



Motion No. M2022-27

Reduce Sound Transit ORCA LIFT Fare to \$1.00

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:	Staff contact:
Rider Experience and Operations Committee	4/07/2022	Recommend to Board	Mary Cummings, Deputy CEO / Acting Chief Financial Officer
Board	4/28/2022	Deferred to May	Lisa Wolterink, Deputy Executive Director-Fares, Grants & Revenue
Board	5/26/2022	Final Action	Chad Davis, Deputy Director, Fares

Proposed action

(1) Authorizes the chief executive officer to implement a lower, \$1.00 fare for ORCA LIFT riders on Sound Transit Services for a six-month period beginning as soon as administratively possible; (2) directs staff to conduct a public outreach process and prepare a Title VI fare equity analysis to support a possible Board decision to make this change permanent; and (3) directs staff to undertake actions to help achieve a goal of enrolling eighty percent of the likely ORCA LIFT market.

Key features summary

- This action lowers the fare for low-income adults (ORCA LIFT) on all Sound Transit services from \$1.50 to \$1.00 for a six-month period.
- The ORCA LIFT program provides discounted fares to enrolled riders with household incomes equal to or less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.
- The action also directs staff to conduct a public outreach process to obtain feedback and develop a Fare Equity Analysis to support a possible Board decision on making this a permanent fare change.
- In addition, the action directs staff to take actions in support of a goal of enrolling eighty percent of likely ORCA LIFT riders in the region. A likely ORCA LIFT rider is defined as an eligible rider that regularly rides transit for 5+ trips per month. It also includes riders who are eligible for the Annual subsidized pass.

Background

The ORCA LIFT program provides discounted fares to enrolled riders with household incomes equal to or less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. These fare discounts are provided by most ORCA transit agencies. Riders can enroll and have income verified at Washington State DSHS offices, through the reduced fare portal on King County Metro's website, at sites and on-site outreach events conducted by Seattle-King County Public Health and Catholic Community services and at several other human service agencies in King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties.

The ORCA LIFT fare for low-income adult riders is currently \$1.50 on all Sound Transit services. This fare aligns with King County Metro's ORCA LIFT fare and falls in the mid-range of other ORCA LIFT fares implemented by transit agencies in the region as shown in the table below.

In 2015, Sound Transit implemented the \$1.50 ORCA LIFT fare on Link service as Metro rolled out the \$1.50 ORCA LIFT fare on its services. This program was based on the low-income fare program Kitsap

Transit had implemented previously. In 2016, Sound Transit implemented an ORCA LIFT fare on ST Express and Sounder services in conjunction with an increase in adult fares on those services. In 2018, the Sound Transit Board acted to reduce the ORCA LIFT fare on ST Express 2-zone service to \$1.50. In 2020, the Sound Transit Board also reduced formerly distance-based ORCA LIFT fares on Sounder to a flat \$1.50 fare.

Regional ORCA LIFT enrollment reached a peak of about 72,000 in 2019. ORCA LIFT ridership and enrollment has declined along with transit ridership overall since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. ORCA LIFT and annual subsidized pass enrollment in the region is currently about 38,000. Sound Transit staff have estimated the size of the regional ORCA LIFT market at about 105,000 adult riders who are not seniors or disabled and are likely transit riders not already participating in institutional pass programs. The eighty percent goal would represent an enrollment target of about 84,000 riders.

Regional ORCA LIFT Fares - March, 2022	
<i>Agency/Service</i>	<i>Fare</i>
Community Transit	
Local	\$ 1.25
Commuter	\$ 2.00
Everett Transit	\$ 1.50
King County Metro	
Bus	\$ 1.50
West Seattle Water Taxi	\$ 3.75
Vashon Water Taxi	\$ 4.50
Kitsap Transit	
Local	\$ 1.00
Fast Ferry	\$5 WB/\$1 EB
Pierce Transit	N/A
Seattle Monorail	\$ 1.50
Seattle Streetcar	\$ 1.50
Washington State Ferries	N/A

Fiscal information

The proposed action is expected to reduce Sound Transit fare revenue by an estimated \$100,000 for the six-month period.

Because this action only affects fare projections for a six-month period, there is no impact to the affordable financial plan projections. Further analysis would be needed to understand impacts to the affordable financial plan projection if the fare were permanently reduced.

Small business participation and apprenticeship utilization

Not applicable to this action.

Title VI Compliance

In compliance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations, a Title VI fare equity analysis will be conducted before forwarding a proposal to the Board to make this a permanent fare change. The FTA regulations do provide for temporary fare changes of up to six months without requiring a Title VI fare equity analysis.

Public engagement

Sound Transit will conduct public engagement in preparation for potential Board action for permanent fare change.

Time constraints

This proposed implementation date for this fare reduction is as soon as administratively possible.

Prior Board/Committee actions

Resolution No. R2020-28: (1) Adopted new, lower fares for Low Income Adults, Youth, Seniors and People with Disabilities for Sounder commuter rail effective March 1, 2021, and (2) superseded the fare rates established in Resolution No. R2018-05.

Resolution No. R2018-05: (1) Adopted new fare rates and fare structure for ST Express bus service, and (2) superseding the fare rates established in Resolution No. R2014-28 and amended by Resolution No. R2015-29.

Resolution No. R2015-29: (1) Selected an Option to set fare rates for the low income fare category and potentially increase fares on Sounder service, (2) selected an option to set fares rates for low income adult fare category and potentially increase fares on ST Express service, and (3) amended Sound Transit fare rates of Resolution R2014-28 with selected options.

Resolution No. R2014-28: (1) Selected an option to set fare rates for the low income adult fare category, and (2) superseded the fare rates established in Resolution No. R2007-06, Resolution No. R2010-11, and Resolution No. R2013-24.

Resolution No. R2010-27: Amended Resolution No. R2010-10 Attachment A--Fare Policy to establish "Low Income Adult" as a new Reduced Fare category.

Resolution No. R2010-10: Adopted a Fare Policy and superseded Resolution No. R99-2-2.

Environmental review – KH 3/31/22

Legal review – AJP 4/1/22



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A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority authorizing the chief executive officer to (1) implement a lower, \$1.00 fare for ORCA LIFT riders on Sound Transit Services for a six-month period beginning as soon as administratively possible; (2) directing staff to conduct a public outreach process and prepare a Title VI fare equity analysis to support a possible Board decision to make this change permanent; and (3) directs staff to undertake actions to help achieve a goal of enrolling eighty percent of the likely ORCA LIFT market.

Background

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Motion

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that the chief executive officer is authorized to (1) implement a lower, \$1.00 fare for ORCA LIFT riders on Sound Transit Services for a six-month period beginning as soon as administratively possible; (2) direct staff to conduct a public outreach process and prepare a Title VI fare equity analysis to support a possible Board decision to make this change permanent; and (3) direct staff to undertake actions to help achieve a goal of enrolling eighty percent of the likely ORCA LIFT market.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on May 26, 2022.



Kent Keel
Board Chair

Attest:



Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator