

Public Hearing FAQs 4.8.09

1. Why can't Laketran use Stimulus money to pay for the service?
 - a. Federal Stimulus money is restricted to capital purchases – buses and equipment. It cannot be used to pay for operating expenses, which are what Laketran most needs at this time.
2. Why is Laketran buying new buses with Stimulus funds if it doesn't have the money to operate them, and are these buses going to be sitting around idle?
 - a. Although Laketran is proposing to cut about 11% of its service hours, at least 92% of rides will still be provided.
 - b. These new buses will be 100% federally funded and will replace older buses that are very challenging and costly to maintain.
3. Can't Laketran just increase the tax levy?
 - a. This is currently under consideration.
4. Why is Laketran proposing to raise fares so much?
 - a. Laketran's present fares are among the lowest in the state. The proposed fare increases are necessary to help preserve Laketran's remaining service, and are more in-line with other transit agencies. These fares are proposed and no final decision has been made.
 - b. Laketran has only had two fare increases since 1986. During the 20 years in which there were no fare increases, sales tax revenues were so strong we did not have to increase fares to cover service costs. With the significant drop in sales tax revenues and state aid, additional money must be generated from those who use the system.
5. Will the new fares be enough to cover future costs?
 - a. The new fare structure alone will not be enough to cover operating costs, but will help Laketran preserve its remaining services.
 - b. Long-term funding solutions are needed that include a more equitable balance of revenue from state and federal sources.
6. Will Laketran cut any staff?
 - a. Significant personnel and related cuts have already been made to reduce expenses.
 - b. Reductions in service may mean reductions in the workforce throughout the organization.
 - c. Laketran will determine the proper size of the workforce needed to provide the remaining service.

7. Why are Dial-a-Ride buses sometimes picking up at the same place at the same time?
 - a. Laketrans allows riders to schedule pick-ups and drop offs by individual appointment times. A more efficient system may be to group riders going to and from certain destinations. However, this would restrict the freedom riders now have in choosing their transportation times and may increase the amount of time people spend on the bus. All options such as this are being considered in order to provide the greatest access to service for the greatest number of people.

8. Why is Laketrans proposing to eliminate Saturday service?
 - a. Saturday has the lowest ridership of the week. On Laketrans fixed route service 1,450 riders are carried on weekdays – only 450 riders use this service on Saturdays; Dial-a-Ride transports 1,100 riders on an average weekday and only 275 on Saturdays. There is no commuter Express service on Saturdays.

9. Why is Laketrans proposing to eliminate evening service and not morning service?
 - a. Fewer people ride the bus in the evening than ride in the early morning.

10. What about dialysis customers on Saturdays and evenings?
 - a. Laketrans is working with dialysis centers to make arrangements for these customers to receive treatments during times Laketrans will be operating.

11. What about medical appointments?
 - a. Medical appointments during operating hours will continue to be a top priority.
 - b. Riders can help the system operate more efficiently by scheduling medical appointments during off-peak hours between 10 am and 3 pm.

12. Why is the proposed senior fare increasing more than the proposed commuter fare?
 - a. Dial-a-Ride is a highly personalized service – one that costs about \$30 per ride to provide. Seniors only pay \$1.50 of this \$30 cost each way. Commuter service is a shared ride with up to 50 people per bus and requires riders to get on and off the bus at a common point then walk to their final destination. A commuter ride cost \$5 to provide and the commuter pays \$3.

13. Will the eliminated service be restored if Laketrans receives more money?
 - a. Yes, service could be restored with additional state and federal operating assistance along with a strong local sales tax.

14. Can't you add more service to make more money?
 - a. More service will not bring more revenue without bringing additional expense Laketrans cannot afford.

15. Why did this situation happen so fast – shouldn't you have known it was coming?
 - a. For several years, Laketrans and other transit systems have been working together to convince both federal and state governments to reinvest in public transit. During this time, Laketrans incurred operating losses in order to preserve the levels of service.
 - b. Laketrans does not have sufficient funds to cover current and future operating losses.
 - c. Continuing reduction in state aid and declining sales tax revenue have precipitated Laketrans's need to develop a financial recovery plan.

16. Why can't Laketrans go back to serving just the elderly and disabled?
 - a. Laketrans has always made seniors and those with disabilities a top priority.
 - b. Ninety-five percent (95%) of transit systems do not provide all the benefits to seniors and people with disabilities that Laketrans does.
 - c. Laketrans spends over \$9 million of its \$13 million budget to provide Dial-a-Ride service to 350,000 riders each year.
 - d. Each year, 400,000 riders now depend on Laketrans's fixed route service and 250,000 riders each year depend on Laketrans's Commuter Express service.
 - e. Because so many people are dependent on public transit, Laketrans must operate a full family of services, which includes fixed route and commuter express as well as Dial-a-Ride.

17. Have you gone to the business community and asked for help?
 - a. Yes, we've been out in the community working on new revenue sources, especially with human service organizations and Medicaid.
 - b. The business community also participates in Laketrans's new GreenPerks program which provides discounts to riders when they shop at these local merchants. Riders simply present their multi-ride ticket to receive discounts and the local economy benefits by increased sales.

18. Why are full-fare Dial-a-Ride fares going to be so much?
 - a. Even after the fare increase, a full Dial-a-Ride fare will be less than half the operating cost of providing a one-way trip, and still less than a taxi ride.

19. Why are there empty buses?

- a. Buses, like the freeways, tend to be busiest at peak traffic times – from 6-9 am and from 3-6 pm. Since commuters all get on and off of those buses at central locations, and run only during peak times, they appear to be utilized closer to capacity. Local fixed route buses carry the greatest number of individuals per day – 1,450 per day. However, these buses stop every $\frac{1}{4}$ mile along the routes and the distance each person travels is different, so there is a great deal of fluctuation in the number of seats filled at any given moment. Dial-a-Ride is a highly personalized service where trips are booked by appointment, making it difficult to schedule these buses at capacity without passengers experiencing very long trip times.

20. Can smaller buses be used?

- a. Yes, Laketrans at one time used smaller Dial-a-Ride buses. However, the smaller buses were difficult for seniors and those with disabilities to get into and out of. Laketrans went to slightly larger Dial-a-Ride buses that are just as economical but enables all customers to use easily.

21. Can Laketrans get gas tax or cigarette tax money?

- a. No, the state constitution prohibits any gas tax money going to transit. Cigarette tax money is allocated by the State to sources other than public transit.