



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Kymber Waltnunson, County Auditor

Capital Projects Drive Rate Increases: Solid Waste Rates Could Double by 2034

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May 14, 2025 | REGIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE



Key Takeaways



Rates increasing significantly



Capital projects large driver



Opportunities to adjust capital projects



Outstanding rec could improve transparency

KCAO 2

Tipping Fees

Self Haulers



Source: King County DNRP

Commercial Haulers



Source: Shoreline Area News

KCAO 3

Components of rate setting

Revenue
requirement



Revenue collected

- Tipping fees
- Fixed annual charge (FAC)

Reserves

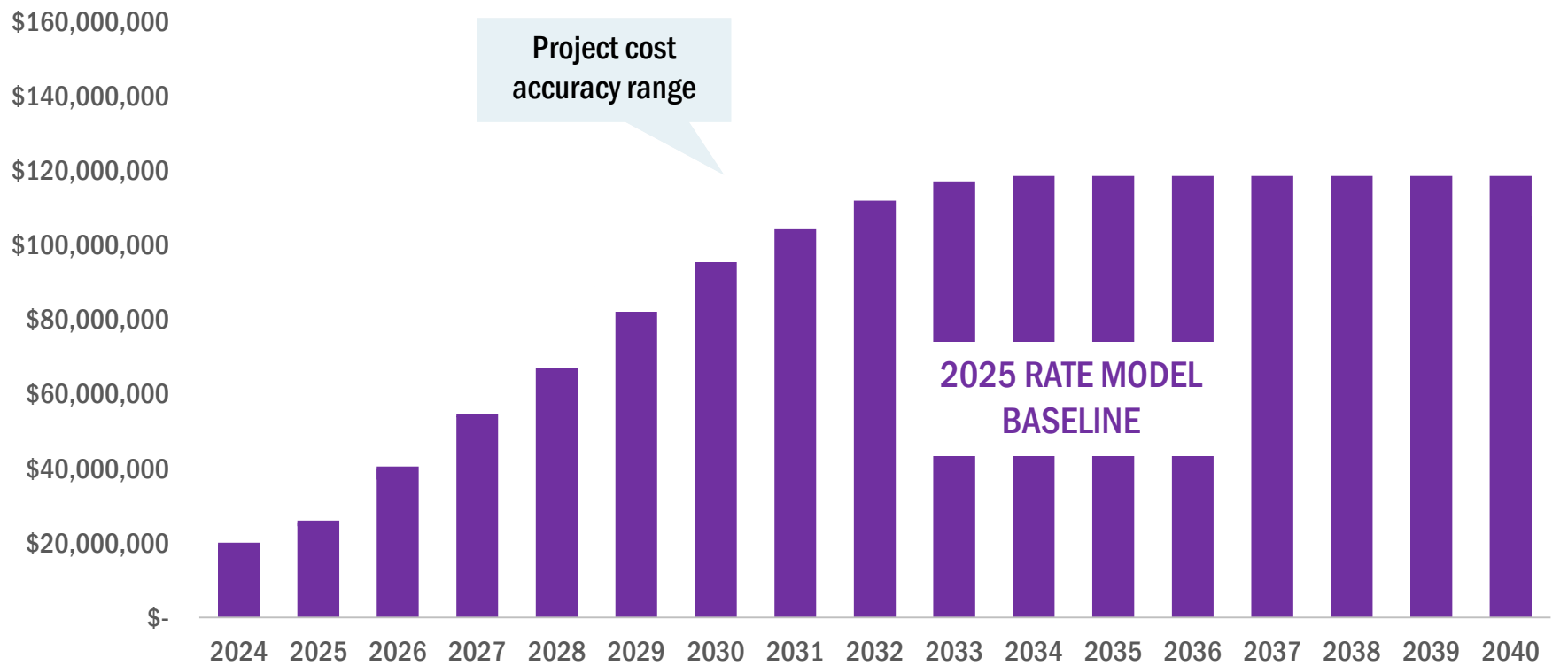
KCAO 4



Long-term rate outlook for SWD

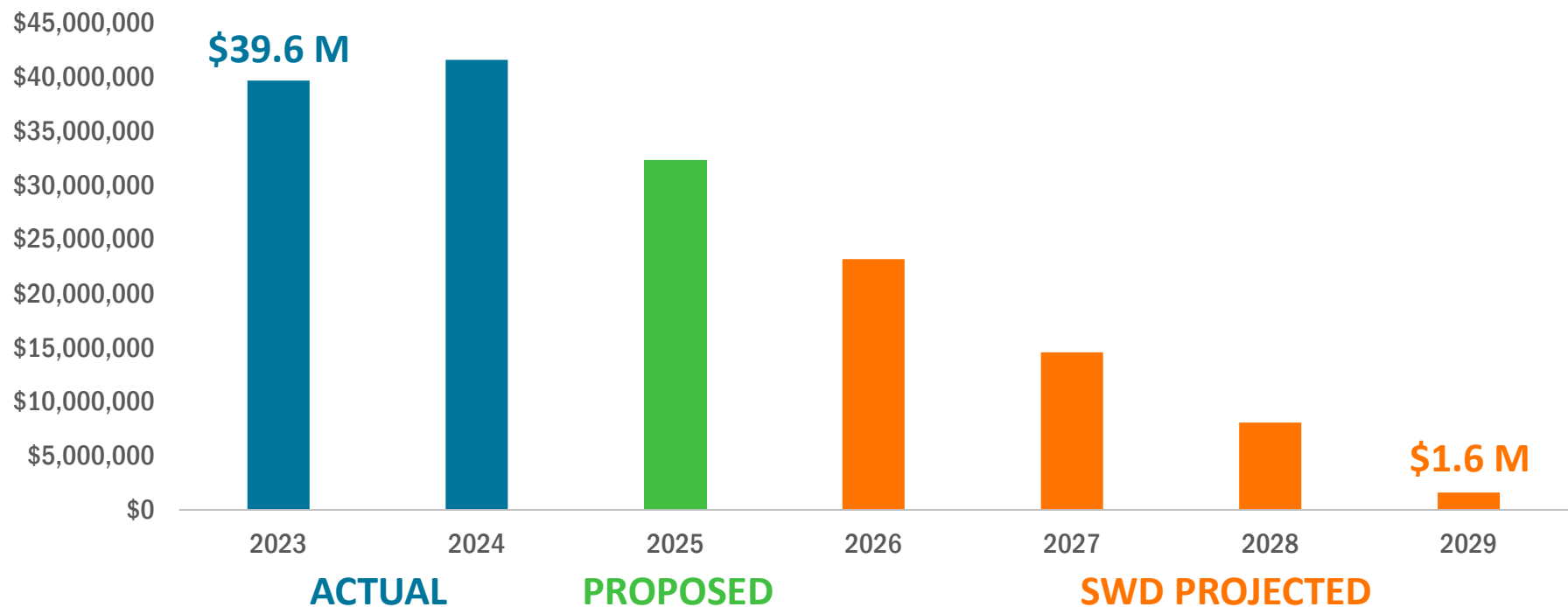
- 2025 Financial Plan
- \$1.32B in capital planned through 2034
- Largely funded by bonds
- Spending with long term impacts

