

City Council – Action Request Form

Date: September 9, 2025

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Kelly Garvin, Assistant Director of Transportation

Jeff Fansler, Director of Transportation

Aaron King, Assistant City Manager

Council Action Requested:

Resolution Modernizing the Winston-Salem Transit Authority's Fare Policy to Establish a Fare Cap

Strategic Focus Area: Economic Prosperity

Strategic Plan Objective: EP2: Improving economic mobility and reducing poverty

Summary of Information:

As the Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) transitions to mobile ticketing and cashless payments through the Umo mobile application, staff recommends further modernizing our fare policy to establish a daily fare cap for fixed-route services. After benchmarking peer transit agencies such as Greensboro Transit Authority, GoTriangle, and the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), staff found that incorporating fare capping into the existing fare structure is considered best practice. These peer agencies have the following fare structure:

Agency	One-Way Fare	Daily Fare Cap
Greensboro Transit Authority	\$1.50	\$4.00
GoTriangle	\$2.50	\$5.00
CATS	\$2.20	\$6.60

This recommendation is further supported by the recently adopted WSTA Route Study, in which our consultant HDR advised implementing fare capping based on operator survey feedback indicating systematic abuse of the free transfer policy, which reduces the City's ability to recover all fares due.

Committee Action:

Committee PW 09/09/2025 **Action** Approval

For Unanimous **Against**

Remarks:

Fare capping sets a maximum daily fare threshold that a passenger can be charged in a single service day. Once this cap is reached, all additional trips for the remainder of the day are free. Implementing fare capping offers several key benefits:

- **Equity and Affordability:** Riders who cannot afford to pay for a monthly pass upfront will still receive the similar cost savings as those who can, ensuring a more equitable fare system.
- **Increased Ridership:** By removing cost uncertainty and rewarding frequent use, fare capping encourages more consistent use of public transit.
- **Mobile Platform Adoption:** Fare capping is most effectively implemented through digital fare media, such as the Umo app. This will incentivize more riders to adopt the mobile fare platform, streamlining fare collection and reducing reliance on cash transactions.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Reducing cash handling and simplifying fare enforcement can improve boarding times and overall service reliability.

By aligning with industry best practices and leveraging technology to improve the rider experience, fare capping supports WSTA's broader goals of increasing ridership, promoting equity, and modernizing the transit system. Staff recommends amending the fare policy to establish a daily fare cap of \$2.00 for all service days.