

## Item 24-1465: Award Recommendation for WisGo Fare Collection System

Fox Cities Transit Commission

Tues, Nov 12, 2024 7:00AM

**George Dearborn (Chairman)** 01:26

And then public hearing and appearances. I don't see any, so we'll move on to action items. We have one, and it's the award for the WisGo collection system. Need a motion to approve, please.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner)** 01:42

So, move.

**George Dearborn (Chairman)** 01:44

I have motion and a second. And are you explaining, Ron? Thank you.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit)** 01:49

Thank you, Chair. So, I'm going to have Dave speak on behalf of this. He's been working on this project, but I just want to say thank you. We got a light agenda here, but it was important for us to get this agenda because the prices are going to be going up at the end of the year significantly. So, we wanted to have an opportunity to save some money on this. So, with that, I will turn it over to Dave and let him go through what this is.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist)** 02:13

Thanks, Ron. I think I'm basically going to summarize what's already in the memo and then hopefully answer questions after. Get this mic in the right spot, sorry. So, our current fare box system we purchased in 2010 and those that ride are familiar with it. As a rider, you approach a fare box. And that system is now 15 years old, and last year our vendor, Genfare, informed us that they were discontinuing that fare box. It's pretty expensive to so to replace it with the same type of technology wouldn't, wouldn't be a wise decision, in my viewpoint. So, it's proprietary, it's expensive to maintain, and, like I said, it's outdated technology speaking.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist)** 03:00

So we met with Milwaukee County Transit System about a year ago and have been having discussions with them and the vendor they selected for about the same amount of time. So, Milwaukee County Transit system launched a new fare collection system called WisGo. They had a procurement process about two years ago, and they actually got 16 vendors to respond. So, it's highly competitive. And the way they designed their project is as a regional system for collecting fares, because Milwaukee County is bordered by Waukesha Metro and Racine Ride system, and then they have commuter routes coming in from Ozaukee and Washington County. So, they needed something that not just worked for them, but they could also have their partnering transit systems join. So, they branded at WisGo, because they're not going to have an app called MCTs in Waukesha, nor any other partnering transit system that are going to want that. So, they came up with the brand WisGo. They open it up to all the transit systems in the state, anybody who was interested in it. And of course, with us, with our outdated outdated system, we were very interested in it. So that's what we're sort of presenting today.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist)** 04:13

So, what is WisGo? Again, from the passenger's perspective, we would need to install a validator that's approximately this size, if you can see, that you would approach as a rider with either a phone with the app on it or a smart card that we would provide to riders. And the smart card is chipped, just like a debit card, so it's no longer the MEG stripe technology anymore. It's a chip in the card. So use either or. And as a rider, you have an

account and you add value to it. So, you add money to your account. And when you scan it, it's going to take the normal fare of \$2, but the beauty of the this electronic or more modern system is you can take advantage of fare capping. So instead of paying for rides and maybe at the end of the day realizing, geez, I could have just gotten a day pass, or at the end of the month, with the amount of times I've ridden, I should have just bought a monthly pass, you automatically get these discounts without having to actually pay for them up front. So, you put the money in your account and then you get discounts as you meet certain thresholds. So, there's a daily cap, a weekly cap and a monthly cap that we've sort of set out in the memo and aligned it with what our current fares are.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 05:31**

So other advantages of the WisGo system—we had a number of things we wanted to accomplish, and they met all of our requirements. So, it's—it also allows us to maintain the revenue agreements we have with the school district, with Fox Valley Tech, with Lawrence University. It's very easy for us on the back end to understand each either app, each account, and then we can configure it so that they ride free; however, then we can track them to build the organization they belong to. So, it will work great for that.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 06:12**

