



Fare Media Revision Title VI Fare Equity Analysis (B79 Amherst-Worcester)

April, 2025



A pilot program to replace cash payments with mobile payment options on PVTA Bus Route B79

PV/TA

Translation/Tradução/Traducción/翻译/ Перевод/ Dịch

English: If this information is needed in another language, please contact the PVTa Title VI Specialist at 413-732-6248 x230.

Portuguese: Caso esta informação seja necessária em outro idioma, favor contar o Especialista em Título VI do PVTa pelo telefone 413-732-6248 x2230.

Spanish: Si necesita esta información en otro idioma, por favor contacte al especialista de PVTa del Título VI al 413-732-6248 x2230.

Chinese Simplified: (mainland & Singapore): 如果需要使用其它语言了解信息，请联系麻纱湾区交通局（PVTa）《民权法案》第六章专员，电话413-732-6248 x2230。

Chinese Traditional: (Hong Kong & Taiwan): 如果需要使用其它語言了解信息，請聯繫麻省灣區交通局（PVTa）《民權法案》第六章專員，電話413-732-6248 x2230。

Russian: Если Вам необходима данная информация на любом другом языке, пожалуйста, свяжитесь со специалистом по Титулу VI PVTa по тел: 413-732-6248 x2230.

Haitian Creole: Si yon moun vle genyen enfòmasyon sa yo nan yon lòt lang, tanpri kontakte Espesyalis PVTa Title VI la nan nimewo 413-732-6248 x2230.

Vietnamese: Nếu quý vị cần thông tin này bằng tiếng khác, vui lòng liên hệ Chuyên viên Luật VI của PVTa theo số điện thoại 413-732-6248 x2230.

French : Si vous avez besoin d'obtenir une copie de la présente dans une autre langue, veuillez contacter le spécialiste du Titre VI de PVTa en composant le 413-732-6248 x2230.

Italian: Se ha bisogno di ricevere queste informazioni in un'altra lingua si prega di contattare lo Specialista PVTa del Titolo VI al número 413-732-6248 x2230.

Khmer: ប្រសិនបើអ្នក-អ្នកគ្រប់ បង្កើតឯកសារនេះ សូមកុំភ្លេចទូរស័ព្ទទៅកាន់ ទីស្នាក់ការកណ្តាល ភូមិភាគកណ្តាល មួយលេខ ៤១៣-៧៣២-៦២៤៨ ឌីអេស ២៣០ ។

Arabic: إن كنت بحاجة إلى هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، يرجى الاتصال بأخصائي الفقرة السادسة على الهاتف 413-732-6248 x230

This report was funded in part through grant[s] from the Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. The views and opinions of the authors [or agency] expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U. S. Department of Transportation.

The Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVMPO) and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin (including limited English proficiency). Related federal and state nondiscrimination laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, sex, disability, and additional protected characteristics.

Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against may [file a complaint](#) with the following:

Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
MPO Title VI Specialist
60 Congress Street
Springfield, MA 01104
Phone 413-781-6045 TTD/TTY (413-781-7168)
E-mail: pvmvocivilrights@pvpc.org

MassDOT Title VI Specialists
Office of Diversity and Civil Rights – Title VI Unit
10 Park Plaza, Suite 3800
Boston, MA 02116
Phone: (857) 368-8580 or 7-1-1 for Relay Service
Email: MassDOT.CivilRights@state.ma.us

U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Civil Rights
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
Website: civilrights.justice.gov/

Federal Transit Administration
Office of Civil Rights
Attention: Complaint Team East Building, 5th Floor—
TCR 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
[FTA online complaint form](#)

The PVMPO complies with the Governor’s Executive Order 526, section 4 requiring all programs, activities, and services provided, performed, licensed, chartered, funded, regulated, or contracted for by the state shall be conducted without unlawful discrimination based on race, color, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, disability, veteran's status (including Vietnam-era veterans), or background.

English: If this information is needed in another language, please contact the PVPC Title VI Specialist at 413-781-6045.

Portuguese: Caso esta informação seja necessária em outro idioma, favor contar o Especialista em Título VI do PVPC pelo telefone 413-781-6045.

Spanish: Si necesita esta información en otro idioma, por favor contacte al especialista de PVPC del Título VI al 413-781-6045.

Chinese Simplified: (mainland & Singapore): 如果需要使用其它语言了解信息，请联系马萨诸塞州交通部（PVPC）《民权法案》第六章专员，电话413-781-6045。

Chinese Traditional: (Hong Kong & Taiwan): 如果需要使用其它语言了解信息，請聯繫馬薩諸塞州交通部（PVPC）《民權法案》第六章專員，電話413-781-6045。

Russian: Если Вам необходима данная информация на любом другом языке, пожалуйста, свяжитесь со специалистом по Титулу VI Департамента Транспорта штата Массачусетс (PVPC) по тел: 413-781-6045.

Haitian Creole: Si yon moun vle genyen enfòmasyon sa yo nan yon lòt lang, tanpri kontakte Espesyalis PVPC Title VI la nan nimewo 413-781-6045.

Vietnamese: Nếu quý vị cần thông tin này bằng tiếng khác, vui lòng liên hệ Chuyên viên Luật VI của PVPC theo số điện thoại 413-781-6045.

French: Si vous avez besoin d'obtenir une copie de la présente dans une autre langue, veuillez contacter le spécialiste du Titre VI de PVPC en composant le 413-781-6045.

Italian: Se ha bisogno di ricevere queste informazioni in un'altra lingua si prega di contattare lo Specialista PVPC del Titolo VI al numero 413-781-6045.

Khmer: បសិ្ថ ន ន ើនើបលាក-អករការបកករបពតមា្ថនន៖

សមាគមកកអករើករើសលើ ព័ កទ៦ របសPVPC តាមរយៈើ លខ១ រសព ១413-781-6045

Contents

1. Authorities and Summary	1
1.1 Summary	1
1.2 Background	2
2. Description of Changes	4
3. Scope and Process.....	4
3.1 Scope.....	4
3.2 Process	4
4. Fare Equity Analysis based on Ridership.....	5
4.1 Summary of the Change.....	5
5. Disparate Impacts and Disproportionate Burden (DI/DB) Analysis	11
5.1: DI/DB Analysis Definitions	11
5.2: DI/DB Impact Analysis Results	12
6. Public Outreach and Consultation	12
6.1 Public Hearings.....	12
6.2 Public Comments from Customer Service	13
6.3 Public Comments from Northern System Survey	16
6.4 PVRTA Response to Comments.....	16
7. Conclusion.....	17
Appendix A: Public Notice.....	18
Appendix B: Presentation	19
Appendix C: Public Hearing Minutes/Public Comments.....	26
Appendix D: BusPlus+ Cash Load Locations.....	36
Appendix E: Major Service Change Policy.....	37
Appendix F: Methodology.....	39

Figures and Tables

Figure 1.1: B79 Route Map	2
Figure 1.2: B79 Route Notice	3
Figure 1.3: Mobile Fare Payment App Instructions.....	3
Table 2.1: Approved Service Changes.....	4
Table 4.1: Summary of the Fare Media.....	5
Table 4.2: Fare Equity Analysis Definitions.....	5
Table 4.3: Fare Equity Analysis Results	8
Table 5.1: Disparate Impacts and Disproportionate Burdens Analysis.....	11
Table 6.1: Comments by Public Hearings.....	12
Table: 6.2: Comments Received by Customer Service.....	13
Table: 6.3: Comments Received from Survey.....	16

1. Authorities and Summary

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTa) was established through Chapter 161B of the Massachusetts General Laws. This law establishes the initial service area and structure. In addition, “The affairs of an authority shall be managed by an administrator who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the advisory board of the authority...The administrator shall be the chief executive officer of the authority...” The administrator is given broad authority to exercise the powers given to the transit authority and is given the authorities at the will of the advisory board including managing facilities and equipment and the hiring of officers, agents, and employees. This includes activities common to transit planning.

As a recipient of Section 5307 and 5310 funds from the Federal Transit Administration, PVTa is required to perform an Equity Analysis as part of FTA rules developed in response to Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and outlined in FTA Circular 4702.1B. Major service changes must be assessed for their potential discriminatory impact with regard to race, color, income, or national origin. Equity analyses are required regardless of whether or not the changes proposed would be beneficial or detrimental to riders.

1.1 Summary

This document is the Title VI analysis of PVTa’s fare media revision for the B79 (Amherst-Worcester) Intercity Service. The fare media revision is an effort by PVTa to improve operational efficiency and safety by streamlining the fare collection process and introducing cashless, mobile payment options. The fare media revision will serve as a pilot program to determine the feasibility of streamlined fare collection on the B79 and future planned intercity routes.

On January 15, 2025, the PVTa Advisory Board approved the use of funding to implement the fare media revision for the B79 as a pilot program to operate for six (6) months from January through June 2025. pending an analysis and evaluation of the service and completion of the Title VI analysis described in this document.

The fare media revision for the B79 requires a Title VI Disparate Impact/Disproportionate Burden (DI/DB) Analysis due to the fact that the proposal will change fare media on a PVTa route. Although the B79 primarily serves students and faculty at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, it is available to all transit passengers and makes stops in rural and low-income communities. The fare media revision also serves as a pilot for implementation on future intercity route services including the planned Northampton to Pittsfield route. This change meets the threshold as a major service change and merits a Title VI DI/DB Analysis. While this change is considered a service enhancement, a Title VI DI/DB Analysis is warranted due to the nature of the change. PVTa’s DI/DB Policy is included in [Appendix C](#).

