

PAART

Plan of Action for Regional Transit Northeastern Illinois

**System improvements:
Seamless and affordable travel –
Recommendations**



Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning

Fare integration



**Our challenge:
Provide a
seamless and
affordable
experience
across multiple
travel modes**



CTA 95TH/DAN RYAN TERMINAL

Recommendations

Unify payment methods and fare system administration

\$ \$ \$

Provide free or discounted interagency transfers

\$

Align fare structures across agencies for similar trips

\$ \$

Integrate with complementary modes and systems

\$

Recommendation: Unify payment methods and fare system administration

Description

- Invest in technology to support a unified payment approach (e.g., tap-on for all systems), including back-office integration
- Implement decision-making structure to identify and maintain common business rules (monthly pass duration, transfer period, etc.)

Primary rationale

- These reforms would simplify the user experience and make it easier and more convenient to rely on transit
- Unified payment methods/administration would also enable greater coordination and other fare reforms (see complementary recs.)

Implementation steps

- Legislative actions:
 - Articulate principles for integration and establish fixed deadline
 - Provide funding to complete integration, including O&M costs
 - Establish governance/decision-making structure to oversee
- State agency actions: N/A
- Local/regional actions necessary to support:
 - Svc. boards and RTA collaborate on procurement/business rules
 - Local governments to consider funding supports

Policy evaluation

Mobility	High/Med/Low
Equity	High/Med/Low
Economy	High/Med/Low
Environment	High/Med/Low
Regional benefit	Regional/Suburban/Urban

Process evaluation

Admin. feasibility	High/Med/Low
Political feasibility	High/Med/Low
Timing	Near/Med/Long (sequenced)
State control	High/Med/Low

Net cost / investment

	'25	'26	'27	'28	'29	'30
Ops.	\$5-\$10M per year if adding tap-on to Metra system					
Cap.	Up to \$150M one-time capital cost depending on tech					

Risks

- Cost overruns for new fare system procurement
- Back-office integration complexities
- Decision-making relies on other governance shifts

Recommendation: Provide free or discounted interagency transfers

Description

- Require the provision of discounted interagency transfers between Metra and other service boards
- Eliminate interagency transfer fare between Pace and CTA
- Offer transfers on both single-ride and multi-day passes

Primary rationale

- Reforms would build on existing integration (e.g., Regional Connect Pass, CTA/Pace integration)
- Reforms would make regional travel more affordable and coordinated across modes, with the potential to address fare equity issues

Implementation steps

- Legislative actions:
 - Define interagency transfer policy goals
 - Provide funding to cover revenue losses
 - Establish governance/decision-making structure to oversee
- State agency actions: N/A
- Local/regional actions necessary to support:
 - Svc. boards and RTA to develop MOUs for revenue sharing
 - Local governments to consider funding supports

Policy evaluation

Mobility	High/Med/Low
Equity	High/Med/Low
Economy	High/Med/Low
Environment	High/Med/Low
Regional benefit	Regional/Suburban/Urban

Process evaluation

Admin. feasibility	High/Med/Low
Political feasibility	High/Med/Low
Timing	Near/Med/Long (sequenced)
State control	High/Med/Low

Net cost / investment

	'25	'26	'27	'28	'29	'30
Ops.	<\$25M/year potential revenue loss					
Cap.	See previous recommendation for capital costs					

Risks

- Balancing revenue losses with ridership and equity improvements
- Building consensus on oversight, revenue-sharing

Recommendation: Align fare structures across agencies for similar trips

Description

- Reform regional fares so that travelers pay the same fare for a given trip, regardless of which mode they choose (i.e., taking Metra vs. CTA between the same start and end points would have the same cost)

Primary rationale

- Enables travelers to choose the mode that works best for their needs
- Existing fare disparities create equity concerns in lower-income areas where Metra is the primary rail service provider (e.g., far south side of Chicago)

Implementation steps

- Legislative actions:
 - Amend RTA Act to establish principle of fare structure alignment
 - Provide funding to cover revenue losses
 - Establish governance/decision-making structure to oversee
- State agency actions: N/A
- Local/regional actions necessary to support:
 - RTA and service boards to consider models of fare alignment, with interim and final goals and timelines

Policy evaluation

Mobility	High/Med/Low
Equity	High/Med/Low
Economy	High/Med/Low
Environment	High/Med/Low
Regional benefit	Regional/Suburban/Urban

Process evaluation

Admin. feasibility	High/Med/Low
Political feasibility	High/Med/Low
Timing	Near/Med/Long
State control	High/Med/Low

Net cost / investment

	'25	'26	'27	'28	'29	'30
Ops.	\$20-\$75M/year for CTA, \$0-\$17M for Metra (worst case)					
Cap.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Risks

- Agency acceptance
- Agency-specific revenue loss implications could vary (based on fare levels and ridership shifts)

Recommendation: Integrate with complementary modes (e.g. bike-share) and systems (e.g. SSL)

Description

- Integrate transit fares and transfers with first/last-mile modes such as bike-share or other micromobility (e.g., scooters)
- Expand data-sharing requirements for private mobility providers
- Integrate fares and coordinate service between Metra and South Shore Line (SSL) in RTA service area

Primary rationale

- Extends the reach and benefits of the transit system using other sustainable modes
- Leverages existing service (e.g., SSL already stops at Metra stations)

Implementation steps

- Legislative actions:
 - Amend RTA Act to facilitate fare integration with other modes
 - Adopt funding levels consistent with new fare structure
- State agency actions: N/A
- Local/regional actions necessary to support:
 - Metra and SSL to pursue MOU for fare/service integration
 - City of Chicago to adopt regulations for micromobility services (e.g., Divvy, shared scooters) that achieve integration

