



www.bigbluebus.com

NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 28, 2010

Contact: Francine Pares/949-481-7559
fpares@intelibrand.com
Linda Gamberg/323-774-9664
Linda.Gamberg@smgov.net

City Council Approves Changes to Big Blue Bus Fare System

- ***New 30-Day and “Baker’s Dozen” discounted passes to be introduced.***
- ***Universal transfers will still be available.***
- ***Fare changes go into effect August 29, 2010.***

SANTA MONICA, Calif. – With the Big Blue Bus (BBB) facing a \$6.4 million structural deficit this coming fiscal year, and ongoing concerns over future operating funds, Santa Monica’s City Council has approved a fare restructuring which will close the budget gap by \$2.4 million annually. The changes will go into effect August 29, 2010 and will avert reductions in service through fiscal year 2011-12.

If regular fare riders choose to pay cash when boarding, the cost per trip will increase from 75 cents to \$1 beginning August 29. For senior, disabled and Medicare fare riders who pay cash when boarding, the cost per trip will increase from 25 to 50 cents. City Council also approved new discounted passes for riders who pre-purchase before boarding the bus, and to retain the Universal Transfer for boarding either a second Big Blue Bus or other regional bus or rail system.

The Big Blue Bus averages about 80,000 boardings a day, or over 20 million passengers a year, across a 52-square-mile service area that stretches from Santa Monica to downtown Los Angeles. BBB’s current regular fare of 75 cents is the lowest in the County and its Senior/Disabled/Medicare fare has remained at 25 cents for the past 25 years.

The Big Blue Bus joins transit agencies around the state, and across the country, that have taken similar measures to keep their buses rolling amid one of the worst economic downturns in the last 50 years. In April, the American Public Transportation Association reported that the severity of the funding situation is evident, with seven out of ten public transit systems, or 69 percent, projecting budget shortfalls in their next fiscal year, and 59 percent of public transit systems reporting that they have already cut service or raised fares.

The primary challenge to transit agencies has been underperforming sales tax revenues due to the weak economy. In BBB’s case, the challenge was compounded by the diversion of State funding sources, which combined with tax revenues, have traditionally funded the majority of the department’s operating budget. Fares make up 20 percent of the agency’s operating revenue.

Stephanie Negriff, director of transit services for the Big Blue Bus, said that the fare restructure is one of several strategies necessary to retain service levels. BBB will also continue to seek ways to increase local revenue sources, such as advertising and lease income, while looking for operating efficiencies to help reduce costs.

-more-

City Council Approves Changes to BBB Fare Structure

Santa Monica’s Big Blue Bus * 1660 7th St. Santa Monica, CA 90401 * Ph: (310) 451-5444

“The approval of this fare adjustment will allow BBB to continue its commitment to providing quality transit service,” said Negriff.

“We hope our riders will see their feedback in these new fare changes,” she said. “I believe this new plan is responsive to community concerns and provides the additional revenue needed to avoid service reductions in the near-term.”

The approved fare restructuring includes:

- **Paying more if rider pays cash when boarding:**
 - Raising the regular and student local cash fare to \$1 (\$2 for Express)
 - Raising the senior/disabled/Medicare local cash fare to 50 cents (\$1 for Express)

- **Introducing pre-purchased discount passes:**
 - For regular fare riders:
 - Frequent riders will benefit from the new 30-Day “Unlimited Ride” Pass for \$60 (\$80 for Express); this allows riders to board as many local Big Blue Buses as they want for \$2/day (\$2.67/day for Express)
 - Occasional riders will benefit from the “Baker’s Dozen” pass, which provides 13 local rides for the cost of 12 at \$12; this allows riders to board for 92 cents/local ride

 - For student fare riders:
 - New 30-Day “Unlimited Ride” Pass for \$40; this allows students to board as many local Big Blue Buses as they want for \$1.33/day

 - For senior/disabled/Medicare fare riders:
 - Frequent riders will benefit from the new 30-Day “Unlimited Ride” Pass for both local and Express service at \$24; this allows riders to board as many local or Express Big Blue Buses as they want for 80 cents/day
 - Occasional riders will benefit from the Baker’s Dozen Pass, which provides 13 local rides for the cost of 12 at \$6; this allows riders to board for 46 cents/local ride

- **Retention of Universal Transfer, but at a new price:**
 - Cost to regular and student fare riders maintained at 50 cents
 - Cost to senior/disabled/Medicare fare riders raised to 25 cents

- **Sales of tokens to qualifying non-profits only.**

- **No change to SMC’s “Any Line Any Time” program on 8/29**

To help reduce the financial burden of the proposed fare adjustments, the Big Blue Bus plans to participate in Metro’s Rider Relief Transportation Program, which offers a \$10 per month subsidy coupon for regular riders, and a \$6 per month subsidy coupon for seniors, disabled and student riders who meet eligibility requirements.

Because the discounted passes incentivize cashless boarding, the fare restructuring will benefit BBB by both increasing farebox revenue and also by streamlining fare collection, which keeps the buses running on time and saves the cost of deploying additional buses to adhere to schedules. For more information, visit www.bigbluebus.com.

###