

Vanpool Program Update Report

August 28, 2025



King County

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I. Proviso Text

SECTION 115, TRANSIT, PROVISO P4¹

Of this appropriation, \$50,000 shall not be expended or encumbered until the executive transmits a vanpool update report and a motion that should acknowledge receipt of the report and a motion acknowledging receipt of a report, and a motion acknowledging receipt of the report is passed by the council. The motion should reference the subject matter, the proviso's ordinance, ordinance section, and proviso number in both the title and body of the motion.

The report shall include, but not be limited, to:

A. The number of active vanpool groups, including, but not limited to:

1. The number of vanpool groups that were active at the end of 2024;
 2. Estimates of the number of vanpool groups that will be active at the end of 2025, 2026, and 2027;
- and

3. A description of the marketing and outreach efforts the Metro transit department is undertaking to respond to changing commute patterns and to increase ridership from new markets, including, but not limited to, schools, as well as shift, hospitality, and essential worker workforces;

B. The total number of vanpool vehicles owned by the Metro transit department as of the end of 2024, including but not limited to:

1. The number and type of vehicles available for service;
2. The number of vehicles available to serve as loaners for vanpool groups; and
3. The number of retired or surplus vehicles, or vehicles that are eligible to be retired or surplus, that remain in the inventory;

C. A description of the Metro transit department's plans to acquire vehicles for the vanpool program, including, but not limited to:

1. The number and type of vehicles planned for acquisition during 2025, 2026, and 2027;
2. A comparison of the costs and number of models available for gas vehicles, gas-electric hybrid vehicles, and battery-electric vehicles;
3. The implications of vehicle type for fares, accessibility, and at-home vehicle charging needs; and
4. The potential implications of increasing numbers of battery-electric vehicles for the van grant program, established in K.C.C. 4.56.100.E., including, but not limited to, how vehicle charging needs might affect the organizations that apply to receive a retired vanpool van and how well battery-electric vehicles will be able to meet the needs of seniors and people with disabilities; and

D. A description of the actions Metro transit department indicated it was going to take in its written responses to the June 2024 report by the King County auditor entitled Vanpool: Improved Monitoring Could Help Achieve Strategic Goals and Reduce Program Risk.

The executive should electronically file the report and a motion required by this proviso by August 31, 2025, with the clerk of the council, who shall retain an electronic copy and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, and the lead staff for the transportation, economy, and environment committee or its successor.

¹ Ordinance [19861](#), Section 115, Transit, Pg96

II. Executive Summary

This report is provided as required by [Ordinance 19861](#) calling for a Vanpool Program Update addressing current and planned changes to the Vanpool Program to address changing ridership patterns.

Background: Metro began the first-ever public commuter van program, branded as Metro Vanpool, in 1979, with four employers and 189 participants in 21 Vanpool groups. Forty years later, in 2019, the program had grown to be one of the largest publicly owned Vanpool programs in the nation, serving 10,724 participants in 1,649 Vanpool groups and providing more than 3.3 million boardings per year. Metro's Vanpool program is a public transit rideshare commuter service that allows a consistent group of five or more individuals with a similar starting point, destination, and work schedule to share driving responsibilities and split fares in a Metro-provided van. This service is best suited for trips not well served by fixed route transit. Customers are all volunteers, including those in the driver and bookkeeper role.

Due to COVID-19 impacts, including state stay-at-home mandates, in January 2021 the program dipped to a low of 2,309 participants in 395 Vanpool groups. In 2023 with return-to-work requirements and hybrid work schedules, the program experienced unprecedented recovery, closing out the year with 975 commuter van groups on the road, totaling 59 percent of the 1,649 pre-pandemic levels. While the program saw substantial recovery in 2023, maintenance facility constraints and variable demand due to inconsistent return-to-work measures leveled growth off. Loosening but continued maintenance constraints and other market uncertainties in the current political climate are expected to continue exerting downward pressure on growth.

Vanpool by the Numbers. King County Metro's Vanpool program is operated with a fleet of five-, seven-, 12-, and 15-passenger, light-duty vehicles. The active fleet is operated and managed on an eight-year life cycle. Vanshare groups use Vanpool vehicles retired from the active fleet. Table 1 details how the fleet is used for:

- Operating Vanpool and Vanshare groups.
- Service loaners which are assigned to program maintenance and repair facilities throughout King County and used by operating groups while their primary rideshare vehicle is out of service for maintenance or repair.
- Vehicles available for new Vanpool and Vanshare groups.

Table 1 Vanpool and Vanshare vehicle numbers 2019-2024

Year	Operating Revenue Service Groups		Total Van Groups	Service Loaners	Vehicles Available
	Vanpool	Vanshare*			
2019	1,565	84	1,649	109	172
2020**	365	39	404	110	1,148
2021**	445	40	485	93	686
2022**	655	37	692	81	309
2023	943	32	975	74	219
2024	963	29	992	72	191

* Vanshare groups generate revenue but use Vanpool vehicles retired from active fleet.

** During COVID-19, Metro Vanpool saw extreme fluctuation in operating groups and reporting.

In 2024, the Vanpool program ended the year with an active fleet of 1,211 and a total retired fleet of 97 (43 retired, 10 JARC, 29 in-service Vanshare, 15 not-in-service Vanshare) for a total of 1,308 vehicles.

During 2024, Vanpool groups traveled 8,056,282 million miles, saving:

- 889,458 gallons of gasoline
- 7,996 metric tons GHG (tailpipe)²
- 9,484 metric tons GHG (well-to-wheels)³
- 22,819,751 Vehicle Miles Travelled

Lower mileage retired vehicles are repurposed for other rideshare services, including Vanshare, Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC),⁴ and Community Van, as well as to support the King County Council's van grant program authorized in King County Code (KCC) [4.56.195](#) [4.56.100](#). Retired fleet may also be sold as allowed per County Code (KCC) [4.56.195](#). Sales revenues are used to support program cost recovery requirements set in County Code (KCC) [4A.700.130](#).

King County [Ordinance 19052](#) set a vehicle electrification goal for a 100 percent zero-emission (ZE) rideshare fleet by 2030 and placed a moratorium on the procurement of gasoline-powered light-duty vehicles. Accordingly, and due to the rapid reutilization of the Vanpool program, the program will not dispose of retired vehicles during the early stages of its ZE transition to ensure vanpooling demand is met.

To support ZE goals, during late Q4 2024, the program procured 120 all-electric seven-passenger vehicles. This purchase was the first significant ZE vehicle procurement. It began the evolution of business practices and program learning to prepare customers and staff for an all-electric Vanpool future. The program will continue procuring ZE vehicles in future years and surplus its Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) fleet at a rate that supports agency and county sustainability goals, regional Vanpool needs, and allows the program to achieve a 100 percent ZE rideshare fleet mandate by 2030.