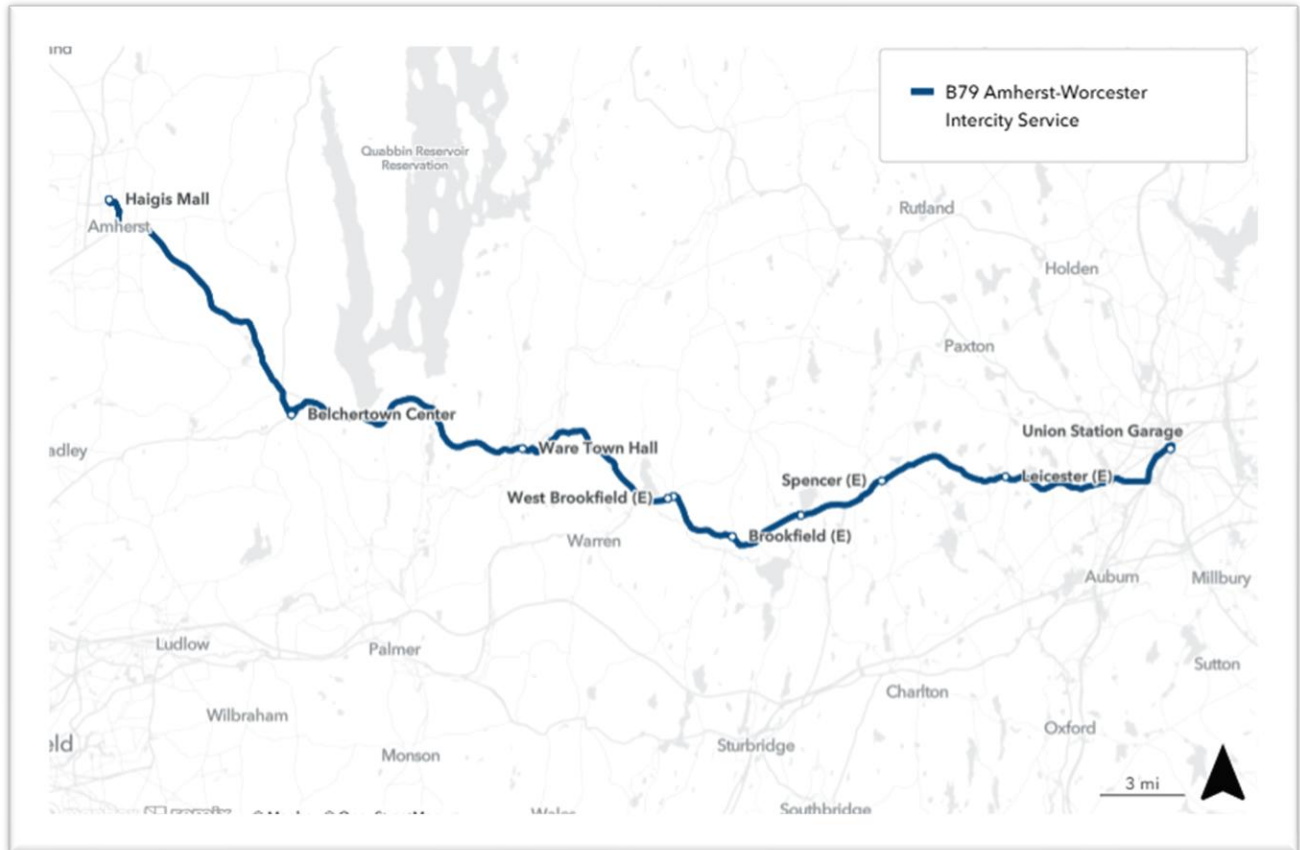
This analysis assesses the potential impacts of new service proposals specified by PVTa’s own Title VI Update that may have a disparate impact or disproportionate burden on PVTa customers of color and/or low-income riders, depending on the nature of the service changes that are implemented. A demographic analysis of impacted PVTa customers is presented to determine the adverse effects of these major service changes. PVTa will consider appropriate mitigating tactics on adverse impacts on minority¹ populations (disparate impacts) and adverse impacts on low-income (disproportionate burden).

¹ A NOTE ON LANGUAGE: This report uses the term “minorities” only when necessary to conform to federal regulations and definitions.

1.2 Background

The B79 (Amherst-Worcester) Intercity Service is a grant funded PVTa route that began operating in September of 2021. The B79 is funded through Section 5311 (f), federally funds competitively distributed through MassDOT. The route fulfills national objectives for the intercity bus program. MassDOT identified the Amherst-Worcester (Rt. 9 Local) route as a service gap in MassDOT's Regional Bus Network Assessment. The B79 provides three (3) round trips, four (4) (Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday) and two (2) round trips on Sundays between Amherst and Worcester with local stops in Belchertown, Ware, West Brookfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Spencer, Leicester, and Worcester. Whenever possible, the B79 is scheduled to connect with MBTA commuter rail service to Boston via Worcester Union Station.

Figure 1.1 B79 Route Map



Fares on the B79 are unique to the route and vary between \$1.50 and \$9.00 (\$.75 and \$4.50 for seniors and disabled people) based on destinations along the route (See [Appendix B](#)). The B79 fare media revision proposal does not change the fare cost, but the current fare structure's uniqueness makes it ideal for piloting a cashless option without impacting other service routes in the PVTa system. On January 15th, as part of the approved pilot program, cash fares were no longer accepted on the B79. Furthermore, and as part of PVTa's system wide Try Transit Program adopted in November 2024, service between Amherst and Ware will remain free until June 2025. The fare media revision for the B79 will streamline fare collection and reduce boarding times through passenger use of the visual validation ticketing App known as BusPlus+. Given the high fares on this route the elimination of cash onboard will also help to reduce the potential for opportunity crimes and the perception that there may be large amounts of cash onboard.

PVTA first implemented the BusPlus+ mobile ticketing App in July 2021. BusPlus+ is the official mobile ticketing app of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. The app allows passengers to purchase and use intercity and commuter bus tickets instantly on regional transit authorities across the commonwealth. The app allows passengers to plan a trip by selecting the origin, destination, choose the type of ticket and quantity, create an account, and link credit/debit cards to complete checkout and activate tickets to show to the bus driver. Although an internet connection is required to make purchases, tickets can be used offline. All personal information and payments are securely transmitted and stored. This six (6) month pilot will assess the success of the fare media revision before a decision can be made to use the app exclusively on all intercity routes.

Figure 1.2: B79 Route Notice

B79 Amherst - Worcester Intercity Route Notice

Effective January 15, 2025

Cash fares will no longer be accepted on the B79.

All riders must use PVTA's Mobile Fare Payment App to pay fare on the B79.

MassDOT **BUS** **PLUS**

For additional Information on mobile fare payment, [click here](#).

Figure 1.3: Mobile Fare Payment App

Mobile Fare Payment App MassDOT BusPlus

Pay your PVTA fare with your smartphone!
Download PVTA's Fare App: MassDOT BusPlus.

BUS **PLUS**

- Buy tickets on your smartphone.
- Activate ticket when the bus arrives.
- Show your active ticket to the driver.
- Enjoy your ride!

Learn how the App works:
[Click here](#) to read the instructions to use MassDOT BusPlus.

PVTA's Mobile Fare Payment App
MassDOT **BUS** **PLUS**

For an Apple device, click on the Apple badge:

How to Purchase a Day Pass

Watch on YouTube

How to Activate a Weekly 7 day Pass

Video

2. Description of Changes

The goal of the fare media revision for the B79 is to improve operational efficiency and safety by streamlining the fare collection process and introducing a cashless, mobile payment option through MassDOT’s BusPlus+ App. The change will only impact PVRTA bus route B79 (Amherst-Worcester) and if successful, could be applied to other future planned intercity service routes. There will be no changes to the current fare costs on the B79 or any other PVRTA regular fixed routes. The pilot program for the fare media revision was approved by the Advisory Board and began on January 15th, 2025.

Table 2.1: Approved Service Changes

Route	Proposed Change	Comments
B79 (Amherst-Worcester)	Replace cash payments with mobile option through the BusPlus+ App	- The pilot program for the fare media revision began January 15th - The service change will only apply to the B79 Route and will not change the fare costs. - If successful, the fare revision could be applied to all intercity routes

3. Scope and Process

This document presents the equity analysis of PVRTA’s Fare Media Revision for the B79 (Amherst-Worcester) Intercity Service. PVRTA’s policies require that all proposed major service changes undergo a Title VI Service Equity Analysis to evaluate potential disparate impacts (DI) on people of color and disproportionate burdens (DB) on low-income persons.

3.1 Scope

This fare media revision that was approved as a pilot at PVRTA’s January 2025 Advisory Board meeting and implemented by PVRTA on January 15, 2025. This revision is considered “major,” by meeting the threshold when “any change in PVRTA fare policies, rates, or media is being considered.” According to the definition requirements of PVRTA’s policies for major service changes, Disparate Impacts (DI) and Disproportionate Burdens (DB). Exceedance of PVRTA’s 20% DI and DB policy variance threshold by these changes is also reported. Also reported are public comments and responses from PVRTA received during the 30-day comment period. Modifications to the changes based on public comment and the DI/DB analysis are also included in this report. In cases where the analysis proves exceedances have overcome the 20% threshold, analysis is provided to show that the proposal is the least discriminatory alternative available.

3.2 Process

PVRTA utilized survey data within this document from the 2022 Northern System Customer Survey and the 2024 Southern System Survey. These surveys provide a snapshot of existing riders for this Title VI Disparate Impact/Disproportionate Burden Analysis. PVRTA chose this methodology (using rider survey data) because it is a more accurate account of actual ridership and usage of the B79 (Amherst-Worcester) Intercity service. A disparate impact is the impact the change to the system would have on people of color. A disproportionate burden is the burden borne on low-income communities.

4. Fare Equity Analysis based on Ridership

This section presents the following information for the fare media revision implemented on January 15, 2025. This change meets the major service changes threshold as determined by the PVRTA Title VI Update 2024. An analysis of the fare media generated from ridership surveys indicates that on PVRTA Route B79, low-income groups are more likely to use the Bus Plus+ App as opposed to other payment methods. Usage of the App among minority groups is only 2% less than other payments methods (See [Table 4.1](#)).

4.1 Summary of the Change

The following are key points of the fare equity analysis for the B79 route.

- The fare media revision will have no disparate impact or disproportionate burden on riders
- The fare media revision will be limited to PVRTA Bus Route B79 and future planned intercity routes.
- No changes to fares are included as part of this media revision.
- No further mitigation is necessary at this time.

