

**Rates of Fare for the Transit Program:
2024 Report**

September 30, 2025



King County

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II. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the modified rates of fare and special transportation services programs offered in 2024 in compliance with section 28.94.265 of the King County Code (KCC). Highlights from the report include:

- Enrollment in the Access paratransit program increased by four percent with an 11 percent increase in boardings for 2024.
- Vanpool and Vanshare vans operating in 2024 provided 1,397,763 passenger trips, up 27 percent from 2023.
- Foregone fare revenue for outreach, marketing and promotional purposes in 2024 was estimated at \$225,972 of an allowable \$350,000.
- Human Service Bus Ticket sales decreased by seven percent in 2024. The total fare value of the tickets sold was \$1,870,870 at a cost to the social service agencies of \$187,087.

In 2025, Metro will collaborate with regional partners through a series of fare forums with the goals of further aligning and simplifying fare policies, modernizing reduced fare programs, and continuing to add enhancements to the ORCA system.

III. Background

Department Overview: King County Metro is the Puget Sound region’s largest public transportation agency. Metro provides bus, paratransit, vanpool, and water taxi services, and operates Seattle Streetcar, Sound Transit Link light rail, and Sound Transit Express bus service. Metro is committed to providing safe, equitable, and sustainable mobility, and prioritizing service where needs are greatest.

Historical Context: KCC 28.94.265 requires that the director of the King County Metro Transit Department (King County Metro) shall submit annually to the council, by September 30, a report on the services and fares authorized by K.C.C. 28.94.035, 28.94.045, 4A.700.130, 28.94.225, 4A.700.530, 4A.700.350, 4A.700.610, and 4A.700.210. The report shall be filed with the clerk of the council, who shall retain an electronic copy and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers. (Ord. 19738 § 16, 2023: Ord. 18837 § 2, 2018: Ord. 18635 § 35, 2017: Ord. 17130 § 10, 2011: Ord. 16702 § 5, 2009: Ord. 12643 § 23, 1997).

Current Context: Metro has a variety of special fares and fares for services other than regularly scheduled transportation services to meet the growing need for transportation services and facilities throughout King County. These programs increase access to transit for those not served by regular rates of fare, in line with the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan¹ objective of ensuring that investments in the transportation system are made “in the places and people with greatest needs.” The summary of those activities in this report also promotes fiscal responsibility in line with Metro’s Strategic Plan for Public Transportation’s² objective to “exercise sound financial management and ensure Metro’s long-term financial sustainability.”

By promoting transit ridership, the activities reported here support the goals of King County’s Strategic Climate Action Plan³ to make more efficient use of our roadways. In addition, Metro’s Access, Community Access Transportation, and Human Services Ticket programs help promote access to transportation, which is a determinant of equity in King County and is consistent with equity and social justice goals.⁴

Report Methodology: The report is prepared annually by Metro’s Fare Policy Team, with data and contributions provided by subject matter experts from each section’s respective programs and teams.

¹ <https://aqua.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/dnrp-directors-office/equity-social-justice/201609-ESJ-SP-FULL.pdf>

² <https://kingcountymetro.blog/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/King-County-Metro-Strategic-Plan-for-Public-Transportation-2021-2023-July-2021.pdf>

³ <https://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/climate/documents/scap-2020-approved/2020-king-county-strategic-climate-action-plan.pdf>

⁴ <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/executive/governance-leadership/equity-social-justice/office-of-equity-racial-social-justice/resources/determinants-of-equity>

IV. Report Requirements

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the modified rates of fare and special transportation services programs offered in 2024 in compliance with section 28.94.265 of the code. Each section begins with the relevant title of the King County Code section and follows with a program summary.

A. ADA Paratransit & Community Transportation Programs

KCC 28.94.035 ADA paratransit program

KCC 28.94.045 King County Metro community transportation program and services

Program Summary

King County Metro's Access Transportation Services program (Access) provides origin-to-destination paratransit service in King County for people who cannot otherwise get to or ride regular Metro bus or light rail service due to a disability. Eligibility is based on whether a person's disability prevents them from performing the tasks needed to ride regular public bus service some, or all, of the time.

The Community Access Transportation (CAT) program provides vans and operating grants to agencies that provide special needs transportation to seniors and people with disabilities in King County.

The Taxi Scrip program is an agreement with taxi companies to provide rides to low-income King County residents that have a disability or are over the age of 64. Program participants make trips on eligible taxi companies and pay the driver using the scrip in place of cash for the metered trip. Participants purchase the vouchers at roughly 50 percent of their value from the Metro.

Below is a summary of the 2024 program data compared to the previous year.

