban local, commuter, and LINK Express routes had separate fare prices. This led to different monthly pass costs, with the commuter monthly pass \$75 and the LINK Express monthly

pass \$150. The \$40 fare cap will apply to commuter and LINK Express service, significantly reducing the financial impact of these routes on regular uses.

### **ADA Service - \$3.00/Ride Without Caps**

With GMT's return to fare service, ADA transportation provided by SSTA to augment our urban local routes will also no longer be free. The Federal Transit Administration provides guidelines for ADA pricing, and GMT's practice consistent with those guidelines has been to charge twice the full-price fare for ADA transportation. ADA riders in Chittenden County will see their door-to-door transportation increase to \$3.00/ride, and there will not be a daily or monthly cap.

### **Price Increase and Price Cap Combination**

The \$50 monthly cap will allow GMT to increase the urban local fare by 33% while also ensuring riders' monthly costs do not exceed the previous cost of a monthly pass.

Infrequent riders will see an increase in their costs, while our most frequent riders will have the same or lower cost than previously without having to pay the upfront cost of a monthly pass.

## **Future Consideration**

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### **Payment Network**

The Genfare Link system will provide access to the nationwide payment network. This will allow riders to add funds to their smart pass using cash or credit/debit card at participating retailers, such as CVS, Walmart, etc. Setup for inclusion in this system takes 18-24 months to complete, which is why it is not being included when we restart service.

### **Expanded Discounts**

Further work will be done to highlight populations eligible to receive a discounted fare rate directly from GMT. To begin, our focus will be on assisting organizations that wish to support riders through the Genfare Link system. This will expand the options for riders to have a free or discounted ride while also ensuring that GMT meets its obligation to generate approximately 10% of its urban operating costs from fare revenue.