

Tacoma Link 2022 Fare Change Public Engagement Report

August 2021

Introduction

This report summarizes the engagement efforts that were undertaken to provide Sound Transit staff with feedback on a proposed change to the Tacoma Link light rail fare structure. It includes a complete list of the outreach methods and examples of the tools used, as well as a summary of the results of the outreach. The report will be included as part of the staff recommendations that will be provided to Sound Transit’s Board of Directors for their review and adoption on November 18, 2021. If approved by the Board, fare collection would begin on Tacoma Link when service expands beyond downtown, coinciding with the opening of the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension currently scheduled for May 2022.

Background

Tacoma Link fares have evolved and responded to a series of board resolutions that have maintained the fare-free situation that passengers experience now.

The most recent board action was in 2016 and it directed staff to propose new fares that would begin when the Hilltop Extension opens.

In the summer of 2021, staff implemented a public outreach effort and brought two fare proposals forward for community input. Option 1 was similar to Pierce Transit’s fares for adults, youth, seniors and passengers with disabilities. Option 2 aligned with Sound Transit’s lowest fares on our existing Link light rail service between Angle Lake and University of Washington. Both options proposed a \$1.50 ORCA LIFT fare for low-income adults, which applies across all of Sound Transit’s bus and train services.

A table outlining the two fare options is below.

	Option 1	PT	Option 2	Link
Adult	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.25	\$2.25 (base)
ORCA LIFT	\$1.50	NA	\$1.50	\$1.50
Youth	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.50	\$1.50
Senior & Disabled	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00

Snapshot of the public engagement

- 564 people responded via the survey
- More than 250 multi-lingual share kits distributed
- Survey and fact sheets available English, Spanish, Korean and Vietnamese
- Over 3900 visits to the English project web page
- Over 1200 visits to the Spanish project web page
- Over 1100 visits to the Vietnamese project web page

The goals of the public outreach effort were to:

- Inform the public of the fare change options and of the ways to provide feedback
- Receive feedback from a diverse set of stakeholders, including traditionally under-represented and hard to reach communities, on their fare change preferences.

To achieve these goals, Sound Transit aimed to:

- Clearly articulate information about fare change options in the service areas priority languages
- Offer the opportunity to learn about and provide comments on the fare change proposal in the service area's priority languages
- Directly inform existing riders on the Tacoma Link service
- Identify and reach out directly to local community groups and employers to encourage participation, as a way to reach local communities during the heightened social distancing and other Covid related in-person restrictions
- Comply with Title VI requirements for engaging traditionally under-represented communities.

Notification and Engagement Methods and Metrics

Notification methods

Staff undertook outreach activities that ran from June 23 through July 25th, 2021. Staff informed stakeholders, community and regional partners, passengers and the general public of the proposed fare changes and invited feedback through a variety of methods, listed below.

- Sound Transit website; online open house
- On-board and station signage
- Paid advertising in local and community media
- Social media
- Press releases and earned media
- Email and text updates to alert list subscribers
- Live briefings and multi-lingual share kits offered, including fact sheets in 4 languages distributed to community stakeholders and regional partners

Web: [Online Open House](#), [Soundtransit.org](#), [HTLE project pages](#)

A dedicated project Online Open House was produced to provide background information on the project and host the public survey. Detailed background information on the project and proposed fare options was also made available on a dedicated Sound Transit web page that was Google Translate enabled. The webpage included links to the project online open house (where the survey was hosted) and offered downloadable fact sheets in four languages. Users were also able to navigate to the project page via prominently displayed links on the Sound Transit event calendar (which rolled up to the *Upcoming Events* section of the home page), the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension (HTLE) project page, and the Fares page.

- Dedicated Online Open House
- Project web page: system expansion /planning future service/Tacoma Link 2022 Fare Proposal (friendly URL: www.soundtransit.org/Tfares)
- The Platform blog
- HTLE Project webpage
- Fares webpage

- ST event calendar (rolls up to home page)

On-board and station signage

With an aim to inform riders where they naturally are, a multi-lingual Passenger Notice was posted onboard Tacoma Link and Sounder vehicles as well as at key transit facilities. The printed notice featured content in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese and was made available:

- On-board Tacoma Link and Sounder South trains
- At Tacoma Link stations,
- At Tacoma Dome station,
- At Tacoma Dome Park-and-Ride