Table 4.1: Summary of the Fare Media

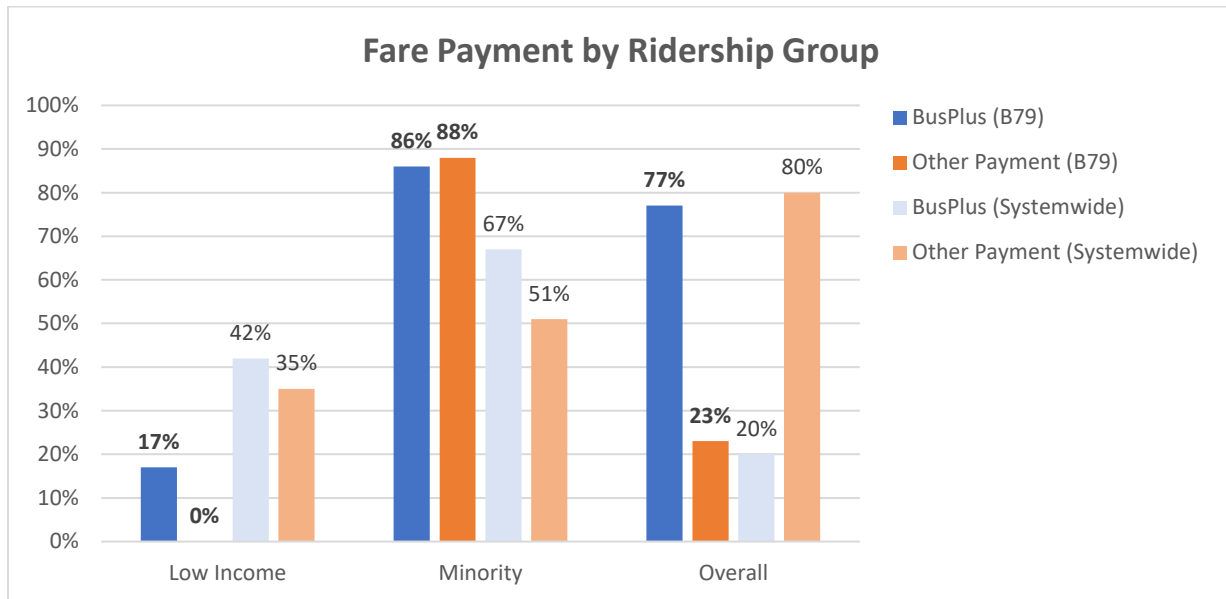


Table 4.2: Fare Equity Analysis Definitions

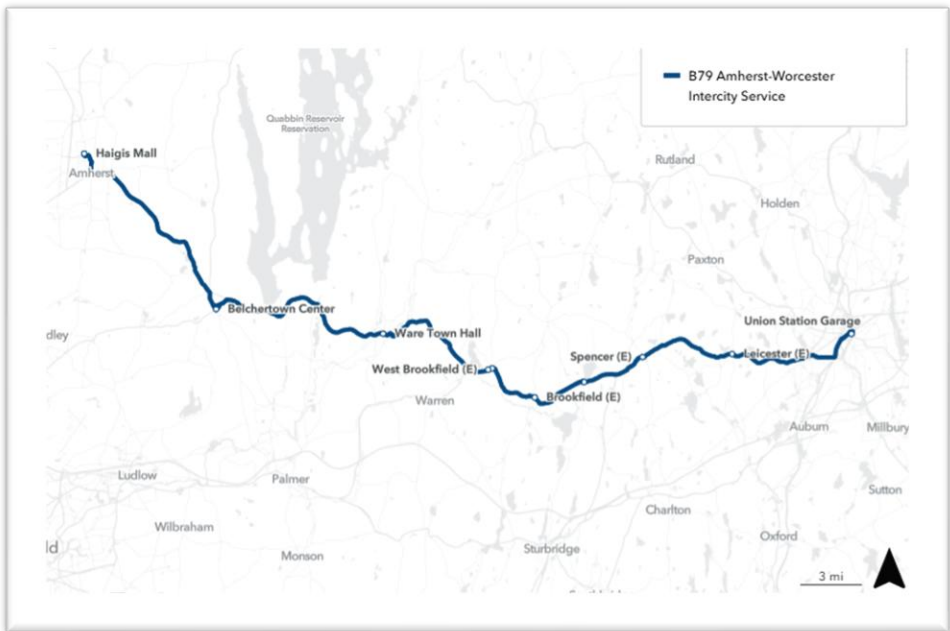
Route Description	Describes the travel corridor and route where the proposed change would occur, including trip frequency and key characteristics of the service.
Proposed Change or Changes	Description of the service change as implemented emergently.
Communities Affected	The municipality(ies) in which the proposed change(s) would occur.
Effective Date	Date the proposed service change would be implemented.

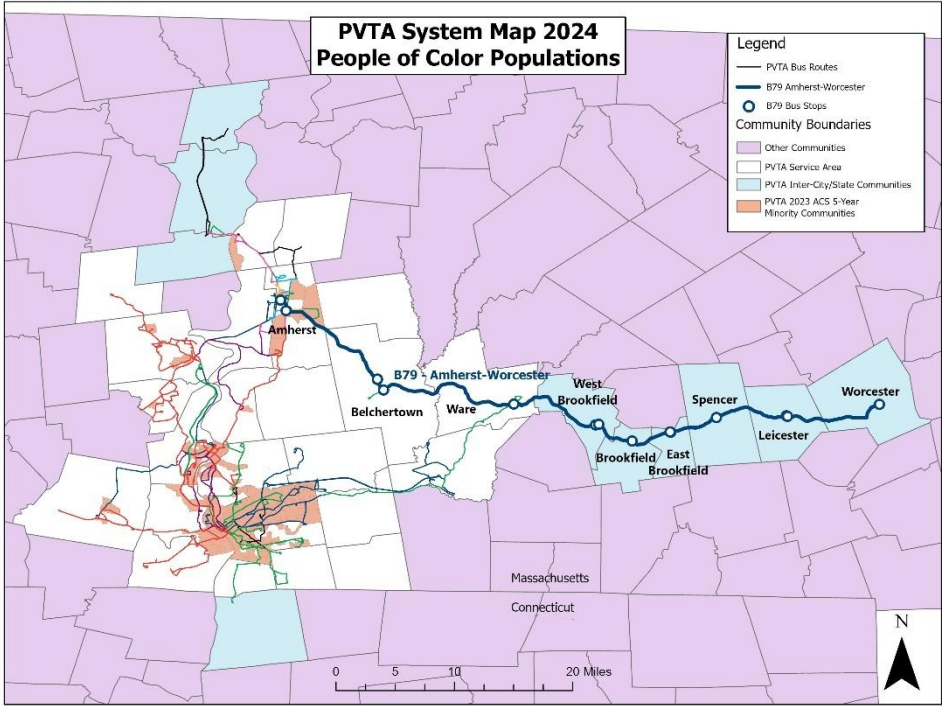
Major Service Change	Determination whether or not the proposed service change includes “any change in PVTA fare policies, rates, or media is being considered”. Actual booked trips were used to determine ridership for each route before and after the affected change.
Customers Affected	An estimated percentage of customers affected per route based on the scheduled trips eliminated. Actual booked trips were used to determine ridership for each route before and after the affected change.
Disparate (Racial Discrimination) Impact Analysis	Explains whether or not there are likely to be differences in the adverse impacts that the proposed service change will have on customers of color in comparison to customers who are white. This is a federally required assessment known as a “disparate impact analysis.” The threshold for this impact is established in the Disparate Impact Policy adopted by the PVTA Advisory Board which states: “the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority has defined a disparate impact as a Major Service Change in which the adverse impacts of the change that people of color experience as compared to non-people of color is 20% or more. For the purposes of this document, the term ‘people of color’ is synonymous with the term ‘minority’ as used in Federal Circular 4702.1B (page 1-4).” (October 1, 2021) Therefore, if the difference in the proportion of customers of color who will be affected by the service change compared to white customers is more than +20%, then the change will be considered to have a disparate impact. For example, if rider surveys show that 60% of the fare media users are people of color and the remaining 40% are white, then the difference (60% minus 40%) is +20%, which meets the +20% threshold to be considered a disparate impact. As another example, if 35% of fare media users are people of color and the remaining 65% are white, then the difference (35% minus 65%) is -30%, which is less than +20% and would not be a disparate impact. Data for this analysis are the systemwide customer surveys of 1,529 passenger rides in 2022 Northern System Survey (Hampden County) and 1,577 passenger rides in 2024 Southern System Survey (Hampshire County). Because our customer surveys indicate a majority of fare media users as people of color, we also include the impact as compared to the system average for discussion purposes. The system averages just under 60% people of color vs. just over 40% white fare media users, therefore much of the ridership on many of the routes would meet the disparate impact threshold.
Disproportionate (Low-income) Burden Analysis	This section explains whether or not the proposed change would have adverse impacts on customers who have low incomes in comparison to those who do not have low incomes. This is a federally required assessment known as “disproportionate impact analysis.” The threshold for this impact is established by the PVTA Advisory Board’s

	Disproportionate Impact Policy which states: “the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority has defined a disproportionate burden to be a change in service where low-income customers would experience a negative impact 20% or larger compared to non-low-income customers. For the purposes of this policy, “low income” is defined as a person reporting an income below the federal poverty line.” (October 1, 2021) For example, if 60% of the riders surveyed on a route are low-income (earning \$11,770/year or less), then the remaining 40% are considered not to be low-income, and the difference (60% minus 40%) is +20%. This meets the policy’s +20% threshold and would therefore be considered a disproportionate impact. In another example, if 35% of fare media users are low-income, then 65% are not low-income, and the difference (35% minus 65%) is -30%, which is less than the +20% policy threshold, and so would not be considered a disproportionate impact. Data for this analysis are the systemwide customer surveys of 1,529 passenger rides in 2022 Northern System Survey (Hampden County) and 1,577 passenger rides in 2024 Southern System Survey (Hampshire County). Consistent with the disparate burden analysis, inclusion of a comparison against the system average is included.
Fares, including elderly and disabled Impact?	Explains whether or not there would be an impact to fares, particularly rates for elderly and disabled In this case, no changes were made to ADA Van Service due to the overlapping nature of service within the areas impacted.
Alternate fare payment types available?	Description of alternate fare payment available to make trips in the corridor in which the service change occurs.
Least Discriminatory Alternative	This section provides information on whether or not there is another alternative that could achieve the business purpose of the approved service change that would be less discriminatory. This analysis is required by the PVTa Disparate and Disproportionate Impact and Disparate Burdens Policies (adopted September 23, 2015) which states: “...in the event that the proposed service change would have an adverse impact that affects customers of color or those with low-incomes (defined as the federal poverty level) more than the non-low income or non-minority populations with a disparity that exceeds the adopted 20% thresholds, PVTa must evaluate whether there is an alternative that has a more equitable impact... and demonstrate that a legitimate business purpose cannot otherwise be accomplished and that the proposed change is the least discriminatory alternative.”

