



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

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Paratransit: New Contracts Bring Opportunity for Change

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SUMMARY



Cost: Payment structure and inflexible service leads to high costs



Quality: Lacking standards for timely service



Equity: Not using tools to ensure equity



Access is contracted out

- Access is contracted out to private sector
- Multi-year contracts
- Transit currently evaluating responses to RFP

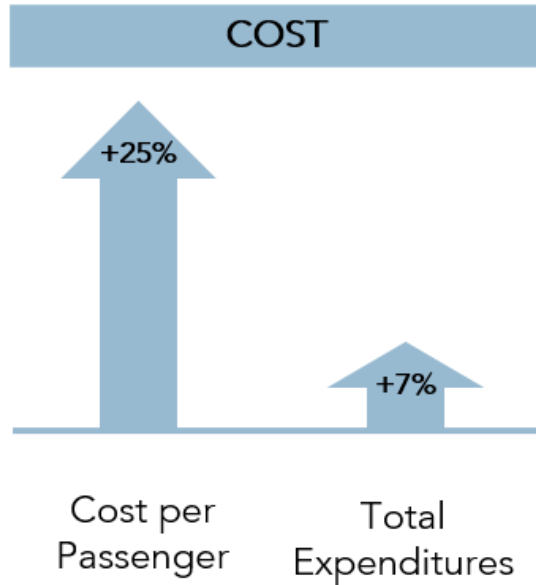


Transit has acted to control costs

- Expanded Community Access Transportation (CAT) program
- Changed eligibility process
- Training to ride fixed-route system



Higher cost, fewer riders, poorer performance



Vehicle operations payment rate exceeds peers

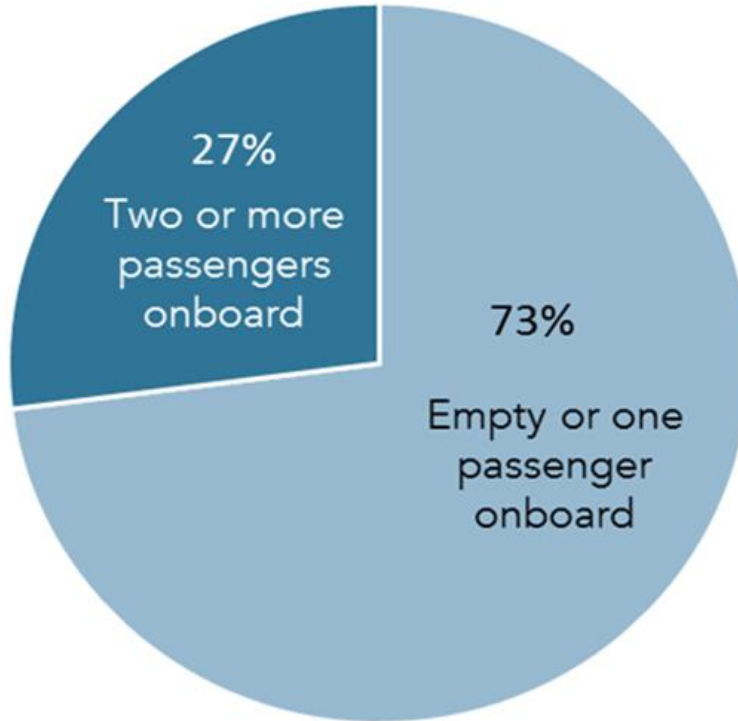


Payment structure discourages efficient service

- Providers paid by service hour
 - More hours results in higher payments
- Incentive for efficient service too small



Van service underutilized



Flexibility can reduce costs and improve service

- Few common trips and underutilized vans leads to high costs and poor service
- Other agencies have more flexibility
- Goal is to optimize service mix



Recommendations

- ▶ Payment incentive for efficient service
- ▶ Promote flexible service
- ▶ Negotiate rates with providers
- ▶ **Optimize service mix**



