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"The 70-Cent Issue"

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MATA

CA, July 28, 1980

The 70-Cent Issue

THE WHEELS have been set in motion to impose one of the highest public transit fares in America on Memphis Area Transit Authority riders. A *pro forma* public hearing has been set for Aug. 15 on MATA's intent to raise the standard adult fare to 70 cents (75 cents with transfers), children to 40 cents and the elderly and handicapped to 25 cents.

On Aug. 27, the MATA board will approve the new rates and put them into effect Sept. 1. We all know why.

This untimely development is necessary to offset the \$2-million deficit imposed on the transit system by a state government which refused to consider local option tax sources for public transportation, and by a

City Council unwilling to fund a maintenance-level operating budget for MATA.

These higher fares will hit hardest at those who do not have other transportation available. In other words, those who can least afford to pay it.

And they may reverse the recent encouraging upward trend in general bus ridership, perhaps to the point that revenues will actually drop and more increases must be contemplated.

SO WHERE DO ALL these people running for all these seats in the next Tennessee General Assembly stand?

In case any of them are looking for campaign issues, here is a real one.