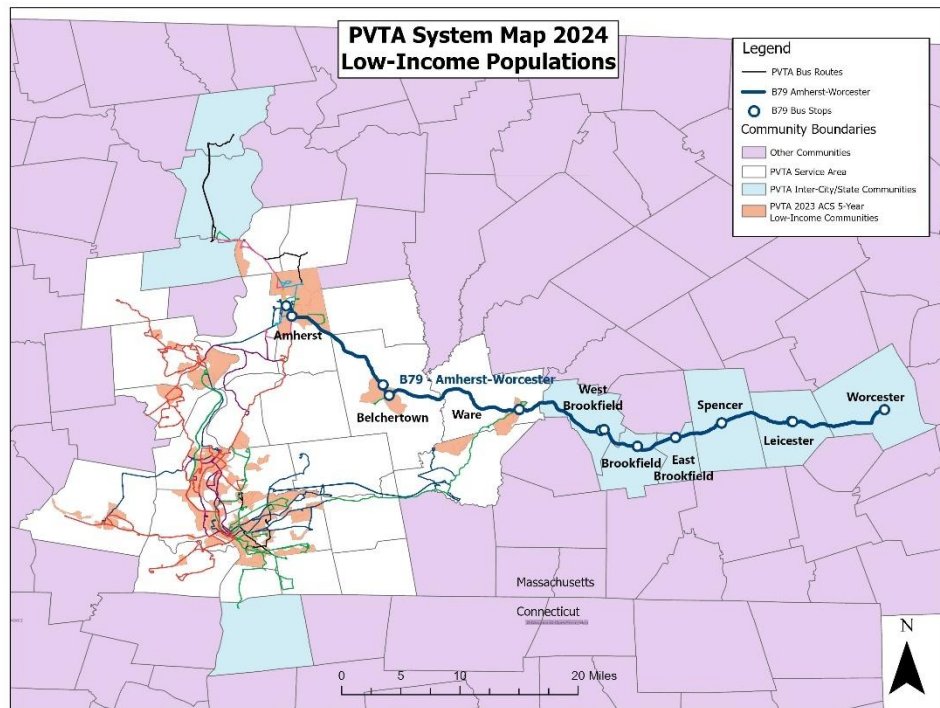
Mitigation and Modifications in Response to Public Comments	If the service change is expected to have either a disparate or disproportionate impact, mitigation must be proposed and implemented to lessen the effects on riders, as required by the PVTa Disparate and Disproportionate Impact Policies (adopted November, 2024) which state: “...PVTa must take measures to mitigate the impact of the proposed action on the affected minority population or low-income population...” This section describes the public comments received that pertain to the service change proposal. It also describes mitigation measures and modifications made by staff to the original December 2021 proposal to anticipated adverse impacts of the change on riders, as well as future and ongoing monitoring and evaluation and additional service changes to reduce adverse effects on riders.
--	---

Table 4.3: Fare Equity Analysis Results

Route Description B79 Amherst-Worcester	 <i>Map of B79 Service Area</i> PVTa bus route B79 (Amherst-Worcester) is an Intercity Service that provides round-trip service between Amherst and Worcester with local stops. Headways and Schedule: three (3) round trips, four (4) days a week and two (2) round trips on the fifth day. Ridership: 2100 YTD Passengers (2022)
Proposed Change or Changes	PVTa proposes to streamline fare media to decrease interaction time with a farebox on the route B79. Given the high fares on this route the elimination of cash onboard will also help to reduce the potential for opportunity crimes and the perception that there may be large amounts of cash onboard. This will impact riders on the B79 and will also assist to determine if this fare media strategies can

	also be effective on other intercity routes (transporting passengers beyond the bounds of the PVTA service area).
Communities Affected	Amherst, Belchertown, Ware, West Brookfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Spencer, Leicester
Effective Date	January 15, 2025
Major Service Change	According to policy, “any change in PVTA fare policies, rates, or media is being considered” is defined by PVTA as a “major service change.”
Customers Affected	While 100% of Passenger Trips on PVTA Bus Route B79 are expected to be affected by the change, a significantly fewer amount of passengers will be impacted since the majority of B79 fare users already use the BusPlus+ mobile ticketing App.
Disparate (Racial Discrimination) Impact Analysis	 Information from route survey data shows that ridership on PVTA’s fixed-route bus system is 55% Minority. When comparing the difference between minority users of the Bus Plus+ App (86%) versus minority users of other payment methods (88%), the change borne by minority riders is two percent (2%). This change is not significant enough to be considered a disparate impact. A higher percentage of minority riders use the BusPlus+ App on bus route B79 (86%) than on the PVTA systemwide (67%), therefore the fare media revision positively impacts minority riders on bus route B79.

**Disproportionate
(Low-income)
Burden Analysis**



Information from route survey data shows that ridership on the PVTA's Fixed-Route bus service is 36% Low-Income.

When comparing the difference between users of the Bus Plus+ App (17%) versus users of other payment methods (0%) the change borne by low-income riders is zero since there are no low-income passengers using other payment methods on bus route B79 and therefore there is no disproportionate burden. Although fewer low-income riders use the BusPlus+ App systemwide, the fare media revision will be limited to bus route B79 and future planned intercity routes, it will not affect any other existing PVTA fixed routes.

**Fares, including
Elderly and
Disabled Impact?**

All fares will be unchanged.

**Alternate Fare
Payment Types
Available?**

Transit passes will continue to be accepted on PVTA Bus Route B79. These passes can be purchased with cash/debit-credit and are available where passes are sold.

**Least
Discriminatory
Alternative**

The fare media revision will not be discriminatory based on the analysis.

**Mitigation and
Modifications in
Response to
Public Comments**

While no mitigation is warranted, PVTA has made changes to the program to include cash transactions for BusPlus+ App tickets at major retailers. Paper passes will continue to be available at HTC and Union Station. PVTA passes can also be purchased by mail.

5. Disparate Impacts and Disproportionate Burden (DI/DB) Analysis

The following is an analysis of the Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden associated with the proposed service change. Based on the analysis, a higher percentage of those who use the BusPlus+ App are Low-Income and People of Color throughout the system. Regarding the B79, there is no statistical difference between the percentage of those who use the BusPlus+ App and those who use other fare media.

5.1: DI/DB Analysis Definitions

An extensive methodology is provided in [Appendix E](#).

Booked-Trips: Actual booked trips were used to determine ridership for this route before and after the affected change.

Low-Income and People of Color Percentages: Low-income and people of color percentages are calculated using results from the most recent rider surveys, The Northern System Survey (2022) and the Southern System Survey (2024).

System Averages: System averages are estimated using 2021 5-Year ACS population estimates for the PVTA service area.

Table 5.1: Disparate Impacts and Disproportionate Burden 1

	Cost		Change		Usage by Group		
<i>Fare Type</i>	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>	<i>Low-Income</i>	<i>Minority</i>	<i>Overall</i>
BusPlus-B79	N/A ²	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	269	1384	1615
Other- B79	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	0	424	485
BusPlus-System	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	59,172	94,335	140,845
Other-System	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	201,036	287,871	568,482
Total					257,623	389,130	709,327
	Cost		Change		Usage by Group		
<i>Fare Type</i>	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>	<i>Low-Income</i>	<i>Minority</i>	<i>Overall</i>
BusPlus-B79	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	17%	86%	77%
Other- B79	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	0%	88%	23%
BusPlus-System	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	42%	67%	20%
Other-System	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	35%	51%	80%
Total					36%	55%	100%

²The term "N/A" refers to "Not Applicable" as there will be no change in the cost of fares.

5.2: DI/DB Impact Analysis Results

A comparison to the system takes the percentage of those potentially impacted by the change and subtracting the system average. A difference greater than 20% is considered a disparate impact or disproportionate burden. The change borne by minority riders is two percent (2%). This change is not significant enough to be considered a disparate impact. The change borne by low-income riders is less than zero (-30%) and therefore there is no disproportionate burden. The result of the analysis shows that the fare media revision on the B79 will not create any disparate impacts or disproportionate burdens to riders with the removal of cash fares.

6. Public Outreach and Consultation

PVTA reached out for public comments and engagement about the fare media revision at public meetings. This section summarizes input received from the public through this process. PVTA performed four (4) public hearings on February 27th and March 6th, 2025. These events were conducted both in-person and virtually in compliance with the Open Meeting Law, that recently extended the option for virtual attendance to public meetings. PVTA utilized Massachusetts Guidelines for Successful Virtual Public Meetings and complied with the approved Public Participation Plan and Title VI 2024 Update. In-person meetings were held in ADA compliant locations that are accessible via transit.

6.1 Public Hearings

The Advisory Board approved public hearings on February 27th, 2025 at both the Ware Town Hall and the Amherst Bang's Center. Two (2) virtual meetings were held via the Zoom platform on March 6th.

Below is a chart of those events and other related comments.

Table 6.1: Comments by Public Hearings

<i>Date and Time and Location</i>	<i>Number of Comments</i>	<i>Summary of Comments</i>
<i>February 27, 10am Ware Town Council</i>	3 relevant comments about the fare media revision	C: For those who can use phones, but don't have credit cards, how do they purchase tickets? R: As of this weekend, they can load up their BusPlus+ accounts at any of the retailers C: Where do you buy tickets? R: Tickets can be purchased at PVTA Customer Service at Holyoke Transportation Center and Springfield Union Station, or by mailing in C: Mailing in you can purchase packets of tickets? Is there an additional Fee? R: Tickets can be purchased in groups of 1 or 10 but are not in packets. There is no additional fee, just the cost of the ticket
<i>February 27, 2pm Ware Town Council</i>	No comments	

March 6, 3pm Virtual	No comments	
March 6, 6pm Virtual	1 relevant comment about the fare media revision	C: I'm worried that when fares resume on the regular buses, they might go cashless too. This is becoming a cashless society. You say it's safer and more efficient but I see customers still haggle with the drivers whether it's cash free or not. I'm opposed, I don't put anything on my phone for money, I prefer the paper pass from Big Y. I'm worried about people not realizing they can still go to Big Y to buy a pass. R: The comment was received.

A full accounting of comments from these events are included as an appendix.

6.2 Public Comments from Customer Service

PVTA accepted public comments on the proposed fare media revision between January 22nd and March 18, 2025. Comments we've received through PVTA Customers Service and were all received via email. The comments are listed below and some continued in [Appendix C](#).

