

# *Briefing on Link Fares and Fare Structure*

*Executive Committee*

*11/02/2023*



# *Why we are here*

- Recap the Board's fares-related work in 2023.
- Provide a reminder and overview of current Sound Transit, regional, and peer agency fare structures and rates.
- Report out on initial results from public engagement on Link fare structure and rates.
- Preview upcoming material to be presented at the full Board meeting in November.
- No action today, information only.

***Where we're going***

# *Fares guiding framework*

*We serve passengers with a fare structure that is regionally integrated to encourage transit ridership through equitable and simple pricing, and financial stewardship.*

# ***Toward a comprehensive fares strategy***

## ***Upcoming needed Board actions***

- ✓ Adopt an equitable and accountable fare compliance policy and expand reduced fare programs.
- ✓ Establish fare rates where none currently exist.
  - ✓ T Line
- ❑ Consider adjusting existing fare structures, fare levels (including parking fees), and categories to meet established targets.
- ❑ Review and consider modifying revenue and farebox recovery targets, and update fare policy.

# Understanding the fare revenue equation



# Areas of focus in 2023

## Major policy topics

- Fare policy – originally adopted in 2010 with a minor update in 2014 (Resolution No. [R2014-27](#))
  - Link fare structure and rate.
  - Farebox recovery targets.
- Parking management program – last Board action in 2018 to allow priced monthly parking permits (Resolution No. [R2018-27](#))
  - Expanded program with daily paid parking.

# *Link fare change overview*



# Link fare change

## Existing fare structure and rate

Mode	Fare structure	Adult fares	Notes
1 Line	Distance-based	\$2.25-\$3.50	Base fare of \$2.25 + \$0.05 per mile charge (rounded to nearest \$0.25)

## Rationale for a fare change now

- Our last fare change on Link occurred in 2015.
- An expanding system results in a larger distance-based fare table and more fare rates.
- We heard interest from Board members to explore a flat fare structure.

# Fare structure

## Existing fares across the Sound Transit district

ST Service	Adult fares
1 Line	\$2.25-\$3.50
T Line	\$2.00
Souder	\$3.25-\$5.75
ST Express	\$3.25

Partner Agency	Adult fares
King County Metro Bus	\$2.75
Community Transit	\$2.50/\$4.25
Pierce Transit	\$2.00
Everett Transit	\$2.00
Seattle Streetcar	\$2.25
Seattle Center Monorail	\$3.50
Washington State Ferries	\$6.25-\$9.45

# Fare structure

## Current Link fare table for adult fares

Station	Angle Lake	Airport - SeaTac	Tukwila International Blvd	Rainier Beach	Othello	Columbia City	Mount Baker	Beacon Hill	SODO	Stadium	International District	Pioneer Square	University Street	Westlake	Capitol Hill	University of Washington	U District	Roosevelt	Northgate	
Angle Lake		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.50	
Airport - SeaTac	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.50
Tukwila International Blvd	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	
Rainier Beach	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	
Othello	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	
Columbia City	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00
Mount Baker	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	
Beacon Hill	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	
SODO	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	
Stadium	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	
International District	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	
Pioneer Square	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	
University Street	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	
Westlake	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	
Capitol Hill	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	
University of Washington	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	
U District	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	
Roosevelt	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	
Northgate	\$ 3.50	\$ 3.50	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		



# How does Link compare to peer transit agencies with light rail?

Agency	Fare structure	Adult fares	Income-qualifying reduced fares?	Fare capping?
Sound Transit	Distance-based fare	\$2.25-\$3.50	Yes	No
Tri-Met* (Portland)	Flat fare	\$2.50 → <b>\$2.80</b>	Yes	Yes
MTS (San Diego)	Flat fare	\$2.50	No	Yes
UTA (Salt Lake City)	Flat fare	\$2.50	Yes	No

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Agency	Fare structure	Adult fares	Income-qualifying reduced fares?	Fare capping?
Sound Transit	Distance-based fare	\$2.25-\$3.50	Yes	No
DART^ (Dallas)	Flat fare with peak surcharge	\$2.00/\$3.00	No	No
Metro Transit (Minneapolis)	Flat fare with peak surcharge	\$2.00/\$2.50	No	No
RTD* (Denver)	<del>Zone-based fare</del> <b>Flat fare with airport surcharge</b>	<del>\$3.00/\$5.25/\$10.50</del> <b>\$2.75/\$10.00</b>	Yes	No

# ***Fare structure***

## ***Distance-based fare considerations***

- Fares depend on how far a passenger travels.
- Distance-based fares require passengers to tap on and tap off.
- If passengers don't tap off, they are charged the highest fare from their originating station.

