

## Item 25-0426: WisGo Update and Request to Approve Fare Capping

Fox Cities Transit Commission

Tue, Apr 22, 2025 2:50PM

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 07:16**

And then, okay, got—then we have an update for the future....

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 07:26**

Wisgo. Should be the Wisgo.

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 07:35**

Okay,

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 07:35**

25-0426.

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 07:35**

Oh. There it is. WisGo. Okay. I got it. Okay. I was reading too far into it. So, I need a motion to approve, please. It's an action item. We have a motion and a second. David will explain that, please.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 07:58**

Thank you, Mr. Dearborn. WisGo. So, the purposes memo in your packet is twofold. One is to kind of give a status update on the project, and the other is to approve the new, I guess, fare capping policy that's listed in the memo. We have some new folks at this meeting. So back in November, this group approved—the Transit Commission—a new fare system for Valley Transit. So, we currently have a fare box on every bus and that system is, oh, 15 years old, maybe more. The manufacturer no longer makes it, so we don't have parts for it. We need to replace it.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 08:40**

About a year ago, we were informed that Milwaukee County Transit system implemented a new system, and they open it up as an inter government agreement so that other transit systems could buy off of it. And so, it's designed as a sort of a regional or statewide fare system, which is all great, and they branded it WisGo. So, it was approved back then. So, I just want to give an update on where we're at.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 09:05**

We have most of the equipment to install. We've done the engineering to install. And in fact, I think we'll begin installing the validators (this is where the passenger interacts with the fare system) probably within the next month, we'll start installing. They'll be vinyl sheet over the front of the validator, because it'll come out bus by bus. So, they won't all be installed in one day. Our hope is to roll out the system September 1, in time for the new school year. We've been meeting with the vendor bi weekly for a number of months now. We've also met with our marketing team, so we have a number—quite a few milestones in place and a schedule to begin interacting quite a bit with passengers, including training dates at various sites, and then fare exchanges and tons of communications with our riders. We haven't got to that point yet, but that's going to be coming soon. You're going to start seeing information about the new fare system.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 10:07**

So, on the bottom of the memo is the fare capping policy. So, the first column called base fare, that's what we charge right now for each of those rider types. And then the last column, monthly cap, that's our monthly pass. And the way these caps work is, as you ride, once you hit a cap, you're not charged anymore. So, if you're an adult, full fare rider, you pay \$2, you get your transfer. You maybe take another ride in the same day with your transfer. If take a third ride, you've hit the cap, and those rides are free. So, the same concept for the monthly pass. Once you hit a certain value, rides after that are free within the calendar month. So, the daily cap is kind of new for us. We do have a day pass. We wanted to structure the daily cap to follow the adult fare. So, you'll notice the daily cap is double the base fare. So, after two rides, you would get free rides after that. So just looking for the Board's input and approval of that before we configure the system to charge those amounts.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 11:16**

I'm curious if we ever did a yearly cap, so someone who is a big-time rider, maybe there's a yearly cap. I don't know. The city bike New York—I mean, it's a rental, but if you, if you get it for a year, it's 120 bucks for the whole year. But if you ever do it without that, it would be really expensive, actually. So, it is a good discount, and it gets people to sign up for the whole year.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 11:41**

Yeah, that's good question. So as Dave mentioned, we're meeting with our team, Milwaukee County Transit, and [unclear], WisGo, bi weekly. We can chat with them and see if where they're at with that. I haven't heard anybody doing that. It's an interesting concept, and even if we can't get that implemented now, that doesn't mean that's something we couldn't think about for the future. I know we have a transit development plan coming up. We could talk through that as part of that plan and see what the feeling is from the community. I think it's a good discussion.

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 11:41**

Yes, go ahead.

**[Question asked off microphone]**

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 12:24**

Calendar.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 12:25**

Calendar month.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 12:36**

So, when we initially roll out there there's a—we have a smart card that we provide riders. There's also an app that you can use. It is capable of doing open payments, so digital like Apple Watch, you know, regular credit cards. I think that's a Phase Two for us. So, we're going to start with the app and the smart card. And the smart card is reloadable.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 12:56**

And just for everybody's information, so these reloadable smart cards, there's national contracts already out for these. So, you can go to any CVS, Walgreens, Walmart. They're already part of the system. They can reload them. Walgreens in town may not know it yet, but they're already part of the system. We might have to educate them, but they're part of the system. You can get your card reloaded right there. So, we tried to make sure there's enough access around immediately to get this thing started. And I figure, well, with Walgreens, CVS, and

Walmart, you got a pretty good coverage just to start with. And then we'll be talking with our other outlets to see if they're interested in onboarding also.

[Question asked off microphone]

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 13:53**

That's a good question. So at least initially, the fare boxes will remain in the bus to accept cash. I don't—ideally, it'd be great if we could eliminate those at some point down the road, but for the foreseeable future, we'll be still accepting cash. What we're going to do is take out the, what I call, the guts of the fair box, all the moving pieces that spit out the transfers and the change cards and the day passes and all that stuff. That's the stuff that breaks down and gives us a lot of road calls, and those are the parts that aren't going to be accessible anymore. So, we will continue to take cash for the foreseeable future. Good question.

[Question asked off microphone]

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 14:36**

Yeah, that's a good question. So as Dave said, we're working with Milwaukee County Transit. So, so far, Milwaukee County Transit, Waukesha transit, Racine transit, Beloit transit, and GO Transit in Oshkosh have all implemented this system, and we'll have it also. This—the smart card is just that; it's smart enough so if I go down to Milwaukee for Summer Fest, I can take my smart card from here, go down, hop on a Milwaukee County Transit bus, and the system knows that I'm running on Milwaukee County Transit, and my fare will be whatever the Milwaukee County Fair is, and they will get the cash from that right away.

[Question asked off microphone. It seemed like the general question was whether the fare capping associated with Valley Transit would transfer down to Milwaukee.]

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 15:17**

Not for their system. It would if I rode their system during the day. So, if I rode theirs multiple times through the day, whatever the capping system they have set up, I should be able to take advantage of that on a given day. Beyond that, I likely wouldn't be down there that much for the capping, but for the day, it should.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 15:36**

Quick question here again, just to clarify, you won't be able to put a credit card and pay for your ride. You can't just tap—

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 15:43**

Not from—

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 15:44**

—but an app you can?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 15:45**

Yes.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 15:46**

Like Venmo or what do you use?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 15:48**

Well, it's the—there's a system app that you download. It's WisGo—

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 15:53**

Gotcha.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 15:54**

And it is regional. So, you—when you first download the app, it'll ask you what transit system you ride, you know, and then it kind of sets you up for our fares and all that other stuff.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 16:04**

And then you reload there, then on that app? You just reload?

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 16:08**

Yep, yep. And As Dave said, the second phase is they are going to be getting open payment. So, if you use—I know, a lot of people take an Apple Watch and just tap it. Your app phones, which is attached to your bank cards and things like that, that is coming as part of phase two just open it up.

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 16:23**

Milwaukee County is going to launch that first. We're gonna let them work out all the bugs before we bring it out here. They—they're hoping to get it in place before Summer Fest, I think.

**Greg VandeHey (Commissioner) 16:33**

So, what is our time frame then?

**David Vickman (Transit Operations Specialist) 16:38**

Hoping—we're gonna probably testing later in the summer and full roll out before the school. So, September 1. We have a lot of meetings and communications between now and then.

**George Dearborn (Chairman) 16:54**

Okay. So, I think we have a motion and a second on this.

**General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 16:59**

Correct.

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

So, we need to have a vote to approve. All those in favor please say aye. Opposed? Thank you. Motion carries.