Policy evaluation

Mobility	High/Med/Low
Equity	High/Med/Low
Economy	High/Med/Low
Environment	High/Med/Low
Regional benefit	Regional/Suburban/Urban

Process evaluation

Admin. feasibility	High/Med/Low
Political feasibility	High/Med/Low
Timing	Near/Med/Long
State control	High/Med/Low

Net cost / investment

	'25	'26	'27	'28	'29	'30
Ops.	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Cap.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Risks

- Complementary modes include a range of private/public operators
- Risk of incomplete integration

Overview: Challenges and opportunities

**Our challenge:
Provide a
seamless and
affordable
experience
across multiple
travel modes**



CTA 95TH/DAN RYAN TERMINAL



Fare Policy and Equity

Chicago's transit fare collection system disincentivizes linked trips between Metra and the two other regional transit systems (Pace & CTA) by requiring most customers to **pay two fares** using **two different payment methods**.

Fare integration has long been a regional goal

Statutory Requirement (RTA Act)

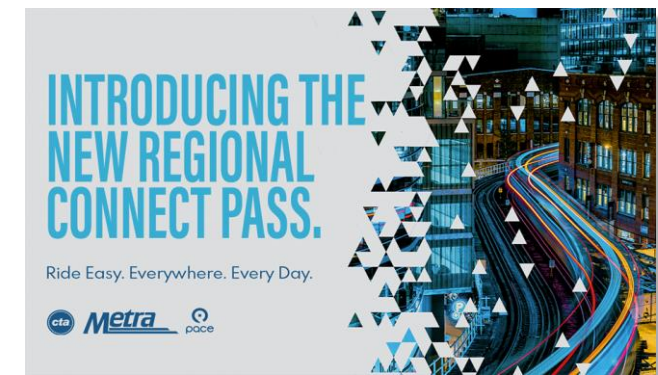
(iii) coordination of fare and transfer policies to promote transfers by riders among Service Boards, transportation agencies, and public transportation modes, which may include goals and objectives for development of a universal fare instrument that riders may use interchangeably on all public transportation funded by the Authority, and methods to be used to allocate revenues from transfers;

Public Act
102-1028

PART

Plan of Action for Regional Transit
Northeastern Illinois

Recent progress



Despite progress, challenges remain for a seamless, multi-modal transit system



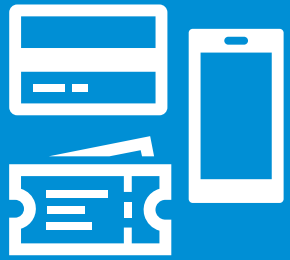
Users and operators must manage multiple payment methods



Uncoordinated fare and transfer structures discourage travelers from choosing the fastest and most convenient transit option, especially for trips that could rely on Metra for some or all of the journey



Complementary connections (e.g., Divvy, South Shore Line) are not integrated with CTA, Metra, or Pace



Users and operators must manage multiple payment methods

User Challenges:

- Tap-and-go versus tickets
- Existing integration relies on “sales channel discounts” but fare products are still separate and two different ways to validate

System Challenges:

- Metra does not have the infrastructure to conveniently accept Ventra card
- Zone-based fare would require “tapping off” too
- Metra and CTA/Pace operate separate back-office systems



Uncoordinated fare and transfer structures disincentivize trips that combine Metra with Pace or CTA

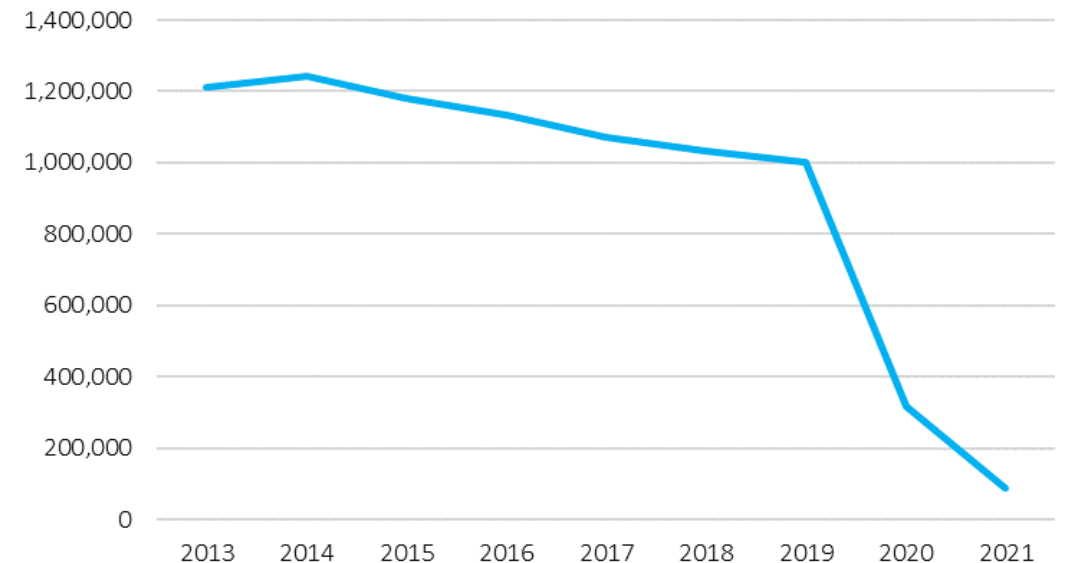
- Discourages travelers from transferring between Metra and CTA/Pace
- Encourages price-sensitive travelers to choose modes that might be slower or less convenient
- Potentially reduces overall transit ridership by limiting the kinds of trips travelers will consider making by transit

Only monthly pass holders can access discounted transfers between Metra and CTA/Pace

Limits discounts for occasional or recreational users, and for those who cannot afford the higher upfront cost of a pass.

