

MINUTES

Ad Hoc Technology Committee

4:03 p.m., September 16, 2024

Committee: Sleasman (Chair), Love

Not present: McPherson

Staff: Becker, Birdsong Terry, Caver, Ciesla, Fields, Garlock, Garofoli, Gautam, Jupina, Miller, Miranda, Polly, Schipper, Scott, Walker-Minor

Public: None

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m. There were two (2) committee members present.

(See PowerPoint slides for details for each agenda item.)

Josh Miranda, Director of Management Information Services and Allen Polly, Director of Revenue Collection, gave the presentation. At the last meeting Open Data Portal was determined to be an ongoing conversation. It's not on today's agenda due to Mike Lively leaving the Authority to take a position at the County.

Account Based Ticketing – Fare Capping

Fare Capping enables more customers to benefit from unlimited use pricing (all-day, 7-day, and monthly). Customers don't need to know in advance how much they will ride in the current day, week, or month. There is no need to pay up front for a whole day, week, or month. And it improves affordability and equity for low-income customers.

Elements of Improved Fare System:

- Implement Account Based Ticketing (ABT) – EZfare allows for this
- Enable Fare Capping (Requires Board approval)
- Update Fare Media
 - Smartcards
 - Ticket Vending Machines
 - Retail sale

RTA's fare system consists of fareboxes on buses, JustRide validators that will enable fare capping, Board Code Book and policy changes and the mobile app. The existing TVMs will only operate using legacy fare media. The new machines will help achieve fare capping. The back office of fare collection is a group of systems that work together to collect fares. It includes the Masabi hub for fare capping and ABT. It achieves that by using platform validators. The TVM replacements will issue fares inside that ecosystem. The existing Genfare fare boxes currently use magnetics and receives cash onboard. They propose to introduce those into the ecosystem of the Masabi hub by having them generate a QR code. But customers can still use cash.

Masabi has created other tech platforms to allow others to use the system. RTA has not adopted that fully because it doesn't follow the Procurement paths that we use so they are exploring those better to see how they can be utilized. Mr. Polly said they are in the process of recommending a consultant to recommend specs for the new TVMs. With the proper specs they will be able to marry all the systems. But it would not be complete because the cash part of the GenFare system would remain separate but if they can get the fare box issuing documents, the rest of the system can read it would be better.

Account Based Ticketing (ABT)

- Account Based Ticketing relies on a back-office account linked to a ticket/token.
- Customer taps/scans the token; fares are calculated based on usage.
- Fare capping is an optional feature enabled by ABT
- Fare capping requires accounts linking fare payments to customers.
- Accounts can have entitlements (*discounts for seniors, students, etc.*)
- Tokens include smartcards and mobile devices.

Disabled customers can log in and create an account and indicate they are disabled and that will be connected to their account moving forward to get charged the correct rate.

Fare capping saves the customer money by capping off the cost of multiple trips that would charge individual trips. With fare capping, the all-day charge would save the customer money. A rolling 7-day fare would be capped at \$25 saving the customer money. Ms. Terry asked if staff looked at other agency structures. They have spoken to other agencies in the NEOride group. Some have gone with the time stamp model. Others use the daily model. Most of the feedback had to do with how far from what they currently deploy to offering this to the public. Ms. Terry suggested they look at best practices. More education will be needed for the unbanked.

Phased Implementation Plan

- Implement fare capping to mobile apps and smartcards
- Open payment

Open Payment (non-account)

- Open payment's secure ticket/token associated with a device/item
- Back-office links the ticket/token trips together.
- Customer taps/scans the token; fares are calculated based on usage.
- Token devices/items include:
 - debit/credit cards, QR codes, smartwatches, & mobile devices.

Limitations:

- *Riders must use the same device/item to benefit from fare capping.*
- *This option cannot be combined with entitlements (discounts for seniors, students, etc.)*

Dr. Caver added that today's agenda fits directly into the Strategic Plan. The plan calls for policy and strategy directives. One is improving how customers pay. This originates from the Fare Equity Study, which was one of the Pillar Studies. Fare capping was one of the components. Fare capping allows equity across the payment structure. In the current structure, to get a discount by buying volume, all the cash is required up front. This plan allows for an equal playing field so that frequent users can build up to the discounts.

Mr. Sleasman asked about the status of the validators. Mr. Miranda said the electronic repair team has repaired the turnstiles in Tower City. The back office is still being worked on by Masabi. Staff are communicating with them, but their response hasn't been at a fast rate. Mr. Love asked about best practices for fare capping. Mr. Miranda said all the feedback was system specific. Some models seem to have an easier time because everyone has a TVM and they can get people engaged, use the card and deploy the training. Those running long routes are struggling to get the message out. If they completely abandon the legacy technology, they get a lot of complaints. If they do good marketing, with some type of enticement strategy, that helps the customer through the process. Most of them

have cited that for every 5 in-person dialog, you get 10-15 adopters of the new system due to word of mouth. Agencies must educate riders to adopt a mindset outside of a calendar usage of their fare payment. The hourly mark or 30-day mark created some difficulties with explaining the change to customers and for companies trying to provide passes to customers for a certain amount of time.

Mr. Cesla added that at a recent APTA Tech conference in Philadelphia. SEPTA talked about launching a smart card. But they didn't do enough education at the beginning. COTA pushed out smart cards. They are at a 20% adoption rate. They also said they didn't provide enough education. Staff are learning from these agencies. Ms. Terry added that we initiate an APTA peer review. Education and trust are key. The public needs time to adopt the new process. Mr. Sleasman suggested staff review the grace period and quantify what it may cost. Look at adoption rates and community trust. Ms. Terry suggested it not be rolled out in the winter. Also consider the school year. Dayton recently went cashless. There may be knowledge to gain from their change.

Mr. Sleasman asked if there would be an easy way to load the customer's account. Mr. Miranda said there could be a custodial option with up to 4 people on it. But fare capping is unique to each rider. Dr. Caver added that we will always have a cash option. The magnetic strip card customer likes to use the Tower City TVMs. The customer who rides more frequently likes the heavier tap and go card they can load money on. Other customers like the account-based system with the option to pay on their phone. They want to merge the fare app with TVM technology, but also keep the system open to accept all the ways customers want to pay. The Masabi cards will have a way to upload through community partners. Mr. Sleasman suggested we think about having a default to purchase tickets that are easy for visitors to the city. Dr. Caver added that research shows that adult customers don't like the feeling of not knowing how to pay for something. They want to drive customers to the app for ease of use.

Mr. Love asked if the idea is to funnel pay preferences over the long term. Dr. Caver concurred. The goal is to migrate customers to cashless since it is the most cost-effective way to collect money. But due to the industry we can't move away from cash completely. They are also looking for an application for paratransit.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:42 p.m.