



King County

Department of Transportation

Metro Transit Division
General Manager's Office
201 S. Jackson Street
KSC-TR-0415
Seattle, WA 98104-3856

November 4, 2011

Barbara Dobkin
P.O Box 66900
Burien, WA 98166

Dear Ms. Dobkin:

Thank you for your letter of October 17, 2011, regarding your request to extend the one-zone fare boundary to South 148th Street so that it includes the North Highline Community.

When Metro began operations in 1973, it inherited a system with 38 zones, with a 10 cent zone surcharge required when crossing a zone boundary. In 1977, the Metro Council simplified this fare structure by adopting a two-zone system, with the zone boundaries being established at the Seattle City Limits. Finally, in 1999, the King County Council adopted an ordinance eliminating the zone surcharge during the 18 "off-peak" hours each weekday and on weekends.

There are a number of important and often conflicting public policy goals that come into play when looking at transit fares. These include recovering the appropriate level of revenue, increasing ridership, reflecting cost of service, minimizing the impacts of fares on those least able to pay, providing for regional coordination with other transit agencies and being as simple as possible to understand and use for riders and operators. These goals often compete with each other and no fare structure is able to fully achieve all of them.

The peak period zone system is an imperfect means of having fares reflect the higher cost of delivering longer trips. Even though two-zone trips are for the most part longer than one-zone trips, there are always issues of equity around the zone boundary as some two-zone trips end up being shorter than some one-zone trips. Shifting the one-zone boundary further south to encompass North Burien would not rectify this in-equity. Moving the boundary to South 148th Street would increase the fare for some riders traveling wholly within the city of Burien. It would just move the problem.

Over the last few years, we have made significant progress in simplifying Metro's fare structure and working with Sound Transit to make transit fares more uniform within King County. Sound Transit has eliminated zones within King County, and that is something that we plan to examine

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as well. However, it's important to note that given Metro's current financial situation, eliminating the two-zone peak surcharge would require raising other fares to make up for the lost revenue.

Thank you again for your letter. If you have further questions or comments, please contact Chuck Sawyer, Research & Management Information Supervisor, at 206-684-1512 or via email at chuck.sawyer@kingcounty.gov. We would be pleased to have a Metro Representative attend one of your council meetings to discuss this issue specifically, or to discuss fare policies in a more general sense.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kevin Desmond".

Kevin Desmond
General Manager
Metro Transit Division

cc: Victor Obeso, Manager, Service Development, Metro Transit Division, Department of Transportation (DOT)
Chuck Sawyer, Supervisor, Research & Management, Service Development, Metro Transit Division, DOT