



City of Winston-Salem City Council Council Agenda Item Summary

Title	Resolution Updating the Extreme Weather and Special Events Fare Policy Change for the Winston-Salem Transit Authority
City Council Committee	Public Works Committee
Meeting Date	August 11, 2026
Staff Lead (Presenter)	Kelly Garvin, Assistant Director of Transportation
Department Head	Jeff Fansler, Director of Transportation
City Manager/ACM	Aaron King, ACM

Agenda Item Summary

Recommended Council Action	Resolution Approval
Suggested Action/ Motion Options	Motion to Approve a Resolution Amending the Extreme Weather and Special Events Fare Policy for the Winston-Salem Transit Authority
Strategic Focus Area	Good Government
Strategic Plan Objective	GG1: Delivering Efficient and Effective Core Services
Anticipated Fiscal Impact	No Material Fiscal Impact

Summary of Information

On August 4, 2025, the City Council adopted an Extreme Weather Policy to help vulnerable members of the community access cooling centers, warming shelters, and other climate-controlled facilities during periods of extreme weather. Since its adoption, WSTA has successfully implemented multiple fare-free service days in response to qualifying extreme weather events.

As staff administered seven fare free service days per the policy throughout the summer, it became evident that extreme heat conditions do not always align with the current fare-free operating window. In several instances, the National Weather Service forecasts met the adopted policy threshold during the early morning or evening hours, when temperatures and heat index values continued to pose significant health risks. Under the current policy, however, customers traveling before 10:00 a.m. or after 7:00 p.m. were still required to pay a fare, despite experiencing the same qualifying weather conditions as riders traveling during fare-free hours.

This limitation creates an inconsistency between the policy's intent and its practical application. Individuals seeking relief from extreme temperatures or traveling to and from climate-controlled facilities may encounter barriers during periods when hazardous weather conditions exist, but fare-free service is not available.

To better fulfill the purpose of the Extreme Weather Policy and ensure equitable and consistent access to essential destinations, staff recommends amending the policy to provide fare-free service for the entire operating day whenever National Weather Service forecasts meet the adopted extreme weather threshold. This change would simplify implementation, eliminate confusion for customers, and ensure that transit remains accessible throughout the duration of qualifying extreme weather events.

Analysis of Fiscal Impact

No Material Fiscal Impact

Attachments

Committee Action	
For:	Against:
Remarks:	