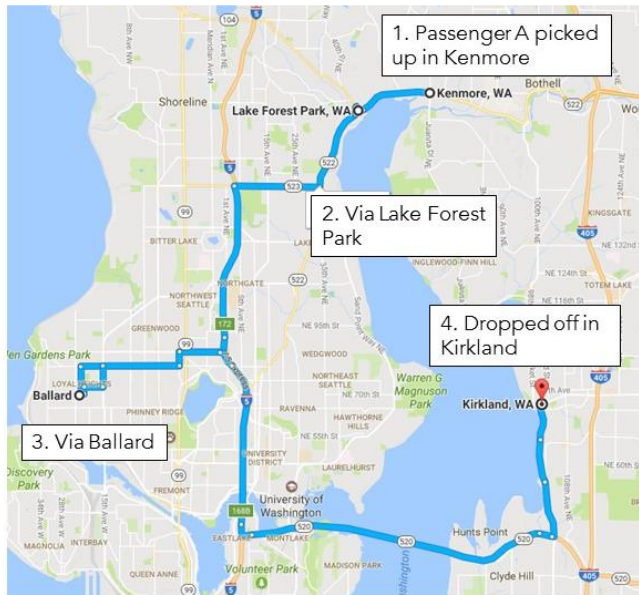
Quality: Three main concerns

- Excessive trip length
- Early drop offs for appointments
- Lack of payment options

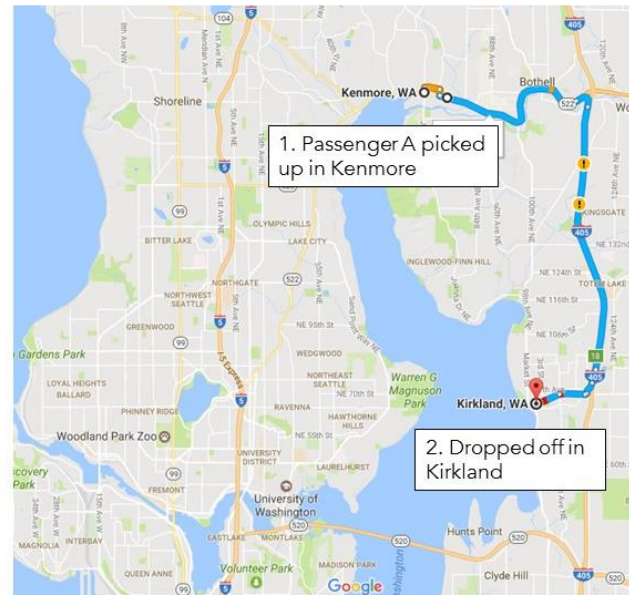


Riders' biggest concern: Trip length

Rider-Reported Access Route
Estimated time: 61 minutes



Direct Route
Estimated time: 19 minutes



Comparing paratransit to fixed route

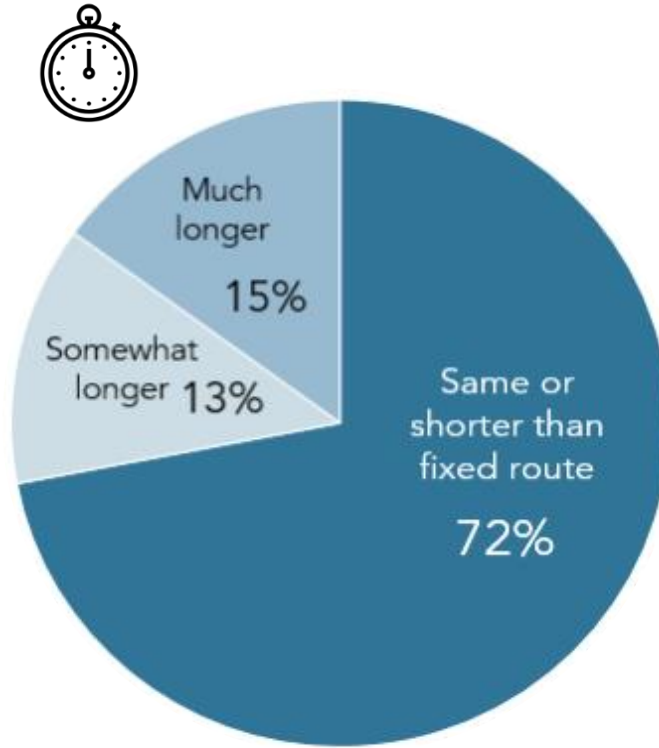
FTA suggests:

