

= SmarTrip =

SmarTrip is a contact @-@ less stored @-@ value smart card payment system managed by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) . The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) uses a compatible payment system called CharmCard . A reciprocity agreement between the MTA and WMATA allows either card to be used for travel on any of the participating transit systems in the Baltimore @-@ Washington metropolitan area . Unlike traditional paper farecards or bus passes , SmarTrip / CharmCard is designed to be permanent and reloadable . For the rest of this article , " SmarTrip " will refer to both unless there is a specific difference between the two .

WMATA began using SmarTrip for payment on Metrorail in 1999 followed shortly by Metrobus and Metro parking lots . It was later extended to other public transit systems throughout the region . SmarTrip users receive discounts on Metrorail fares . Although WMATA initially drew criticism due to the limited number of SmarTrip sales locations , distribution has expanded to local convenience stores and supermarkets . By late 2012 all Metrorail stations were equipped with SmarTrip vending machines .

In October 2010 , WMATA announced that it was working on a replacement system because the company that makes SmarTrip cards has since gone out of business . However , the transit agency found an alternate manufacturer to produce additional cards until a new payment system is introduced . After March 6 , 2016 , SmarTrip cards are the only Metrorail payment method , and paper farecards will no longer be accepted .

= = Overview = =

SmarTrip cards are 3 ? by 2 ? inches (85 @.@ 7 mm × 54 @.@ 0 mm) , roughly the same size as a credit card or driver 's license . The card is brought into close proximity with a circular target on the top or side of each faregate rather than inserted into a slot . Because the card has a radio @-@ frequency identification (RFID) chip inside , it only has to be in close proximity to the target and is usually not necessary to actually touch it with the card , although it can be touched to the target if desired , or the card can be scanned while still inside a wallet or purse passed over the target , affording some speed and convenience over the paper farecard which must be physically inserted into a slot . In the Metrorail system , touching the card to the target will display the value remaining as the faregate opens , both when entering and exiting . On Metrobuses , the farebox will audibly beep and display the remaining value . In all cases , the appropriate fare is deducted automatically , accounting for any applicable transfers and discounts .

In an effort to reduce fraud and waste , Metro announced in October 2008 that it would be eliminating paper bus transfers effective January 4 , 2009 . All riders who wished to take advantage of reduced @-@ fare transfers were required to pay using SmarTrip . Paper bus passes were eliminated in January 2011 and passes are now only available on SmarTrip .

For SmarTrip , pass rules are different from CharmCard . All Metrorail passes are now available on SmarTrip . These include One @-@ Day , 7 @-@ Day , and 28 @-@ Day fast passes valid for unlimited travel on Metrorail . A 7 @-@ Day Short Trip Pass is also sold , allowing unlimited off @-@ peak rides , and unlimited peak rides for trips costing up to \$ 3 @.@ 50 , with the difference in fare deducted from the stored value on the card if necessary . CharmCard allows a maximum of two of each pass to be stored , so two day passes and two monthly passes , plus cash , can be stored on the card .

Metro also sells SmarTrip cards that are preloaded with a One @-@ Day rail pass online for the same price as just the pass alone (\$ 14 since July 1 , 2012) , including all of the commemorative SmarTrip cards issued since 2009 .

Standard cards can be purchased at vending machines within all Metrorail stations , at Metro sales offices , selected retail stores , and online . The purchase price includes \$ 2 for the card itself plus an initial fare value , which varies depending on where they are purchased : cards purchased at stations cost \$ 10 (\$ 2 for the card and \$ 8 fare value) , while those purchased online cost either \$ 10 or \$ 30 (\$ 2 for the card and \$ 8 or \$ 28 fare value) . The cards can be reloaded using farecard

vending machines or using cash at fareboxes onboard buses . Riders may also add value to their SmarTrip cards by trading in paper farecards (a used farecard up to \$ 20 , or an unused farecard of any value) . There is a difference between SmarTrip and CharmCard on the maximum value that can be stored on the card . SmarTrip can store up to \$ 300 in value , while CharmCard can store up to \$ 200 .