Metro's Planned Program Changes. While Metro's top Vanpool employers remain key customers to cultivate and support, their employees' commute patterns have changed from the traditional model of five commuters traveling together multiple days each week, to a more hybrid work environment. Metro must evolve to meet this change and provide Vanpool schedule flexibility. Additionally, the pandemic highlighted other markets that could benefit from the flexibility and quick availability of a Vanpool commute including rural workers, students who attend schools with few public transportation options, and essential workers whose schedules and/or worksites are not well served by transit.

Metro is transforming its Vanpool program to be more efficient, inclusive, and sustainable. It's focusing on transitioning to an all-electric fleet, enhanced customer engagement, and innovative solutions that

² US Average pounds of GHG per gallon of gasoline, well-to-wheel
(US GREET 2017 model, https://www.afdc.energy.gov/vehicles/electric_emissions_sources.html)

³ Ibid

⁴ [Job Access Reverse Commute Data](#)

improve mobility, welcome new markets, build a thriving rideshare community, complement transit, and promote equity and sustainability.

III. Background

Department Overview: King County Metro provides bus, paratransit, rideshare, on-demand, and water taxi services, and operates Seattle Streetcar, Sound Transit Link light rail, and Sound Transit Express bus service. Metro is committed to providing safe, equitable, and sustainable mobility, and prioritizing service where needs are greatest.

Key Context: Metro began the first-ever commuter van program, branded as Metro Vanpool in 1979, with four employers and 189 participants in 21 Vanpool groups. Forty years later, in 2019, the program had grown to be one of the largest publicly owned Vanpool programs in the nation serving, 10,724 participants in 1,649 Vanpool groups and providing more than 3.3 million boardings per year.

Metro's Vanpool program is a public transit rideshare commuter service that allows a consistent group of five or more individuals with a similar starting point, destination, and work schedule to share driving responsibilities and split fares in a Metro-provided van. This service is best suited for trips not well served by fixed route transit. Customers are all volunteers, including those in the driver and bookkeeper roles.

The program also provides Vanshare vehicles. Vanshare is a public transit rideshare service that provides 'first or last mile service' for commuters who use another public transit mode and can either share the ride to work in a Vanshare from a park-and-ride, train station, or transit hub or they can share the ride from home to a hub. Given that the two services are substantially the same, they are referenced collectively as "Vanpool" in this report, unless otherwise noted.

Equity and Social Justice: Any commuter who lives or works in King County is eligible to use Vanpool service. If space in the vehicle is available within the existing route and schedule, no rider may be excluded by an already operating Vanpool group. As a service that may be quickly implemented wherever eligible groups live and work, Vanpool is able to provide service in areas where other public transit options such as traditional bus may not exist. This flexibility aligns with King County's efforts to promote fairness and opportunity for all residents.

Environmental: By taking approximately 4.5 single-occupancy trips off the road and replacing them with one for each Vanpool group formed, Metro Vanpool supports sustainability performance measures outlined in Metro's Strategic Plan which is aligned to the Strategic Climate Action Plan's goals of reducing vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and greenhouse gas transportation emissions. In 2024, Vanpool groups traveled 8,056,282 million miles, saving:

- 889,458 gallons of gasoline
- 7,996 metric tons GHG (tailpipe)⁵
- 9,484 metric tons GHG (well-to-wheels)⁶
- 22,819,751 Vehicle Miles Travelled

⁵ US Average pounds of GHG per gallon of gasoline, well-to-wheel
(US GREET 2017 model, https://www.afdc.energy.gov/vehicles/electric_emissions_sources.html)

⁶ Ibid

COVID-19: On March 24, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee issued Proclamation 20-25 Stay Home – Stay Healthy⁷ “prohibiting all people in Washington State from leaving their homes or participating in social, spiritual and recreational gatherings of any kind regardless of the number of participants, and all non-essential businesses in Washington State from conducting business ...” which lasted through May of the same year.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 had immediate, profound, and ongoing impacts on King County Metro. For example, in January and February 2020, the Metro Vanpool program provided more than 400,000 monthly boardings. By April of 2020, the program had contracted to slightly more than 30,000 boardings for approximately 4,000 participants in approximately 600 active vans. It dipped to a low of 2,309 participants in 395 active vans by January 2021. More information about Metro’s response to COVID-19 in 2020-21 is available in Metro’s COVID-19 Response and Recovery Report⁸ and associated progress updates.⁹ After the Stay Home – Stay Healthy proclamation was lifted and a phased statewide reopening was implemented, the Vanpool program saw steady recovery throughout much of 2021 and 2022, ending with 3,457 participants in 602 Vanpool groups. In 2023, with return-to-work requirements and hybrid work schedules adopted by some of the Vanpool program’s larger employers, the program experienced unprecedented recovery, ending the year with 975 groups on the road. By the end of 2024, the number of operating groups had increased to 992 (60 percent of 1,649 pre-pandemic levels).

Metro’s Planned Program Changes. While Metro’s top Vanpool employers remain key customers to cultivate and support, their employees’ commute patterns have changed from the traditional model of five commuters traveling together multiple days each week, to a more hybrid work environment. Metro must evolve to meet this change and provide Vanpool schedule flexibility. Additionally, the pandemic highlighted other markets that could benefit from the flexibility and quick availability of a Vanpool commute including rural workers, students who attend schools with few public transportation options, and essential workers whose schedules and/or worksites are not well served by transit.

In collaboration with stakeholders, Metro took steps to support these changes which included:

- Piloting a Vanpool app (FlexVanpool) added to the state’s rideshare system (RideshareOnline.com). The app helps participants and commuters find and reserve seats with Vanpool groups along their commute, automatically recording any trips taken via the app to their personal trip calendar in RideshareOnline.com, communicate through the app, and allows participants to view the van along the route for easier connections.
- Establishing an online Vanpool fare calculator to make Vanpool fares easier for customers to understand based on each Vanpool group’s unique commute. Vanshare, limited to 20-miles round trip to or from a public transit hub or worksite, is a straightforward \$200 flat monthly fare split between riders.