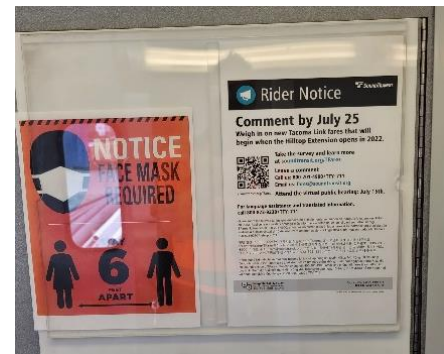


Figure 1: Sounder on-board passenger notice

Paid advertising

A paid media strategy was designed and deployed using consultant resources (EnvirolIssues). Ad placements and costs are included as Appendix A. Ads ran between June 23 and July 25.

- Print and online publications - DEIS focus
- Local newsletters, including Peach Jar
- Facebook ads: English, Spanish and Vietnamese

Organic social media

Sound Transit's Twitter and Facebook social media accounts were used to post information about the fare change and engagement period. The fare change proposal was also featured on the agency's blog, The Platform.

- Twitter
- HTLE Facebook group
- The Platform blog

Press releases

Two press releases were issued. The first was published on June 23, at the start of the engagement period; the second was sent on July 12 to promote the public hearing.

Digital rider alerts and project updates

Four electronic alerts were sent to a variety of subscribers to notify them of the fare change proposal, where to learn more and how to provide comment, including:

- Tacoma Link rider alert subscribers
- ST Express rider alert subscribers for routes serving Tacoma Dome station (574, 590, 594, 595, 586)
- Sounder South rider alert subscribers
- HTLE project update subscribers

The first alert was sent on June 23 at the start of the engagement period, the second on July 12th and the third on July 22 as a final reminder to Tacoma Link alert subscribers only. An HTLE project update was sent to list subscribers on 7/8/21.

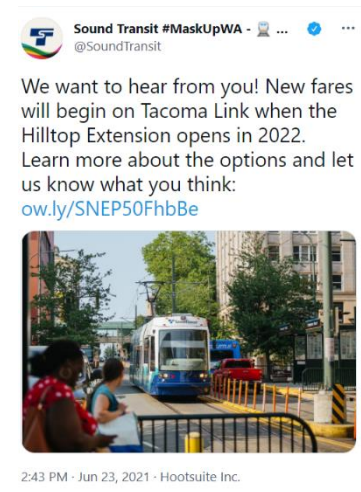


Figure 2: June 23 Twitter post

Partner and stakeholder channels

Due to the ongoing system expansion work in Pierce County, especially on the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension project, fare engagement staff were able to utilize the extensive existing community relationships built by Community Engagement and Government and Community Relations staff. See Appendix E.

- Briefings at standing meetings with community groups and officials
- Stakeholder share kit with translated social assets, fact sheet, press release and multi-lingual poster

Engagement methods

Sound Transit provided several methods for the public to submit their feedback and comments. Because ongoing Covid-19 restrictions limited in-person notifications and data collection multiple non-contact ways of providing feedback were offered to stakeholders and the public, including a robust online open house experience. The online open house was available in multiple languages and was produced and hosted by Customer Engagement's on-call outreach consultants, EnviroIssues.

- On-line open house + survey available in English, Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese:
<https://tfares.participate.online>
- Project specific email address: fares@soundtransit.org
- Virtual public hearing
- Telephone via Customer Service office, including in-language via Language Line service: 1-800-201-4900

Summary of equitable engagement tactics

A goal of the outreach strategy was to enable feedback on the fare changes options from a diverse set of stakeholders, including traditionally hard-to-reach communities.

Priority languages (over 1% of population) for the impacted area were identified through a GIS analysis to include Spanish, Korean and Vietnamese. Key resources were translated into these three languages. Examples are in Appendix B.

- Survey and online open house available in 3 priority languages in addition to English.
- Translated project information and feedback opportunities available through the Language Line service via Passenger Care (Customer Service) team.
- Project information available on the project webpage via translated fact sheets and via embedded Google translate tool.
- Multi-lingual posters and fact sheets available to community groups and proactively distributed through emailed project “share kits”.
- Briefings to community based and cultural organizations by Government and Community Relations and Engagement staff.
- Promotional advertising in community newsletters and in-language ethnic media.
- Paid, translated Facebook ads promoting the engagement period.
- Multilingual passenger notices posted on-board T Line and Sounder trains and at high traffic stations.