It also comes with a substantial retail network. It's called the Incom Retail Network, which I wasn't too aware of until we got into this project, but it includes places like CVS and Walgreens. So, if you don't have an app, don't have a way to add value in your app through a bank account or other form of credit, you can go to the retail network and add value to your smart card with cash. So that's another advantage of the system is we're always concerned about Title VI and equity in the community. So, we could never create a system that would discriminate against folks that don't have bank accounts. So, we always need some form of cash option. This allows you to add value in terms of cash to your account. I think we'll be running a parallel system for some time, and probably will continue to allow cash on the bus, so you can use your app, card, cash and then our regular fares for some time, until we slowly phase out the fare box and the mechanical aspect of it, which causes—it's expensive and it causes some issues.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 07:22**

So, I guess in the end, this, this met all of our requirements and will help us replace—eventually replace—the fare box system. I know there's going to be a few questions, so happy to answer those.

**Larry Wurdinger (Commission Member) 07:38**

...other systems. Does this card work—if we go to Milwaukee, then we can use the same? So, we can just get one card?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 07:43**

Great question, yes, yep, that's the beauty of the regional system. And Ron was explaining before the meeting, it also is smart enough to know that you're paying that fare to Milwaukee County. That fare goes to Milwaukee County if you're up here. And as I noted in the memo, there's five systems in the state that have partnered. I think we'd be the fifth of the six, but it's Milwaukee, Waukesha, Racine, and Beloit, and Oshkosh. So, go ahead.

**Mike Patza (Commissioner) 08:14**

...Walgreens outlets has options for those who had cash only. Would there be an option for like a not sure this is the right term, like a vending machine that will be set up like at the transit center, a kiosk, if you will, we can put cash into and get your car reloaded?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 08:26**

Yeah, there is. We'll look into adding a T—we call them a TVM, a ticket vending machine. We'd look at adding one of those maybe in the future. We're going to see kind of how it works, and whether or not we have a lot of demand for that. The current—

**Mike Patza (Commissioner) 08:40**

without doubt that, this still meets all the title six?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 08:43**

Yep.

**Mike Patza (Commissioner) 08:44**

Okay.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 08:44**

I would just say the vending machine is not going to happen immediately because we're going to be demo-ing the current transit center and doing things moving around. So, until we get a new structure there, we can't afford a several thousand dollar machine. But, yes, something we'd look at as the timing allows.

**Mike Patza (Commissioner) 09:02**

Thank you.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 09:07**

How we're gonna get the word out? I know I had one of these—a rider in Kaukauna doesn't have a phone, doesn't—I'm sure he has no bank—I mean, like, so I'm just curious how we're gonna get the word out and when he needs to go to try to take the bus. I guess we'll have cash on there yet until we phase it out?

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 09:22**

We will. So, a couple of different things. We've been we've been kind of dragging our feet on this to see how it was working the other systems, and, you know, we're talking to them about how they've rolled things out and lessons learned and things not to do. And ironically, one of the things that surfaced from everybody we talked to is once they start installing these validators, you can't install them all overnight. It's going to be a couple month process for us. These validators are going to be on the busses, and that's going to pique curiosity from everybody on the bus, "What's that and how do I use it?" And we'll have to deal with that in a marketing effort. May be teasing it a little bit as we're going along. But it'll take an extensive marketing effort, with signs on the busses and social media and getting our drivers. We've already talked with Sarah, our Mobility Manager. She's going to be out and about in the community, various organizations, talking with them how to utilize it, the schools, things like that. So, it'll take an extensive effort. We probably wouldn't be rolling this out until sometime in the summer. It's gonna take us that long to get it rolled out.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 10:28**

So, is there any possibility of, like, mailing transit users a card?

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 10:35**

We could if we knew who they were.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 10:36**

Right. I didn't know if, through the, you know, the NEW Connector or something, we had a database of some sort.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 10:43**

Not enough.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 10:44**

And this—will this work with the connector or not?