Table: 6.2: Comments Received by Customer Service

<i>Date and Time and Location</i>	<i>Commentor</i>	<i>Summary of Comments</i>
February 15, 2:40 PM(Email)	Daniel Wininger	C: As long as you still accept cash. If you eliminate the cash payment option, you exclude and discriminate against those who do not have smart phones. Both-and, not either-for. Sincerely, Dan, a pvta patron
February 20, 8:52 AM (Email)	Heather Reichgott	C: Smartphone ownership should not be required to ride public transit!
February 23, 11:51 AM (Email)	Martin Baker	C: Dear Customer Service, I can't attend public meetings, since they are on day and time when I'm working, which seems like a planned event. Anyway, if free fares doesn't extend beyond June 30, 2025, and fares go cashless then you are discriminating against people that don't use cell phone apps, to pay or have cell phone without that capability. I rely on the bus for work... (Continued in Appendix C, Comment #3)

February 26, 4:42 pm (Email)	Vanette Smith Bay State Health	C: Hi PVTA, Thanks for allowing feedback. I admit to being a Ms. Daisy and I don't want cashless payment option at all. I buy my pass at Big Y and spend over \$50. I like the option of swiping my pass. Thank you for your time
February 28, 11:24 am (Email)	Gail Mulczynski	C: Hello, I am unable to participate in the town hall meetings regarding PVTA making it cashless on intercity rides. As a senior who rides the buses on a regular basis, it would be a hardship for me not to use cash. I do not use my phone to pay for services. Depending on the month, it may or may not make financial sense to use a monthly bus pass. (Continued in Appendix C, Comment #5)
March 3, 10:17am (Email)	Alex Jarrett Northampton City Councilor	C: Dear PVTA administrators, Thank you for seeking comments on the B79 fare media change. I'm writing in my capacity as a City Councilor in Northampton. This change limits who has access to public transportation, and impacts those with the fewest resources: those without a smartphone, and a credit or debit card, which typically means having a bank account. Other transportation providers, such as bus and rail companies, provide multiple ways to access their services: buying tickets on a website, over the phone or in person at a station or customer service center. (Continued in Appendix C, Comment #6)
March 4, 11:52 am (Email)	Sara Howard	C: Hello, I am writing to provide input regarding the proposed transition to only accepting fares via cell phones on the new Pittsfield route and on the B78. I am a person who uses the PVTA system frequently, and this would be a hardship for me personally. I do not always have access to a smartphone. I am also a registered nurse working in the field of mental health, and I work with many unhoused people or people struggling to manage in various ways. (Continued in Appendix C, Comment #7)
March 4 10:04 pm (Email)	Ben Winter	C: Dear PVTA administrators, Thank you for seeking comments on the B79 fare media change. I'm a resident of Northampton and a bus rider who regularly uses the B43, G73E and R42 lines. This change limits who has access to public transportation, and impacts those with the fewest resources: (Continued in Appendix C, Comment #8)

March 7 8:46 pm (Email)	Katie Zang	C: Hello, While I missed the public hearings, I would still like to comment on the issue of making intercity bus routes run on a cashless pay system. As stated on the notice for the public hearings, the goal of the change in payment on these routes is "to improve operational efficiency and improve safety." Intuitively, a cashless only pay system would indeed improve operational efficiency. However, it's unclear as to how exactly this would supposedly improve safety. Safety for the drivers or the passengers? (Continued in Appendix C, Comment #9)
March 18 7:56 pm (Email)	Sylvie Sinapah	C: Hello PVTa, <u>This is extremely urgent. I would like to advocate for those who cannot pay via a mobile phone. Please can you refer me to the right person or office?</u> Of utmost importance: there are poor people in the Western Massachusetts community and they are going to be tremendously penalized by that system of payment, if the latter is applied on all intercity routes. Please I beg you to give a chance to those people to commute decently, without having to put their life in danger and/or endure other indignities to try to commute. Thank you very much in advance for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you!

6.3 Public Comments from Northern System Survey

PVTA received public comments from the 2025 Northern System Survey which was currently being conducted at the time of this report. Comments relevant to the fare media revision and within the public comment period between January 22 to March 18, 2025 were included in this report. Other comments will be included in the forthcoming 2025 Northern System Survey report.

Table: 6.3: Comments Received from 2025 Northern System Survey 1

<i>Date and Time and Location</i>	<i>Commentor</i>	<i>Summary of Comments</i>
<i>March 7</i>	<i>Response #158</i>	C: don't switch from cash to online only pay!!!!!!
<i>March 10</i>	<i>Response #252</i>	C: Requiring phones for tap to pay makes the bus less accessible for those without smartphones, who frequently rely on the bus the most
<i>March 14</i>	<i>Response #656</i>	C: The PVTA is too dependent on everyone having a smartphone. If my phone is lost or broken I have no way to know when the bus is coming or to access routes like B79. I would like physical bus schedules to be posted at bus stops, and to have a way to buy paper B79 etc. tickets. There are people who don't have smartphones at all, and the bus system should work for them too.

6.4 PVTA Response to Comments

PVTA has reviewed the comments received from the public and is confident that most concerns have been addressed within this fare equity analysis. The agency has also reiterated that the fare media revision is not systemwide, it will only be implemented on the B79 and other future planned intercity routes that provide service outside of the PVTA service area. Survey data also reveals that approximately 97% of low-income passengers use smartphones and would not be inconvenienced by using the Bus Plus+ Mobile Ticketing App.

Prior to each public hearing, PVTA shared a map of locations where cash could added to the BusPlus+ Mobile Ticketing App. The agency also explained that paper passes for the B79 can be purchased by mail, or at customer service centers in Holyoke or Springfield.

Further justifications and mitigation strategies enacted by PVTA can be found in the conclusion section of the report.

7. Conclusion

The goal of the fare media revision for the B79 (Amherst-Worcester) Intercity Service is to improve operational efficiency and safety by streamlining the fare collection process and introducing cashless, mobile payment options. The fare media revision will serve as a pilot program to determine the feasibility of streamlined fare collection on the B79 and future planned intercity routes.

On January 15, 2025, the PVTA Advisory Board approved the use of funding to implement the fare media revision for the B79 as a pilot program to operate for six (6) months from January through June 2025, pending an analysis and evaluation of the service and completion of the Title VI analysis.

PVTA performed four (4) public hearings on February 27th and March 6th 2025. These events were conducted both in-person and virtually in compliance with the Open Meeting Law, that recently extended the option for virtual attendance to public meetings. Comments received at the public meetings and customer service were accepted and recorded.

The fare media revision for the B79 will not create any disparate impacts based on race or disproportionate burdens on low-income populations to riders. Based on the analysis, the change borne on low income riders is less than zero (-30%) and there is no statistical difference between the percentage of people of color who use the BusPlus+ App and those who use other fare media on the B79 (2%).

Based on feedback received from the public hearings, and the agency's desire to provide alternatives for low-income and unbanked passengers who prefer to use cash, PVTA has developed partnerships with retail locations to accept cash payments which can be uploaded to the BusPlus+ App. A map of these locations is listed in [Appendix D](#).

PVTA has also decided to continue accepting B79 specific passes which can be purchased at Union Station (55 Frank B Murray St, Springfield, MA), Holyoke Transportation Center (206 Maple St, Holyoke, MA) . PVTA passes can also be purchased by mail by making checks out to PVTA and mailing to PVTA Customer Service Center Union Station 55 Frank B Murray St. Springfield, MA 01103.

Appendix A: Public Notice



PUBLIC HEARINGS

on

TITLE VI ANALYSIS ON B79 FARE MEDIA CHANGE

Goal: To improve operational efficiency and improve safety by streamlining the fare collection process by moving to a cashless payment on all intercity routes.

PUBLIC HEARING DATES & TIMES

In-Person

Thurs., February 27, 2025

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Ware Town Hall

Selectboard Meeting Room

126 Main Street, Ware, MA 01082

In-Person

Thurs., February 27, 2025

2:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Amherst Bangs Comm. Ctr.

Glass Room

70 Boltwood Walk, Amherst, MA 01002

Virtual – Zoom Meeting

Thurs. March 6, 2025

3:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Meeting ID: 898 5569 9112

Phone #: 1 (301) 715-8592

Passcode: 765839

Virtual – Zoom Meeting

Thurs. March 6, 2025

6:00 PM - 6:30 PM

Meeting ID: 898 5569 9112

Phone #: 1 (301) 715-8592

Passcode: 765839

Additional Ways to Comment:

Email: Comments@pvta.com

Phone: Call (413) 732-6248 x2237 and leave up to a 3-min message

Online: Complete comment form at www.pvta.com

For More Information: www.pvta.com or 413-781-7882

PVTA provides reasonable accommodation and/or language assistance free of charge upon request, as available. Contact PVTA at 413-732-6248 x2237 or email zbonet@pvta.com.

Requests should be made as soon as possible prior to the meeting. For additional information, language service requests, or reasonable accommodations visit:

<https://www.mass.gov/nondiscrimination-in-transportation-program>

Notice Posted February 13, 2025



Introduction

Title VI B79 Fare Revision

- PVTA is streamlining fare collection on the B79 route for efficiency and to determine the possibility of rolling out a streamlined fare collection to the other intercity routes.

B79 Service

- This is an intercity Route funded through federal grant funding in 2021, separate from the regular fixed-route service.
- B79 provides three round trips a day between Amherst and Worcester with local stops in Belchertown, Ware, West Brookfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Spencer, Leicester and Worcester.
- The Fare cost of the B79 will not change, but fare will be available in ways that reduce boarding time through the Mobile Fare Payment BusPlus+ App.

