



Fare Equity Analysis Report – Resolution No. R2024-27

Fare Equity Analysis of Lowering the ST Express Fare from \$3.25 to \$3.00

Authority

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 4702.1B (“Circular”) and Sound Transit’s 2019 Title VI Program, an equity analysis is conducted any time fare changes are proposed to ensure that changes do not unfairly impact people of color and low-income populations. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 states:

“No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

The FTA has provided specific implementing guidelines and regulations for complying with the Circular. Due to the interrelated nature of race/ethnicity and income, the Circular instructs transit agencies to also consider impacts on low-income populations as well as minority populations; the assessment of potential Title VI issues related to fare changes is completed through a fare equity analysis.

The proposal to lower a fare on Sound Transit service calls for such an analysis prior to the Sound Transit Board of Directors taking action.

1. Description of Fare Change

This proposed fare change would lower the full fare on ST Express bus service from \$3.25 to \$3.00 and align this fare with the \$3.00 adult flat fare on ST Link service implemented on August 30, 2024, fully aligning ST Express and Link fares for all customer categories. This would simplify ST fares in support of ST Board policy “to encourage transit ridership through equitable and simple pricing.” (ST Board Resolution No. R2024-08)

Current and proposed fares are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Existing and Proposed Sound Transit Fares

Rider Group	Current Fares	Proposed Fare
ST Express Adult Fare	\$3.25	\$3.00

2 Fare Equity Analysis Policy

Sound Transit Board of Directors Resolution No. R2022-19 established policies for conducting equity analyses of service and fare changes impacting minority and low-income populations.

The policy directs Sound Transit to conduct a fare equity analysis prior to making any fare change to analyze potential adverse effects on minority and low-income populations. This policy establishes the following thresholds for determining whether the proposed fare change would have a disparate impact on minority populations and/or a disproportionate burden on low-income populations:

- Fare increases. When considering a fare increase, if the agency's analysis indicates that the average percentage fare increase experienced by minority or low-income riders is 20 percent or greater than the average percentage fare increase experienced by non-minority or non-low-income riders, the change creates a disparate impact or disproportionate burden.
- Fare decreases. When considering a fare decrease, if the agency's analysis indicates the average percentage fare decrease experienced by non-minority or non-low-income riders is 20 percent or greater than the average percentage fare decrease experienced by minority or low-income riders, the change creates a disparate impact or disproportionate burden.
- Change in payment type or fare media. When considering a change in payment type or fare media, if the agency's analysis indicates that the impact on minority or low-income riders is 20 percent or greater than the impact on non-minority or non-low-income riders, the change creates a disparate impact or disproportionate burden. To the extent a change to fare media has any impact on the cost to ride transit, the incremental costs associated with the change are considered as part of a fare increase or decrease analysis.

3. Analysis of Disparate Impact/Disproportionate Burden

This proposed fare change would lower fares for full fare adult riders on ST Express service, aligning the fare with the \$3.00 adult fare on ST Link light rail. This represents an eight percent reduction in the full adult fare on ST Express. This fare proposal would not change the \$1.00 reduced fare for Seniors and Riders with Disabilities available through the Regional Reduced Fare Program and for low-income riders available through the ORCA LIFT program. This eight percent reduction in adult fares falls well within the 20 percent or greater range established by ST's Title VI policy.

The \$1.00 fare for these reduced fare customers would represent a 67 percent discount from \$3.00 adult fare. The ORCA LIFT fare was reduced by 33% from \$1.50 to \$1.00 in March of 2023 for all ST modes of service. (Resolution No. R2023-05).

This proposal would have no adverse impact on minority or low-income riders, therefore it will not result in any disparate impact or disproportionate burden on these riders.