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 10:47**

Not initially, but it's something we're talking about internally to getting to that point. The vendor is still working a little bit on the para transit side. Ours is a little bit different, because we have so many different service levels within the VT II branding. The vendor's kind of sitting back and going, well, we have to figure out how to make all these different fares work, but it's something we're working on.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 11:10**

I would, I would just add, Greg, that we are going to purchase a couple of demo units that we can take out to table top and sort of demo how it works to riders before we roll out. Because I think we learned a lot with our service changes in July on things we need to do to communicate with riders and things that worked really well. And I think expanding that—because a fair is such an integral part of riding the bus that we're going to need to be out in a lot of different areas demoing how this works.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 11:43**

Could someone walk onto the bus and just put a credit card onto that or not?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 11:47**

There is—so that's called an open loop payment, which is something I learned. Yeah, that capability is there. They're rolling it out now. We're starting with the smart card and the app first and then, yes, Apple Watch and things like that are possible with this system. Definitely.

**Larry Wurdinger (Commission Member) 12:10**

...they just get that if they ride so much in a 30-day period, or are we still going to have a monthly pass? Or how does that work?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 12:16**

Yeah, so that's the fare cap. So basically, if you ride every day and you hit the different fare caps the way I calculated, after like the third week, you would hit the \$60 and then the fourth week would be free. And as you ride, there's feedback on the screen that tells you what your balance is and things like that. Or if you've met your fare cap it'll say, "This one's free," you know, that sort of thing.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 12:42**

So, one of the things that we look at Larry is there's a lot of individuals who it's a hardship to come up with \$60 at the beginning of the month, but they can come up with two bucks, four bucks—

**Larry Wurdinger (Commission Member) 12:52**

Right? Oh, no, it should work better. Yeah.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 12:54**

Yeah. So, the that's where the fare capping is really cool on this. Once they hit that point, then it's free the rest of the month, and that they're paying as they're going, rather than having to come up with that big amount at the beginning, if it's if it's a difficulty form.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 13:07**

And it is a calendar month. So right now, we have a 30-day pass. So, the first day you use it, that's when the clock starts on the 30 days. This would switch to calendar month. So, every month would be you'd start new. So, it'll be a little different, part of the education.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 13:27**

What's the minimum someone would have to put on onto this car, just like two bucks, four bucks, or something like that?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 13:33**

I don't even know the answer that. I would assume—

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 13:34**

Sure, good question.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 13:36**

I would assume two would be what you would need for one ride or \$1 if you are reduced.

**Unknown Commissioner 13:42**

Were we part of the—or were you Dave, part of the development of the application? Or how did the procurement work?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 13:54**

That that was Milwaukee County Transit System that did the full procurement like, two years ago, ish.

**Unknown Commissioner 14:01**

And then we can just...?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 14:02**

Yeah, we—it's an intergovernmental. So, they wrote that in the procurement, so you can do that and allow for. Oftentimes we do that when we purchase busses, we piggyback off of another procurement. This is a little different, because it's another municipality, so it's an intergovernmental agreement. So, they wrote that in the procurement that whoever we select is going to do our business and any of our partners that sign up.

**Unknown Commissioner 14:25**

Okay, thank you.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 14:26**

Yeah.

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 14:31**

Anyone else?

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 14:33**

I really like the what Larry brought up about if I go to Milwaukee or if I go to Oshkosh, that you can use that in the card, that as soon as you swipe your card in that locale, it'll know that the fare goes to Milwaukee County or Oshkosh, wherever you are. And because our customers do move around, they go down to Oshkosh or they go to Milwaukee for the day, and they want to use the system. It's really cool. They don't have to do anything. Just tap their card and go and then, as long as there's valid fare on it, you're ready to go.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 15:02**

That's question [...] option with the card. So, like you ran out of money.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 15:11**

I'm not aware of that, but it does tell you every time you swipe it, I believe what your balance is, but I haven't anybody asked that question at all.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 15:20**

No, I have not asked them that. That's a good question.