And monthly passes have been a shrinking market for a while

Metra monthly pass total purchases



Source: HNTB analysis of Metra data

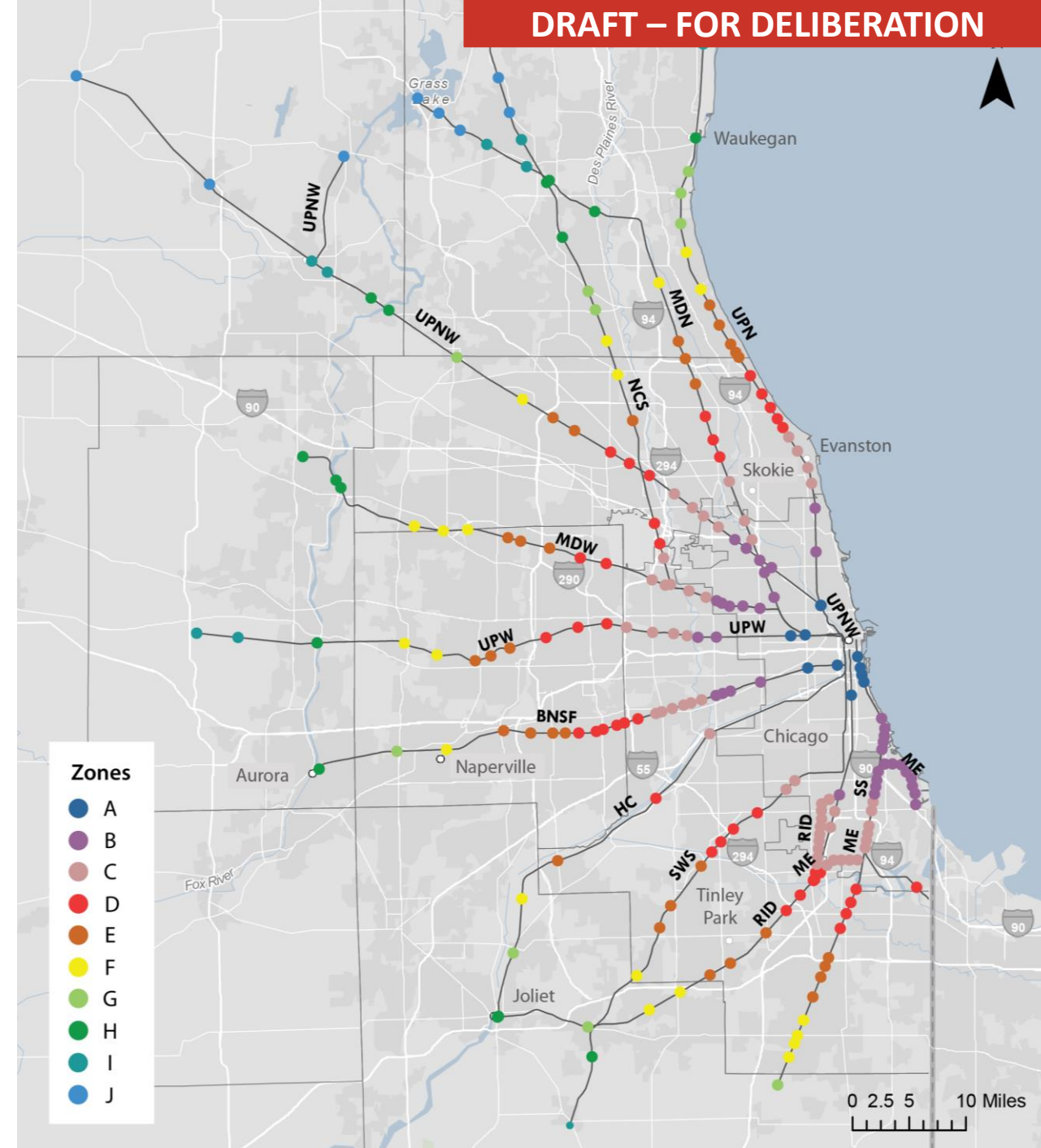
Today, fares encourage travelers to rely on slower or less convenient options

Origin	Destination	CTA/Pace Only		Including Metra	
		Cost	Time	Cost	Time
West Pullman	Loop	\$2.50*	62 min	\$5.50 (\$3.00 with Fair Transit pilot)	45 min
Andersonville	Hyde Park	\$2.50*	82 min	\$6.75 (\$4.50 with Fair Transit pilot)	63 min
Maywood	Union Station	\$2.25*	54 min	\$5.50	29 min

* Includes discounted transfer that is only available when using Ventra. Cash fares would require two full fare payments.

This is also an equity issue as areas such as the South Side of Chicago pay much higher fares with few alternatives

Metra has over 70 stations within the City of Chicago (and 2 more under construction)