- Sampling longer trips
- Find portion of trips similar to fixed route



Most trips similar to fixed route, some much longer

“Much longer” trips took nearly 40 minutes longer on average



Regularly monitor trip length

Recommendation

- ▶ Set, monitor, and enforce standards for on-board time

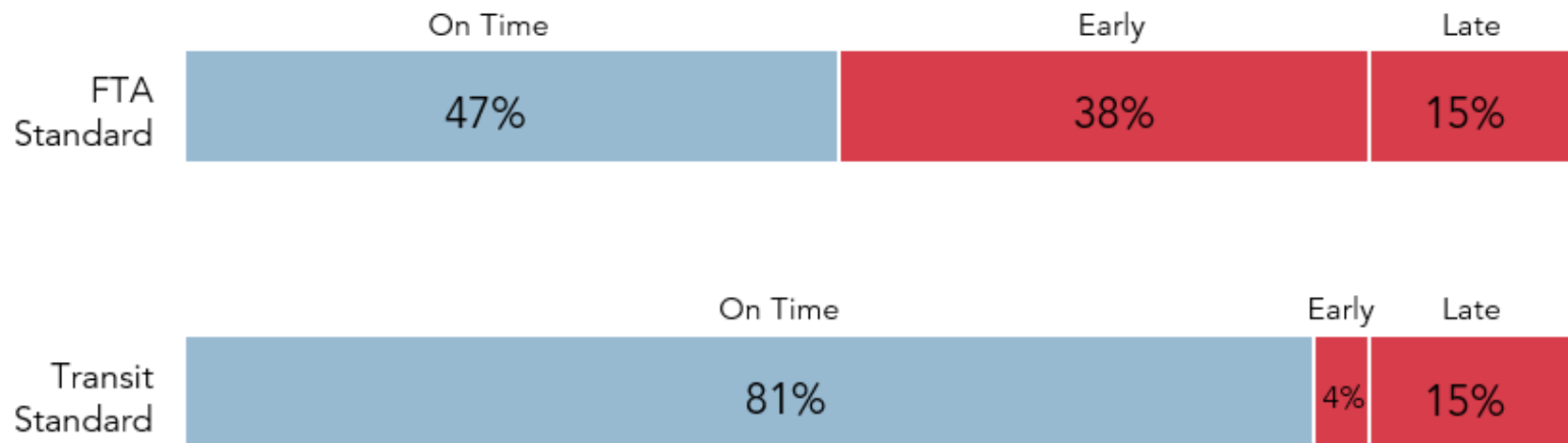


Riders arrive too early for appointments

- Safety and quality concerns
- FTA standard
 - No more than 30 minutes early
- Transit standard
 - No more than 60 minutes early