**Larry Wurdinger (Commission Member) 15:23**

[...] tie it to a credit card, because then you technically would never run out.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 15:31**

And that's kind of that open loop thing that Dave was talking about. When it gets to that point, it'll actually be a debit transaction versus loading money onto your card. So, there's a couple of different things going on here, but that would take care of that same thing. You wouldn't have to load it. You'd just do a debit transaction

**Ronald Torrance (Commissioner) 15:49**

[...] system.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 15:50**

Right.

**Ronald Torrance (Commissioner) 15:51**

And if you get to a minimum it automatically replenishes to a [...] based—tied to a credit card. So, it automatically replenishes base as soon as you get down to a minimum level. It automatically replenishes.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 16:04**

Yeah. Is that something you have to opt into? That's good question. We can check it out. It's a good question.

**Ronald Torrance (Commissioner) 16:12**

Make it a lot easier for people.

**Claire Holzschuh (Commissioner) 16:16**

[...] a little bit. I don't know if anyone has ever used like the scooters, like the Lyme or the Bird. I think it's Bird is the other one. I didn't realize that it auto, like, filled the account, and it just took like, \$30 right out of my account. So, I don't know if that does happen. I feel like we should be a little considerate of that if we do have people that are low income. That might be a big amount for someone right away. So.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 16:39**

No, it doesn't do that. So, I don't know if it could, but I know by default, it does not do that.

**Ronald Torrance (Commissioner) 16:47**

[...] guessing that you could sign up for that.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 16:49**

I don't know if that's something you can opt into, but like I said, as a new user, that's not going to happen. Of course, if there's no money there, it's not going to let you ride. So.

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 17:00**

[...] your credit card. Yes, please go ahead.

**Diane Dexter (Commissioner) 17:06**

Currently, if I want a smart card through WisGo, I need to send my credentials and information down to Milwaukee and have them send the card to me. Will we have the capability locally to do that instead of sending in our information?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 17:22**

Yeah. So, if you, if you read about this system right now online, it's Milwaukee-centric. So, when we have our own set of information on our website, it'll be based on the Appleton and the Fox Cities area, where you can be certified. And so, we do that here. It's, part of the—I wouldn't say the downside of being a part of a regional system is, you know, I suppose you can look at Milwaukee County site and be confused, but we'll fix that once we get our information out there.

**Diane Dexter (Commissioner) 17:54**

Thank you.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 17:55**

Yeah, good question.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 17:59**

The other thing that will be done through this process is we have individuals who get reduced fares for whatever reason. So, whether they're a senior citizen, 65 or older, or have a disability, we would actually certify them, and this card would have that data on it, so it would automatically know which fare to collect from the individual based on the card.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 18:19**

I and if you lose your card, we can cancel it, get you a new one, transfer the value over.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 18:32**

So, get clear in my head, but you could just tap your phone or your watch too. You wouldn't need a card?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 18:40**

To—yes. To start it would be just their WisGo app, but then to roll out that open pay stuff that would be in the future. I think the vendor is still working on it, so they haven't even rolled it out in Milwaukee yet. But—

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 18:55**

It's close.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 18:56**

Yeah, it's close.

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 18:59**

Yes, please.

**Diane Dexter (Commissioner) 19:01**

if you have a smartphone in the app and you have multiple family members, how does each person pay?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 19:09**

Yeah, we asked that, and everyone has their own account. So, either everyone has a phone or one person has a phone and the others have cards. It's a different system.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 19:24**

Yep, yeah.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 19:27**

Or could you take a credit card and tap it three times?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 19:31**

That—I don't know how that open pay works, but that—

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 19:33**

Which is what I just—

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 19:34**

I don't know about the—

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 19:36**

—tap now.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 19:37**

So, I don't know about the Open Payment, but the app will not allow you to do that. You can tap. It doesn't allow you to start tapping. Because, if somebody loses a card, and before they notify anybody—

**Larry Wurdinger (Commission Member) 19:48**

You could let 30 people on.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 19:50**

Right because—and that's that also screws up the fair capping and all that stuff too. So, there's a time transaction on there, just like our fare boxes right now. You just can't sit and swipe your pass your pass back. The bus will be beep at you. It doesn't allow you to do it, and this will be the same situation.



