## STAFF REPORT

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| **Agenda Items:** | 7 & 8 | **Name:** | Mary Bourguignon |
| **Proposed No**.: | 2021-0230 2021-0231 | **Date:** | June 23, 2021 |

**SUBJECT**

Proposed Motion 2021-0230 would rescind and replace Motion 15646, which made 36 van allocations in 2020, to remove one organization that has indicated it will not be able to use its van due to the fiscal and operational impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Proposed Motion 2021-0231 would transfer 37 retired vanpool vans to nonprofit organizations and local governments. Agencies are designated by Councilmembers.

**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.

For 2021, Metro has 36 retired vans available to be transferred, as well as one van remaining from 2020, which was not able to be used due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and which will be re-allocated in 2021.

Proposed Motion 2021-0230 would reflect the change to the 2020 allocation by removing the name of the organization that cannot use its van. Proposed Motion 2021-0231 would transfer 36 vans retired in 2021 and one remaining van from 2020 to organizations that have been designated by Councilmembers following an application and review process (the organization names will be added by amendment).

Because of the operational changes many organizations have made to ensure staff and client safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, the requirements for agencies applying to receive a van have been changed for the duration of the pandemic emergency. This temporary change allows applicants for a van to provide their plans to use the van either to transport low-income, seniors or young people or people with disabilities OR during the pandemic “to transport goods or supplies, including, but not limited to, food, clothing, school supplies or medical equipment, to serve the needs of low-income, seniors or young people or people with disabilities.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

**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.[[3]](#footnote-3) 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.[[4]](#footnote-4),[[5]](#footnote-5) 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.[[6]](#footnote-6)

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.[[7]](#footnote-7) 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.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

A description of the program, including requirements for the use of transferred vans, was incorporated into the King County Code in 2006.[[9]](#footnote-9)

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, 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.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**2021 Van Transfer.** For 2021, Metro has 36 vans available for transfer, as well as one van remaining from 2020. The 36 vans for initial allocation are 2013 seven-passenger Dodge Caravan minivans, and they became available in May 2021. Proposed Motion 2021-0231 will be amended to list the organizations to which the vans will be transferred. As part of the application process, organizations were required to demonstrate their ability to meet program requirements, as listed in the King County Code. In addition, organizations have agreed to pick up their van no later than October 1, 2021.

Because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the organizations that was allocated a van in 2020 was unable to use it. In response, Proposed Motion 2021-0230 would rescind and replace Motion 15646, which made the 2020 allocation, by removing the organization that cannot use its van from the list of organizations in the motion.

**AMENDMENTS**

Amendment 1 to Proposed Motion 2021-0231 would add the names of organizations to receive a van in 2021. Because one van from 2020 is available to be re-allocated, the amendment lists 37 organizations (the Councilmember who made the 2020 allocation that was not able to be used has made an additional allocation for 2021).

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Motion 2021-0230
2. Proposed Motion 2021-0231
3. Amendment 1 to Proposed Motion 2021-0231

1. To make up for the removal of this van from the 2020 allocation, the 2021 motion will allocate 37 vans. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ordinance 19241 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Overview of Metro Vanpool Program: <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/transportation/metro/travel-options/rideshare/programs/vanpool.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. King County Metro 2021-2022 Business Plan, September 2020, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 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-5)
6. King County Metro 2021-2022 Business Plan, September 2020, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. King County Metro 2021-2022 Business Plan, September 2020, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ordinance 11578, Section 114 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ordinance 15546 as amended by Ordinance 18777, KCC 4.56.100.E [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. KCC 4.56.100.E [↑](#footnote-ref-10)