SmarTrip and CharmCard have different qualifications for inter @-@ system usage , e.g. using CharmCard on non @-@ MTA providers , and using SmarTrip on MTA . Passes and non @-@ cash loads (such as employee transit benefits) are stored on the card in a separate " purse " from cash loads . Purse benefits can only be used on the issuing system for that benefit , so a day pass issued by MTA on either a CharmCard or SmarTrip will only be valid on MTA , and a WMATA @-@ issued monthly pass will not be valid on MTA even if it was loaded on a CharmCard . This does mean it is possible to have identical or different passes (like a monthly pass from one and a day pass from the other) from both WMATA and MTA simultaneously loaded on the same card . Monthly transit benefits provided by an employer will only be valid for whichever system the employer is registered with , so an employer who is registered to provide transit benefits with WMATA will only grant benefits usable on WMATA and Washington , DC @-@ area transit providers , even if the benefits are loaded on a CharmCard . Cash loaded on either card is valid on both WMATA and MTA vehicles . This also means purse funds cannot be used for cash equivalents , so a person who is authorized for a monthly bus pass in employee benefits cannot use that benefit to pay for rail travel or a day pass .

Discounted (half @-@ fare) cards have different rules for SmarTrip and CharmCard . SmarTrip for seniors and the disabled may only be purchased in person from a metro agent or authorized sales office , and the person must show ID and for a disabled rider , proof of disability (either WMATA Disabled ID or Medicare card .) CharmCard for seniors and disabled are only available from the MTA reduced fare office at 6 St. Paul Street in downtown Baltimore , with similar requirements (proof of age or disability) . Also , while WMATA charges a \$ 2 fee plus the amount to load in value for senior / disabled SmartTrip card , MTA merely requires at least \$ 2 or more in value to be initially loaded onto a senior / disabled CharmCard , MTA waives any fee for the card .

? Exit fare ? machines (used with paper farecards) previously did not accept SmarTrip , and riders with insufficient value to pay their fare were allowed to exit the system with a negative balance . This negative balance must , however , be paid before the card may be used again to enter the system . In addition , the card must contain sufficient value to pay the full fee in order to exit a Metro parking lot or board a Ride On bus . Because SmarTrip owners were allowed to exit the system with an unlimited negative balance , the Metro Board had previously rejected proposals to reduce the price of SmarTrip cards from \$ 5 down to \$ 2 @.@ 50 . Starting September 1 , 2012 , Metro began offering \$ 3 rebates to customers who registered their cards online after purchase . The cards still cost \$ 5 , but a \$ 3 credit was refunded to the card five days after first use . Also starting Sep 1 , riders have been required to have a minimum balance of \$ 1 @.@ 20 on their SmarTrip cards (35 ¢ for half @-@ fare senior / disabled cards) in order to enter the Metrorail system , which reduced the possible negative balance upon exit . Effective October 1 , 2013 , the price of the card was reduced to \$ 2 , the rebate program was discontinued , and the maximum permitted negative balance upon exit was set at \$ 1 @.@ 50 , with riders who would exceed this being required to use the Exitfare machines to add value to their cards .

SmarTrip cards comply with the ISO / IEC 14443 Type B standard . A microchip contained within the card stores its value , as well as the rider ? s most recent entry and exit points , and a unique identifier . However , the unique identifier is not linked to a person ? s name or identity , unless one registers the card online . Registering SmarTrip cards allows riders to recover their remaining balance (minus a \$ 5 replacement fee) , should the card be lost , stolen , or damaged . The unique identifier also allows workers enrolled in the SmartBenefits program , which allows employers to subsidize employee transportation costs tax @-@ free , to credit their monthly benefits to their cards .

The SmarTrip system was built and designed by Cubic Transportation Systems , Inc . , a subsidiary of San Diego @-@ based Cubic Corporation . As of October 2010 Cubic is reportedly no longer

producing the cards . In December 2010 , WMATA issued a request for proposals for a replacement system . The new payment system is expected to use federal employee badges and certain smart phones in addition to the stored value cards . In January 2014 WMATA announced that the contract for the new system was awarded to Accenture .

In May 2012 , the transit agency announced that it had found a replacement manufacturer for SmarTrip cards to avoid shortages until a new payment system goes into place . Customers will likely not notice any differences except that the new cards are slightly thinner and cheaper to produce .

= = History = =

SmarTrip was the first contact @-@ less smart card for transit in the United States when WMATA began selling SmarTrip cards on May 18 , 1999 . By 2004 , 650 @, @ 000 SmarTrip cards were in circulation . On November 12 , 2002 , the first SmarTrip readers were used on Metrobuses . In May 2004 , SmarTrip readers were introduced at parking garage gates . In December 2010 , 1 @, @ 800 @, @ 000 SmarTrip cards were in use . In February 2011 , WMATA replaced the antennas on all Metrorail faregates to improve the speed and range of its faregates ' SmarTrip processing .

In May 2011 , WMATA and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation started a pilot project to give students in the DC Public Schools " DC One Cards " which are SmarTrip compatible . The new cards serve as both a student identification card and provide reduced Metro fares during student commuting hours . The cards are intended to address youth behavior problems in Metrorail stations .

