

AGENDA ITEM 8-C
ACTION ITEM

TO: CHAIRMAN ZIMMERMAN AND THE VRE OPERATIONS BOARD

FROM: DALE ZEHNER

DATE: NOVEMBER 20, 2009

RE: AUTHORIZATION TO AMEND VRE TARIFF TO MODIFY THE YOUTH FARE POLICY

RECOMMENDATION:

The VRE Operations Board is being asked to authorize the Chief Executive Officer to amend the VRE tariff to reflect changes to the youth fare policy to allow for an increase in the age of children riding free with a fare paying adult from age 6 to age 10 and to eliminate the youth fare discount for youths age 11 through 21.

BACKGROUND:

As part of the ongoing FY 2011 VRE budget process, VRE staff reviewed potential policy changes that could be made to enhance revenue without having a critical impact on ridership or service. Accordingly, in September 2009, the Chief Executive Officer sought and received authorization from the VRE Operations Board to solicit comments related to a proposed modification to the youth fare policy that would eliminate the 50% discount fare for youths age 11-21 and increase the age limit for children who ride free with a fare paying adult from age 6 to age 10.

Between September 28th and November 6th, VRE accepted comments on the proposed changes. A public hearing was also held on November 2, 2009. Out of the three individuals who attended the hearing and the 94 written comments received, approximately 70 percent were against the proposed change and approximately 30 percent were in favor. Of those opposed, the majority

represented students who travel on VRE to attend private schools in Northern Virginia or Washington, DC or college students. Of those in favor, most felt that everyone utilizing a seat should pay full fare. There are no regulations governing required discounts that must be offered to youths.

It is estimated that approximately 80 youths travel on VRE trains on a daily basis. Because that is a relatively low figure in comparison to the average daily ridership, consideration was given to continuing to offer the youth discount under an amended and more stringent process. However, staff ultimately found that because this program is not required and does not benefit the majority of VRE riders, it should be eliminated until a time when the budget was more favorable toward discretionary programs.

FISCAL IMPACT:

VRE staff estimates that the recommended amendment will result in an increase in annual fare revenue of approximately \$100,000.

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**RESOLUTION
8C-11-2009
OF THE
VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS
OPERATIONS BOARD**

WHEREAS, as part of the ongoing FY 2011 VRE budget process, VRE staff reviewed potential policy changes that could be made to enhance revenue without having a critical impact on ridership or service; and,

WHEREAS, the Chief Executive Officer sought and received authorization to solicit comments related to a proposed modification to the youth fare policy; and,

WHEREAS, children age 6 and under currently ride free with a fare paying adult, the proposal would increase the age to 10 and under; and,

WHEREAS, youths age 11-21 can currently purchase tickets at a 50% discount, the proposal is to eliminate any discount for youths age 11-21.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the VRE Operations Board authorizes the Chief Executive Officer to amend VRE's tariff to modify the youth fare policy to increase the age a child can ride free with a fare paying adult from age 6 to age 10 and to eliminate the 50% discount for youths age 11-21.