

Fare Enforcement Briefing

Transportation, Economy, and
Environment (TrEE) Committee

June 16, 2026

Introduction to Metro Fares

Metro Fares by the Numbers

Metro collects fares to help fund transit service.

\$78M

2025 Metro fare revenue

63%

Share of Metro fare revenue
from business customers

20%

Share of Metro boardings
made by reduced fare riders

10-15%

Share of operating costs Metro
aims to recover with fares

8.5%

Share of operating costs Metro
recovered with fares in 2025

1 in 11

Share of bus service hours
covered by fare revenue

Policy Framework

Community –

- Invest upstream, where needs are greatest
- Prioritize awareness, access, and ease of use

Regional Fare Forum –

Regionally prioritized outcomes:

- 1) Alignment
- 2) Improvements to reduced fare enrollment and verification
- 3) Affordability

KC Council –

- Take an income-based approach to fares, and prioritize equitable access, meeting revenue targets, and regional alignment
- Prepare for a future without on-board cash fare payment

KC Executive –

- Breaking the cycle
- Building for affordability
- Be in community
- Better government

Other considerations -

- Tap-to-pay
- ORCA card virtualization
- FIFA
- Regional system expansion

Metro envisions
a fares system that is:

**EASY
FAIR &
AFFORDABLE**

Income-Based Approach to Fares

Metro takes an income-based approach to fares. Prioritizing revenue from business customers and full fare riders allows Metro to offer reduced fares to riders who need them.

Full Fare - \$3.00

Available for:

- Adult riders (aged 19-64)

Reduced Fare - \$1.00

Available for:

- Low-income riders (via ORCA LIFT for riders earning <200% federal poverty level)
- Riders with disabilities
- Senior riders (age 65 and up)

Fully Subsidized Fare - \$0.00

Available for:

- Youth riders (age 18 and under)
- Some very low-income riders (via Subsidized Annual Pass for participants in 6 state benefit programs and earning <80% FPL)

2026-2027 Focus Areas



Fare collection

Operating and maintaining systems that collect fares, coordinating with frontline work groups, labor, and others.

Customer experience

Delivering more fare access and options, with a focus on riders with barriers.



Regional coordination

Supporting rider access to the regional transit system, and implementation of Regional Fare Forum priorities of alignment, improved enrollment and verification, and affordability.

Financial stewardship

Increasing fare revenue, reducing fare evasion, strategically deploying fare enforcement, and using data to drive fare strategy and policies.



Fare Enforcement Overview

Shifting Landscape

Perceptions of safety, rider expectations, and fare revenue and compliance shifted considerably during the pandemic. Beginning in 2020, Metro launched several initiatives to stabilize the system and welcome riders, rebuild ridership, and reshape approaches to safety, security, and fare enforcement.



Key Activities

- Resume fare collection
- Ridership recovery initiatives
- Expand business programs
- Reassess traditional safety and security practices (SaFE Reform Initiative)
- Increase rate for adult fares and align reduced fares
- Launch Regional Transit Safety Task Force

Community Approach to Fare Enforcement

Metro re-launched Fare Enforcement in May 2025 with an updated approach informed by 2018 audit findings and community members from the SaFE Equity Workgroup and Fare Enforcement and Fare Education Taskforce.

2018 Audit Findings:

- Address systemic inequities around vulnerable populations, including the unhoused
- Unresolved citations led to increased costs in the District Courts that challenged financial stability

2024 Community Recommendations:

- Lead with fare education to foster positive interactions
- Emphasize reduced fare options and how to access them
- Provide information about resolving a fare non-payment when issued a citation
- Work with riders to find the resolution that's right for them through Fare Adjudication

Outcomes-based Change

Building a fare enforcement program that:

- Leads with education and resources
- Concentrates officers where they are needed
- Equally inspects riders for proof of payment and offers a range of resolution options

Leads to:

- A stronger culture of 'riding right'
- Greater access to fare information and resources
- More fare revenue to invest in transit service

Evaluating Implementation

Metro re-launched fare inspection on the system on 3/31/2025, resuming full fare enforcement with warnings and citations on 5/31/2025.

Lead with Education & Resources

- Systemwide fare education campaign
- First two months of fare inspection focused on education and resources

Concentrate officers where they are needed

- Average 8 teams of Fare Enforcement Officers (FEOs) conducting fare enforcement between 5:30am-11:30pm daily.
- 10 routes with high ridership and incident reports (A, C, D, E, F, H, 7, 36, 40, 106)

Conduct fare enforcement, offer resolution options

- From 5/31/2025-3/31/2026 FEOs completed 119K inspections, issued 5K warnings and 30 citations

Citation Resolution

- **Pay the fine**
 - \$20 within 30 days
 - \$40 within 90 days
- **Perform 2 hours of Community Service**
 - any King County nonprofit
- **Load ORCA Card**
 - \$20 on ORCA LIFT
 - \$10 on Reduced Fare Card
- **Enroll in a Fare Program**
 - ORCA LIFT for income-qualified riders
 - Reduced Fare Program for disabled riders
 - Medicare card holders
 - Seniors (65+)

Evaluating Impact

Metro is tracking rider behavior and perception, access and information, and fare revenue after re-implementing Fare Enforcement.

Strengthen culture of
'riding right'

- Systemwide fare evasion decreased by 1%.
- Share of riders who feel safe on system increased by 12% per RNR Survey from 2024 to 2025.

Expand access to fare
information and
resources

- Reduced fare boardings increased by 16% systemwide.
- ORCA utilization increased by 1% systemwide and 3-5% on inspected routes.

Increase fare revenue
to invest in transit
service

- Total fare revenue increased by 7% systemwide from \$73M in 2024 to \$78M in 2025.

Fare Enforcement Costs

	Program Cost (2016)	Program Cost (2017-18)	Program Cost (2019-20)	Program Cost (2025)	Program Cost (2026-2027)
Fare Enforcement Operations	\$1.3M	\$2.5M	\$6.0M*	\$1.6M	\$3.4M
Administrative Costs	\$0.35M**	\$0.01M***	\$0.7M	\$0.2M	\$0.4M

* Fare enforcement operations were expanded when tunnel closed

** Administrative costs are an estimate in 2016 because costs went through the District Courts, not Metro

***This cost is low due to 2018 being the first year that Fare Adjudication was implemented (after Aug 2018)

****Note that 2021-2024, Metro didn't incur costs due to pause in Fare Enforcement

Key Takeaways from Year 1 of Fare Enforcement

Metro relaunched fare enforcement in 2025

with 30 officers deployed on ten routes.

- Community recommendations were integrated into operations
- Fare Enforcement Officers lead with fare education through inspections, teaching riders how to use the system

Since fare enforcement returned, Metro measured improvements systemwide and on inspected routes where data is available.

- On inspected routes, ORCA taps increased by 3-5%, as compared to the 1% increase systemwide



Questions