

Free Youth Fares, Youth Mobility Program and Youth Ridership

Regional Transit Committee

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Presenters



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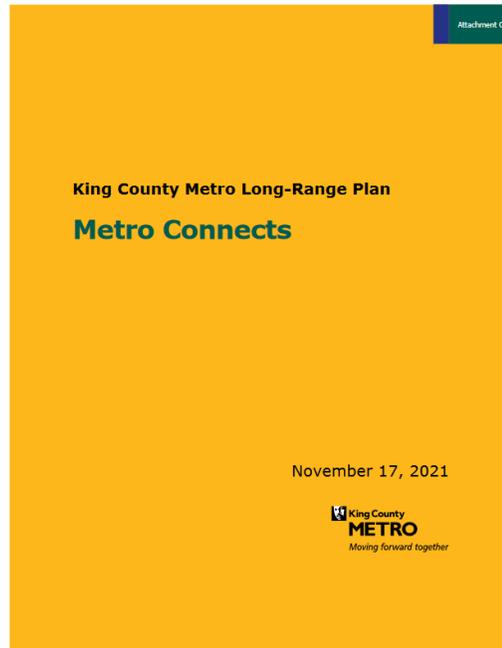
Youth Mobility Program Manager
(she/her)



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Market and Business Development
Supervisor (she/her)

How the Youth Mobility Program Fits Into Metro's Guiding Policies



- Create a sustainable pipeline to transit ridership



- Invest upstream where needs are greatest
- Improve access to mobility options

Background: Free Youth Transit

Free Youth Transit: Overview

- Began September 2022, statewide
- Riders 18 and younger can take transit for free
- Youth ORCA cards are highly encouraged
- Order online at FreeYouthTransitPass.com with proof of age
- Convert to Adult cards when the cardholder turns 19

Youth ORCA Card - Exp **\$0.00**
Print (reduced fare - requires proof of age)



• ORCA Youth cards are available to youth ages 6 to 18.

No added money or passes

Proof of age documentation is required before adding to shopping cart

[UPLOAD DOCUMENT](#) [ADD MONEY / PASS](#) [ADD TO CART](#)

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Free Youth Transit: What we're hearing

Sample responses from 2024 high school student survey, when asked how free youth transit has affected them:

"It's gotten me to a lot of places. It is the only reason I can do so many activities."

– 10th grader, Shorewood HS

"It helps us get around a lot faster when our parents can't take us."

– 9th grader, Rainier Beach HS

"I was a sophomore when free youth transit was implemented, and the decrease in my stress levels has been substantial."

– 12th grader, Auburn HS

Metro's Youth Mobility Program:

Investing in transit riders of the future

Youth Mobility Program

Our goal: More young people have the skills to ride transit confidently.

Outreach

- Community partnerships
- Events

Education

- Class workshops
- Partnerships with schools

Opportunity

- Paid internships
- Career pathways

Focus on priority populations.

Outreach & Partnerships

Metro attends community events to:

- Educate about free youth transit
- Distribute Youth ORCA cards
- Understand community needs and barriers

In 2024 we:

- Interacted with **3,000** people
- Distributed **1,500** Youth ORCA cards

Recent partners: CoCreative Culture, Para Los Niños, Communities in Schools, and Best Starts for Kids



Classroom Transit Education

- Interactive class workshops
- Grades 2-12
- Topics include how to ride, safety, and sustainability
- 2024-25 school year:
 - **2000+** students
 - In 23 schools



“It’s so important to share this info with our students so that they can be confident exploring their world.” - Host teacher

Marketing free youth transit

- Partner with ORCA agencies
- Advertisements, influencer partnerships
- Spring 2023 campaign; new round starting this month
- Micro level: community marketing pilot at Highline High School



Youth Summer Internship

- Three-week program for high-school aged youth
- Youth are empowered to become peer ambassadors for transit and learn about local government and urban planning
- Metro also offers college/graduate internships, veteran fellowships, and apprenticeships



What we're hearing: youth travel & awareness

Fall 2024 survey in six high schools: Auburn, Juanita, Newport, Rainier Beach, Shorecrest, Shorewood. Over 1200 responses.



