

Partnership for a Zero-Fare Mountain Line

May 20, 2014

Missoula Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee Members:

- ✓ Think what it means to increase Mountain Line's ridership by 45%.
- ✓ Imagine an additional 400,000 rides per year.
- ✓ Envision benefits to air quality, livability, and community satisfaction.

It can happen in Missoula and you can help. It is working in several communities similar to Missoula in size, population and demographics.

We invite you to initiate a trial effort in Missoula by converting Mountain Line into a zero-fare community bus system.

As proven in other communities, zero-fare bus services result in significant benefits:

- Substantial increase in ridership.
- Increase in operational efficiency.
- Reduced administrative expenses.
- Zero-fare communities consistently rate as "more desirable" for living standards.

Increased Ridership: In a recent survey of 39 communities with zero-fare systems, ridership increased between 20 and 60 percent. Notably, Corvallis, Oregon—a city approximately the size of Missoula with a similar bus system—recently adopted a zero-fare system and increased ridership by 60%.

Efficiency: Without on-board fare collection, the entire transit system functions with greater efficiency; buses can load passengers faster and spend less time at bus stops, boosting on-time performance. Additionally, zero-fare systems save money by eliminating the need for costly administrative functions and equipment related to handling cash, tickets, transfers, and passes.

Desirable Communities: Zero-fare bus service contributes to livability and public health objectives. Significant increases in ridership results in lower emissions of carbon and other pollutants, thus contributing to cleaner air. Bus riders reduce traffic congestion with the related dependence on petroleum and cars. Increased physical mobility of bus riders supports a healthy and active lifestyles.

Convenient bus access through zero-fare transit connects a community in ways that earn positive community recognition. Several communities offering zero-fare transit have received state and national awards as "Best Places to Live." As demonstrated by places such as Corvallis, Oregon, Logan, Utah and Bozeman, Montana, zero-fare service helps bridge social and cultural "Town and Gown" divides.

Partners for a Zero-Fare Community Bus Service

Demonstration Project

Goal: To expand community bus ridership by 45 % on fixed routes by encouraging riders through zero-fares. The three-year Mountain Line demonstration period operates through contribution from multiple partners.

Period of the Demonstration Project: Calendar year 2015 through 2017

Benefits to Missoula of "Zero-Fare" Community Bus Service

Significant Ridership Increases

Providing zero-fare community bus service is virtually certain to result in significant ridership increases no matter where it is implemented. Research from the 39 communities with zero-fare systems indicates that ridership will increase from 20% to 60% in a matter of just a few months, and even more in some areas. The most recent public transit agency to go zero-fare is in Corvallis, Oregon, in 2011, which resulted in a 43% increase in ridership within two months, with no increase in service hours.

Mountain Line will soon be implementing improvements recently approved by voters, which include 15-minute all-day bus frequency (Bolt! service) on Route 2. This service complements the popular Bolt! service currently in place on the system's busiest service: Route 1. In addition to Bolt! service on Route 2, upcoming improvements include late-evening service on Mountain Line's four most popular routes.



If Mountain Line implements zero-fare community bus service at the same time as these improvements the total ridership increase is estimated at a conservative 400,000 rides each year by the third year following implementation. That's a 45 % ridership increase benefiting us all.

Livability and Public Health Objectives

Offering zero-fare service contributes to livability and public health objectives. Significant increases in ridership lower the carbon and other pollution produced in a community, contributing to cleaner air, reduced traffic congestion, and less dependence on gasoline and autos. Increased ridership means a more active and healthier community.