⁷ [20-25 Coronavirus Stay Safe-Stay Healthy \(tmp\) \(002\).pdf \(wa.gov\)](https://www.wa.gov/20-25-Coronavirus-Stay-Safe-Stay-Healthy-(tmp)-(002).pdf)

⁸ King County Metro Transit, COVID-19 Response and Recovery Report, <https://kingcounty.gov/~media/depts/metro/schedules/ready-when-you-are/metro-covid-recovery-report.pdf>

⁹ King County Metro Transit, COVID-19 Response and Recovery Report Progress Update – March 2021, <https://kingcounty.gov/~media/depts/metro/schedules/ready-when-you-are/metro-covid-recovery-report-update-march-2021.pdf>

- Began developing an enhanced online employer toolkit to support employers and promote Vanpool. The new toolkit is expected to be complete by Q4 2025.
- Initiating new marketing and messaging, including a recently completed website refresh and an in-the-works *Vanpool Guidebook* expected to be completed by Q3 2025.
- Creating a web-based program application and customer worksheet to streamline the Vanpool application process.
- Introducing a self-service vehicle pick-up and drop-off process established to improve the Vanpool customer experience at our vehicle distribution center.
- Activating a vehicle maintenance exchange process streamlined to eliminate repeated customer trips and vehicle transactions at garages.
- Renewing an emphasis on developing new market pilots:
 - o Initiating and expanding a reduced-fare Vanpool pilot for communities who may most benefit from Vanpool and Vanshare commutes, including lower income, shift workers, hospitality employees, refugees, and essential workers. Reaching out to small businesses to illustrate how Vanpool can help address their parking challenges.
 - o Introducing a School Vanpool pilot to support transporting K-12 students to and from school and after-school activities to assist communities and parents by addressing school bus driver shortages, decreasing school-related neighborhood traffic congestion and supporting clean air initiatives.

Report Methodology: Metro staff from Metro Transit’s Mobility Division developed this report.

IV. Report Requirements

A. Number of active Vanpool groups

1. Number of Vanpool groups active at the end of 2024

At the end of 2024, Metro Vanpool had 992 active rideshare groups on the road (963 Vanpool and 29 Vanshare, see Table 1 Vanpool and Vanshare vehicle numbers 2019-2024). Though used for revenue-generating operating groups, Vanshare vehicles are retired Vanpool vehicles that are no longer in active service and have met King County’s cost-recovery requirement.

Beginning in mid-2023 and continuing through 2024, Metro Vanpool’s ability to place groups in service with vehicles in a state of good repair was limited to 1,000 groups due to the unexpected and limited availability of contracted maintenance facilities. Efforts to resolve these issues during 2024 led to an increase to 1,040 groups by Q3 2025, with the potential for further moderate increases by year-end.

2. Estimated number of active Vanpool groups at the end of 2025, 2026, and 2027

Program estimates for the number of active groups are found in Table 2. Estimates are based on market demand evaluation, budget, and fleet capital investment planning.

The Metro Vanpool program experienced steady and incremental growth each year in the five years preceding COVID-19 (3.2 percent average; 2015-2020). Post-COVID recovery has been substantial with active groups increasing at an annual average of 37.3 percent from 2021 to 2024. However, recovery at

this rate is not expected to continue at this rate. Modest increases in active Vanpool groups are projected through year-end 2027.

Table 2 Estimated number of active Vanpool groups

Year	Estimated Active Vanpool Groups	Percent Change
2025	1,050	+ 5.8%
2026	1,098	+ 4.6%
2027	1,146	+ 4.9%

3. Marketing and outreach efforts

Due to the 1,000-group operating limit in 2023-2024, Metro Vanpool encouraged commuters interested in forming new groups to join existing groups when possible. This demand management effort was moderately successful as average program ridership in a seven-passenger van went from a high of 5.9 in years 2017-2019, to a low of 4.8 in 2022, and back up to 5.6 by year-end 2024.

To increase Vanpool participation in new markets, respond to changing commute patterns, and increase ridership, Metro Vanpool began a comprehensive effort to refresh marketing and program materials and actions (see Table 3). Where available, federal and state grants funds are utilized to minimize program cost; however, lack of funding availability can increase risk to continuation of efforts.

Table 3 Marketing efforts 2024-2025

Effort	Goal	Details
Expanded reduced Vanpool fare pilot countywide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce barriers to program entry Improve equity and access to Vanpool for all commuters 	Metro Vanpool launched a countywide grant-funded, reduced fare pilot for entry-level, shift, hospitality, rural, refugee, custodial, and essential manufacturing workers. Any income-qualified commuter making less than \$25 per hour who lives or works in King County pays just \$49 per month for their Metro Vanpool fare. With an average Vanpool fare of \$156/month, this represents hundreds in annual savings for eligible commuters. The pilot ended Q2, 2025 and a pilot evaluation is underway and expected to be complete Q3 2025.
Introduced fare-free Vanshare option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase connections by providing commuters with first/last mile connections from home to a public transit hub and/or from transit hubs to worksites. 	Metro Vanpool offered a fare-free Vanshare option for entry-level employees to increase access to mobility and provide an opportunity to leave their personal

Effort	Goal	Details
		vehicle at home, increasing parking capacity at small businesses.
Developed refreshed marketing and outreach materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase program education and awareness 	<p>Created a library of cohesive marketing resources including graphic design elements, photographs, and content. Materials were used to create digital and print resources.</p> <p>Examples include print materials such as postcards (residential/business), brochures, and bus ads as well as digital materials such as geo-targeted social media ads (commuter-tested for effectiveness).</p>
Translated materials into multiple languages and provided translators for events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce barriers to program entry • Improve accessibility and understanding in multiple languages 	Metro translated promotional materials into nine languages and provided multiple translators for more than three dozen in-person employer transportation events, benefits fairs, and meetings to increase awareness and education.
Conducted outreach with South Sound businesses and in neighborhoods with high concentrations of priority populations and small and disadvantaged businesses. *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase program education and awareness with small businesses and their employees, and within priority neighborhoods • Reduce barriers to program entry through promotion of reduced Vanpool fare pilot 	<p>Metro reached out to small businesses that employ entry-level and shift workers with limited or no fixed route options and no transportation subsidy, as well as neighborhoods without sufficient fixed route options. Businesses with limited parking were told how Vanpool usage could reduce employee parking, freeing up parking for customers.</p> <p>Marketing included social media ads, direct mail, onsite business park and employer visits. Key partnerships with Kent/South King County area employers and the Chamber of Commerce included community events, job fairs, lunch and learns, and other activities and outreach.</p>