Less on time than it looks



New rule needs enforcement

Recommendation

- ▶ Monitor and enforce standards for timely appointment drop offs

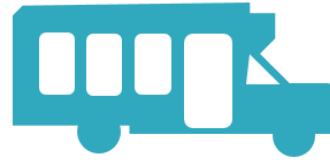


Few payment options for Access riders



FIXED ROUTE

Cash/transfers
ORCA: Monthly pass
ORCA: E-purse
Tickets/transfers
Mobile tickets

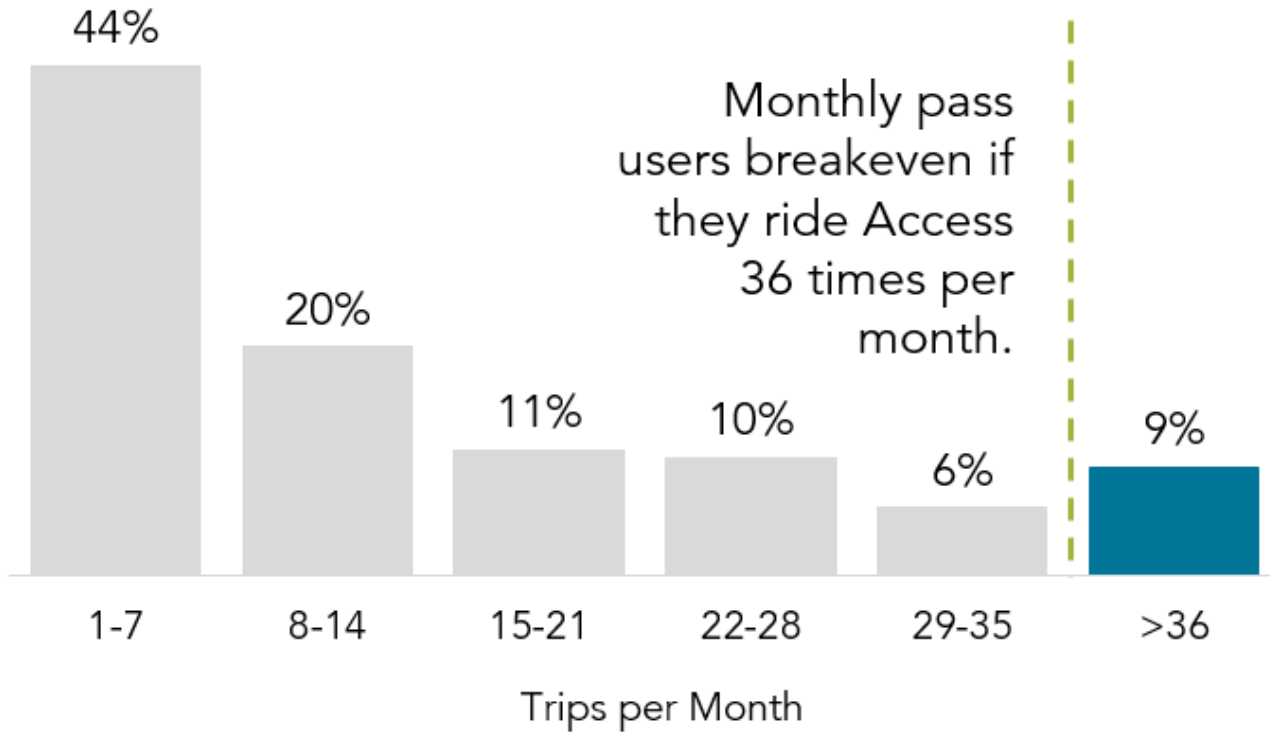


ACCESS PARATRANSIT

Cash
ORCA: Monthly pass



Most lose money with a monthly pass



Increase payment options

Recommendation

- ▶ Offer more ways to pay that reflect rider needs and trip frequency



Three aspects of equity

- Existing tools underutilized
- Demographic data gaps
- Key populations not represented