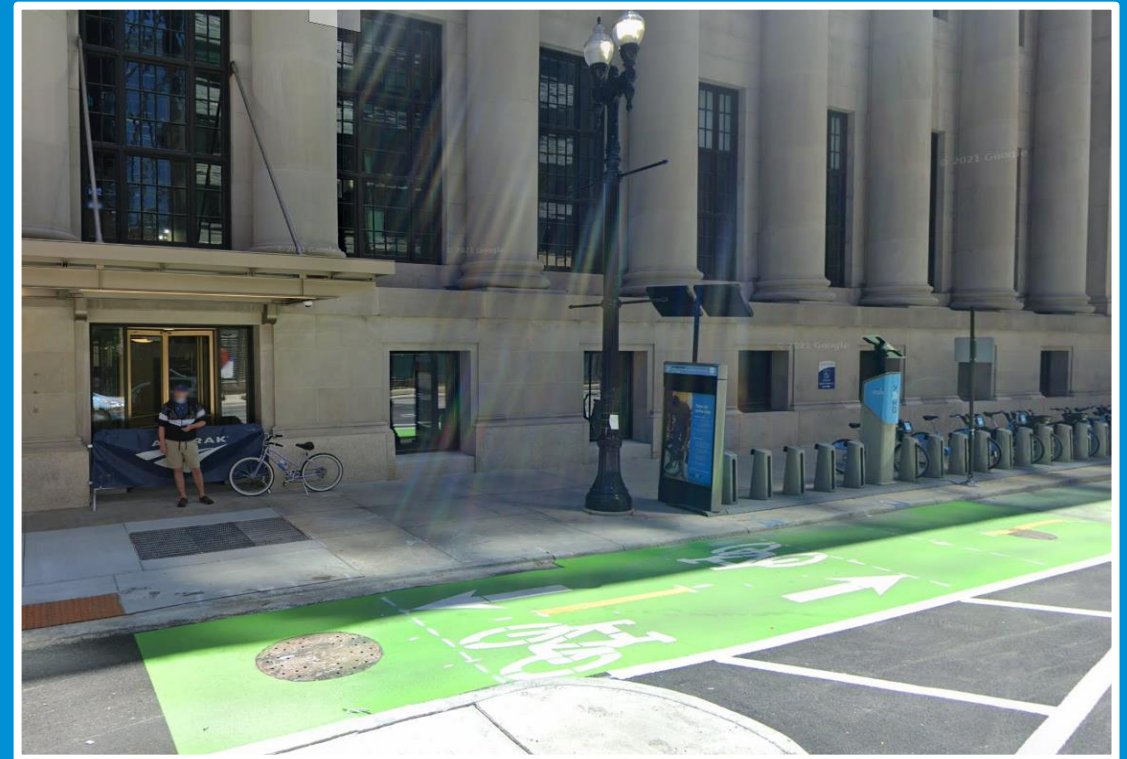




Connections rely on complementary modes that are not integrated



NICTD SOUTH SHORE LINE AT MILLENNIUM STATION



DIVVY BIKE SHARE AT UNION STATION

South Shore Line shares stations & terminals with Metra, **without fare integration**

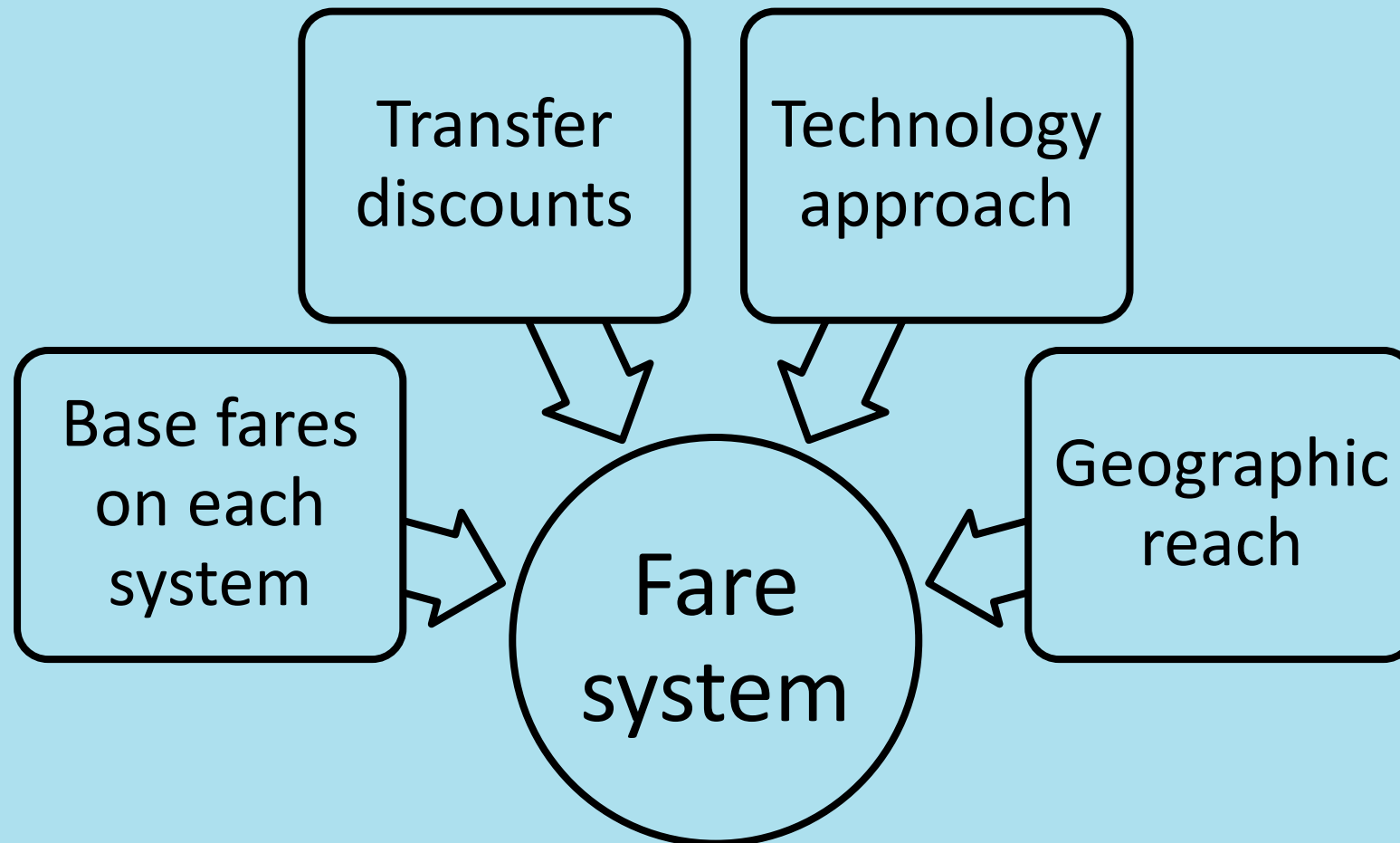
In fact, trips within
Chicago on the SSL are
prohibited entirely!
(Except to/from
Hegewisch)