Debt service increasing significantly



KCAO 6

Stabilization reserve being drawn down

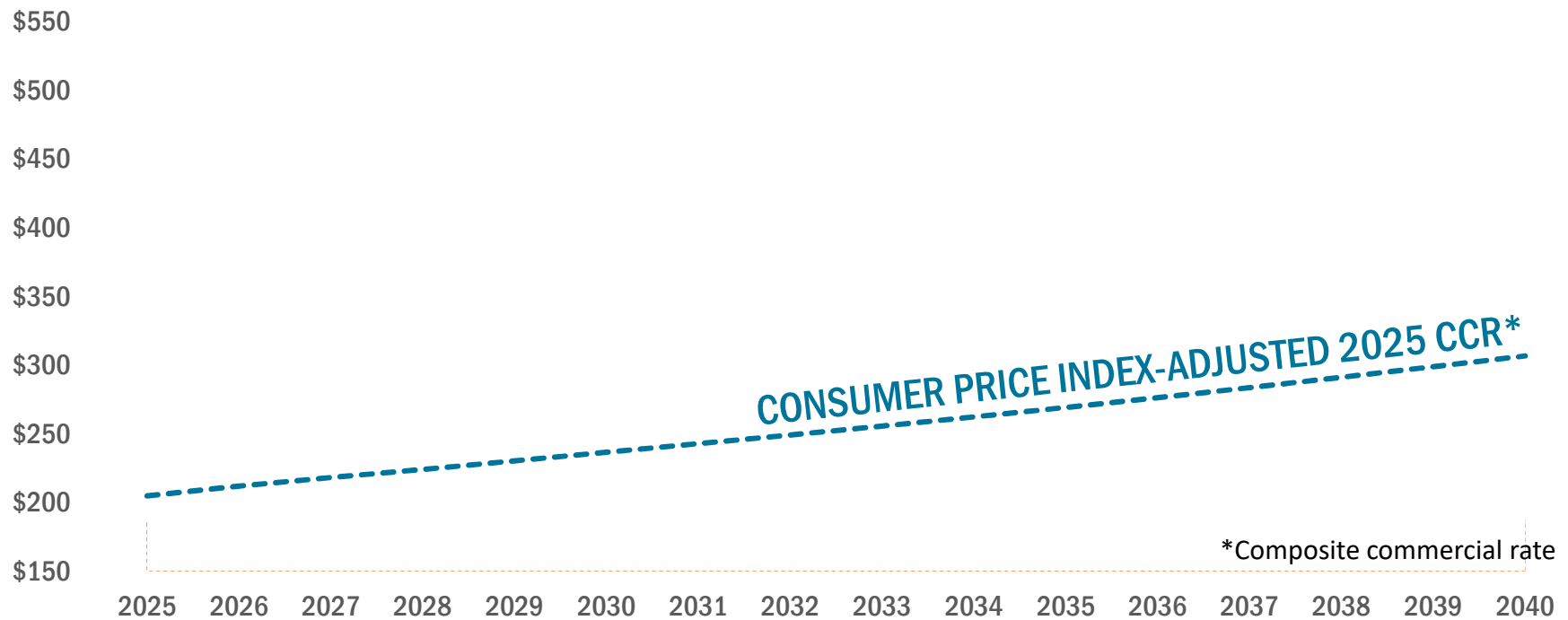


Source: KCAO analysis of SWD 2025 Rate Proposal Appendix D.

