



Since the first week of March, the drivers of the buses that bring the workers in and out of Coronado had been announcing that the fare would be increasing from 25 cents to 35 cents beginning March 21, 2011. According to the drivers, they decided to increase the fare because of the increase in gas prices and also because of the condition of Coronado roads. For some of the workers, the rise in the fare was reasonable due to the increase in gas prices. However, others believed that the increase should be accompanied by an improvement in the service offered by the bus drivers. The primary complaints of the Coronado workers were that the buses did not run frequently enough, the buses sometimes did not complete their routes, and some of the drivers were too rough with the passengers.

As had been previously announced, on Monday, March 21, the bus drivers began to charge the new rate of 35 cents for trips in and out of Coronado. Even though this increase was anticipated, some of the workers were very unhappy with the measure, and they went before the Chame Transit Police to make a complaint. Shortly thereafter, a group of policemen came to meet with the drivers and informed them that the increase in fare needed to be endorsed by the Transit Authority in order for it to take effect. On Wednesday, March 23, the bus drivers stopped providing the Coronado service which forced a large number of workers to take taxis or walk to work.

Although, as yet, the Transit Authority has not approved any increase for bus fares for the west area of Panama, the drivers began to provide the transportation service again with the new rate of 35 cents. When I asked one bus driver about the fare increase, he only said that Coronado is a 'private area.' I can only suppose that what he meant was that the transportation service that they provide is also private. In addition to the fare increase, the drivers promised to offer better service to all of their clients.

So please remember, if you use Coronado buses, be prepared. The new fare for Coronado bus users has increased to 35 cents. I can only hope that this fare increase also brings a rise in the quality of the service that the Coronado busses provide.