

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – SPOKANE TRANSIT**

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### **STA BOARD APPROVES PILOT COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM, FLAT RATES FOR VANPOOL**

SPOKANE – Today the Spokane Transit Authority (STA) Board of Directors approved two initiatives intended to improve access to public transit services – a 12-month, pilot discount pass program for nonprofit human service agencies (HSAs), and a simplified fare structure for Vanpool commuters.

#### **Community Access Pass (CAP) Program**

Beginning September 1, certified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that provide quality of life services to vulnerable populations will be eligible to purchase select transit passes at a 50 percent discount as part of a 12-month pilot effort called the Community Access Pass (CAP) program. The key functions of the pilot are to assess whether the discount helps current pass-purchasing agencies extend their resources to additional clients, and whether it helps enable other social service agencies to begin purchasing and distributing transit passes to their clients.

Discount passes will be available to organizations providing clients with the following services:

- Programs treating illness or substance abuse
- Children and family services, including children living in foster care
- Programs that provide food, shelter or employment opportunities
- Programs serving victims of domestic violence
- Programs serving refugees and other populations with limited English proficiency
- Programs serving individuals with disabilities
- Programs serving individuals living at/below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level

Primarily led by its Ombudsman & Accessibility Officer, Emily Arneson, STA collaborated with local social service organizations to gather input about their respective and collective needs. That process led to the development of the CAP program to enable those agencies to increase transit access to their clients in need. The half-off discount allows nonprofit organizations to utilize previous budget amounts to purchase twice as many passes for distribution. STA designed the program to be cost-neutral to safeguard level spending patterns that prevent revenue reductions the agency uses to provide current transit service levels.

“Spokane is fortunate to have an active and collaborative network of nonprofit agencies focused on serving the most vulnerable members of our community,” Arneson said. “Through strong and ongoing partnerships with these organizations, we’ve developed an initial framework for a viable transportation solution for those agencies whose missions are to help people improve their lives.”

The pilot will be evaluated for effectiveness and sustainability in its third quarter. The STA Board will review the results and determine the program’s future.

For more information, or to apply as a certified 501(c)(3) nonprofit, please contact STA’s Business Development Manager, Delana Combs, at [dcombs@spokanetransit.com](mailto:dcombs@spokanetransit.com), or (509) 343-1674.

### **Vanpool Fare Change – Flat Rates**

Beginning August 1, STA will implement a flat-rate fare structure to simplify how Vanpool commuters pay for the transportation service. The first in Washington to do so, STA implemented this change to attract new Vanpool customers with straightforward pricing.

Vanpool, a commuter-focused transit service provided by STA, enables commuters to reduce the cost and impact of driving to work alone. Different from traditional carpooling, STA provides and maintains 7, 12 and 15-passenger vans that are driven by Vanpool groups to and from work in similar parts of the region.

Previously based on variables subject to frequent changes, the new, simplified fare structure is based solely on where each Vanpool group starts and ends:

- \$60 a month if your commute is within Spokane County
- \$80 a month if your commute includes Kootenai or Stevens County
- \$100 a month if your commute is in any other county

Existing customers whose monthly payments are less than the new rates will have their current payment frozen. Any future changes will be a part of an agency-wide, comprehensive fare assessment.

For more information about Vanpool, visit [www.spokanetransit.com](http://www.spokanetransit.com), or contact STA’s Vanpool Manager, Greg Garrett, at [ggarrett@spokanetransit.com](mailto:ggarrett@spokanetransit.com), or (509) 325-6048.

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*STA provides public transportation services through fixed route (bus) service, paratransit service and vanpool to the cities of Airway Heights, Cheney, Liberty Lake, Medical Lake, Millwood, Spokane and Spokane Valley and parts of the unincorporated County. The organization employs more than 600 people and is overseen by a 13-member regional board: nine voting elected officials from Spokane County and*

*cities in the Public Transportation Benefit Area, three non-voting elected officials from area small cities, and a non-voting labor member. For more information about STA, please visit [www.spokanetransit.com](http://www.spokanetransit.com).*