

# Free Youth Fares, Youth Mobility Program and Youth Ridership

Regional Transit Committee  
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# Presenters



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# How the Youth Mobility Program Fits Into Metro's Guiding Policies



- Create a sustainable pipeline to transit ridership



- Invest upstream where needs are greatest
- Improve access to mobility options

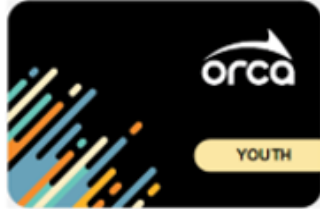
# Background: Free Youth Transit

# Free Youth Transit: Overview

- Began September 2022, statewide
- Riders 18 and younger can take transit for free
- Youth ORCA cards are highly encouraged
- Order online at [FreeYouthTransitPass.com](https://FreeYouthTransitPass.com) with proof of age
- Convert to Adult cards when the cardholder turns 19

**Youth ORCA Card - Exp**  
**Print (reduced fare -**  
**requires proof of age)**

**\$0.00**



- ORCA Youth cards are available to youth ages 6 to 18.

No added money or passes

Proof of age documentation is required before adding to shopping cart

UPLOAD DOCUMENT

ADD MONEY / PASS

ADD TO CART

communitytransit



SEATTLE  
STREETCAR



# Free Youth Transit: What we're hearing

Sample responses from 2024 high school student survey, when asked how free youth transit has affected them:

*"It's gotten me to a lot of places. It is the only reason I can do so many activities."*

– 10th grader, Shorewood HS

*"It helps us get around a lot faster when our parents can't take us."*

– 9th grader, Rainier Beach HS

*"I was a sophomore when free youth transit was implemented, and the decrease in my stress levels has been substantial."*

– 12th grader, Auburn HS

# **Metro's Youth Mobility Program:**

## **Investing in transit riders of the future**

# Youth Mobility Program

Our goal: More young people have the skills to ride transit confidently.

## Outreach

- Community partnerships
- Events

## Education

- Class workshops
- Partnerships with schools

## Opportunity

- Paid internships
- Career pathways

Focus on priority populations.



# Outreach & Partnerships

Metro attends community events to:

- Educate about free youth transit
- Distribute Youth ORCA cards
- Understand community needs and barriers

In 2024 we:

- Interacted with **3,000** people
- Distributed **1,500** Youth ORCA cards

Recent partners: CoCreative Culture, Para Los Niños, Communities in Schools, and Best Starts for Kids



# Classroom Transit Education

- Interactive class workshops
- Grades 2-12
- Topics include how to ride, safety, and sustainability
- 2024-25 school year:
  - **2000+** students
  - In 23 schools



*"It's so important to share this info with our students so that they can be confident exploring their world." - Host teacher*

# Marketing free youth transit

- Partner with ORCA agencies
- Advertisements, influencer partnerships
- Spring 2023 campaign; new round starting this month
- Micro level: community marketing pilot at Highline High School





# Youth Summer Internship

- Three-week program for high-school aged youth
- Youth are empowered to become peer ambassadors for transit and learn about local government and urban planning
- Metro also offers college/graduate internships, veteran fellowships, and apprenticeships



# What we're hearing: youth travel & awareness

Fall 2024 survey in six high schools: Auburn, Juanita, Newport, Rainier Beach, Shorecrest, Shorewood. Over 1200 responses.



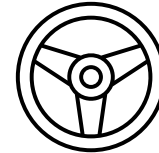
**82%** know transit is free



**69%** have ridden transit recently



Social activities are a key reason for using transit



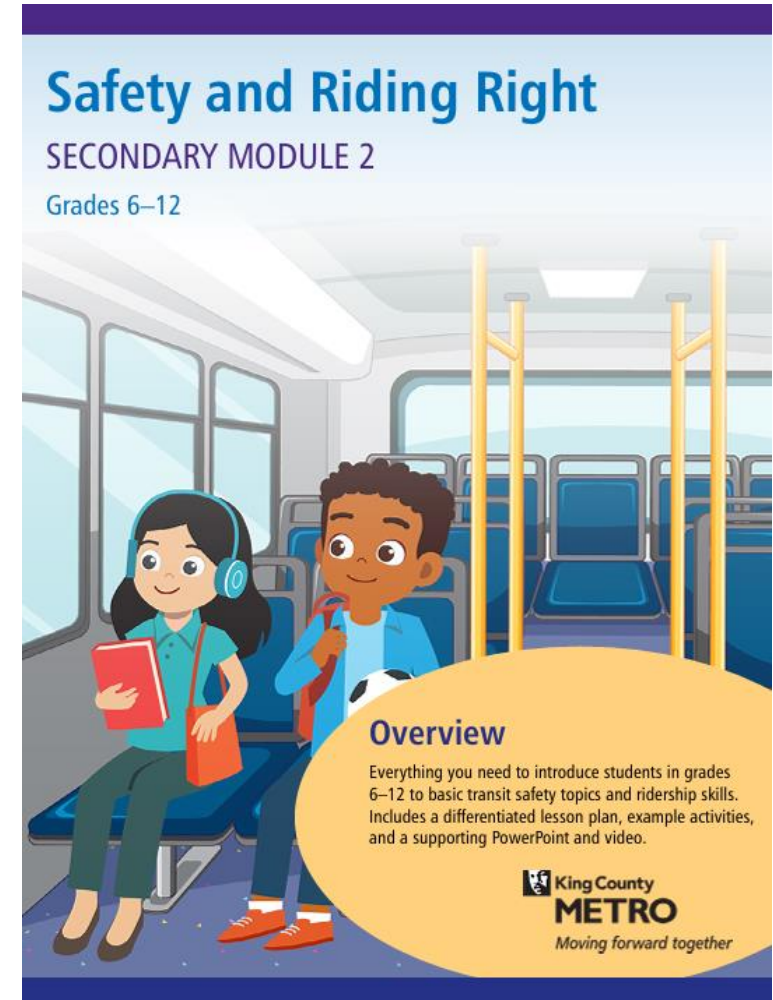
Older teens more likely to drive



Getting dropped off at school is common

# What we're hearing: safety

- Survey responses:
  - 60% believe public transit is safe
  - Higher among riders (66%), vs non-riders (45%)
  - Riding together feels safer
- Classroom Transit Education
  - Module on safety and riding right
  - Tools to report concerns and ride respectfully



# Ridership & Data

# Youth ridership data and ORCA use

- Data on youth ridership is inconsistent
- Estimate: youth are about 10% of Metro bus riders
  - From on-board and video counts
- Most youth riders (~85-90%) do not use an ORCA card
- Barriers to ORCA use:
  - Youth unlikely to order a card online
  - Many prefer to use their phone; cards can be lost
  - May not understand why they should tap



# Encouraging fare media use by youth

- Focus groups help understand barriers
- Partnerships with schools & CBOs on ORCA card distribution
- Gentle reminders by fare inspectors
  - No citations to youth; encourage youth to get a card
- Messaging: encourage ORCA card use, prominent in ads
- Working towards future fare media options

# Resources

- Know someone who needs a Youth ORCA card? Send them to [FreeYouthTransitPass.com](https://FreeYouthTransitPass.com)
- Want to encourage young people riding transit? Watch for **Metro's new ads** and share to your networks
- Get updates on youth and transit through our newsletter: [kingcounty.gov/metro/transiteducation](https://kingcounty.gov/metro/transiteducation)



# Closing and Questions