Effort	Goal	Details
		Metro mailed more than 2,500 business and 23,000 residential postcards in Kent; Metro hosted 40 in-person employer events in Kent and participated in five community-based organizations to reach priority areas. Metro provided refreshed and simplified materials to increase program awareness.
Demonstrated FlexVanpool app technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce barriers to program entry • Simplify process to find and join a Vanpool 	Metro Vanpool tested new technology available through RideshareOnline.com (the state ridematch and Transportation Demand Management website). The mobile app allows participating groups to offer available seats weekly to searching riders who match the commute. Proof-of-concept achieved with 20 participating groups with plans for expansion in 2025.
Offered rider recruiting promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase ridership • Encourage existing customers to recruit new riders with rewards 	Metro Vanpool launched a <i>Refer Friends</i> recruiting incentive to reward participants who recruited riders into the program, whether in their Vanpool or another. More than 200 submissions for recruiting rewards were received.
Offered – <i>Test Ride a Vanpool</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce barriers to program entry and increase ridership • Provide opportunity for commuters to take test rides in a matching Vanpool 	This ongoing Metro Vanpool offer allows commuters up to three free round-trip commutes with a matching Vanpool to see if a Vanpool commute fits their needs. The offer reduces barriers to joining program.
Began <i>Vanpool Manual</i> update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase program awareness and education • Improve customer experience through clarified program guidelines 	Metro Vanpool began updating a nearly 20-year-old <i>Vanpool Manual</i> that provides program guidelines, expectations, and resources for drivers, riders, and bookkeepers. Updates add consistency and clarity to program guidelines, and web and print resources will be

Effort	Goal	Details
		more accessible. New materials will begin to be available Q2 2025.
Upgraded RideshareOnline.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce barriers to program entry • Improve marketing support tools in collaboration with vendor, Smart Rideshare 	Coordinated upgrades to RideshareOnline.com; including sponsoring, launching, and participating in the new statewide <i>Switch Your Trips</i> campaign promoting Vanpool, rideshare, transit and active commuting (biking and walking). Tested numerous updated RSO features such as the FlexVanpool app and Vanpool formation tool.
Developed grant applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce barriers to program entry • Acquire WSDOT grant funds to support reduced fare pilot and marketing efforts 	<p>Metro Vanpool was awarded a 2024 WSDOT Public Rideshare grant which covered costs associated with the reduced fare pilot and other Vanpool promotional efforts and campaigns.</p> <p>During 2024, Metro Vanpool also applied for 2025-2027 WSDOT grant funds.</p>
Developing online <i>Employer Toolkit</i> for Vanpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase program awareness and education • Provide refreshed employer-focused resources 	Metro will continue work to create and update marketing and outreach materials during 2025. Focus will shift from commuters to employers in the form of an <i>Employer Toolkit</i> . This effort will create awareness of program benefits for employers and their employees and make resources easier to find and use.
Providing free Vanpool fare for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce barriers to program entry and increase ridership • Provide Vanpool option for commuters with children 	Paying a Vanpool fare for youth can be a barrier for parents and guardians. In 2025, Metro Vanpool will implement free fares for youth riders to align with the statewide Move Ahead Washington transportation package that allows Washington residents 18 and under to ride transit for free.
Developing Metro school Vanpool pilot	Increase school travel options for parents and youth	As part of the <i>Safe Routes to Schools</i> initiative, Metro Vanpool

Effort	Goal	Details
		will continue work in 2025 to identify interested schools and develop a school Vanpool demonstration pilot.
Supporting <i>Revive I-5</i> mitigation efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase program awareness and education • Reduce congestion by removing single occupancy vehicles 	Starting in late 2025 and into 2026, Metro Vanpool will work closely with partner agencies (WSDOT and SDOT) during Revive I-5 , a major roadwork undertaking in Seattle’s downtown core, to help mitigate the expected negative impacts to traffic and congestion.

* Priority populations as defined on [page 17](#) of the King County Metro Strategic Plan.

B. Total number of Vanpool vehicles owned by King County Metro at the end of 2024

1. Number and type of vehicles available for service

2. Number of vehicles available as loaners for Vanpool groups

See Table 4 for vehicle inventory at the end of 2024 including vehicles in operation, available for service, and for loaners. Vehicle types listed include electric (EV) and internal combustion engine (ICE) as well as vehicles that support customers with mobility challenges represented by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The five-passenger EVs listed are Nissan LEAF vehicles. Seven-passenger Tesla EVs purchased during Q4 2024 were not received until Q1 2025. The Tesla fleet will be methodically deployed during 2025 at first to customers on the program waitlist who have expressed interest in driving a Tesla. In this early deployment Metro will continue learning how to manage and support an EV fleet and minimize potential for negative impacts from an immediate and full deployment. Early deployment will be evaluated after 6 months to determine next steps.

King County Metro’s Vanpool program is operated with a fleet of five-, seven-, 12-, and 15-passenger, light-duty vehicles. The fleet is operated and managed using an eight-year useful life benchmark (ULB), or life cycle. Vehicles beyond the eight-year ULB are retired from the active fleet. The fleet includes:

- Vehicles operating as Vanpool and Vanshare groups
- Vehicles available for new Vanpool and Vanshare groups
- Service loaners assigned to program maintenance and repair facilities throughout King County and used by Vanpool groups while their primary rideshare vehicle is out of service for maintenance or repair.

Table 4 Vehicle inventory at the end of 2024

Vehicle Size/Type	Vanpools (VP) in Operation	Available for New VP Groups	Vanshares* (VS) in Operation	Available for New VS Groups	Service Loaners in Operation	Total Revenue Service Fleet
5-passenger EV	12	6	2	1	0	21
6-passenger ADA ICE	1	1	0	0	1	3
7-passenger ICE	916	123	25	10	66	1,140
12-passenger ICE	23	20	2	4	3	52
15-passenger ICE	11	26	0	0	2	39
TOTAL	963	176	29	15	72	1,255

* Vanshare groups generate revenue but use Vanpool vehicles retired from the active fleet

3. Number of retired or surplus vehicles

Table 5 shows inventory at the end of 2024 of retired or surplus vehicles, or vehicles that are eligible to be retired or assigned to surplus.

Vanshare is public transit rideshare service that provides ‘first or last mile service’ for commuters who use another public transit mode and can either share the ride to work in a Vanshare from a park-and-ride, train station, or transit hub or they can share the ride from home to a hub.

Metro’s Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) Program contracts with Community Based Organizations and provides leased vehicles to provide work, training, or childcare trips among low-income and Limited English Proficiency community members.