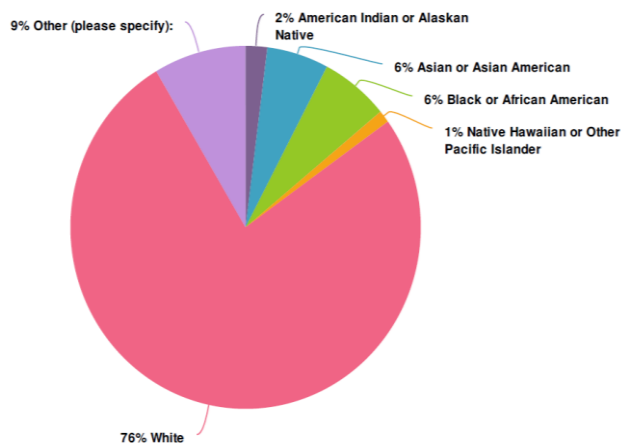


Figure 3: Ethnicity of survey respondents who chose to report

Value	Percent	Responses
English	98.3%	350
Spanish	7.6%	27
Vietnamese	0.8%	3
Cantonese	0.6%	2
Mandarin	1.4%	5
Russian	0.3%	1
Somali	0.3%	1
Korean	0.8%	3
Tagalog	0.8%	3
Other (please specify):	3.1%	11