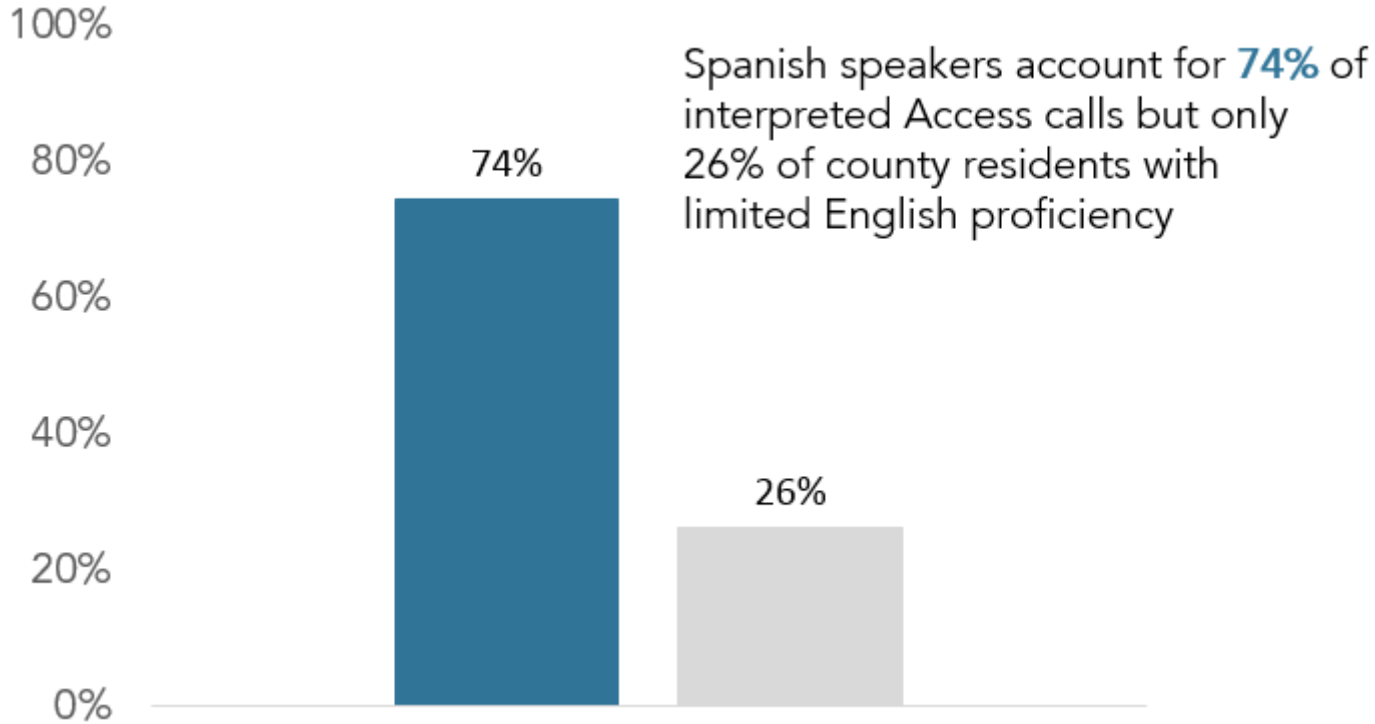


Language barriers exist

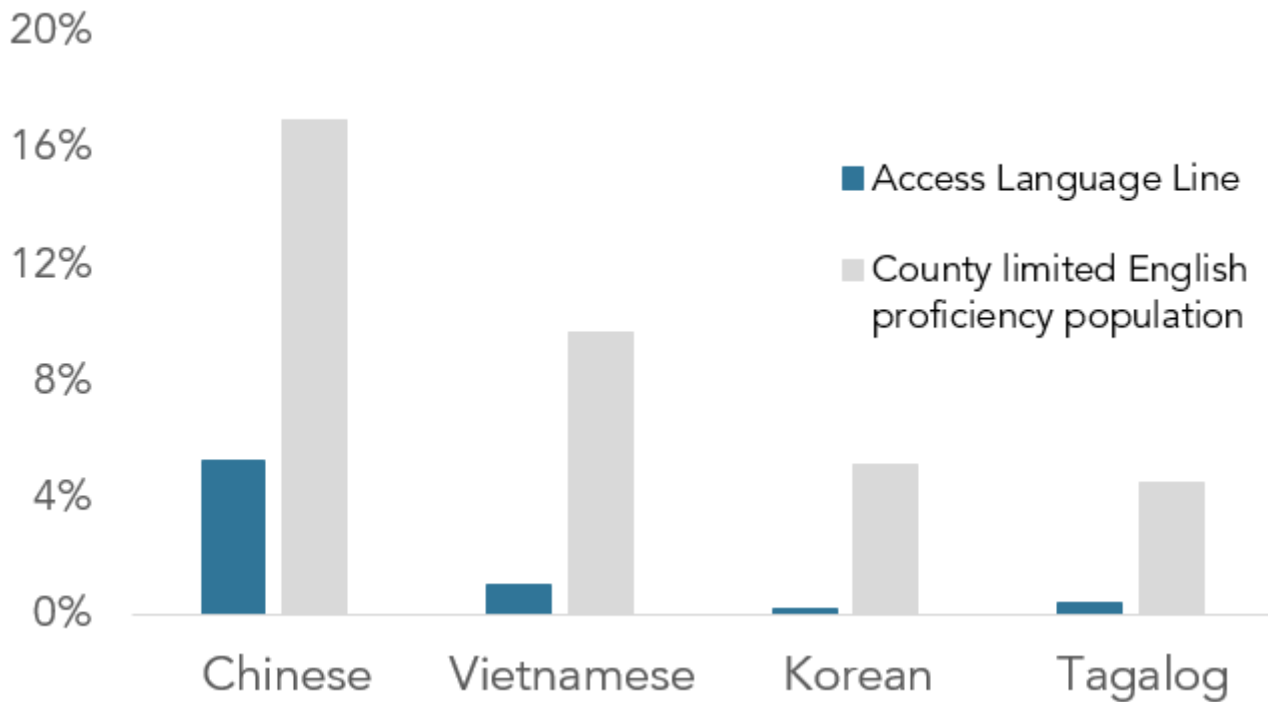
- Hearing about and applying for Access
 - Outreach only upon request
- Booking rides
 - Language assistance disproportionate
- Navigating service notices