Table 5 Number of retired or surplus vehicles at the end of 2024

Vehicle Size/Type	Retired			Total Retired Fleet	Surplus		Total Surplus Fleet
	Available	JARC*	Vanshare*		Pending Insurance**	Pending Sale	
5-passenger EV	0	0	3	3	0	0	0
6-passenger ADA ICE	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
7-passenger ICE	15	5	35	55	4	0	4
12-passenger ICE	13	5	6	24	0	3	3
15-passenger ICE	14	0	0	14	0	0	0
TOTAL	43	10	44	97	4	3	7

* JARC and Vanshare are vehicles retired from active Vanpool fleet that remain in use

** Vehicles pending insurance are damaged with an insurance recovery or liability awaiting disposal pending release by the Metro Vanpool insurance provider, King County Office of Risk Management

C. Metro's plans to acquire vehicles for the Vanpool program

1. Number and type of vehicles planned for acquisition during 2025, 2026, and 2027

See Table 6 for number and types of vehicles Metro plans to acquire during 2025, 2026, and 2027. King County [Ordinance 19052](#) set a vehicle electrification goal for a 100 percent ZE rideshare fleet by 2030, and placed a moratorium on the procurement of gasoline-powered light-duty vehicles. EV vehicles are preferred, but the final procurement mix will be influenced by external factors such as available vehicles, cost, and available charging infrastructure.

Table 6 Vehicles Metro plans to acquire

Fleet Procurement Plan	2025*		2026		2027	
	Replacement	Expansion	Replacement	Expansion	Replacement	Expansion
5-passenger	3	0	0	0	18	0
6-passenger ADA	4	0	0	0	0	0
7-passenger	148	0	210	48	323	48
12-passenger	68	0	0	0	0	0
15-passenger	43	0	0	0	0	0
Sub-Total	266	0	210	48	341	48
Total	266		258		389	

* 2025 approved CIP budget

2. Comparison of costs and models available.

The Washington State Department of Enterprise Services produces an annual vehicle purchase contract that state and local agencies may use to purchase vehicles through using the [Contract Automobile Request System](#) (CARS). Purchasing vehicles using the state contract offers two key benefits. First, it saves time and money by removing the need to go through a time-consuming procurement process. Additionally, the state contract provides potentially lower costs for some vehicles, though the 2025 contract has limited options for gas- and electric-hybrid (Hybrid) and EV vehicles. This could be a challenge for King County's sustainability goals. Whenever possible, Metro Vanpool will purchase off this contract to provide consistency with other agency programs and reduce additional efforts required to procure a King County vehicle contract.

Vehicles available on the open market provide more options, especially for hybrids and EVs, but that variety often comes with higher vehicle costs. It also includes significant county resources to support the often year-long or longer multi-departmental process required to create a Contract to Purchase Agreement. Table 7 lists the range of options for consideration.

Table 7 Vehicle purchasing options, 2025

Vehicles Available on State Contract						
Van Size/Type	Gas-Powered Vehicles		Gas-Electric Hybrid Vehicles		Battery-Electric Vehicles	
	# Models Available	Avg Cost of Models	# Models Available	Avg Cost of Models	# Models Available	Avg Cost of Models
5-passenger	4	\$25,730	N/A		3	\$28,090
6-passenger ADA	3	\$62,014	3	\$59,889	N/A	
7-passenger	8	\$47,464	1	\$52,100	N/A	
12-passenger	7	\$62,953	N/A		1	\$97,940
15-passenger	N/A		N/A		N/A	
* Washington State Motor Vehicles contract (28423) used for vehicle availability/cost information (primary program vehicle procurement tool). ** Without state contract, program would have to establish contracts for each vehicle needed (max useful life = 5 years, KC Procurement rules).						
Vehicles Available on Open Market / Retrofit						
Van Size/Type	Gas-Powered Vehicles		Gas-Electric Hybrid Vehicles		Battery-Electric Vehicles	
	# Models Available	Avg Cost of Models	# Models Available	Avg Cost of Models	# Models Available	Avg Cost of Models
5-passenger	6	\$27,000	9	\$29,000	8	\$44,000
6-passenger ADA	1	\$61,000	1	\$61,000	None on Market	
7-passenger	7	\$44,643	6	\$45,667	4	\$75,171
12-passenger	9	\$46,101	None on Market		1	\$97,940
15-passenger	5	\$48,000	None on Market		None on Market	

3. Implications of vehicle type on fares, accessibility, and at-home charging.

Program cost-recovery requirements (100 percent capital and operating, at least 25 percent administrative) require that fares paid by customers directly contribute towards associated program costs. As Table 7 above shows, prices for ADA, hybrid, and EVs are generally greater than for ICE vehicles, significantly so in some cases. Traditional Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles typically provide the most options for the lowest price which corresponds to the lowest fares and most accessibility.

However, a King County purchasing waiver is now required for the purchase of any vehicle that is not 100 percent ZE which includes all ICE and hybrid vehicles. Waivers are submitted to the Metro General Manager's office for review before consideration for approval by the King County Executive Climate Office. For waiver eligible purchases, at least one of three criteria must be met.

- No available charging at the primary home for vehicle is available now, nor anticipated to be available in the next six months
- Currently available electric vehicle specifications do not meet business needs
- Total cost of ownership is 20 percent more or higher for EV

Charging availability for customers remains a complicating factor. Not all employers provide worksite charging. Providing home-charging reimbursement to customers with availability who do not have access to worksite charging can mitigate some charging availability limitations. However, not all customers have access to at-home charging. Additionally, contractual and technology investments required for the software solutions to support this reimbursement adds significant program complexity and cost. Conventional hybrid-electric vehicles within acceptable price point that do not require plug-in charging can mitigate cost and charging concerns.

Reimbursement for at-home charging is essential as program fares cover the cost of vehicle fuel. The factors noted above increase barriers to accessing service and could disproportionately negatively impact individuals with disabilities and/or limited incomes who do not receive a substantial Vanpool subsidy from their employer.

Metro Vanpool recognizes there are disparities with respect to availability of charging infrastructure for program customers and is committed to exploring options for increasing equity in this area. Although no single solution currently exists, the program will continue to utilize worksite charging where available, pilot home charging reimbursement software solutions, and leverage their fleet fuel card provided to groups for public charging at participating locations as needed. Results from these early pilot efforts will be evaluated, shared, and compared with other King County fleet departments to help inform preferred solutions and best practices.

4. Potential implications of increasing numbers of battery-electric vehicles for the van grant program.

Internal combustion engines (ICE) will continue to be provided to the van grant program until EVs begin to be retired (estimated 2033). Hybrid and ICE vehicles that are purchased through ZE waiver may also continue to be available in smaller quantities beyond 2033, depending on when they are purchased and their vehicle condition.

Maintenance considered routine for ICE or hybrid vehicles such as an oil change or fluid replacement are not required for EVs. However, battery replacements or major repairs to engine and drive components for EVs are very expensive. Routine maintenance costs for EVs will be lower than ICE vehicles while major repairs are expected to be more expensive. Most EV batteries are projected to retain 70-80 percent of capacity after 10 years. Currently no ADA compliant battery-electric vehicles are available on the market.

As noted for Vanpool customers, charging infrastructure is significantly less available than fueling locations for ICE vehicles.