- The ADA paratransit program had 12,810 total ADA registered clients as of December 2024, compared to 12,376 in December 2023, an increase of four percent.
- 2024 ADA registrant boardings with Access Transportation increased by 11 percent to 830,201 from 748,380 in 2023. Overflow Taxi boardings were 111,499, down eight percent from 121,496 in 2023.
- The Taxi Scrip program had 12,968 eligible registrants in 2024, one percent more compared to 12,781 in 2023. Participants took 1,734 taxi scrip trips in 2024, an 18 percent decrease compared to 2,108 in 2023.
- Community Access Transportation (CAT) agencies provided 292,533 rides to persons participating in their programs in 2024, a 19 percent increase in ridership compared with 246,404 rides in 2023.
- Total Paratransit fare revenue was \$901,042 in 2024, an increase of 17 percent from \$771,281 in 2023.
- Service costs for 2024 totaled \$94,953,303, a 28 percent increase compared to \$74,118,959 in 2023, primarily driven by increased ridership and vehicle revenue hours. Service costs include direct operating, program management, ADA eligibility and registration, community partnership program (CAT), and administrative expenses.

B. Vanpool Fares

4A.700.130 Vanpool fares

Program Summary

King County Metro administers the largest publicly owned commuter van program in the nation. The Vanpool and Vanshare program provides vans, staff support, maintenance, fuel, and insurance to groups of five to 15 people who commute together.⁵ Riders pay a monthly fare based on the round-trip mileage of the commute, the number of people in the van, and the van size. At the end of 2024, there were 992 commuter vans in operation, an increase of two percent from 2023. Commuter vans operating in 2024 provided 1,397,763 passenger trips, up 27 percent from 2023.

Pursuant to code, commuter van fares are to be established at a level such that the program is reasonably estimated to fully recover program operating and capital costs, and at least 25 percent of the cost of administering the program. In 2024, operating costs were \$4,716,738, capital costs were \$5,585,000, and administrative costs were \$6,216,792 (25 percent of which needs to be recovered through fares). Commuter van fare revenue was \$10,206,634, up 49 percent from the previous year but falling short of the amount needed to meet recovery requirements set by 4A.700.130. The Vanpool and Vanshare program is currently exploring changes to its fare structure and policies to better ensure compliance with fare revenue requirements.

C. Ride Free Services Agreements

KCC 28.94.225 Ride free services agreements

Program Summary

This section authorizes the County Executive to enter into agreements to provide ride free services within geographic areas. No ride free area agreements were in effect in 2024.

D. Leasing of Transit Vehicles

KCC 4A.700.530 Leasing of transit vehicles

Program Summary

This section establishes the policy regarding the lease or rental of county-owned transit vehicles for charter operation by others. Minimum rental rates for the lease of transit vehicles are set to recover the marginal cost per service hour plus 10 percent. Different costs per service hour are assessed based on the size and type of vehicle leased. King County Metro did not lease any coaches in 2024.

E. Interagency Trip Agreements

KCC 4A.700.350 Interagency trip agreements

⁵ At the beginning of 2022, the minimum required vanpool size was temporarily reduced to two riders in response to the COVID pandemic. This was increased to three riders on June 1, 2022 and later restored to five riders in 2023.

Program Summary

This section authorizes the County Executive to enter into agreements with other transit agencies for regional fare payment and revenue apportionment. In 2024, King County Metro participated with six other transit agencies in the regional ORCA fare payment system, as authorized by Ordinance 14598;⁶ adopted on April 29, 2003.

F. Waiving or Discounting Fare or Pass Prices

KCC 4A.700.610 Waiving or discounting fare or pass prices

Program Summary

This section authorizes the King County Metro Transit Department General Manager to waive or discount fares for the purposes of attracting new ridership, testing new services and strategies, and supporting special transit programs.

The total revenue loss to King County Metro for waiving or discounting fare or pass prices in 2024 is estimated at \$225,972 of an allowable \$350,000 (see Appendix A). The following programs account for this total:

Adopt-A-Stop Program: The Adopt-A-Stop program encourages volunteers to “adopt” one or more non-sheltered bus zones to assist in regular cleaning and upkeep. While King County Metro no longer offers free ride tickets to new volunteers, volunteers who have previously received tickets for providing this service are still given 60 tickets per quarter. In 2024, 22,560 tickets were distributed to 94 volunteers for an estimated revenue loss of \$20,783.

Marketing/Community Outreach: Free ride tickets were distributed for marketing and community outreach events. A total of 19,800 tickets were distributed for an estimated revenue loss of \$18,241.

New Year’s Eve Free Rides: The annual New Year’s Eve free ride promotion provided free transit on all King County Metro services to encourage safe travel. Revenue loss is estimated at \$183,274.

Seafair Fleet Week: From July 30 through August 4, 2024, King County Metro provided free transportation on all regular service for US Navy and US Coast Guard personnel in uniform or with proper identification. Metro does not maintain counts for the number of free rides provided but foregone revenue is believed to be minimal.

Tickets for Customer Service/Other: 3,500 free ride tickets were distributed to riders who have had a negative experience on transit or for other miscellaneous reasons (e.g., lost wallet, took wrong bus, route change impacts, etc.). Estimated revenue loss was \$3,224.

G. Provision of Tickets to Human Services Agencies

KCC 4A.700.210 Provision of tickets to human services agencies

⁶ Ordinance 14598 [\[LINK\]](#)

Program Summary

The King County Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) is responsible for determining the eligibility of, and directing ticket allocations to, human service agencies serving low income and homeless populations. King County Metro subsidizes 90 percent of the fare value of human services tickets, while human service agencies pay the remaining 10 percent. The subsidy value is not to exceed \$4,000,000 per year.