FARES

	Amherst	Belchertown	Ware	West Brookfield	Brookfield	East Brookfield	Spencer	Leicester	Worcester
Amherst	X	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$3.50	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$9.00
Belchertown	\$1.50	X	\$1.50	\$3.50	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$9.00
Ware	\$1.50	\$1.50	X	\$3.50	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$9.00
West Brookfield	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50	X	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$6.00
Brookfield	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$3.50	X	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$6.00
East Brookfield	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$3.50	\$3.50	X	X	X	X
Spencer	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$3.50	\$3.50	X	X	X	X
Leicester	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$3.50	\$3.50	X	X	X	X
Worcester	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	X	X	X	X

B79 ELDERLY AND DISABLED FARES

MUST HAVE A VALID PVTA ID OR STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION ACCESS PASS

	Amherst	Belchertown	Ware	West Brookfield	Brookfield	East Brookfield	Spencer	Leicester	Worcester
Amherst	X	\$0.75	\$0.75	\$1.75	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$4.50
Belchertown	\$0.75	X	\$0.75	\$1.75	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$4.50
Ware	\$0.75	\$0.75	X	\$1.75	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$4.50
West Brookfield	\$1.75	\$1.75	\$1.75	X	\$1.75	\$1.75	\$1.75	\$1.75	\$3.00
Brookfield	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$1.75	X	\$1.75	\$1.75	\$1.75	\$3.00
East Brookfield	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$1.75	\$1.75	X	X	X	X
Spencer	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$1.75	\$1.75	X	X	X	X
Leicester	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$1.75	\$1.75	X	X	X	X
Worcester	\$4.50	\$4.50	\$4.50	\$3.00	\$3.00	X	X	X	X



Pay your PVRTA fare with your smartphone!
Download PVRTA's Fare App: MassDOT BusPlus.



Objective

- The goal of the Route B79 fare media revision is to improve operational efficiency and safety by streamlining the fare collection process and introducing cashless, mobile fare payment options on all intercity routes.
- In January, the Advisory Board approved the use of funding to implement the fare media revision as a **pilot program** to operate for six (6) months from January through June 2025 pending completion of the Title VI analysis.

Authorities and Responsibilities

Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent executive orders and FTA Circular 4702.1B, PVTA must conduct an analysis of any major service change.

The B79 is a route funded through Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus Program, separate from the regular fixed-route system, but is considered part of the fixed-route system and falls under the above Title VI authorities.

The following fare change qualifies for this analysis under the major service changes definition:

Fare changes/Revisions

- Streamlined Fare Collection on the B79, exclusive to the Mobile Fare Payment through the BusPlus+ App.

Fare Media Revision

B79 (Amherst-Worcester)

- PVTA will no longer collect cash fare on this route.
- Fare will be exclusively collected using the MassDOT BusPlus+ App.
- Fare cost will not change to the rider.
- Current fare prices are described in the previous slides, with the exception service between Amherst and Ware which remains Fare Free.
- Fare can be purchased through the BusPlus+ mobile app.

Other Considerations:

- PVTA's fixed-routes are currently operating fare free.
- Riders of Amherst based routes receive prepaid fare through UMass and Five Colleges Inc., rather than paying fare onboard, decreasing boarding time and travel time.



Mobile Fare Payment App MassDOT BusPlus

Pay your PVTA fare with your smartphone!
Download PVTA's Fare App: MassDOT BusPlus.



- Buy tickets on your smartphone.
- Activate ticket when the bus arrives.
- Show your active ticket to the driver.
- Enjoy your ride!

Learn how the App works:
[Click here](#) to read the instructions to use MassDOT BusPlus.

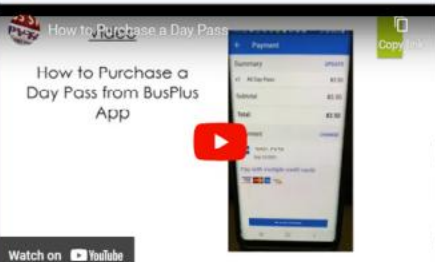


PVTA's Mobile Fare Payment App

MassDOT 

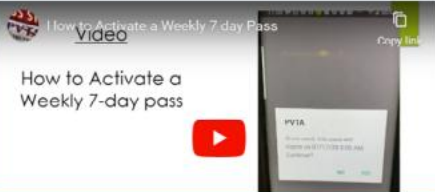
For an Apple device, click on the Apple badge:

How to Purchase a Day Pass

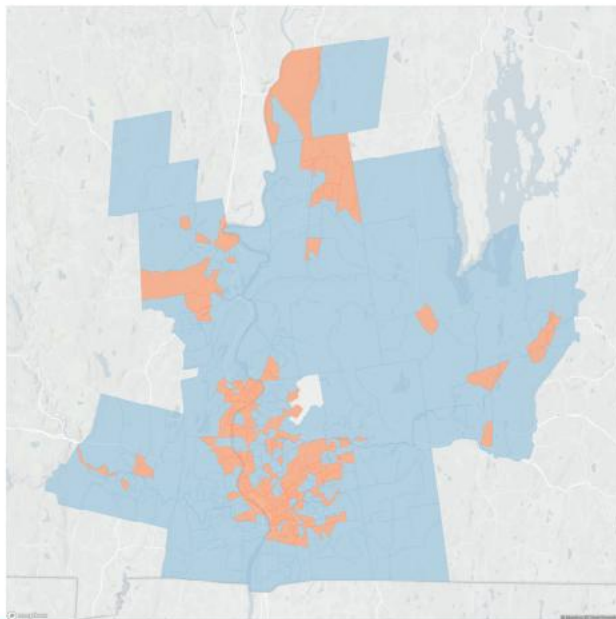


Watch on  YouTube

How to Activate a Weekly 7-day Pass



<https://www.pvta.com/busPlus.php>



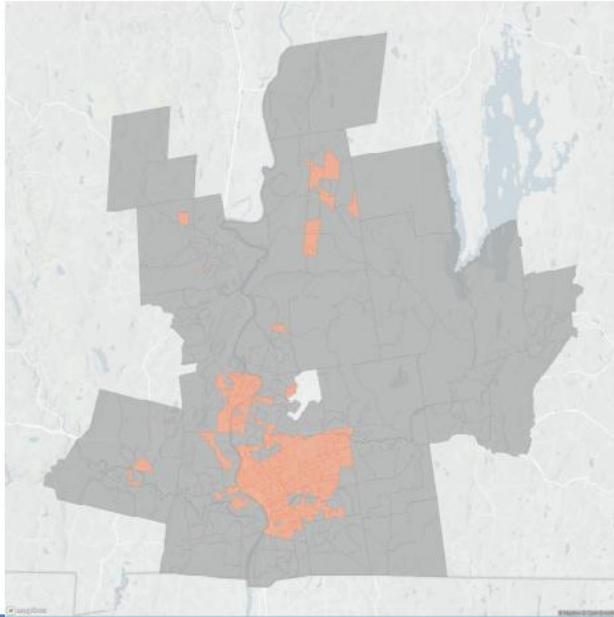
System-wide Low-Income Populations

Low Income

Average low income percentage for the service area by census block group.

Above average low income percentage

Below average low income percentage



System-wide People of Color Populations

Minority

Average minority percentage for the service area by census block group.

Above average minority percentage

Below average minority percentage

	Cost		Change		Usage by Group		
Fare Type	Before	After	Before	After	Low-Income	Minority	Overall
BusPlus -B79	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	269	1384	1615
Other- B79	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	0	424	485
BusPlus-System	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	59172	94335	140845
Other- System	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	201036	287871	568482
Total	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	257623	389130	709327
	Cost		Change		Usage by Group		
Fare Type					Low-Income	Minority	Overall
BusPlus -B79	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	17%	86%	77%
Other- B79	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	0%	88%	23%
BusPlus-System	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	42%	67%	20%
Other- System	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	35%	51%	80%
Total	N/A	N/A	Unchanged	Unchanged	36%	55%	100%

Mitigations

- No Disparate Impact or Disproportionate Burden
 - While this analysis does not show a disparate impact or disproportionate burden on low-income or minority riders, PVTA has listened to riders concerned with access to the BusPlus+ App.
- Cash can be loaded into the Mobile ticket System at various locations throughout the region.
- Tickets and passes are also available through non-electronic means:
 - Purchasing paper passes at Big Y, PVTA Customer Service at Holyoke Transportation Center and Springfield Union Station
 - Paper Passes by mail will continue to be offered

Conclusions

- PVTA will continue to research advancements in fixed-route bus service to provide the most efficient service to its customers. Mobile Ticketing like BusPlus+, has become a standard practice for bus systems throughout the nation.
- PVTA's B79 fare revision will continue advancement of PVTA into new technology to increase route efficiency and decrease travel time.
- Unbanked individuals can load fares onto the Mobile Fare Payment App or purchase paper passes.

Appendix C: Public Hearing Minutes/Public Comments

Title VI B79 Fare Payment Media Revision Public Hearing

February 27, 2025

Ware Town Council (10am)

In Attendance:

Paul Burns-Johnson (Director of Transit Operations) - PVTA

Alex Forrest (Manager of Data Analysis) – PVTA

Ben St. Amand (Safety and Compliance Coordinator) – PVTA

Jordan Tedoldi (Assistant Director of Transit/Charter Services) – PVTA/UMass Transit Services

Peter Kuusisto (Senior Transit Planner) – PVPC (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission)

No Community members were in attendance

Meeting Minutes:

The meeting was opened by PVPC's Peter Kuusisto at 10:02 AM

PVTA's Paul Burns-Johnson presented the changes.

PVPC's Peter Kuusisto concluded the meeting at 10:32 AM

Title VI B79 Fare Payment Media Revision Public Hearing

February 27, 2025

Amherst Bang's Center, Glass Room (2pm)

In Attendance:

Paul Burns-Johnson (Director of Transit Operations) - PVTA

Alex Forrest (Manager of Data Analysis) – PVTA

Ben St. Amand (Safety and Compliance Coordinator) – PVTA

Connie Englert (Director of Transportation Services) PVTA/UMass Transit Services

Jordan Tedoldi (Assistant Director of Transit/Charter Services) – PVTA/UMass Transit Services

Peter Kuusisto (Senior Transit Planner) – PVPC (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission)

Community In Attendance:

Debbie Distefano (Hilltown Community Health Centers)

Carolina Kenny (Hilltown Community Health Centers)

K Jones (Hilltown Community Health-Ashfield)

Minutes:

The meeting was opened by PVPC's Peter Kuusisto at 2:02 PM

PVTA's Paul Burns-Johnson presented the proposed changes.

Carolina: For those who can use phones, but don't have credit cards, how do they purchase tickets?

