## STAFF REPORT

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| **Agenda Items:** | 5 and 6 | **Name:** | Mary Bourguignon |
| **Proposed No**.: | 2021-04222021-0424 | **Date:** | November 30, 2021 |

**SUBJECT**

Proposed Motion 2021-0422 would rescind and replace Motion 15893,[[1]](#footnote-1) which made van allocations for 2020.

Proposed Motion 2021-0424 would rescind and replace Motion 15984, which made van allocations for 2021.

In each case, the proposed legislation would remove one organization that will not be able to use its van due to the ongoing financial and operational impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and replace it with a different organization that will be able to use the van.

**SUMMARY**

Since 1995, the Council has worked with Metro to transfer retired vans from Metro’s vanpool program to nonprofit organizations and local governments that serve low-income, seniors or young people or people with disabilities.

In 2020, the Council approved Motion 15646 awarding 26 retired Metro vans. Earlier this year, the Council approved Motion 15894, allocating 37 retired Metro vans (36 newly retired vans, as well as one van remaining from 2020, which was not able to be used due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic).

One of the organizations that was originally allocated a van in 2020 through Motion 15646 (rescinded and replaced with Motion 15893) and one of the organizations that was allocated a van in 2021 through Motion 15894 are not able to use their vans due to the ongoing financial and operational impacts of the pandemic. Proposed Motions 2021-0422 and 2021-0424 would reflect these changes to the 2020 and 2021 allocations by removing the name of the organizations that cannot use their vans and re-allocating the two vans (one from 2020, one from 2021) to different organizations selected by the Councilmembers from the relevant districts.

**BACKGROUND**

**King County Metro Vanpool Program.** Metro operates a commuter vanpool program as an alternative mobility service for individuals who don’t have convenient bus service between home and work. Vanpools range in size from five to 15 riders. Each group has at least two volunteer drivers, plus a bookkeeper to track mileage, ridership, and fares. Fares are based on mileage, number of riders, and size of van.[[2]](#footnote-2) Vans are kept at a driver’s house and riders usually meet at a Park & Ride, with each group determining their own route, parking, and operating rules.

Metro sets fares for the program (which are often subsidized by employers) to recover 100 percent of the program’s direct costs and at least 25 percent of the indirect and administrative costs. Metro reports that actual 2019 direct operating costs for the program were $9.4 million and indirect operating costs were $0.9 million, with an average cost per ride of $3.07.[[3]](#footnote-3),[[4]](#footnote-4) Prior to the pandemic, Metro had been piloting a transition to lower-emission vans, including all-electric and plug-in hybrid vans.

Use of the vanpool program declined significantly during 2020, as many commuters worked from home in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Metro anticipates that, as businesses transition to hybrid work arrangements, there may be less demand for vanpools and employers may reduce the subsidies they provide to employees.[[5]](#footnote-5)

In response to the pandemic and its impacts on ridership, Metro states that its focus for the program moving forward will be on maintaining existing vanpools, while working to understand the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, including potential reductions to fleet growth to align with service planning, revised standards for vehicle age and replacement, and a revised approach to non-fixed-route electrification.[[6]](#footnote-6) These changes could ultimately affect the number and type of retired vans available to be transferred.

**Transfer of Retired Vanpool Vans.** The transfer of Metro vanpool vans to serve those in need began with a proviso in the adopted 1995 County budget. That proviso required Metro to “provide without charge at least four vanpool vehicles… for use by non-profit agencies exclusively for the purpose of transportation of low income clients.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

A description of the program, including requirements for the use of transferred vans, was incorporated into the King County Code in 2006.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The program has grown over the years, following the growth of Metro’s vanpool program. For 2021, there are 36 vans available for transfer, four to be designated by each Councilmember, as well as one van remaining from 2020, which will be re-allocated by the Councilmember who made the original, unused allocation in 2020. Each year, the Council allocates the vans by motion to non-profit organizations or local governments based on the following criteria:

* The capacity to support ongoing van operation, including assured funding for licensing, insuring, fueling, and maintaining the van;
* Ability to provide qualified and trained drivers;
* Specific plans for use of the van to transport low-income, seniors, or young people or people with disabilities, and assurance that the use shall be available to those persons without regard to affiliation with any particular organization; and
* Geographic distribution of the van allocations in order to address the mobility needs of low-income, seniors, or young people or people with disabilities countywide.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**2020 Van Transfer.** For 2020, Metro made 36 newly retired vans available for transfer. Ultimately, two of the organizations that were allocated vans were unable to use them. One of the vans was rescinded through Motion 15893 and then reallocated through Motion 15894. The second van would be rescinded and reallocated through Proposed Motion 2021-0422.

**2021 Van Transfer.** For 2021, Metro made 36 newly retired vans available for transfer. They were 2013 seven-passenger Dodge Caravan minivans, and they became available in May 2021. In addition, one van that had been retired in 2020 and allocated by the Council was not able to be used and was re-allocated to a different organization in 2021. Through Motion 15893, the Council rescinded the original 2020 van allocation for the van that was unable to be used. Through Motion 15894, the Council allocated the 36 vans retired in 2021, as well as the one van remaining from the 2020 allocation.

Since the allocation of vans through Motion 15894 earlier this year, one organization that was allocated a van has stated that it will be unable to use a van. Proposed Motion 2021-0424 would rescind Motion 15894, restate the 36 vans that were able to be used by the organizations to which they were allocated through Motion 15894, and then reallocate the van that was unable to be used to a different organization.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Motion 2021-0422
2. Proposed Motion 2021-0424
1. Motion 15893 rescinded Motion 15646, the original van allocation motion for 2020, to replace one organization that had previously indicated it was unable to use its van. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Overview of Metro Vanpool Program: <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/transportation/metro/travel-options/rideshare/programs/vanpool.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. King County Metro 2021-2022 Business Plan, September 2020, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For comparison, as noted in the Metro Connects Progress Report section of the 2020 System Evaluation Report, Attachment A to Motion 15802 (p. 19), average cost per boarding for Metro bus and DART service was $5.22 in 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. King County Metro 2021-2022 Business Plan, September 2020, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. King County Metro 2021-2022 Business Plan, September 2020, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ordinance 11578, Section 114 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ordinance 15546 as amended by Ordinance 18777, KCC 4.56.100.E [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. KCC 4.56.100.E [↑](#footnote-ref-9)