



**For immediate release:** April 17, 2009

**Contact:** Geoff Patrick, Sound Transit  
(206) 398-5313; [geoff.patrick@soundtransit.org](mailto:geoff.patrick@soundtransit.org)

Rochelle Ogershok, King County Metro  
(206) 296-6515; [rochelle.ogershok@kingcounty.gov](mailto:rochelle.ogershok@kingcounty.gov)

## **ORCA smart card limited rollout gets underway** **Phased introduction begins April 20 and will continue through 2009**

**SEATTLE** - Traveling the Puget Sound region by bus, train and ferry will get even easier this spring and summer with the arrival of ORCA—One Regional Card for All.

ORCA will make rummaging for correct change a thing of the past. When boarding, ORCA riders will simply tap their new smart cards on a reader device. The electronic fare system will replace about 300 various passes, tickets and transfers with a single card that works for all seven of the major public transportation agencies serving King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

A limited rollout of the system will begin April 20 at the same time the partner agencies work to identify and resolve remaining technical issues in a live environment.

The limited rollout will continue for several weeks followed by a more extensive ORCA launch and customer awareness campaign expected to begin in June. The phase-in of ORCA will continue through the end of the year as people's current transit passes expire and are replaced by ORCA cards. The phased process will give transit customers and the agencies time to transition to the new system.

The seven ORCA partners are Community Transit, Everett Transit, King County Metro Transit, Kitsap Transit, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit and Washington State Ferries. Together, the agencies serve more than half of Washington's population and carry more than 500,000 riders daily.

### **How ORCA works**

ORCA is a durable, plastic smart card containing a microprocessor. Passengers will simply "tap" their ORCA card on a card reader on board buses or at train, light rail and ferry stations, and enjoy their ride.

ORCA cards come equipped with an "E-purse" function that allows a rider to preload fare value onto the card. With each trip — whether the trip involves one agency's system or transfers between systems — the correct total fare amount, including any transfer value, is automatically deducted from the value on the card. Riders can also take unlimited trips by purchasing a monthly pass on their ORCA card.

With ORCA, customers will have more options for paying their transit fare. Riders can buy and revalue ORCA cards online, by phone, by mail, and in person at transit agency customer service offices, ticket vending machines and select retail businesses around the region.

ORCA cardholders can check their accounts online, by phone or at ticket vending machines. Customers will have the option to register their cards, which allows them to restore their card value if it is lost or stolen. Registered cardholders can select an “Autoload” feature that can add value to a card when their E-purse is drawn down to a certain amount or when their monthly pass expires.

Cash will continue to be accepted on all of the transit systems. However, the transit agencies plan to eliminate paper transfers for trips between multiple agencies as more customers move to the ORCA card. With ORCA, a valid transfer will automatically be available for subsequent rides on trains and buses within two hours. Once the phase-in of the ORCA system is complete, riders using cash instead of an ORCA card to transfer between different agencies’ systems will pay the full fare for each leg of their ride.

During the phased rollout of ORCA, riders can get an ORCA card at no charge. After the rollout, it will cost \$5 to purchase an ORCA card (\$3 for Regional Reduced Fare Permit customers) in addition to the value the rider loads. Under normal wear, ORCA cards are expected to last three to five years before they need to be replaced.

### **When to get ORCA**

The limited rollout of ORCA in the coming weeks will allow bus drivers, train and ferry operators, and other agency staff to adjust to the new system. During this time, a number of transit riders will opt to be early adopters and begin using ORCA right away.

Riders who purchase their own monthly transit pass will begin to receive ORCA cards instead of their usual PugetPass over the next couple of months. The majority of passholders receive their transit passes from their employers, and those customers will be converted beginning this summer as annual contracts come up for renewal. A major education campaign will also encourage cash-paying customers to switch to ORCA.

This phased approach will allow for a gradual ramping up of our ORCA customer base that will make it easier to identify and correct operational or service problems that arise. Customers are invited to report problems or offer comments on the system at 1-888-988-6722 (ORCA) and via [www.orcacard.com](http://www.orcacard.com).

ORCA (One Regional Card for All) is the Puget Sound region’s transportation smart card. Similar systems exist in Hong Kong (Octopus), London (Oyster), Seoul (I Am), Boston (Charlie Card), Washington, D.C. (SmarTrip), the Bay Area (TransLink) and Houston (Q Card), as well as other cities.

The ORCA project is on track for completion within the original contract budget of \$43 million.

### **For information about ORCA starting April 20:**

[www.orcacard.com](http://www.orcacard.com) or 1-888-988-6722 (ORCA)/ TTY Relay: 711/ 888-889-6368

# # #