A total of 833,740 tickets were sold through the program in 2024 to 98 participating agencies (see Appendix B for the full list of agencies), down seven percent from 2023. The total fare value of the tickets sold was \$1,870,870 at a cost to the social service agencies of \$187,087.

In 2024, Metro also conducted focus groups with human service agencies and community members to support the modernization project for the Human Services Bus Ticket Program. Based on the information collected from these engagement efforts, Metro will be piloting an ORCA-based option for human service agencies in 2025 with an evaluation planned for 2026. Twelve agencies were selected to participate in the pilot, with the goal of gathering recommendations for how to best structure an ORCA-based human service program in the future.

V. Conclusion/Next Steps

Over the next year, Metro will collaborate with regional partners through a series of fare forums with the goals of further aligning and simplifying fare policies, modernizing reduced fare programs, and continuing to improve and add features to the ORCA system.

VI. Appendices

- A. 2024 Estimated Foregone Revenue from Waiving or Discounting Fares
- B. 2024 Human Service Bus Ticket Social Service Agencies

Appendix A: 2024 Estimated Foregone Revenue from Waiving or Discounting Fares

2024 Estimated Foregone Revenue from Waiving or Discounting Fares

Free Ride Tickets	Tickets	Estimated Foregone Revenue
Marketing/Community Outreach	19,800	\$18,241
Adopt-a-Stop	22,560	\$20,783
Customer Service/Other	3,500	\$3,224
Fare-Free Promotions	Boardings	Estimated Foregone Revenue
NYE Free Fares	221,354	\$183,274
Total		\$225,972⁷

⁷ Foregone revenue is the amount of expected fare revenue waived. New trips generated by fare promotions that otherwise would not have occurred are not counted towards foregone revenue.

Appendix B: 2024 Human Service Bus Ticket Social Service Agencies

2024 Human Service Bus Ticket Social Service Agencies

- Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services
- African Community Housing and Development
- Akin - Children's Home Society of Washington
- Arms Around You
- Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS)
- Atlantic Street Center
- Aurora Commons
- Bailey Boushay House
- Ballard Food Bank
- Bellevue Fire Department
- Bellwether Housing
- Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
- Catholic Community Services
- Chief Seattle Club
- City of Bellevue Probation Services
- City of Issaquah
- City of Kent Corrections - City Jail
- City of Kirkland HS - Parks and Community
- ColumbiaCare Services Inc.
- Communities of Rooted Brilliance
- Community House Mental Health Agency
- Compass Housing Alliance
- Congolese Integration Network
- DAWN - Domestic Abuse Women's Network
- Denise Louie Education Center
- Disability Empowerment Center
- Downtown Emergency Service Center- DESC
- El Centro de la Raza
- Elizabeth Gregory Home
- Entre Hermanos
- Eritrean Association in Greater Seattle
- Evergreen Recovery Centers PCAP
- Fautleroy Church United Church of Christ
- Federal Way Caregiving Network
- Friends of Youth
- God's Providing Hands and Services II
- H.O.P.E. Center Resources
- HERO House NW
- Hopelink
- KC DAJD Community Corrections Division
- KC District Court - Therapeutic Courts
- Kent Municipal Court - Probation Department

Appendix A: 2024 Estimated Foregone Revenue from Waiving or Discounting Fares

- Key Recovery & Life Skills Center
- Kindering
- King County Department of Public Defense
- King County Library System Foundation
- King County Veterans Program - Tukwila
- Lifelong
- Literacy Source
- Low Income Housing Institute
- Mercy Housing Northwest
- Mt. Baker Housing Association
- Navos
- Neighborhood House
- New Beginnings
- New Young Scholars
- Nickelsville
- Northwest Education Access
- Organization for Prostitution Survivors
- Pike Market Senior Center and Food Bank
- Pioneer Human Services
- Pioneer Square Clinic HMC
- POCAAN
- Porchlight (Congregations for the Homeless)
- Public Health Seattle King County
- Queen Anne Helpline
- Rainier Valley Food Bank
- Real Change
- Reclaim (Snoqualmie Valley Shelter Services)
- Recovery Cafe
- Refugee Resettlement Office
- ROOTS Young Adult Shelter
- Sea Mar Community Health Centers
- Seattle Conservation Corps
- Seattle Municipal Court
- Seattle Repertory Theatre
- Seattle's Union Gospel Mission
- SHARE/WHEEL
- Shoreline Community Care
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Seattle/KC
- Solid Ground
- Solid Ground's Regional Access Point RAP
- Sound
- St. Francis House
- The Salvation Army

Appendix A: 2024 Estimated Foregone Revenue from Waiving or Discounting Fares

- The Seattle Public Library
- Together Center
- Totem Star
- University District Food Bank
- Valley Cities Counseling & Consultation
- Villa Comunitaria
- WA Department of Corrections - Tumwater
- We Care Daily Clinics
- Weld Seattle
- West Seattle Food Bank
- World Relief Western Washington
- YMCA of Greater Seattle
- YWCA Seattle | King | Snohomish