

Youth ORCA Distribution and Transit Education Updates

Transit, Environment and
Economy Committee
July 19, 2022



Expenditure Restriction

- \$330,000 shall be expended or encumbered solely for expanding youth ORCA card distribution and transit education in schools, as described in the reduced fare ORCA card procurement location implementation plan approved by Motion 15681.
- With a goal of starting distribution for the 2021-2022 school year, the Metro transit department shall initiate the ORCA card distribution portion of the program once the department determines a school district is ready to partner and only after students are receiving at least some in-person instruction at school.
- **The Metro transit department should brief the mobility and environment committee, or its successor, on efforts to expand youth ORCA card distribution and transit education in schools by September 9, 2022.**

Policy alignment

Expanding youth access to subsidized ORCA cards aligns with:

- **Metro Connects** goals of making transit affordable to all, moving towards cashless payment, and making boarding easier and faster
- **Strategic Plan for Public Transportation** goals of investing upstream where needs are greatest, and improving access to mobility options

Accepted Plan

In alignment with the Reduced Fare ORCA Card Procurement Location Implementation Plan, this presentation outlines:

1. Program costs
2. Fare subsidy/foregone revenue
3. Engagement to inform program design
4. Program roll-out strategy prioritizing highest needs
5. Program funding
6. Implementation in 2021-2022 school year

1. Program costs

Program Activities	Costs Y 2021-2022
Transit Education Curriculum Development	\$110,000
Summer Pass Expansion	\$180,000*
Skyway/Renton Subsidized Passport Program	\$100,000
Youth Engagement through Focus Groups, Surveys, and Leadership Opportunities	\$40,000
Wages and Benefits (1.0 FTE)	\$240,000
Total	\$670,000

* This figure is an estimate. Summer Pass Expansion costs not yet finalized for 2022.

2. Subsidy/foregone revenue

Fare subsidy/foregone revenue type	Amount 2021-2022
Special Rates of Fare – Summer Pass 2021	\$23,300
Total	\$23,300

Special Rates of Fare are applied when Metro waives or discounts fare or pass prices.

3. Engagement to inform program design

What we heard from schools

Themes from focus groups with school district staff:

- There is value for youth to have ORCA cards
- Schools are the most convenient access point for students
- Students often have little money and need funding to load and use an ORCA card
- There is need for more multi-lingual education and awareness of transit options among parents and youth
- The existing ORCA Youth application is confusing

3. Engagement to inform program design

What we heard from youth

Youth report that the primary reasons that prevent them from taking transit more often are:

- **Fares or money**
- **Concerns for personal safety**
- **Don't know how to use transit**

“People who work in my position **need transportation in order to keep their jobs.**”

“Our parents are struggling to keep a roof over our head and food to eat. So **it's hard to ask our parents for a few dollars or change for fare to catch the bus.**”

“Students, especially high schooler, **should not worry about transportation.** They must focus on graduation.”

“Public transportation has impacted my life by **giving me the ability to continue practicing sports** even when my mom had to start working more”

“Sometimes, I find myself declining an event at school or otherwise because **I don't have transportation home,** and I think passes are important.”

4. Roll-out strategy prioritizing highest needs

Metro's roll-out strategy prioritized:

- School districts and schools where more than 50% of students are from low-income households (eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch)
- High schools that have frequent transit service in the area

As a result, 85% of subsidized ORCA distribution in 2021 – 2022 went to youth from low-income households. Most card distribution was in school districts in South King County that serve majority students of color.

5. Program Funding

Metro was approved to hire 1TLT Youth Mobility Program Lead.

Metro also applied a combination of supplemental funding, grant funding, local dollars and foregone revenue to fund development of youth educational curriculum and support expanded youth ORCA Card distribution in the 2021 – 2022 school year.

6. Program implementation in 2021-2022 school year

Metro began expansion of youth ORCA card distribution and transit education, concurrent with a return to in-person schooling, during the 2021-2022 school year by:

- Conducting 17 in-person ORCA distribution and engagement events at 12 priority high schools and middle schools
- Distributing 6,000+ fully subsidized Summer ORCA passes to youth
- Fully subsidizing an annual ORCA Passport contract with Renton School district for ~1,900 students in the Skyway area
- Held 30+ virtual workshops, teaching more than 500 high school age youth about transit basics (launched Spring 2021)

Pillars of Metro's Youth Mobility Program

Affordability

- Implement Free Youth Transit
- Maintain focus on where needs are greatest

Education

- Develop materials for youth audience
- Outreach to meet students where they are

Safety

- Empower youth to ride confidently
- Engage youth in Metro's safety policy updates

Opportunity

- Provide paid leadership opportunities and internships
- Showcase Green Jobs pathways

Youth Mobility Programming

- **2017-2020:**
 - Youth ORCA access - \$.50 summer fare pilot
 - Summer Pass Program for low-income youth
 - Regional \$10 e-Purse Youth ORCA promotion
- **2021 – 2022:**
 - Youth ORCA card fee is eliminated
 - Reduced Fare Portal launch
 - Summer Pass Expansion
 - Skyway/Renton Subsidized Passport Program
 - Transit Education curriculum development
 - Youth Engagement through focus groups, surveys, and leadership opportunities



What's Next?

Proposed Free Youth Transit Pass

- Free fares for youth under 19 as of Sept. 1st
 - Regional launch synched with start of schools
 - Foregone revenue replaced by State funding
- Free fares apply to Metro and other transit in the region
 - Bus, water taxi, streetcar, Access, light rail, Sounder
 - Walk-on WA State Ferries after Oct. 1
- Youth keep current ORCA cards
 - Transition automatically to free pass
 - Need to individually register by June 2023
- Don't have an ORCA card?
 - Students can flash their student ID
 - More options coming in 2023 (App-based cards)
 - All youth can board for free, regardless of fare media



Closing and Questions