

MeVa Fare Policy Statement

February 6, 2025

In December 2021, the Merrimack Valley Transit (MeVa) Advisory Board boldly voted to go fare-free systemwide beginning in March 2022 for a two-year demonstration period. Thanks to state-support, founded on its initial success, the pilot program has since been extended through July 2025.

In March, 2024, The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) retained Stantec Inc. to conduct a top-to-bottom evaluation and Business Case analysis of the MeVa Fare-Free program. The full review was presented to the board in February, 2025 and concluded that:

MeVa's fare-free program has fostered a multitude of operational, environmental, and social benefits, accomplishing all of its goals in various ways. Together, the monetary value of those benefits supports a business case for the fare-free program, as they will exceed the costs of lost fare revenue.

The report goes on to note that:

Beyond quantifiable benefits, highlights of the program's impact include:

- *More people are patronizing more businesses in the Merrimack Valley, benefiting both tax revenue and job access;*
- *The time that it takes people to get on the bus has been cut in half, reducing idling and allowing buses to run more efficiently;*
- *People are driving less, reducing emissions, and improving safety;*
- *People report high satisfaction with bus service, increased access to medical care, and decreased social isolation.*

Informed by these data and analysis, the MeVa Advisory Board hereby adopts the following policy on a permanent basis:

All MeVa bus and paratransit bus services will be fare-free for all riders, meaning no payment is required to board any vehicle. This policy applies to all routes and services operated by MeVa Transit during regular operating hours, with no distinction based on age, income, or disability status.