**Michael Brown (Commissioner) 20:11**

Maybe this isn't related, but at the YMCA, the app on the phone, I've got every single family member in the one app, so I can just scroll through and open up whoever's, you know—you scan them in, and you just click it, and you can scan them right in through just one app. And I don't know if this has the opt—you know, the option to do that, or if you have to have, you know, a separate app on a separate device for individuals.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 20:33**

We specifically asked them about this, and, yeah, each account is a separate device right now, but that's certainly something we can ask them about how they can move forward with that.

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 20:44**

But if I have someone visiting and loan them my smartphone to use for right, unless—I could do that, right? Would be identified by me app. At least, I would assume.

**Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 20:56**

So, with that in mind, how does this impact say, like the students who get bus passes through their school, through Lawrence, through the other agreements. Are they going to get a smart card? Are they just going to have to create their own—will—so they will have the app opportunity?

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 20:56**

If you're going to give up your phone, George. Yeah, it's not intended to work like that, because, again, that gets into the fare capping, just like we don't allow people to use our bus passes and everything else. They're supposed to be for the individual. It's not a community bus pass.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 21:30**

So, our thought process is students, my kids, they might leave the house with just about anything, not have it with them, except this. They've always got this with them, and that's—I think that's probably where it's going to end up. We'll work with the schools and whatever agencies, but in most cases, they're going to, they're going to issue the app, and there's a code or something of that or online. This is—

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 22:00**

Oshkosh with their school district, I think they provided all of them with a smart card. Of course, there's a unique identification with each smart card, so you're able to, in that user's account, say this is a, you know, Oshkosh Area School District student, and then the system goes from there. But I believe Milwaukee with UW M use phone, and they had a QR code for them to sign up. And I don't know the ins and outs of how that work. I just know that they've done this over a million times, so we're pretty confident we can take care of all the different types of revenue agreements we have.

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 22:39**

I'm just thinking a case where I've been to Chicago and I bought a card and my wife used it too, so I paid a certain amount of money for certain people to get on. Is it gonna work that way or not?

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 22:53**

No.

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 22:54**

Okay.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 22:54**

There's gonna have to be a separate account for each individual, because it won't allow you to swipe a card multiple times, it'll cap it at one ride. There's a timing on there.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 23:06**

I'm just picturing on the bus—

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 23:10**

That's what I'm thinking, yeah.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 23:13**

...seeing that, if you just play with the credit card, tap, tap, tap.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 23:16**

Well, as soon as it's available, then we'll be looking at it, but they're working on it as we speak.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 23:22**

I don't—yeah, I don't I don't know the ins and outs of that, but yeah, for the fare capping, it's one—they have to have different accounts somehow. So, I don't know. I don't know how that works.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 23:34**

I would think if they could pay with credit card, without the other thing, and you could just pay for multiple rides it would fix that problem.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 23:40**

As long as they want to give up fare capping, yeah.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 23:42**

Yeah. But I mean I'm just saying they get on the bus once. Let's just say, you know, or whatever, and they didn't have the card, could they still ride that bus right there is my question.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 23:52**

I'm assuming there's ways to do things, but again, the fare capping, to get that benefit, you have to have an account for individuals and that's why I think the majority of our customers are gonna be concerned about the fare capping. We're gonna have a one offs. You know that somebody was just in town riding it for a day. We're gonna figure out how to deal with that. But in those cases, if we have a tvn or something like that, they can buy a couple ride ticket or something, just spit balling off top of my head. I guess.

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 24:24**

We'll make it work. Any other questions? If not, we have a motion and second on the floor. All those in favor, please say, aye. Any opposed? Thank you. Motion carries.