82% know transit is free



69% have ridden transit recently



Social activities are a key reason for using transit



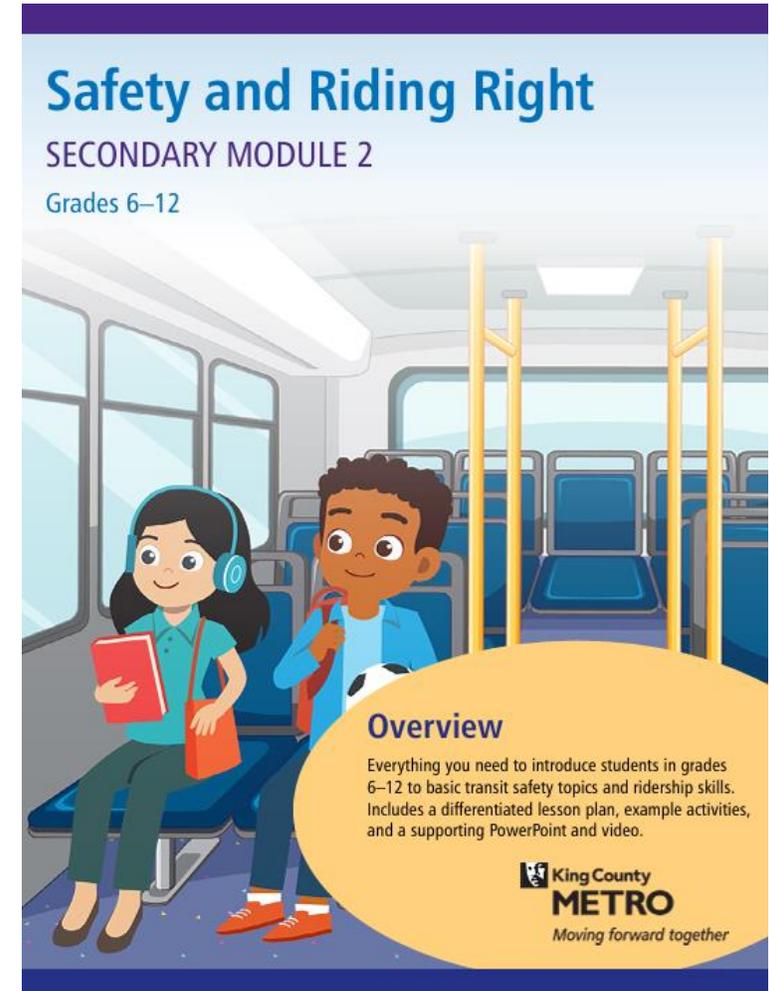
Older teens more likely to drive



Getting dropped off at school is common

What we're hearing: safety

- Survey responses:
 - 60% believe public transit is safe
 - Higher among riders (66%), vs non-riders (45%)
 - Riding together feels safer
- Classroom Transit Education
 - Module on safety and riding right
 - Tools to report concerns and ride respectfully



Ridership & Data

Youth ridership data and ORCA use

- Data on youth ridership is inconsistent
- Estimate: youth are about 10% of Metro bus riders
 - From on-board and video counts
- Most youth riders (~85-90%) do not use an ORCA card
- Barriers to ORCA use:
 - Youth unlikely to order a card online
 - Many prefer to use their phone; cards can be lost
 - May not understand why they should tap

Encouraging fare media use by youth

- Focus groups help understand barriers
- Partnerships with schools & CBOs on ORCA card distribution
- Gentle reminders by fare inspectors
 - No citations to youth; encourage youth to get a card
- Messaging: encourage ORCA card use, prominent in ads
- Working towards future fare media options

Resources

- Know someone who needs a Youth ORCA card? Send them to FreeYouthTransitPass.com
- Want to encourage young people riding transit? Watch for **Metro's new ads** and share to your networks
- Get updates on youth and transit through our newsletter: kingcounty.gov/metro/transiteducation



Closing and Questions