Spanish speakers overrepresented



Other common languages underrepresented



Be proactive about equity

Recommendations

- ▶ Use language data for customer service
- ▶ Conduct Equity Impact Review





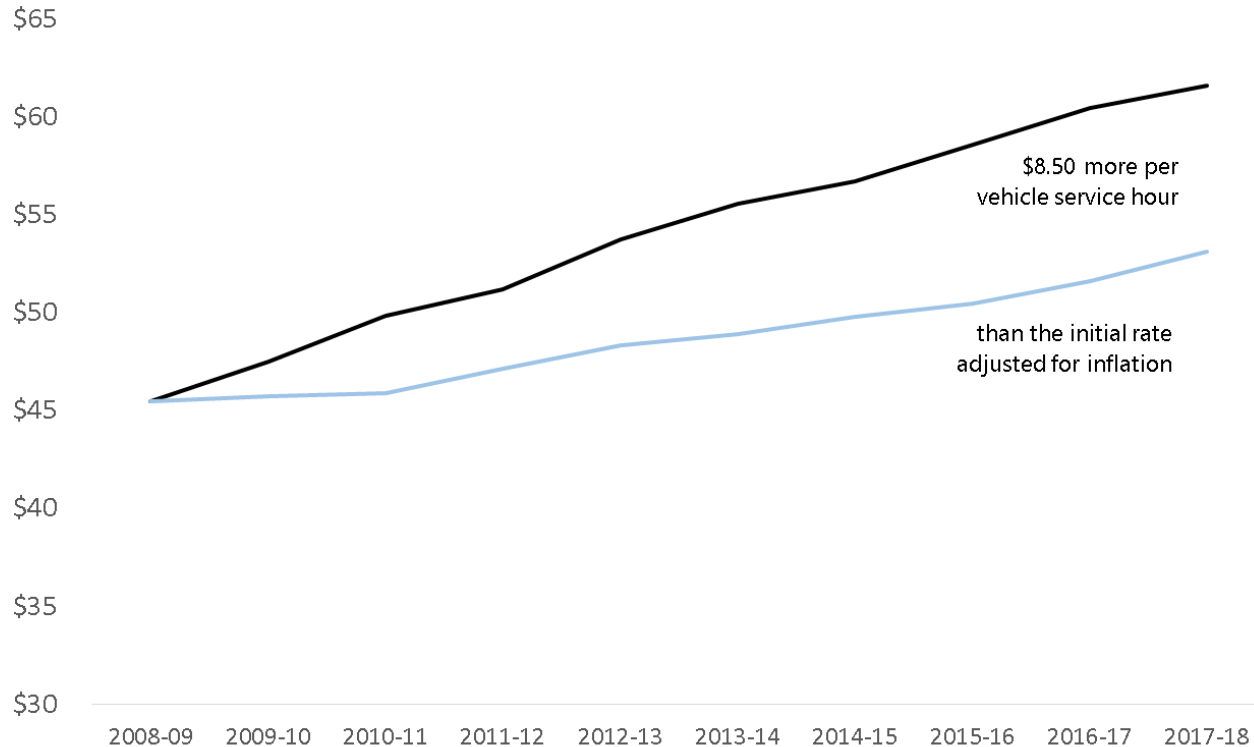
Thank you

Full report available online

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/auditor>

Questions?

Provider payment growth exceeds inflation





Paratransit matters

- Americans with Disabilities Act
- 196,000 people with disabilities in King County
 - 1/3 people of color
 - Many with limited English proficiency
- \$60 million (10% of Transit budget)

How Access service differs from fixed route

- Eligibility-based
- Origin to destination
- Demand-responsive
- Outsourced