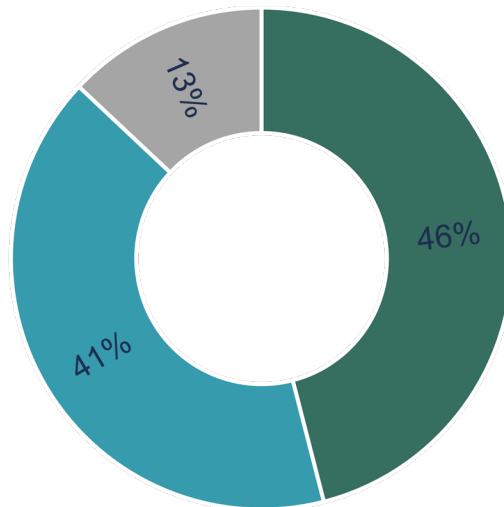
## ***Flat fare considerations***

- One fare for all rides – simpler to understand and budget for.
- Flat fares require passengers to only tap on.
- Simplified fare structure allows for easier potential transition to fare capping.

# Link fares by passenger type (2022)

*More than half of passengers don't need to think about distance-based fares*

- Passengers who have a reduced fare (13%) or an employer-provided ORCA card (41%) accounted for **54% of Link fare boardings in 2022**.
- **46% of Link boardings pay the adult fare**, whether using an ORCA e-purse, pass products, or via ticket vending machines.



■ Reduced fares ■ Employer-provided ORCA ■ Adult fares



***Link fare change:  
initial engagement results***

# Link fare structure & rates\*

## Focus of engagement

- Should we maintain a distance-based fare or adopt a flat fare?

	Distance-based fare	Flat fare
Fare rates under consideration	Increase base fare by \$0.25 or \$0.50	\$3.00, \$3.25, or \$3.50

- Seeking input related to simplicity, affordability, and impact on someone's use of light rail based on a change to Link fare structure.
- No changes being proposed to other fare categories like low-income fare, senior/disabled fares, or youth fares.

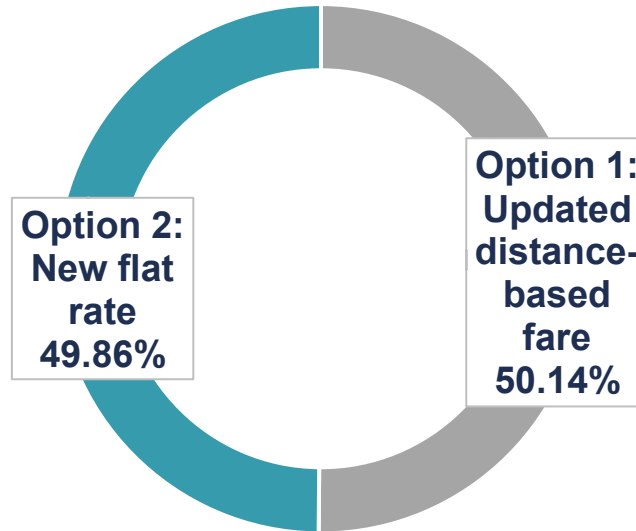
# *Engagement activities & schedule*

## *Timing & tactics*

- Engagement period began on September 25 and ran through October 22.
- Key tactics included an online open house, a passenger survey, engagement with community-based organizations, targeted focus groups, and street teams to drive survey participation.
- Engagement efforts targeted areas and populations likely to be most impacted by a Link fare change, parking program expansion, or both.