= = Design = =

On the front of the standard SmarTrip card is a stylized picture of a Metrorail car and Metrobus in front of representations of the Washington Monument , United States Capitol , and stylized versions of classical architecture found in Washington , D.C. The Metro logo appears in the bottom left . A " Senior " SmarTrip is also available that automatically calculates applicable discounted fares for senior citizens (age 65 +) . The design is identical to the standard SmarTrip except that the card is printed in shades of bright yellow and brown , instead of blue and green . Since the Senior SmarTrip allows for discounted fares , the card may only be purchased in person with a valid ID from a Metro sales office or authorized vendor .

The first two promotional SmarTrip cards were issued in 2008 to commemorate the opening of the newly built stadium of the Washington Nationals , Nationals Park . Special SmarTrip cards commemorating the inauguration of President Barack Obama were issued in January 2009 and 2013 . In July 2013 , a special July 4 commemorative SmarTrip card was introduced .

In June 2014 , Metro celebrated the 125th anniversary of the National Zoo by issuing commemorative SmarTrip cards featuring " popular zoo baby residents . "

In July 2014 , a commemorative SmarTrip card was issued to celebrate the opening of the Silver Line .

On March 27 , 2016 , Metro unveiled a new Smartrip card design , to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Metrorail system opening .

= = Criticism = =

An early criticism of the SmarTrip cards had been that they were only sold at suburban Metrorail stations , online , a few selected retailers , and Metro sales offices . However , in 2008 , Metro reached an agreement with CVS / pharmacy to sell the cards at 187 DC @-@ area locations in an effort to increase SmarTrip use . The SmarTrip cards are also sold at area grocery store chains . In late 2012 WMATA installed SmarTrip vending machines at all Metrorail stations .

A number of SmarTrip features that were supposed to be introduced in 2005 by SmarTrip 's creator , Cubic Transportation Systems , were not fully implemented until 2012 . Initially , riders could only

add value to a SmarTrip card at Metrorail stations or by using cash while boarding a Metrobus . In November 2008 , after years of delays , WMATA announced that customers would have the ability to add funds to their SmarTrip cards online by September 2009 , but that deadline was missed . WMATA did launch SmarTrip 's online reload feature in September 2011 . WMATA allowed customers to load a seven @-@ day unlimited Metrorail pass to their SmarTrip cards in April 2012 .

All trips made with a SmarTrip card , with the exception of bus transfers and passes , are charged as individual one @-@ way fares . WMATA offers discounted rail and bus passes to customers who make several trips in one day , or many trips , or many short trips , in a seven @-@ day period ; however , SmarTrip users can only use the 7 @-@ day unlimited pass , and must manually load each transit pass onto their SmarTrip cards . This is in contrast to the Oyster card system on the London Underground , for example , where fares are automatically capped to ensure that customers never pay more than the cost of a one @-@ day pass each day .

There have been complaints when customers ' cards cease to work as a result of placing the card in proximity to metal or physically damaging the card . In such cases Metro guarantees that the fund balance on the card will be transferred to a new card . However , customers have complained that WMATA has not been processing such balance transfers promptly .

= = = Parking = = =

In a controversial move , WMATA announced that as part of a new cashless parking payment system , SmarTrip would be the only way to pay for parking at Metro @-@ operated garages and lots effective June 28 , 2004 , after reports of widespread theft by Metro 's parking contractor , Penn Parking .

The decision prompted complaints that Metro was inconveniencing its many customers , including tourists and other infrequent users , who did not own a SmarTrip card . In April 2007 , WMATA began testing the use of credit cards to pay for parking at six Metro stations , avoiding the need to pay for parking with SmarTrip cards at those stations . The sites are Anacostia on the Green Line , Shady Grove on the Red Line , Vienna and New Carrollton on the Orange Line , and Franconia @-@ Springfield and Largo Town Center on the Blue Line . One exit lane at each station accepts credit card payments through a reader next to the existing SmarTrip card target . WMATA has since announced that it will make at least one credit card exit lane available at all Metro pay @-@ on @-@ exit parking facilities .

= = Participating systems = =

The following is a list of transit systems that accept the SmarTrip card for payment . The Maryland Transit Administration ' s CharmCard uses a compatible payment system from the same manufacturer . A reciprocity agreement allows patrons to use either payment card to travel on any of the participating systems throughout the Baltimore @-@ Washington Metropolitan Area .

* Virginia Regional Transit (VRT) , a separate bus service which also serves Loudoun County , does not participate in SmarTrip .