Additionally, Washington State continues to explore options to replace the gas tax with some version of a road usage charge to offset declining associated tax revenues resulting from increasing adoption of EV, hybrid, and fuel-efficient ICE vehicles.

D. Actions Metro indicated it would take in its written responses to the June 2024 report by the King County auditor

Table 8 lists the actions Metro Vanpool indicated it would take in response to each recommendation from the King County auditor in the June 2024 report, *“Vanpool: Improved Monitoring Could Help Achieve Strategic Goals and Reduce Program Risk.”*

Table 8 Metro’s response to auditor’s recommendations

Number	Recommendation	Planned and Completed Actions
Recommendation 1	Metro should develop, document, and implement a plan to create a more affordable Vanpool program fare option that is sustainable without reliance on grant funding.	<p>Metro Vanpool expanded a regional reduced fare pilot to the entire county during Q3 2024. The pilot will run through Q2 2025 with expected evaluation complete by end of Q3 2025. Pilot results will inform this effort.</p> <p>County Code requires that Metro set Vanpool fares to recover 100 percent of the program's operating and capital costs and a minimum 25 percent of administrative costs. Periodic fare increases are required to maintain this cost recovery. Metro Vanpool works closely with employer relations and fare policy groups within Metro as well as Metro leadership prior to any fare increase. The current fare structure is applied equally to all participants, including employers who provide employee Vanpool subsidies.</p> <p>Metro will use pilots, research, and cost and impact analysis to develop and document a plan to create a more affordable Vanpool program fare option. Implementation will require additional funding and will require code changes which would require the King County Council’s support and action. Key steps in this process will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of a reduced fare pilot to inform the need and market for a more affordable fare program. - Work with employers on potential long-term solutions to address an affordable fare option and research possibilities, recognizing that Vanpool is largely an employer sponsored program.

Number	Recommendation	Planned and Completed Actions
		It takes a group of commuters, geographic density and interested volunteer drivers to form vanpools. Metro will continue to work with small businesses and employers on potential long-term solutions to address an affordable fare option and research possibilities, recognizing that Vanpool is largely an employer sponsored program.
Recommendation 2	To better focus limited resources, Metro should update and document its strategic plan's equity objectives to be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely.	Metro will review the Vanpool strategic plan's equity goals to ensure alignment with 2026-27 budget planning and annual workplans. Goals will be developed and documented with targets that can be easily tracked in business analytics software, Expected completion in Q4 2025.
Recommendation 3	Metro should develop and document performance measures and targets for its equity goals, regularly assess progress toward meeting the targets, and make necessary adjustments.	Metro will incorporate equity goals and targets from Recommendation 2 into its Power BI analytics for review and tracking at the operational staff level. Key performance indicators will be added to Monthly Business Reviews for leadership awareness. Expected completion in Q4 2025.
Recommendation 4	Metro should document and implement a plan to analyze the impact of electrification on cost and fares, ridership and accessibility, and risk. The plan should incorporate a method to update the analysis as new information becomes available.	<p>Metro purchased 120 Tesla Model Y electric vehicles in December 2024 to begin fulfilling the objectives of King County Ordinance 19052 requiring 100 percent rideshare fleet electrification by 2030.</p> <p>Telematics and home-charging reimbursement software-as-a-service (SaaS) solutions are critical to making vehicles available in an equitable fashion. Timing for purchase and implementation is dependent upon King County Information Technology (KCIT)</p> <p>Fare planning is currently underway. Operational and customer effects will be considered in fare changes and closely monitored.</p> <p>As part of the new EV rollout, Metro will identify Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for measures noted by the auditor for comparison to the current fleet and any electrification plan refinement. KPI's will be added to operational and Monthly Business Reviews for leadership awareness.</p>

Number	Recommendation	Planned and Completed Actions
		The Tesla fleet will be methodically deployed during 2025 at first to customers on the program waitlist who have expressed interest in driving a Tesla. In this early deployment Metro will continue learning how to manage and support an EV fleet and minimize potential for negative impacts from an immediate and full deployment. Early deployment will be evaluated after six months to determine next steps for deployment.
Recommendation 5	Metro should assess and regularly update the effects of Vanpool program fleet electrification on progress toward County environmental and equity goals. Metro should communicate its assessment to Metro leadership.	Traditional environmental metrics such as vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and CO2 reductions will continue to be tracked and reported. With prior electric and hybrid vehicle usage, the employer charging requirement often resulted in underrepresentation among underserved and priority populations. Metro plans to implement home charging reimbursement to prioritize and more easily place EVs in equity priority areas by allowing home charging at no cost to customers. These results will be tracked and reported to leadership. Expected completion in Q1 2026.
Recommendation 6	Metro should use the information gathered as part of Recommendation 5 to inform its ZE strategy.	Metro will track customer usage information. Analysis of factors such as maintenance, risk events, customer demand, usage, and vehicle performance will help inform and shape electrification planning efforts. Where possible, results will be stored in business information systems for easier reference and incorporation into Power BI for analysis and reporting. Results will inform strategy, be tracked and conveyed to leadership. Expected completion in Q2 2026.
Recommendation 7	Metro should refine the point system based on risk to ensure consistency in application and to align points with the relative risks of the violations.	Metro began work to refine the risk point system in Q3 2024 after the risk specialist was hired. Research and analysis included internal program data as well as external review of the insurance industry, and other public transit agencies who manage similar volunteer driver programs. Draft revision is complete, and review began in Q2 2025 with expected completion in Q3 2025.
Recommendation 8	Metro should hire a risk specialist.	Metro published the job recruitment announcement to hire a Vanpool risk specialist on May 17, 2024. The risk specialist was hired in July 2024.