Figure 4: Languages spoken at home of survey respondents who chose to report

Notification and engagement metrics

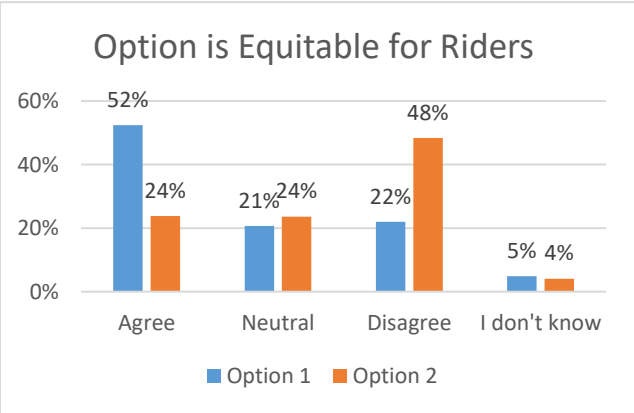
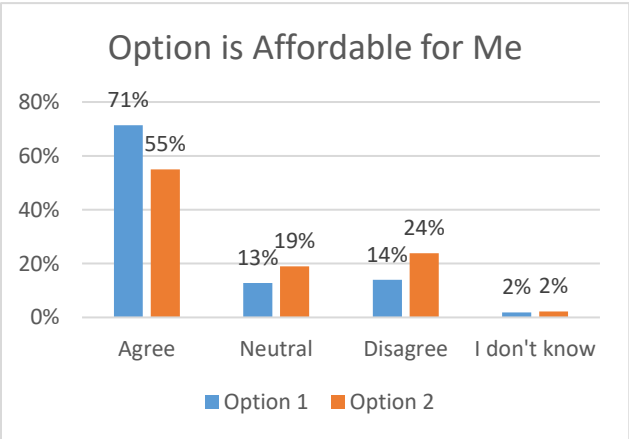
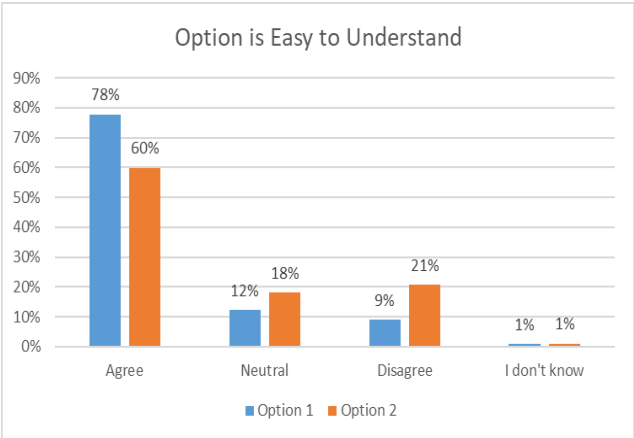
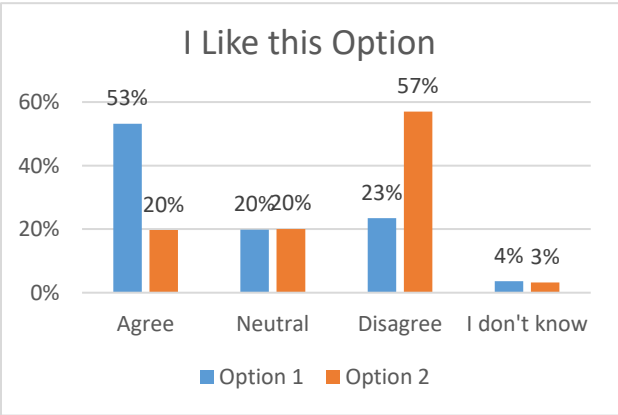
Type	Detail	Reach												
Notifications														
Stakeholder briefings	Live or in-person conversations between GCR or Community Engagement staff and stakeholder groups.	23+ organizations briefed (See Appendix E for complete list)												
Online Open House (https://tfares.participate.online) and ST.org/Tfares webpage	Detailed project information available on Sound Transit's public websites. Links to it prominently displayed on the homepage, Fares and HTLE project pages.	6397 total participate.online site views during comment period <i>3902 English</i> <i>1290 Spanish</i> <i>1178 Vietnamese</i> <i>27 Korean</i>												
2 press releases	Two press releases distributed to local media channels, first at launch and second prior to the public hearing.	500 media contacts and partner agencies notified each time												
4 digital notices/updates	Digital notices, alerts or updates sent by email or text to: 1 and 2) Sounder South, Tacoma Link and Route 574, 590, 594, 595, 586 Rider Alert subscribers 3) Tacoma Link Rider Alert subscribers 4) HTLE project subscribers	1) 20,711 recipients 1331 unique opens (21%) 2) 19,318 recipients 1139 unique opens (20%) 3) 10,980 recipients, T Line only, 504 unique opens (14%) 4) HTLE project update subscribers: 5342 recipients, 1021 (20%) unique opens												
Organic social media	Twitter, HTLE Facebook page, Platform blog post	<u>Reach</u> Twitter: 3,392 impressions Blog: 59,867 recipients <u>Engagement:</u> Twitter: 4 likes, 4 retweets Facebook: 7 comments, 17 shares Blog: 746 page views												
Outreach share kit distribution	Distributed fact sheets, a multilingual poster and media materials to groups, committees and individual stakeholder who were encouraged distribution through their own organizational channels	260 kits distributed by email												
Coach and station posters	Printed rider alert posters displayed on Tacoma Link and Sounder South trains and stations (see Appendix B)													
Display ad campaign	Digital and print ad campaign that included English and translated ads placed in local publications and via paid social media	Facebook - Paid <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Reach</th> <th>Clicks</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>English</td> <td>60049</td> <td>1520</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spanish</td> <td>66145</td> <td>1667</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vietnamese</td> <td>41336</td> <td>1306</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> (see Appendix A for complete reach and engagement data)		Reach	Clicks	English	60049	1520	Spanish	66145	1667	Vietnamese	41336	1306
	Reach	Clicks												
English	60049	1520												
Spanish	66145	1667												
Vietnamese	41336	1306												
Legal notice for public hearing	Public notice printed in the Daily Journal of Commence													

Type	Detail	Reach
Engagement		
Survey	Online survey available in Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish and English. Composite results are attached as Appendix C	564 total respondents 556 English 4 Spanish 4 Vietnamese 0 Korean
Email	received at fares@soundtransit.org	12 emails received
Public hearing	On-line meeting to receive live comments from the public	0 comments received
Telephone	Includes comments received via Customer Service and Language Line	0 comments received

Summary of Engagement Results

Online Survey

A key element of Sound Transit’s outreach program was an online survey intended to allow customers and the general public to provide feedback on the two fare options. A total of 564 survey responses were received.



Survey respondents indicated a preference for Fare Option 1, which was the lower, \$2 fare on all four measures used in the survey. Full survey analysis and results are available in Appendix C.

Written comment

12 written comments were received via the fares project email address. Of the 9 applicable comments **7 supported continuing Tacoma Link as a fare-free service**, one supported Option 1 and one supported charging fares but didn't indicate a preferred option. The summary of written comments is attached as Appendix D

Public hearing

No comments were given at the public hearing.

Telephone and Language Line via Customer Service

No comments were received by Customer Service staff

Summary of Appendices

Appendix A: Ad placements and examples

Appendix B: Notification examples

Appendix C: Survey analysis and results

Appendix D: Written comment

Appendix E: List of stakeholder briefings held and feedback notes