Paul: As of this weekend, they can load up their BusPlus+ accounts at any of the retailers

Carolina: We will make sure to notify our patients who use UMass Memorial Medical Center

Paul: Don't forget the B79 does not run on Tuesdays or Wednesdays

Paul: The B79 stops at the Worcester Union Station Parking Garage

Connie: To get to the buses, you have to walk around the building

Paul: You can walk right up the alley under the railroad tracks

Paul: Route 9 can be a weather dependent route as we had to cancel a trip due to snow

Connie: Just one trip was cancelled

Connie: The alleyway to the side of the parking garage should be handicap accessible

K. Jones: Where do you buy tickets?

Paul: Tickets can be purchased at PVTA Customer Service at Holyoke Transportation Center and Springfield Union Station, or by mailing in

K. Jones: Mailing in you can purchase packets of tickets? Is there an additional Fee?

Paul: Tickets can be purchased in groups of 1 or 10 but are not in packets. There is no additional fee, just the cost of the ticket

K. Jones: I love PVTA; I have loved the work you do for decades

PVPC's Peter Kuusisto concluded the meeting at 2:32 PM

Title VI B79 Fare Payment Media Revision Public Hearing

Virtual Meeting

March 6, 2025, 3 PM

PVTA: Director of Transit Operations, Paul Burns

PVPC: Principal Transit Planner, Carl Jackson

Community In Attendance: None

Minutes:

The meeting was opened by PVPC's Carl Jackson at 3:00 PM

There were no members of the community in attendance

PVPC's Carl Jackson concluded the meeting at 3:30 PM

Title VI B79 Fare Payment Media Revision Public Hearing

Virtual Meeting

March 6, 2025

6 PM

PVTA: Director of Transit Operations, Paul Burns

PVPC: Principal Transit Planner, Carl Jackson

Community In Attendance: (3 people) Mike H. John, Neal

Minutes:

The meeting was opened by PVPC's Carl Jackson at 6:00 PM

PVTA's Paul Burns-Johnson presented the proposed changes.

John: I'm worried that when fares resume on the regular buses, they might go cashless too. This is becoming a cashless society. You say it's more safe and efficient but I see customers still haggle with the drivers whether it's cash free or not. I'm opposed, I don't put anything on my phone for money, I prefer the paper pass from Big Y. I'm worried about people not realizing they can still go to Big Y to buy a pass.

Paul received the comments and displayed a location map for where paper passes can be purchased.

John: Another issue, when you got the new electric buses, the opening times changed at the Holyoke Center to 9 o'clock instead of 8 o'clock, which is hard for people going to work in the morning. The lady who works there comes and goes as she pleases, but doesn't open it in time. A security guard has to let people in. There used to be a machine, but it has never worked.

Paul: I will speak to customer service about the hours at Holyoke, the machines were placed as part of a Charlie Card like program and was removed because the program failed.

PVPC's Carl Jackson concluded the meeting at 6:30 PM

Public Comments Received by PVRTA Customer Service

Comment #1 Feb. 15, 2025

From: Daniel Winingar <senor.rhythm@gmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, February 15, 2025 2:40 PM

To: Zoraida Bonet <comments@pvta.com>

Subject: Streamlining fare payment

As long as you still accept cash.

If you eliminate the cash payment option you exclude and discriminate against those who do not have smart phones.

Both-and, not either-for.

Sincerely,

Dan, a pvta patron

Comment #2 Feb. 20, 2025

From: Heather Reichgott <heather.reichgott@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2025 8:52 AM

To: Zoraida Bonet <comments@pvta.com>

Subject: B79 fare change comment

Smartphone ownership should not be required to ride public transit!

Comment #3 Feb. 23, 2025

From: Baker <mbaker45@verizon.net>

Sent: Sunday, February 23, 2025 11:51 AM

To: Zoraida Bonet <comments@pvta.com>

Subject: Cashless Fare

Dear Customer Service,

I can't attend public meetings, since they are on day and time when I'm working, which seems like a planned event. Anyway, if free fares doesn't extend beyond June 30, 2025 and fares go cashless then you are discriminating against people that don't use cell phone apps, to pay or have cell phone without that capability. I rely on the bus for work. There's not a problem with cashless fares, if bus passes will still be permitted, but I heard that the passes will go away, but in my opinion then you are blocking a cashless concept, for the pass is cashless. If the free fares continue, then I am all set, but if fares are re-instilled and go cashless with no pass option, then you loose a paying customer and now I will have a harder time to get to work, but at best a more expensive way since there are no Ubers, etc. take me to work, especially at time I go.

Anyway, I wanted my opinion to be noted.

Martin Baker

mbaker45@verizon.net

Comment #4 Feb. 26, 2025

From: Smith, Vanette <Vanette.Smith@baystatehealth.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2025 4:42 PM
To: Zoraida Bonet <Comments@pvta.com>
Subject: re: cashless payment

Hi PVTA,

Thanks for allowing feedback.

I admit to being a Ms Daisy and I don't want cashless payment option at all. I buy my pass at Big Y and spend over \$50. I like the option of swiping my pass.

But I'm so appreciative of the generosity of passes being free until June .

Thank you for your time

Comment #5 Mar. 3, 2025

From: Gail Mulczynski <rain.falls14@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 28, 2025 11:24 AM
To: Zoraida Bonet <comments@pvta.com>
Subject: New Fare Possibilities - Town Hall Meetings

Hello,

I am unable to participate in the town hall meetings regarding PVTA making it cashless on intercity rides. As a senior who rides the buses on a regular basis, it would be a hardship for me not to use cash. I do not use my phone to pay for services. Depending on the month, it may or may not make financial sense to use a monthly bus pass.

I'm sure I am not the only person in this predicament if you choose to go cashless.

Thank you for taking riders' concerns into consideration.

Gail Mulczynski

Comment #6 Mar. 3, 2025

From: Alex Jarrett <ajarrett@northamptonma.gov>

Sent: Monday, March 3, 2025 10:17 PM

To: Zoraida Bonet <Comments@pvta.com>

Cc: Paul Burns <pburns@pvta.com>

Subject: B79 fare media change comment

Dear PVTA administrators,

Thank you for seeking comments on the B79 fare media change. I'm writing in my capacity as a City Councilor in Northampton.

This change limits who has access to public transportation, and impacts those with the fewest resources: those without a smartphone, and a credit or debit card, which typically means having a bank account. Other transportation providers, such as bus and rail companies, provide multiple ways to access their services: buying tickets on a website, over the phone or in person at a station or customer service center.

I encourage you to invest in more secure fare boxes so that cash can be accepted. If you can't accept cash on board, please offer other ways to pay that are more accessible than a smartphone.

While some of my constituents use the B79 route, many more will use the coming Northampton to Pittsfield route. I'm very concerned about the precedent this is setting and how this change limits access to critical transportation options for the most vulnerable.

Please confirm that you've received this comment.

Thank you,
Alex Jarrett
Northampton City Councilor

Comment #7 Mar. 4, 2025

From: Sara Mae <saramaehoward@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, March 04, 2025 10:28 AM

To: Zoraida Bonet <Comments@pvta.com>

Subject: Fare collection options in pvta

Hello,

I am writing to provide input regarding the proposed transition to only accepting fares via cell phones on the new Pittsfield route and on the B78. I am a person who uses the PVRTA system frequently, and this would be a hardship for me personally. I do not always have access to a smartphone. I am also a registered nurse working in the field of mental health, and I work with many unhoused people or people struggling to manage in various ways. Many of these folks that I work with either have items stolen frequently, and do not have a cell phone, or it breaks and there are other much more immediate pressing priorities affecting their survival that they must attend to rather than figure out how to obtain a new smart phone. I find this trend toward requiring certain types of technology to be alarming. People should not be required to own specific devices in order to have access to the public transit system. Not everyone owns a smartphone or wants to. Some people do not have access and some choose to not have one for environmental reasons. Those people should still have access to public transit. This is not something that will affect only a few outliers. This will affect a significant amount of people. I am speaking as a professional who works with a large percentage of people who utilize public transit in order to access needed resources, and a person who does so in my own personal life as well. Please do everything you can to include other options for payment that do not require people to own smartphones. Thank you so much for considering my input. This is a very important issue for me. I would appreciate if you can let me know you received this email.

Best regards,

Sara Howard, RN, BSN

Comment #8 Mar. 4, 2025

From: Ben Winter <bwinter@pedalpeople.com>

Sent: Tuesday, March 04, 2025 10:04 PM

To: Zoraida Bonet <Comments@pvta.com>

Subject: B79 fare media change comment: against smartphone requirement

Dear PVTA administrators,

Thank you for seeking comments on the B79 fare media change. I'm a resident of Northampton and a bus rider who regularly uses the B43, G73E and R42 lines.

This change limits who has access to public transportation, and impacts those with the fewest resources: those without a smartphone, and a credit or debit card, which typically means having a bank account. Other transportation providers, such as bus and rail companies, provide multiple ways to access their services: buying tickets on a website, over the phone or in person at a station or customer service center.

I encourage you to invest in more secure fare boxes so that cash can be accepted. If you can't accept cash on board, please offer other ways to pay that are more accessible than a smartphone.

I'm very concerned about the precedent this is setting and how this change limits access to critical transportation options for the most vulnerable.

Thank you,
Ben Winter
Northampton, MA

Comment #9 Mar. 7, 2025

From: Katie Zhang <kzhang@umass.edu>

Sent: Friday, March 07, 2025 8:46 PM

To: Zoraida Bonet <comments@pvta.com>

Subject: Comment on the B79 fare media change

Hello,

While I missed the public hearings, I would still like to comment on the issue of making intercity bus routes run on a cashless pay system.

As stated on the notice for the public hearings, the goal of the change in payment on these routes is "to improve operational efficiency and improve safety." Intuitively, a cashless only pay system would indeed improve operational efficiency. However, it's unclear as to how exactly this would supposedly improve safety. Safety for the drivers or the passengers? What safety risks or incidents occur with the current fare system to warrant a change for the sake of safety? I find it largely unnecessary to switch methods if there is not a legitimate safety reason to do so. If there is some tangible efficiency benefit that offsets the cost (moneywise for installation and upkeep, and timewise for both drivers and riders to adjust to the new system), perhaps it would be worth it.

Another potential issue with the system is how the change would negatively affect homeless and low income riders. With lower income and high cost of living, homeless and low income individuals are more likely to have poorer credit and fewer funds in bank accounts. This makes paying things in cash far more accessible than using credit or debit cards. As transportation is an essential need, the option to pay by cash should not be eliminated.