Number	Recommendation	Planned and Completed Actions
Recommendation 9	Metro should ensure that data systems support proactive risk monitoring such as cost per driver, per vehicle/group, and per incident category over time.	Metro will collaborate with Metro IT to build on Metro's existing enterprise application software for risk and safety management, Safety and Security Management (SSaM) system. The goal is to develop tools and processes for providing the data necessary to capture and report on the additional recommended program risk and safety metrics. Expected completion in Q4 2025.
Recommendation 10	Metro should regularly monitor the metrics in Recommendation 9 and respond to patterns that emerge.	When available, the noted metrics will be pulled into Power BI for regular monitoring and reporting by the Metro risk specialist to leadership. The program has existing driver discipline and training programs and resources to use this additional driver risk and safety data effectively. Expected completion in Q4 2025.
Recommendation 11	Metro should identify, document, and implement appropriate controls or incentives to ensure Vanpool volunteer drivers report unexplained damage incidents in a timely manner.	This work began after the risk specialist was hired and can begin looking at data and trends to recommend a plan of action for Metro leadership to consider. Expected completion in Q3 2025.
Recommendation 12	Metro should develop a plan for piloting telematics and documenting lessons learned to inform future use. This should include plans to proactively manage risk, reduce the number of incidents with unexplained causes, and consider what data is necessary.	An initial telematics plan currently exists to support the program's ZE transition, specifically the home charging reimbursement effort, to allow for equitable deployment of the EV rideshare fleet. This effort will provide a better understanding of what type and amount of telematics data can be pulled, including data to manage risk as recommended by the auditor. In addition, the automotive manufacturing industry's onboard vehicle safety technology is continuously improving. Metro will incorporate the evaluation and adoption of this improved technology as part of its vehicle procurement process. Expected completion in Q4 2025.
Recommendation 13	Metro should document and communicate policies and procedures for staff who monitor and respond to vehicle misuse.	As noted in recommendation 14, Metro Vanpool has removed personal and documented the enforcement process for violations. Additionally, as of Q2, 2025, the <i>Vanpool Manual</i> has been revised to more clearly define acceptable use for customers. Work remains to create internal system reports and resources to support staff. Expected completion in Q3 2025.

Number	Recommendation	Planned and Completed Actions
Recommendation 14	To ensure responsible and equitable use of public funds, Metro shall revise its personal use policy to bring it into alignment with Washington State Transit Insurance Pool guidelines.	As of January 2025, Metro implemented a no Vanpool personal use policy to reduce risk, align with Washington State Transit Insurance Pool (WSTIP) guidelines and our partner public transportation Vanpool programs who do not allow for personal use.
Recommendation 15	Metro should assess and document the feasibility and trade-offs of reporting system options that allow volunteer bookkeepers to directly enter vehicle and rider information.	<p>Full implementation will require approval and support of a KCIT project.</p> <p>Metro Vanpool began work in Q1 2025 with the Metro Mobility Division Market & Business Development workgroup to explore and document options and feasibility to automate and/or streamline vanpool bookkeeper processes and requirements.</p> <p>Project charter and scope as well as staff and customer qualitative interviews to help inform areas of focus are expected to be completed Q4 2025.</p>

V. Conclusion/Next Steps

Metro’s Vanpool Program, which has evolved over four decades, continues to be a vital component of the region’s public transit options, particularly for commuters and employers in areas less served by fixed-route transit. Despite COVID-19 pandemic setbacks, the program has shown recovery, reaching 59 percent of pre-pandemic levels in 2023 with expectation to reach one-thousand-plus operating groups in 2025. As Metro responds and adapts to changing ridership patterns and market conditions, Metro Vanpool remains an essential mobility solution in addressing commuter and employer needs, supporting equity-focused markets, and meeting environment goals, particularly for those commuters who have flexible or hybrid work schedules.

However, challenges persist, including fluctuating demand, dwindling maintenance facility options, and the ongoing uncertainty in the economic and political landscape for pilot and promotional funding and electric vehicle purchase and deployment. These factors may continue to place constraints on future growth, requiring continued operational and strategic adjustments to meet the evolving needs of Metro’s public Vanpool commuter base.

Looking ahead, Metro Vanpool will continue providing safe, clean, and reliable commuter service while balancing strategic efforts to meet the goals of the King County Strategic Climate Action Plan and ZE targets in an equitable manner. Improved monitoring to support strategic goals and reduce program risk will remain a key point of emphasis, as will exploring options to create more affordable Vanpool program fares.

Along with the Vanpool program, Metro has long built, piloted, and operated community-focused flexible services. To better serve communities, Metro is innovating those flexible services and integrating them into a more unified, efficient, and easy-to-use system. The Vanpool program will be part of this adaptation and will help ensure the changing needs of customers are met seamlessly.

Metro thanks the King County Council and Executive for their support of the program. Metro also recognizes and deeply appreciates staff from the Executive's Office who have provided significant support in developing, writing, and reviewing this report.

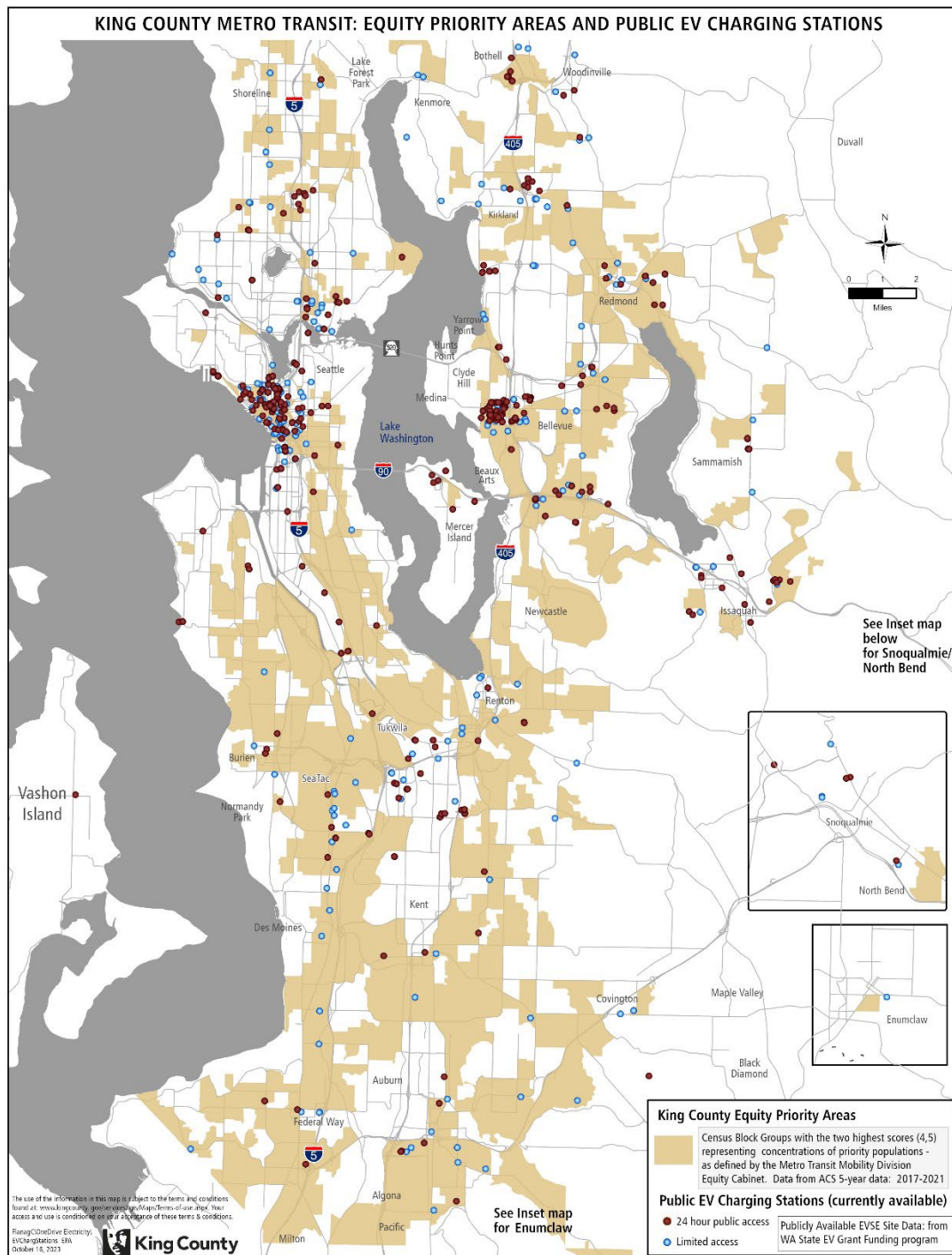
VI. Appendix A: EV Charging Infrastructure and Availability