Multimodal first/last-mile connections are a force multiplier for good transit service

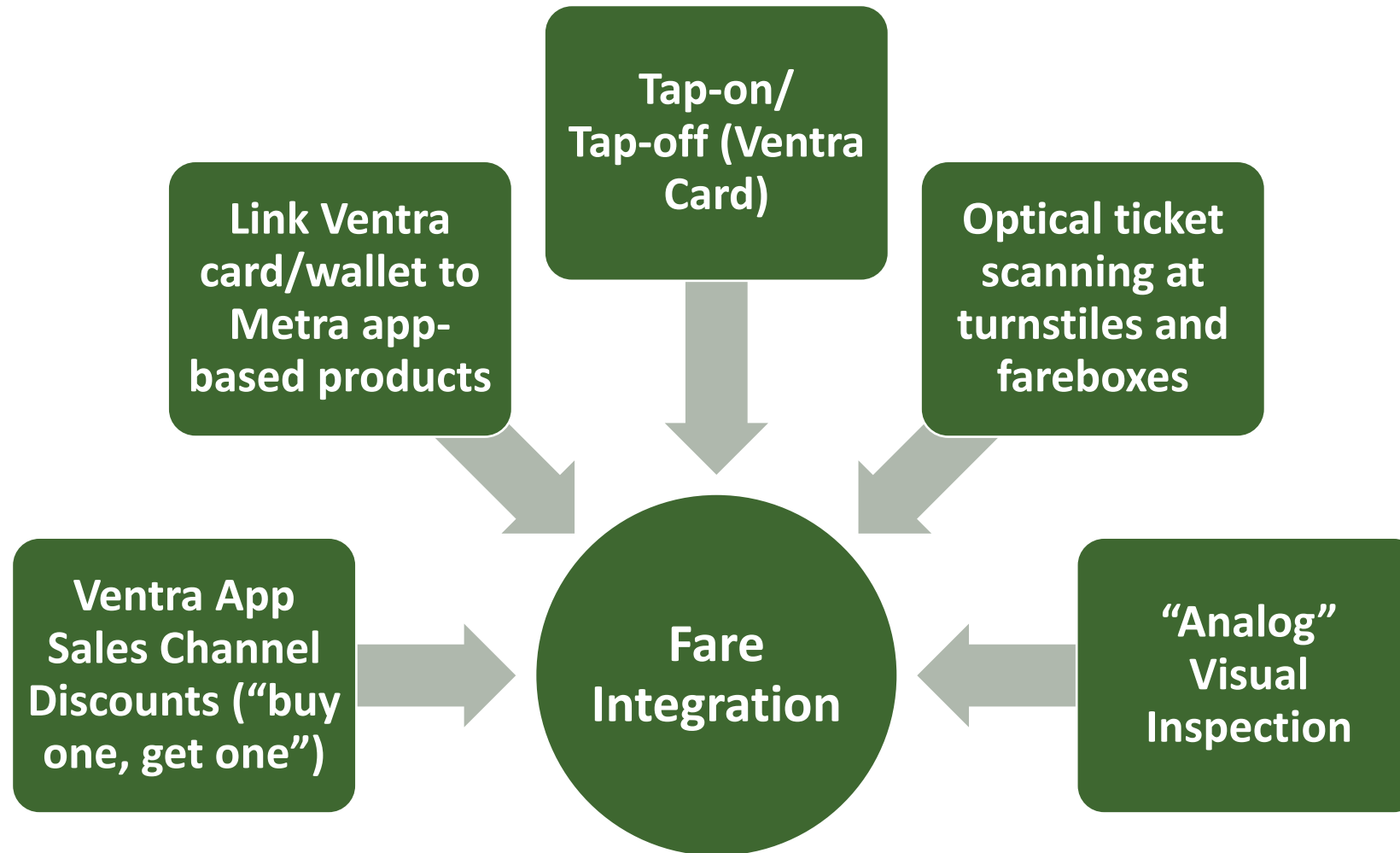


Solutions to achieve seamless travel

“Fare integration” involves several overlapping components



Technology Options



Base Fare and Discount Options

Free transfers

(Each agency sets its own fares, highest fare is the only fare you pay)