KCAO 7

Rate could reach over \$400 a ton by 2034

PER-TON RATE

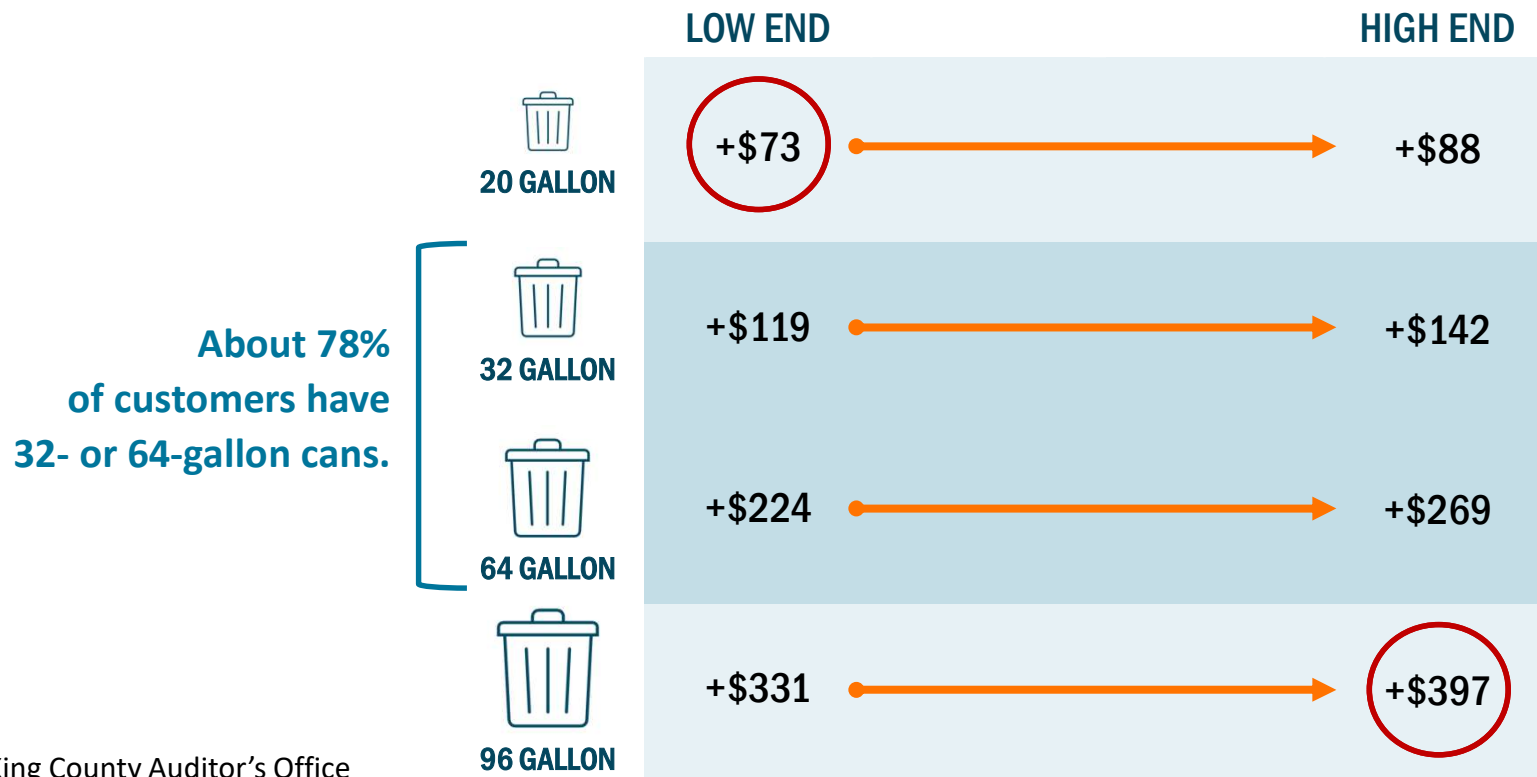


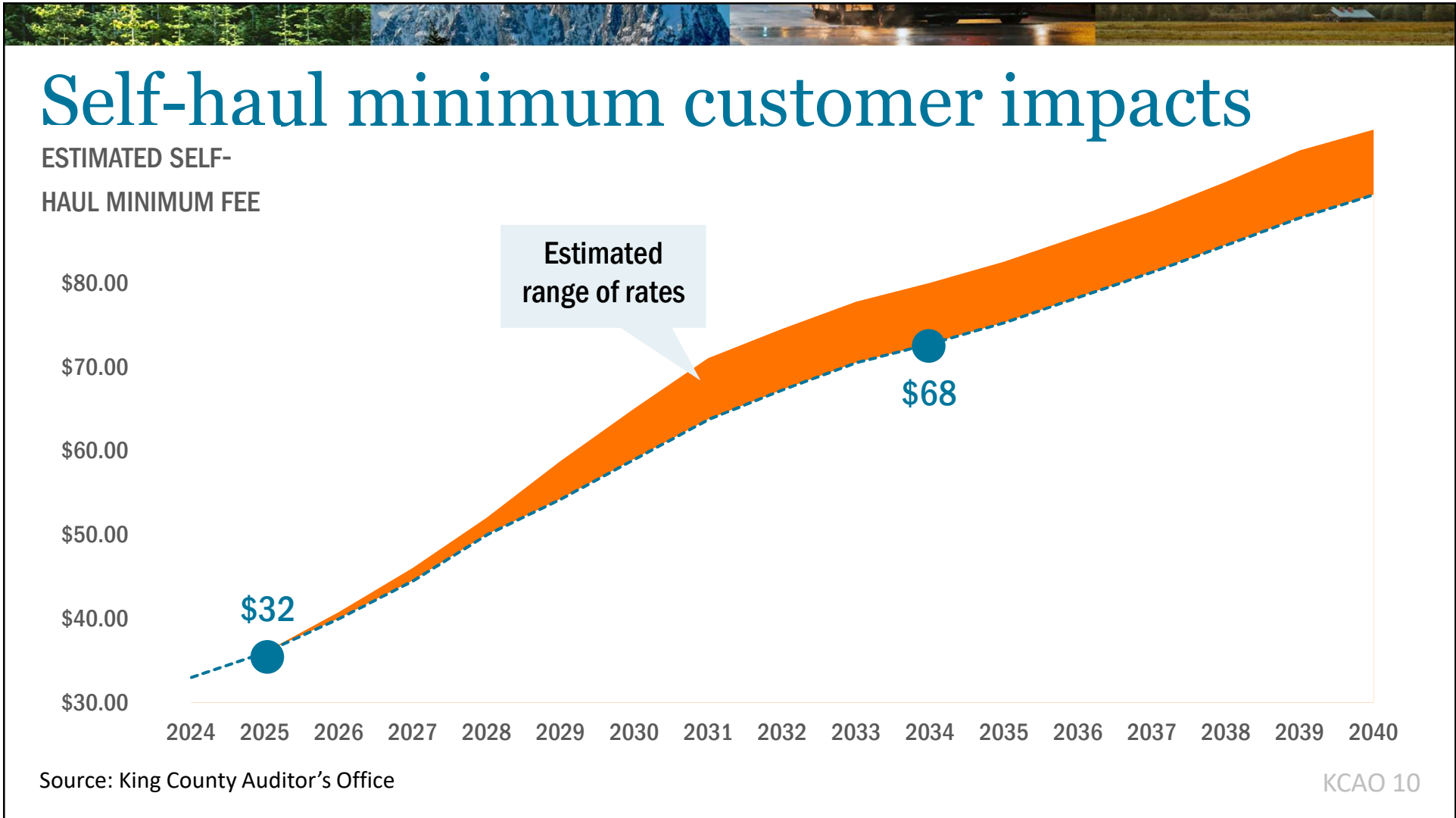
Source: King County Auditor's Office

KCAO 8

Curbside customer impacts will vary

ESTIMATED YEARLY INCREASE







Opportunities to adjust capital spending

- Delay
- Rescope
- Reconsider
- Revise solid waste comp plan

KCAO 11

Changes in investment can lower rates

PER-TON RATE

\$600

\$550

\$500

\$450

\$400

\$350

\$300

\$250

\$200

\$150

2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 2030 2031 2032 2033 2034 2035 2036 2037 2038 2039 2040

Estimated
range of rates

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX-ADJUSTED 2025 CCR

*Composite commercial rate

KCAO 12

Changes in investment can lower rates

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Estimated
range of rates

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX-ADJUSTED 2025 CCR

*Composite commercial rate

KCAO 13



Implement 2015 rec for transparency

- Estimates are a snapshot
- Identify key assumptions
- Conduct sensitivity analysis
- Present long-term rate forecasts as ranges

KCAO 14



Key Takeaways



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Outstanding rec could improve transparency

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