

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 a \$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.

¹ This policy supersedes Section 1, Appendix 1 in the Public Participation Plan adopted 11/15/2017

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, PVTA 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

PVTA 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.