EV charging infrastructure has not been widely deployed in King County, with even less access available in priority population areas. Map 1 below identifies current public EV charging stations that provide 24-hour public access overlayed with areas that include populations of greatest need based on equity priority area scoring. Equity priority area scores are weighted according to the following categories:

1. Persons of Color – 40 percent of the score
2. Poverty – 30 percent of the score
3. Limited English Proficiency – 10 percent of the score
4. Populations with Disabilities – 10 percent of the score
5. Foreign Born Population – 10 percent of the score

The map identifies socioeconomic disparities experienced by underserved and underrepresented communities in the highlighted areas. The map highlights where opportunities exist to enhance and expand the charging infrastructure access across King County.

Map 1: King County Metro Transit: Equity Priority Areas and Public EV Charging Stations



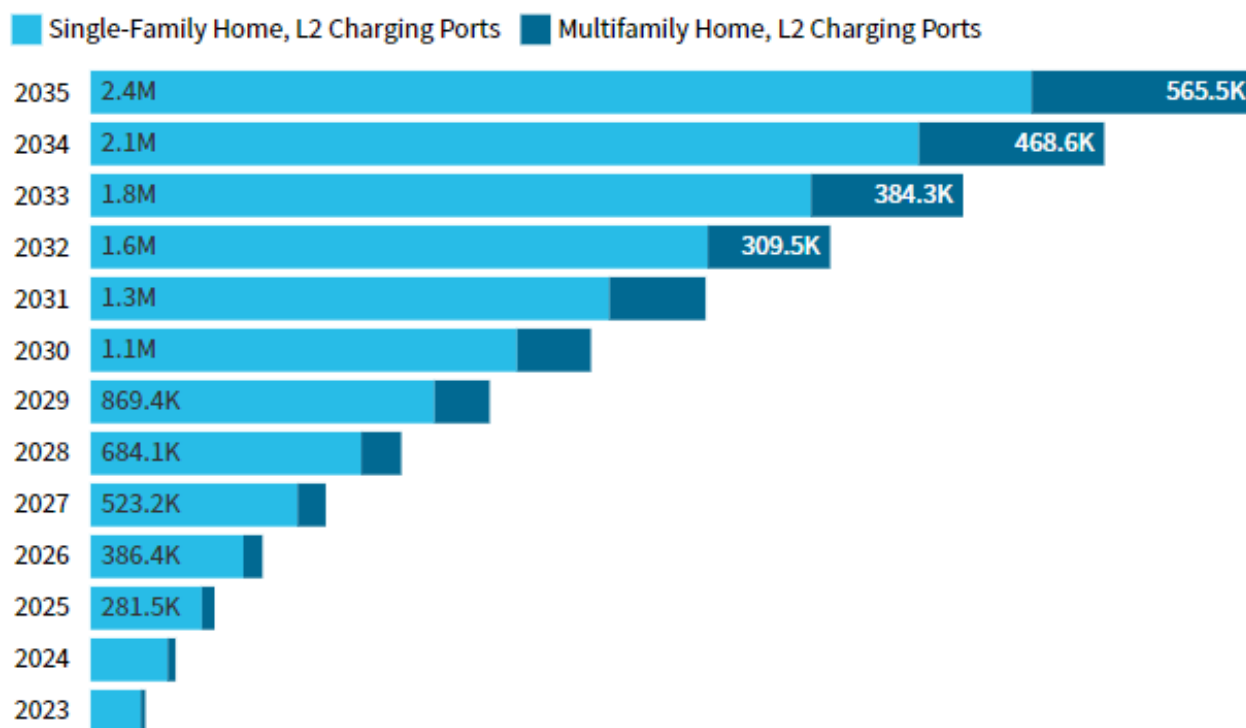
The Interagency Electric Vehicle Coordinating Council,¹⁰ created as part of the Move Ahead Washington Legislation (ESSB 5974), recognizes that, in addition to inequitable distribution of public charging infrastructure, home charging (which Vanpool participants will likely rely on in the near term) is

¹⁰ [EV Coordinating Council - Washington State Department of Commerce](#)

primarily accessible to those who live in a single-family home with access to a 110v outlet or a personal level II charger. There is limited charging infrastructure in multi-family dwellings, and most charging infrastructure is deployed in higher-income areas or along highways.

Addressing the charging infrastructure is going to require a regional/national approach where electric vehicle incentives and infrastructure accessible and available to all Washingtonians. The strategy notes “...To ensure that these monetary and equity benefits are realized, Washington will need to focus on enabling charging access for residents of multi-family homes, whether directly on-site or nearby at neighborhood charging sites to closely replicate the convenience home charging offers to residents of single-family homes. The chart below “depicts the estimated number of residential charging ports for both single-family and multifamily dwellings required to support LDVs in the Strong Electrification Policy scenario, totaling more than 2.9 million by 2035.”¹¹

Cumulative Residential Charging Ports Required, Strong Electrification Policy Scenario



¹¹ [Final RMI-US-WA-Transportation-Electrification-Strategy_full-report_020224.pdf](#) | Powered by Box, page 27.

To improve access to EVs and charging infrastructure for populations of greatest need, Metro is:

- Prioritizing The ZE Vanpools purchases to serve communities, disproportionately impacted by air pollution and climate change to the extent that demand exists for Vanpooling and suitable charging infrastructure is available;
- Helping Vanpool participants find existing charging locations;
- Identifying partnering opportunities with Metro's employer and jurisdictional customers to expand charging infrastructure for Vanpools, and
- Seeking grants and other funding to expand charging infrastructure for Metro fleet, including Vanpool.