# Link fare structure preferences

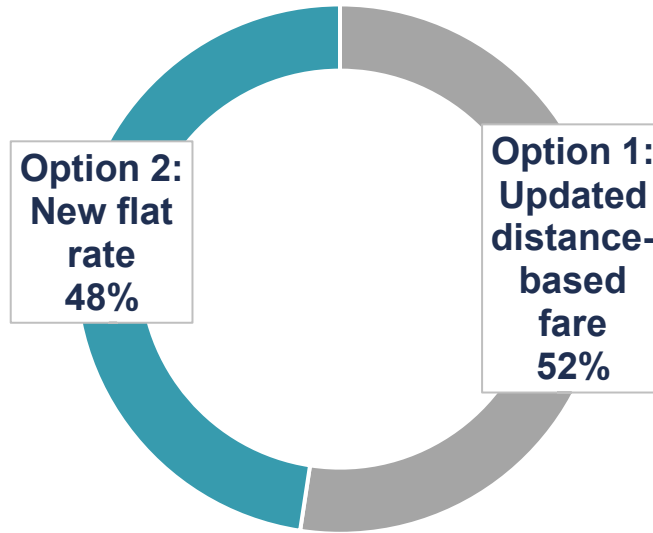
*Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?*



*Overall breakdown | 3,841 respondents*

# Link fare structure preferences

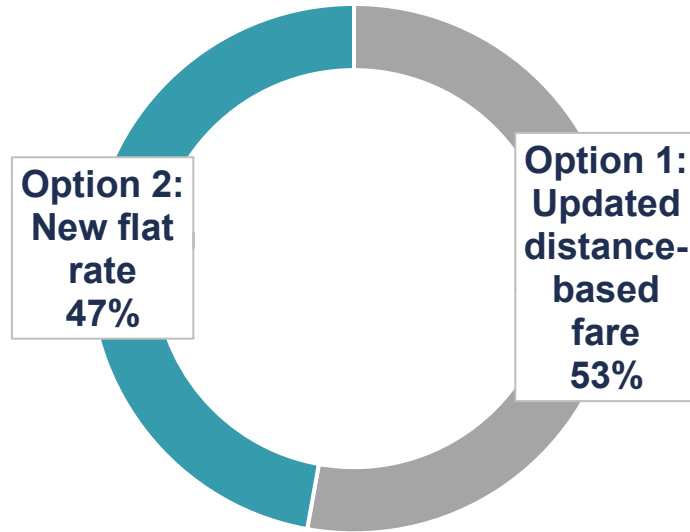
*Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?*



*Full-fare passengers | 2,261 respondents*

# Link fare structure preferences

*Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?*

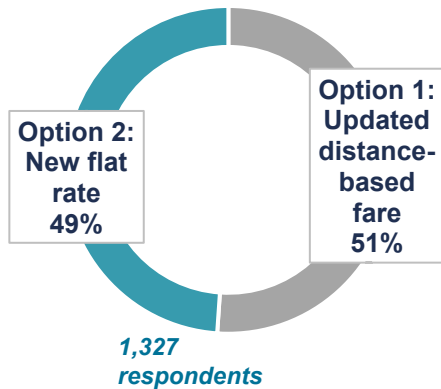


*Frequent passengers | 2,296 respondents*

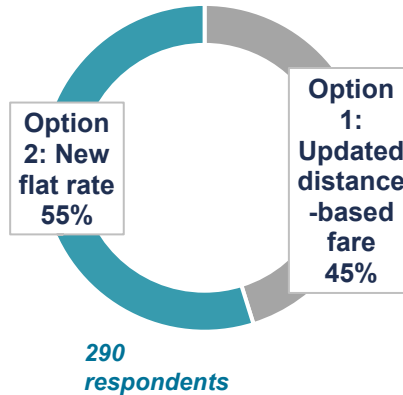
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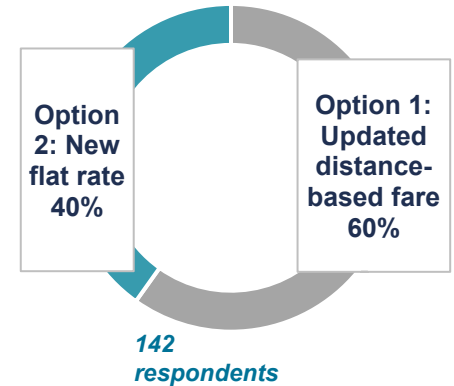
## King County