Fixed discount

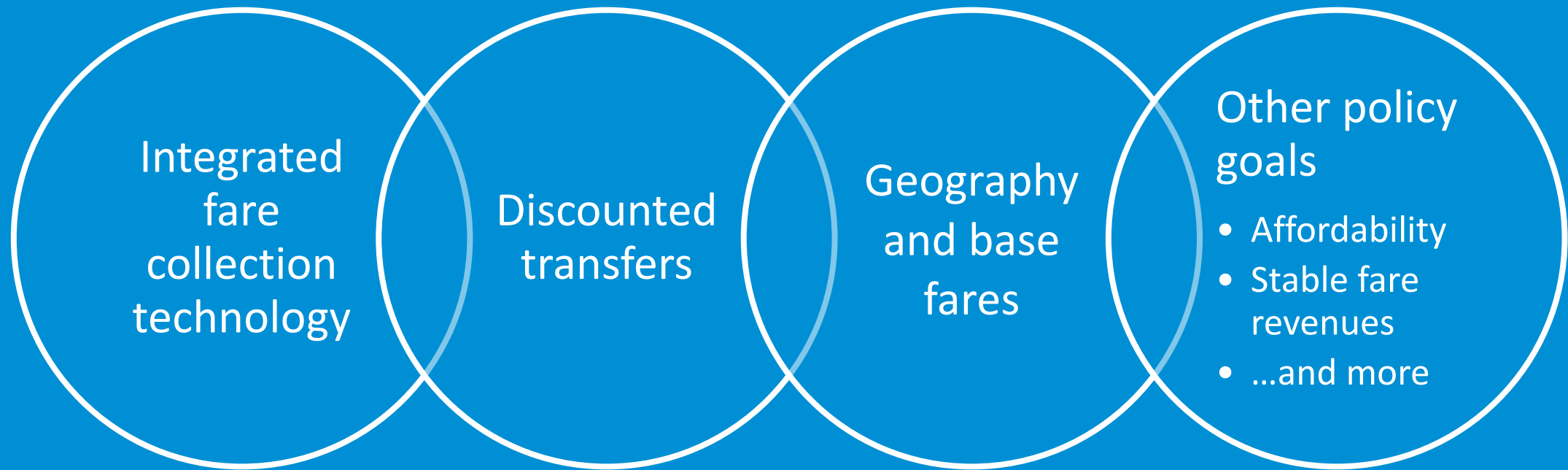
(Each agency sets its own fares, fixed discount e.g. \$2 off when you transfer)

Total Integration

(single flat or zone-based fare, no matter which agency's service you use)

All scenarios can be applicable to different fare types, including single use and/or passes

Policy and technology solutions are distinct but interrelated

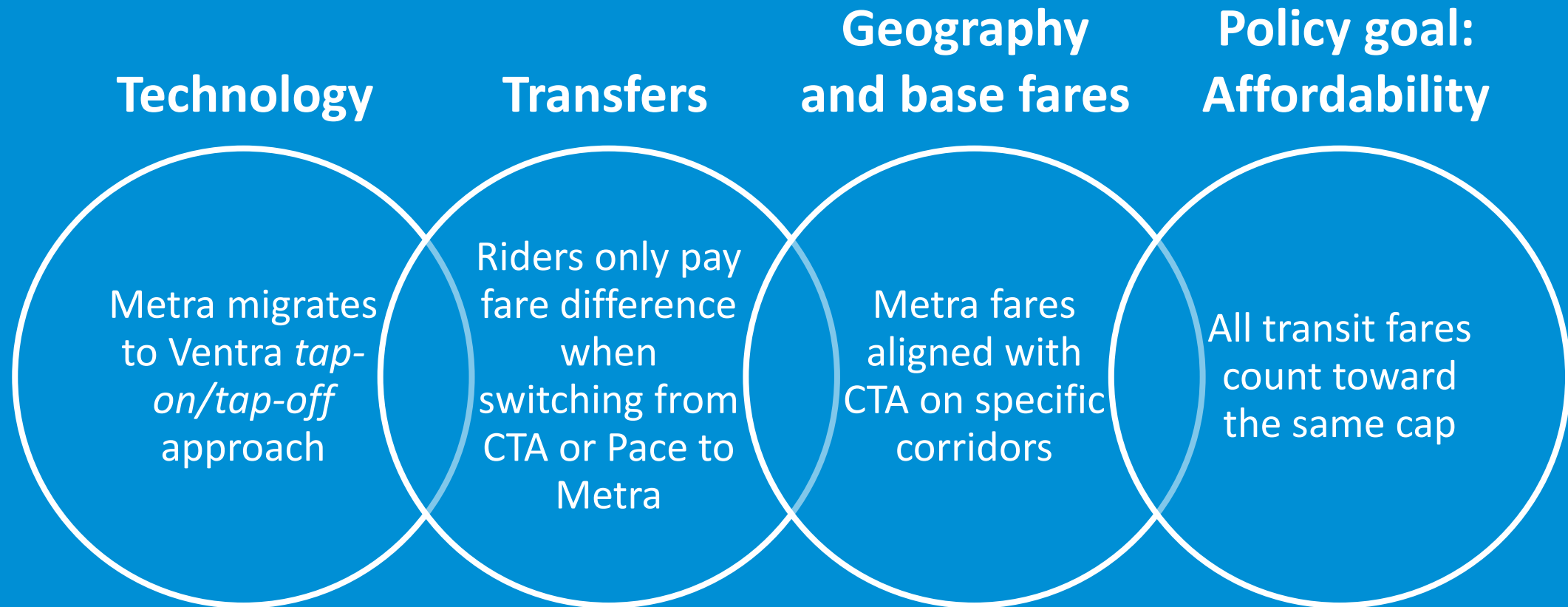


Solutions must also address governance and implementation challenges

- Revenue sharing
- Procurement decisions and “ownership” of fare collection assets
- Back office integration
- Ongoing fare policy decision-making
- Structural incentives and performance metrics (e.g., farebox recovery ratio)





EXAMPLE

A successful approach for the region will combine multiple elements



What our peers are doing about fare integration

Peers have taken different approaches...

