



## Don't Transfer Cost To Responsible Bus Riders

Are there so many lying, cheating, belligerent, punch-throwing maniacs riding Albuquerque buses that the only way to ensure they pay their fares is to force law-abiding commuters to fork over 50 cents for a transfer? We don't think so.

ABQ Ride has been trumpeting its ridership since gas started inching toward \$4 a gallon. The month of May saw more than 909,000 boardings. No doubt some of those passengers were angry, inebriated folks looking to hitch a ride with a free-but-expired transfer and find a moving seat to snooze in. And no doubt bus drivers would rather not deal with them. The same can be said for the majority of riders.

So instead of punishing the many for the bad behavior of the few, why not have drivers use that cell phone or radio to call a cop to the next stop when a rough rider gets out of line? Once the word gets out that ABQ Ride isn't providing a free mobile drunk tank/cage fight, the problem ridership should drop. If the root problem is really riders altering expired transfers, reusing or stealing and selling them, will charging 50 cents eliminate the abuse? An authority figure with a badge sounds more promising.

While we're at it, how about making responsible ridership easy? Instead of gouging paying riders for 50-cent transfers that require exact change, how about selling weekly and daily passes in addition to the monthly and three-day variety. And making those available places other than the Downtown Alvarado station and a handful of groceries during banker's hours. And adding rechargeable smart cards.

You can walk into most retail outlets, from gas stations to drug stores, and buy gift cards to chain restaurants, department stores, book sellers and phoneservice providers. Why not a simple bus pass?

Driver Frederick Garcia says fraudulent use of transfers is "probably our No. 1 problem on city buses." Transit Director Greg Payne estimates it costs the city at least \$300,000 a year.

That needs to be addressed. But responsible folks already pay to ride the bus. The city shouldn't transfer the cost of dealing with scofflaws to them, too.

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