



King County | Office of the Executive

Executive Girmay Zahilay

Chinook Building, CNK-EX-0800
401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104-2391

July 22, 2026

The Honorable Sarah Perry
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Perry:

This letter transmits the Cashless Fare Engagement Report in response to budget proviso P10 in Ordinance 20023.

The enclosed report summarizes the Metro Transit Department's (Metro) engagement efforts to ensure that transit riders who face barriers to a cashless transition are prepared for this change. The report also provides an update on the proposed timeline for transitioning to a system in which cash fares are no longer accepted on board buses, including the specific milestones Metro plans to complete as part of a cashless transition.

Metro received direction to move to a cashless onboard fare payment system in 2021 with the adoption of Metro Connects (Ordinance 19367). Initial work included sharing with Council information on the current state of Metro's fare payment system and options to support a cashless transition, which were transmitted to Council as a proviso response in 2022 (Motion 15162). Council staff participated in the Partner Review Board during the cashless transition planning process.

Metro prioritized rider and community input as a core element guiding decision-making and planning. Metro has centered the voices of riders who will be most impacted through various engagement efforts, including seniors, low-income, and multilingual riders, as well as human service agencies that support riders. Riders have shaped how Metro will transition to cashless onboard fare payment and will continue to be vital collaborators in ensuring the most impacted riders are ready when this change is implemented.

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Since 2021, Metro has engaged priority population riders and organizations that serve these populations in the decision-making and planning processes for a cashless transition, as well as in identifying ways to improve access and affordability of reduced fares. Metro's Fares Cabinet and Fares Partner Review Board have been instrumental in identifying the steps Metro must take before stopping cash acceptance on board buses.

Through Metro's engagement, the community shared their needs for a fare system that makes paying for transit easy, fair, and affordable. Metro is working to create a future fare payment system where all riders have choices and options that work for them. Implementing efforts to raise awareness of fare options, making reduced fares more accessible and affordable, and offering new ways for organizations to sponsor and distribute fares to the communities they serve will significantly improve riders' ability to access transit. By prioritizing people who currently have the fewest options, Metro is not only preparing riders for cashless on-board fare payment but also developing a pathway to an equitable and accessible fare system.

Thank you for your consideration of this report. The important work discussed in the report will help people who are most transit-dependent continue to afford and access transit services across King County.

If your staff have questions, please contact Rachel Wilch, Fare Policy Program Lead, Metro Transit Department, at 206-263-0609.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Girmay Zahilay", written in a cursive style.

for

Girmay Zahilay
King County Executive

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Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff, King County Council

Melani Hay, Clerk of the Council

Karan Gill, Deputy Executive, Office of the Executive

Jasmin Weaver, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Hyeok Kim, Chief Operating Officer, Office of the Executive

Sierra Howlett Browne, Director of Government Relations, Office of the Executive

Garrett Holbrook, Council Relations Director, Office of the Executive

Michelle Allison, General Manager, Metro Transit Department