## Snohomish County



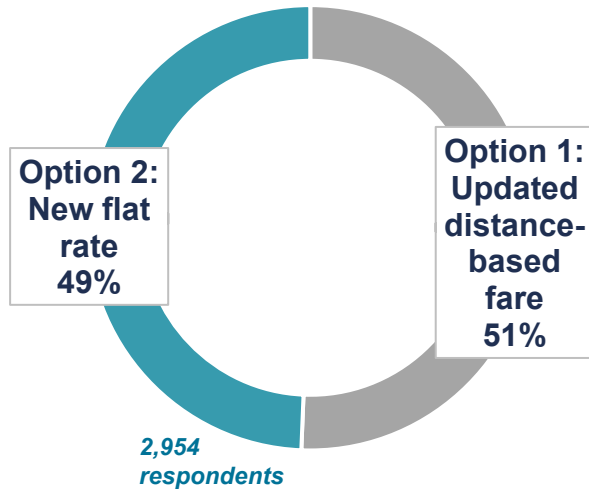
## Pierce County



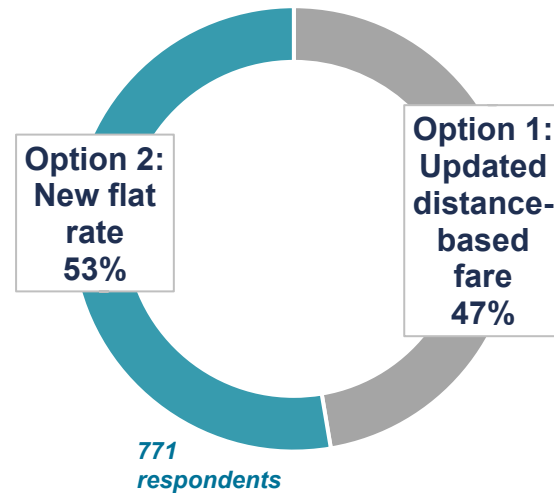
# Link fare structure preferences

Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?

Passengers using existing stations



Passengers planning to use ST2 stations

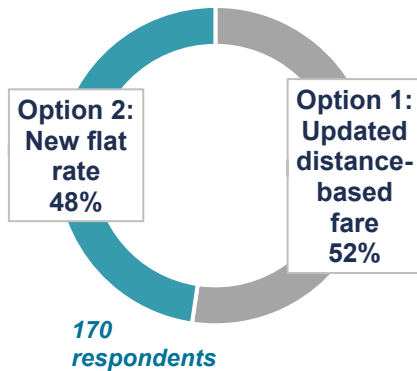




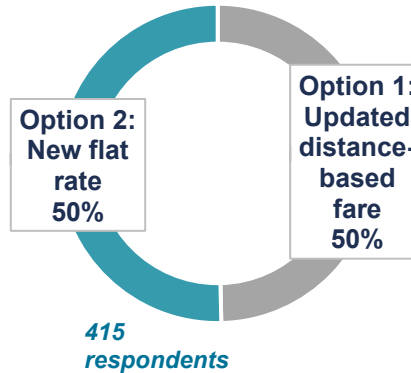
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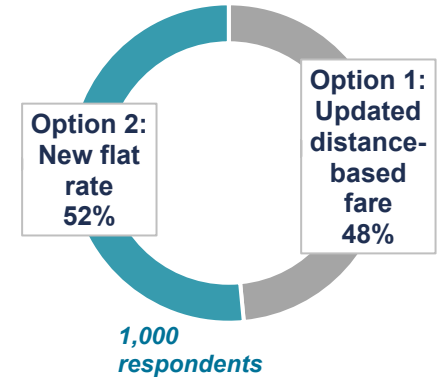
Those earning  
less than \$50,000



Those earning  
between \$50,000  
and \$99,000



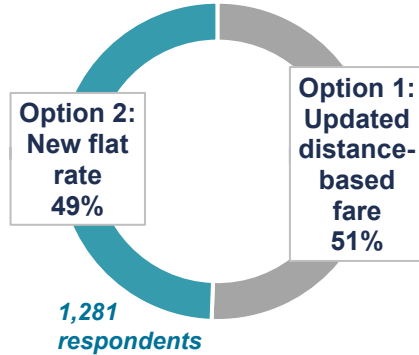
Those earning  
more than  
\$100,000



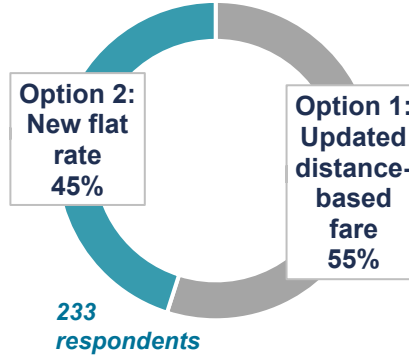
# Link fare structure preferences

Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?