Agency/Program	Region	Program
	Seattle, Washington	<p>100% free transfers across regional agencies, managed by a joint board.</p> <p>Highest fare among services used is the only fare you pay.</p>
	Boston, Massachusetts	<p>Commuter rail passes (zone-based) include unlimited access to local bus and subway.</p> <p>Free transfers between subway and one commuter rail line.</p>
	Bay Area, California	<p>27 transit agencies; ad-hoc collaboration evolving into full integration, including free transfers to/from bus/subway.</p> <p>Unified payment system now adopted by 24 agencies.</p>
	Berlin, Germany	<p>Total integration: 100% free transfer between modes within a specific geographic area (regional zone-based fare).</p>

...but there are common themes

Full integration can happen gradually

Geographically targeted approaches are common (specific lines or zones)

Regional entities or joint boards provide leadership

Seamless integration between tap-on urban transit and zone-based commuter rail is challenging and potentially costly



Metra and CTA/Pace users can utilize the Regional Connect Pass:

A \$30 CTA/Pace Monthly Pass available to Metra \$100 Monthly Pass holders

Benefits

- Reduces cost for riders needing both Metra and CTA/Pace monthly passes
- Allows unlimited trips across all three service boards
- Improves upon previous Link-Up and PlusBus passes:
 - Eliminating the need for manual validation and making the product easier to access and buy
 - No time-use restrictions (Link-Up pass was only valid during weekday peak commuting hours)

Disadvantages

- Marketed as a single product, but actually two separate passes sold as a “bundle discount”
- Metra pass lives in the app, while CTA/Pace pass is associated with a card and validated by scanning a tap reader
- Metra pass is valid for calendar month while CTA/Pace pass lasts 30 days, often resulting in the two expiring on different days
- Only available for monthly (no paygo or short-duration option such as 1-, 3-, or 7-day pass)

FARE INTEGRATION

Case Study: ORCA (Seattle, WA)



Participating Agencies	9 Bus, Rail, Ferry, Monorail, Streetcar	
Commuter Rail Fare Basis	Sounder Distance-based	Link Light Rail Distance-based
Transfer Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free transfers if the next trip is less expensive than the first, otherwise the difference is charged • Unlimited transfers within a two-hour window • Distance-based system requires tap on/off • Ferry services excluded 	
Governance	ORCA Joint Board includes the 7 original participating agencies	
Vendor	INIT (next generation account-based system) Vix (original contract)	

FARE INTEGRATION

Case Study: ORCA (Seattle, WA)

ORCA Card and myORCA App

- Unlimited free transfers within two-hour window (only pay most expensive leg), even **between agencies**
- Paygo and regional pass options
- Most agency-specific passes eliminated
- Distance-based trips require tap on/off



FARE INTEGRATION

Case Study: ORCA (Seattle, WA)

ORCA Joint Board

- Representation from each of the major transit operators
- Fare revenue distribution is based on the number of rides each agency provided and the relative fare charged by each agency



FARE INTEGRATION

Case Study: Clipper (Bay Area)



Participating Agencies	24 Bus, Rail, Ferry	Access to BART parking only, bikeshare, and bike parking
Commuter Rail Fare Basis	BART Distance-based	Caltrain Zone-based
Transfer Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free and discounted transfers to select transit providers • Transfer policies vary by transit provider • Distance- and zone-based systems require tap on/off 	
Governance	Metropolitan Transportation Commission	
Vendor	Cubic	

FARE INTEGRATION

Case Study: Clipper (Bay Area)

Clipper Card and Mobile App

- Physical card or card linked to Apple/Google Pay for tap on/off
- Mobile app for pass/cash value management, trip planning
- Accepted by almost all Bay Area transit operators
 - Began in 2010 with 6 operators
 - Now 24 out of 27 use it
- Houses multiple passes and cash value
- Reload card on the app, at machines in stations, or at ticket offices and customer support centers



FARE INTEGRATION

Case Study: Clipper (Bay Area)

Bay Area Shared Passes and Discounts

- San Francisco Muni + BART “A” Pass – joint monthly pass specifically for trips within San Francisco
- \$0.50 transfer discount to Muni buses and LRT from commuter rail (SF focused)
- Free transfers to SamTrans and VTA buses from Caltrain for monthly Caltrain passholders
- Shared daily and monthly pass by four East Bay bus operators



FARE INTEGRATION

Case Study: Clipper (Bay Area)

MTC Fare Integration Task Force

- Clipper Executive Board Special Committee
 - Members are from area transit agencies
- Formed in 2020 to oversee the Bay Area Transit Fare Coordination and Integration Study (2021)
- Fare Policy Vision Statement
- Now oversees resulting fare integration/coordination pilot programs

Bay Area Fare Coordination and Integration Study

*Draft
Business Case Summary*



EQUITY LENS

Case Study: Fairmount Line (Boston, MA)

Lowered fare zone on City-only commuter rail line that serves lower-income parts of the city without subway service

Tap-on (single fare zone, no need to tap-off)



FARE INTEGRATION

Case Study: VBB (Berlin, Germany)

100% free transfer between
modes within a specific
geographic area (zone-based)



Integration with Complementary Modes

Integration with complementary modes and services outside the three RTA service boards



Transit can be integrated across state lines





South Shore Line

- West Lake Corridor (opens 2025) will likely attract many Illinois residents
- SSL already provides the only service at Hegewisch, which is technically a Metra station

FARE INTEGRATION ACROSS STATE LINES

Case Study: RIPTA/MBTA

- RIPTA allows riders with monthly MBTA passes to board RIPTA buses at no cost (only through July 2023)



Micromobility options can be integrated with transit to better serve users transferring between modes



MICROMOBILITY

Case Study: Washington, DC

- Users with a registered SmarTrip Card have free and unlimited access to Metro's Bike and Ride facilities
- Controlled, video-monitored, and sheltered bicycle parking



