



City of Winston-Salem City Council
Council Agenda Item Summary

Title	Resolution to Amend the Winston-Salem Transit Authority Fare Policy to Establish a New Microtransit Rate
City Council Committee	Committee of the Whole
Meeting Date	March 9, 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 Suggested Action/ Motion Options	Resolution Approval Motion to Approve a Resolution Amending the Winston-Salem Transit Authority Fair Policy to Establish a New Microtransit Rate
Strategic Focus Area Strategic Plan Objective	Economic Prosperity EP2: Improving Economic Mobility and Reducing Poverty
Anticipated Fiscal Impact	Fiscal Impact Anticipated: See Analysis in Summary

Summary of Information

In January 2025, the City Council endorsed the Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) Vision Network as part of the WSTA Route Study. This plan establishes a long-term framework for a more efficient and reliable fixed-route system, emphasizing shorter headways, more direct routing, and additional transfer opportunities outside the downtown core.

To implement this vision, staff must continually assess opportunities to discontinue underperforming routes and reallocate service hours to corridors where they can generate higher ridership and strengthen the overall network. This strategy reflects the “virtuous transit planning cycle” outlined in the service standards adopted by Council in October 2023.

The Route Study also identified the need for a flexible mobility option in areas where fixed-route service may be reduced or removed. Microtransit—an on-demand, shared public transportation service—offers a viable alternative.

Using real-time trip requests and dynamic routing, microtransit provides more responsive service in lower-density areas.



Vision: To be a premier city in the region providing world-class amenities while retaining a sense of charm and hospitality
Mission: To provide impactful services that enhance the quality of life for current and future generations
Values: Teamwork * Responsibility * Respect * Integrity * Customer Service

Although typically subsidized, microtransit fares remain lower than private on-demand services such as Uber or Lyft.

Since City Council establishes fare policy for WSTA, staff recommends amending the fare policy to include a microtransit fare of \$2.00 per ride. This recommendation is informed by a review of peer systems in the region:

High Point Transit System

- **Fixed-route fare:** \$1.25
- **Microtransit fare:** \$2.50
- **Transfer policy:**
 - *From Microtransit → Fixed Route:* Includes up to **2 free fixed-route transfers**.
 - *From Fixed Route → Microtransit:* Riders pay the **fare difference** (\$1.25).

Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation

- **Fixed-route fare:** \$2.50
- **Microtransit fare:** \$2.50
- **Transfer policy:**
 - *From Microtransit → Fixed Route:* Transfer is **free**
 - *From Fixed Route → Microtransit:* Transfer is **free**

CATS (Charlotte) – Express Service

- **Express Service fare:** \$3.00
- **Express Plus fare:** 4:20
- **Microtransit fare:** \$2.20
- **Transfer policy:**
 - *From Microtransit → Express or Express Plus:* Riders pay the **difference** in fare—\$0.80 for Express or \$2.20 for Express Plus.

WSTA (Recommended Option)

- **Fixed-route fare:** \$1.00
- **Microtransit fare:** \$2.00
- **Transfer policy:**
 - *From Microtransit → Fixed Route:* Includes **1 free fixed-route transfer**.
 - *From Fixed Route → Microtransit:* Rider pays the **difference** (\$1.00)

Analysis of Fiscal Impact

In Fiscal Year 2025, the proposed microtransit service area generated \$30,737 in fare revenue at the current \$1.00 per-ride rate. Assuming a modest increase in ridership and a proposed fare of \$2.00 per ride, staff estimates annual fare revenue of approximately \$64,547 for the microtransit zone.

The estimated annual cost to operate the microtransit service is \$626,578, compared to \$553,092 for the existing fixed-route service in the same area.

Although microtransit represents a higher overall operating cost, it offers the potential to attract more riders in lower-density neighborhoods by providing flexible, demand-responsive service. As ridership increases, the cost per passenger is expected to decline, improving productivity and aligning service levels more closely with community travel patterns.

Attachments

Resolution

Committee Action	COW 3/9/2026
For:	Against:
Remarks: Approved Unanimously	