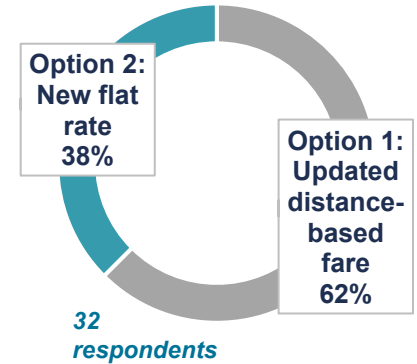
White or  
Caucasian



Asian or Asian  
American



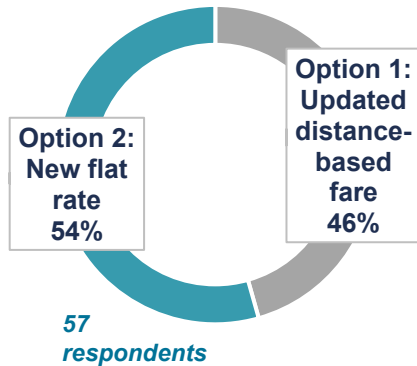
American/  
Alaskan native  
First Nations  
Indigenous



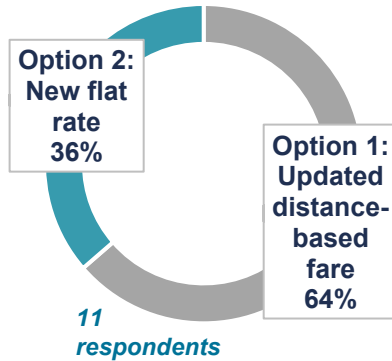
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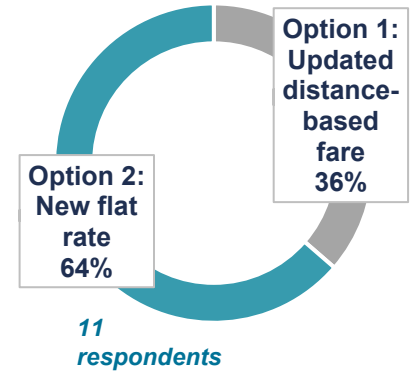
**Black,  
African,  
African-American**



**Middle Eastern  
Northern African**



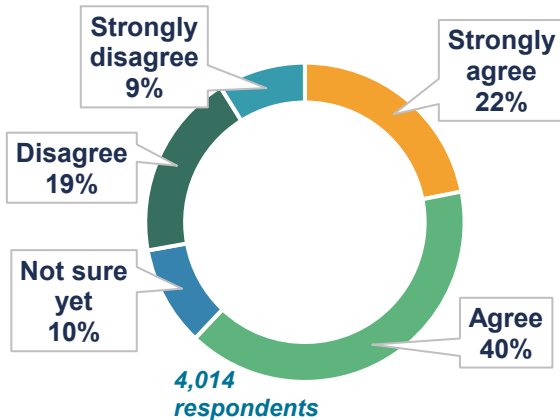
**Native Hawaiian,  
Pacific Islander**



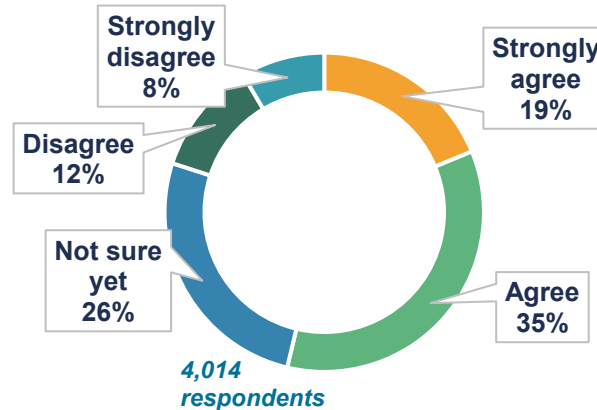
# Link fare structure preferences

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements for a distance-based fare?