MICROMOBILITY

Case Study: Washington, DC

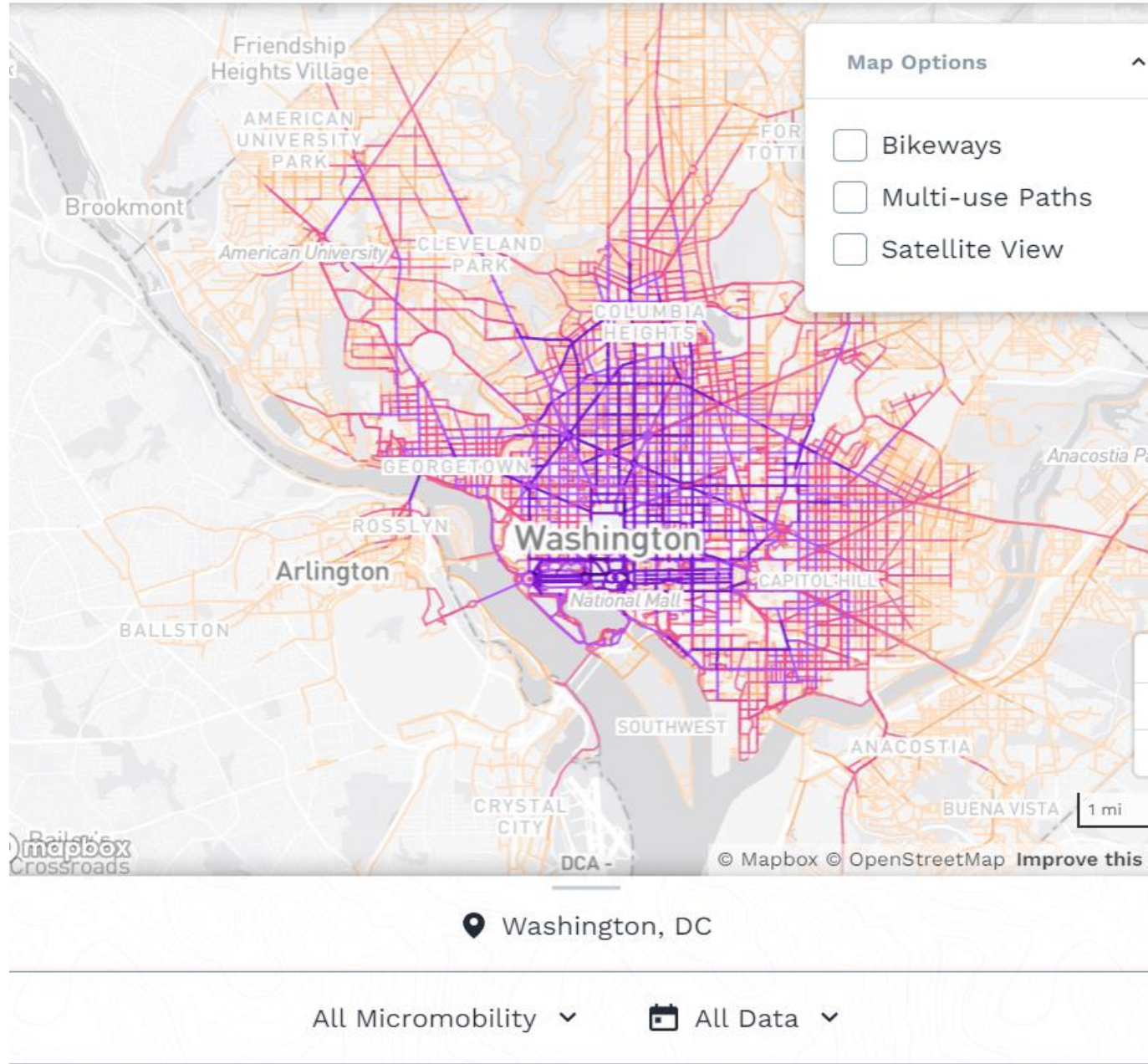
- Offer for 10 free bikeshare rides for existing WMATA customers
- App integration
- 5,000+ Capital bikes and 650 docking stations in DC, Maryland, and Virginia



MICROMOBILITY

Case Study: Washington, DC

- Ride Report Micromobility Dashboard
 - Vehicle Trips Per Day
 - Average Active Vehicle Counts Per Day
 - Trips Per Vehicle Per Day
- Shows data for all micromobility, E-Bikes, and Scooters



MICROMOBILITY

Case Study: Berlin, Germany

- Partnership between Berlin's public transport operator BVG and Vianova
- Planning 150 parking zones and mobility hubs to link conveniently with public transport



MICROMOBILITY

Case Study: DB (Germany)

- "Call a Bike" platform and mobile app to reserve bikes in several German cities
- First 30 minutes of every trip are free in Hamburg and Stuttgart



Potential solutions for seamless travel

Establishing a structure...

- Identify a regional owner of fare systems (e.g., regional entity or joint-agency board)
- Identify defined metrics and timeline to implementation

...that can achieve regional fare policy goals...

Articulating goals and principles that must be addressed:

- Payment method (e.g., tap-on)
- Free or discounted transfers
- Consistency across fare structures

To be informed by additional analysis of cost, ridership, equity, etc.

...and has the required funding to ensure long-term sustainability

- Funding infrastructure investments required to achieve goals (e.g., Metra migration to tap-on)
- Ensuring a funding backstop for potential revenue losses based on integration impacts

Connections with complementary modes

- Funding subsidized transfers and integration of fare payment platforms
- Expanding data sharing requirements from private mobility providers (e.g., Uber/Lyft) to identify opportunities and costs of greater integration
- ...and more

Strategies that cut across PART topics

- Governance implications of revenue sharing and rate-setting
- Ongoing public subsidy impacts
- ...and more

Next steps

- Share white papers and issue primers
- Gather feedback from regional stakeholders on potential solutions



Thank you!

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