In addition, this disproportionate negative effect could run the risk of a Title VI infraction. According to data on homelessness and poverty in Massachusetts, a large majority of homeless and low income individuals are black or hispanic. Especially of note are the specific statistics on homelessness by racial demographic within the western counties of the state, which PVTA operates in. A very disproportionate number of homeless individuals in this area are hispanic. This means that the change in fare system is arguably a Title VI infraction, or at least runs a high risk of being one, as the change would put in place a barrier for certain passengers on the basis of race (Title VI does not address discrimination against socioeconomic status, but the specific negative effects on homeless and low income individuals leads to discrimination based on race).

(sources: <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-dashboards/?State=Massachusetts>

<https://spotlightonpoverty.org/states/massachusetts/>)

In summary, I believe that the proposed changes to the intercity line fare system are unnecessary at best, discriminatory at worst. I believe it would be in PVTA and their passengers' interest to not implement this new system as mandatory. Cashless payment as an *option* could be beneficial, but as the goal stands to make the *only* available payment method, I do not agree with this decision.

Thank you for considering my opinion,

Katie Zhang

Comment #10 Mar. 18, 2025

Hello PVTA,

**This is extremely urgent. I would like to advocate for those who cannot pay via a mobile phone.
Please can you refer me to the right person or office?**

Of utmost importance: there are poor people in the Western Massachusetts community and they are going to be tremendously penalized by that system of payment, if the latter is applied on all intercity routes.

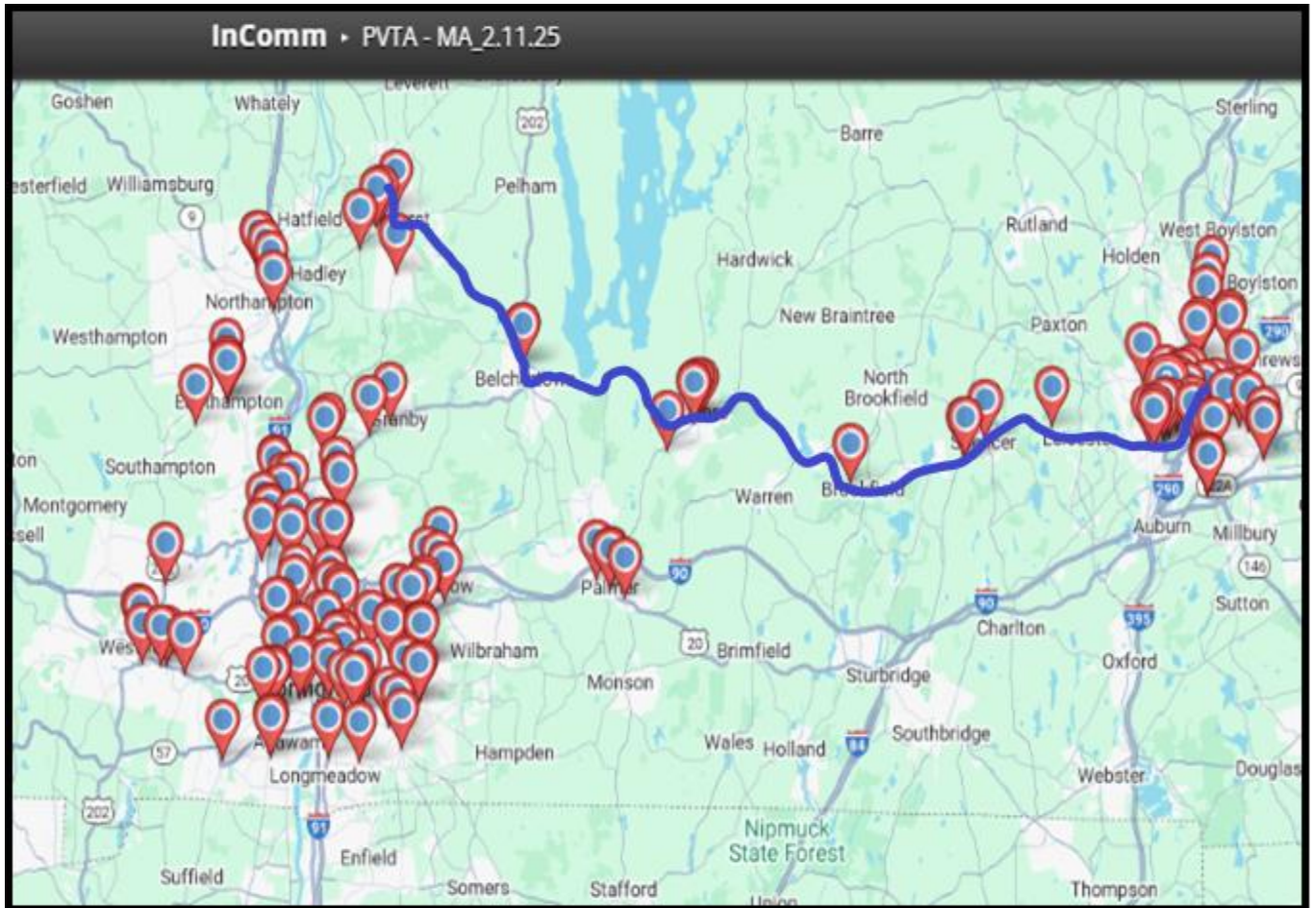
Please I beg you to give a chance to those people to commute decently, without having to put their life in danger and/or endure other indignities to try to commute.

Thank you very much in advance for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you!

Most sincerely,
Dr. Sylvie Sinapah

Appendix D: BusPlus+ Cash Load Locations

The map below shows all retail locations in our service area where cash can be uploaded to the BusPlus+ App. The B79 Route is highlighted in **BLUE**



Participating retailers include:

- 7 Eleven
- CVS
- Dollar General
- Family Dollar
- Speedway
- Walgreens
- Walmart** Only available at the money or customer services centers

Major Service Change Policy, Disparate Impact Policy, and Disproportionate Burden Policy

Major Service Change Policy

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority is required by the Federal Transit Administration to have a threshold at which point a service change is considered a “Major Service Change.” Any service change exceeding that threshold is required to be presented to the public for comment and consideration, as outlined in the PVTa Public Hearing and Major Service Change Policy in Appendix 1 in the [Public Participation Plan](#).¹ In fulfillment of this requirement, the PVTa will hold public hearings and conduct an analysis on Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden when a proposed change meets the following criteria:

- Any change in PVTa fare policies, rates, or media is being considered; or
- An alteration of service to existing fixed route service that:
 - Cumulatively changes the number of vehicle revenue hours in the service area by 7.5% or more.

Or:

- Changes the number of vehicle revenue hours on any specific route by 50% or more; or
- Changes the location or number of stops on any specific route by 25% or more.
- The establishment of a new route.

Service or fare changes which are considered temporary or experimental, and which have a duration of 12 months or shorter, are not considered Major Service Changes.

Process for Restoring Service

Approximately 50% of PVTa operating funding is provided through state legislative appropriations, subject to gubernatorial approval. In FY17 and FY18, funding levels for the next fiscal year were not determined until after the start of the fiscal year. However, PVTa has a fiduciary responsibility to pass a balanced budget before the start of the fiscal year (July 1st) even if state funding levels may not be finalized until July, August, or even September.

As a response, PVTa bases the upcoming fiscal year budget on the Governor’s proposed budget, which is typically released in the winter of the prior fiscal year. However, there has been a great deal of uncertainty in recent years regarding final budget amounts. For instance, in 2018 the FY19 governor’s budget resulted in a projected \$3.1 million funding shortfall for the PVTa. In order to approve a balanced budget before June 1st, PVTa conducted a public process on a suite of service reductions in accordance with the Major Service Change Policy in force at the time. ²

Ultimately, the budget deficit for FY19 was reduced from \$3.1 million to \$800,000 due to additional funding from the state. However, this was not determined until the end of August, well after the start of the new fiscal year on July 1. In instances where a projected shortfall is reduced, PVRTA staff will use performance measures to systematically reinstate service using the following criteria:

- ☐ Percentage of people of color and low-income customers using the route
- ☐ Ridership and performance measures as compared to service standards

PVRTA will create a ranking of service reductions should additional funding be provided and rescind service cuts based on that ranking.

Disparate Impact Policy (Racial Discrimination)

In accordance with FTA Circular 4702.1B, and industry standards and best practices, the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority has defined a disparate impact as a Major Service Change in which the adverse impacts of the change that people of color experience as compared to non-people of color is 20% or more. For the purposes of this document, the term “people of color” is synonymous with the term “minority” as used in Federal Circular 4702.1B (page I-4).

Disproportionate Burden Policy (Low Income)

In accordance with FTA Circular 4702.1B, and industry standards and best practices, the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority has defined a disproportionate burden to be a change in service where low-income customers would experience a negative impact 20% or larger compared to non-low-income customers. For the purposes of this policy, “low income” is defined as a person reporting an income below the federal poverty line.

Appendix F: Methodology

PVTA utilized rider surveys from the draft Northern System Survey and ridership data for this Title VI Disparate Impact/Disproportionate Burden Analysis. Disparate impact is the impact the change to the system would have on low-income communities. Disproportionate burden is the burden borne on people of color.

The analysis for bus route B79

Data sources

- Demographic data comes from the Northern System Survey
- Low-income status is set at 100% of the US federal poverty level 2025.
- Minority status is derived by subtracting the white, non-Hispanic population from the total population
- Map and routing data are provided using OpenStreetMap, Mapbox, and Valhalla.

Methodology

1. Get the number of booked-trips on a route, including its low-income and minority percentage.
 - Use highest monthly ridership numbers available
 - Calculate an estimate of runs by counting runs on the pdf schedules on PVTA's website and multiplying that out to 4 weeks (~1 month) since ridership is monthly.
 - Multiply the ridership X trips to get booked-trips.
 - Multiply by the low-income and minority percentages to get the number of low-income or minority booked trips.
2. Compare the number of booked-trips, before and after.
 - Divide the low-income and minority booked trips by the total people trips for each route to get the “change borne” by each group.
 - Compare these numbers with the low-income and minority percentages from the PVTA system average. This difference will be your “comparison to the system”.
 - Repeat for both the discontinued ridership and additional ridership to display a comparison of booked trips, before and after.
3. Determine Disparate Impact/Disproportionate Burden
 - If comparison to the system is less than 20% this is insignificant and therefore considered “No Impact/No Burden”.
 - If comparison to the system is more than 20% this is significant and therefore considered an “Impact/Burden”.