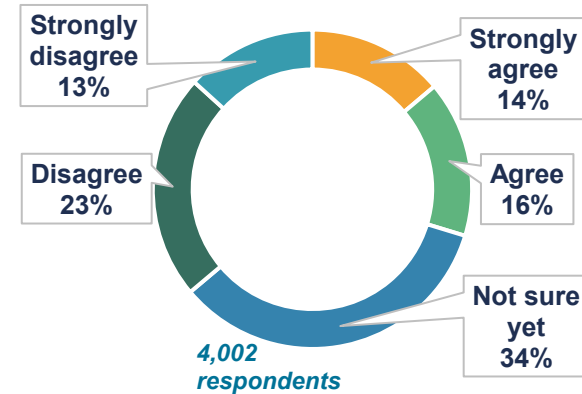
This option is easy to understand



This option is affordable



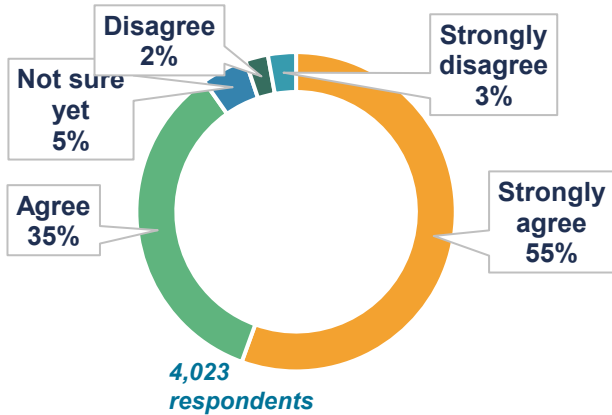
This option would encourage me to use light rail more



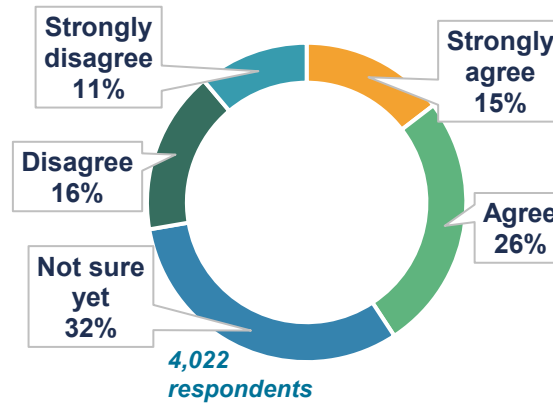
# Link fare structure preferences

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements for a flat fare?

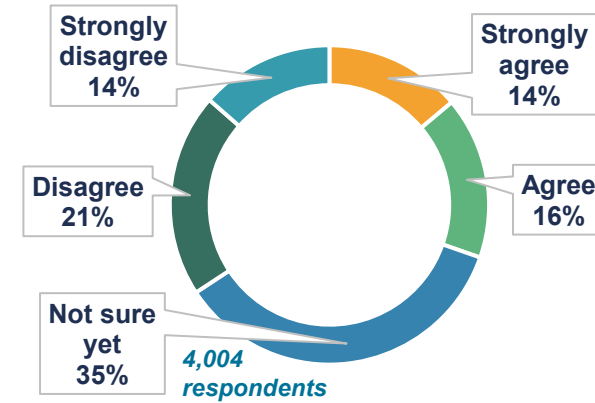
This option is easy to understand



This option is affordable



This option would encourage me to use light rail more



# *Link fare structure engagement themes*

## *What else we heard*

- We are working to summarize themes from information sessions, focus groups, community-based organizations, and the 1,600 open-ended comments received in the passenger survey.
- Initial themes that have emerged:
  - Consider a zone-based fare structure.
  - Fare rates under consideration are too high, or fares should be free.
  - Focus on enforcing fare payment compliance before raising fares.

***Next steps***

# ***Toward a comprehensive fares strategy***

## ***Key dates toward Board action on Link fare change***

### **November**

- 11/16: Public hearing.
- 11/16: Board meeting for a more detailed briefing, including:
  - *additional passenger experience, equity, and financial analysis of fare rates under consideration*
  - *mapping out mitigations and next steps following a potential Link fare change*

### **December**

- 12/7: REO for potential action on Link fare changes (including Title VI analysis).
- 12/15: Board for potential action on Link fare changes.



*Thank you.*



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