



Legislation Text

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Clerk 06/26/2018

A MOTION requiring the executive to transmit a report identifying opportunities to make public transit more affordable and accessible to people in need.

WHEREAS, the King County council has worked with the King County executive and Metro Transit to implement a number of programs to make public transit more affordable and accessible to people in need, and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 12643 authorized the sale of transit tickets to human services agencies at a discounted price to allow human services agencies to provide free or low-cost transit tickets to the people they serve, and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 12643 established the regional reduced fare program, which provides a reduced transit fare for people with disabilities and seniors over age sixty-five, and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 13480 authorized transit pass agreements with public school districts and established a no-charge child fare and a reduced-price youth fare for younger transit riders, and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 17757 authorized the use of region's transit fare card, the one regional card for all ("ORCA"), for a low-income fare for transit ("LIFT"), for people with household income of less than double the federal poverty level, and

WHEREAS, Motion 14772 approved a report outlining opportunities to make transit more accessible to college students, including by extending the ORCA LIFT program to students meeting ORCA LIFT eligibility guidelines, and

WHEREAS, Motion 14998 directed Metro Transit to increase efforts to enroll eligible adults in the ORCA LIFT program before July 1, 2018, and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 18609 increased the total discount to be provided under human services transit ticket program, beginning in 2018, to distribute discounted fare payment media to human service agencies, and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 18610 authorized Metro Transit to waive the three dollar administrative fee for the regional reduced fare program for people with disabilities and seniors over age sixty-five, and

WHEREAS, Metro Transit has currently implemented transit pass agreements with nearly one thousand local employers to provide ORCA cards to their employees, and

WHEREAS, Metro Transit has also implemented an ORCA multifamily development passport program, through which owners of multifamily properties can offer ORCA cards to their residents, and

WHEREAS, Metro Transit has currently implemented transit pass agreements with five public school districts, with costs paid for by the school districts, through which eligible students, with eligibility determined by income level or distance from school, are provided with an ORCA card that allows them free fare on transit during the school months, and

WHEREAS, the city of Seattle has provided funding to supplement the transit pass agreement for the Seattle public school district so as to provide eligible students, who are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program and are in grades six through twelve, with an ORCA card that allows them free fare on transit year-round, and

WHEREAS, in 2017, Metro Transit implemented a summer reduced ORCA youth fare that was one-third of the regular youth fare for young people between the ages of six and eighteen during the summer months, and

WHEREAS, Metro Transit is planning a 2018 summer ORCA youth pass pilot program for the Highline and Lake Washington school districts, through which high school students who are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program and are working during summer 2018 will receive an ORCA card that will allow them free fare on transit during the summer months, and

WHEREAS, the city of Seattle has announced the intention to fund the ORCA opportunity program,

which will provide ORCA cards that will allow free fare on transit year-round to all high school students in the Seattle public school district, as well as college students who are participating in the Seattle Promise program, with a contribution to be provided by Metro Transit during the first year of program operations, and

WHEREAS, Metro Transit is engaged in an ongoing work program related to fares, which aims to increase equity and social justice opportunities, while increasing affordability, speeding passenger boarding, and increasing safety for bus drivers and riders, and

WHEREAS, the King County council and King County executive have expressed the goal of working with Metro Transit to provide additional opportunities to make public transit more affordable and accessible to people in need;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The executive is requested to submit a report that provides an update on its work program related to fares and that includes information on additional opportunities to make public transit more affordable and accessible to people in need, who include low- and moderate-income people and each category of persons identified in section B.

B. The report should include, but not be limited to:

1. Opportunities to make public transit more affordable and accessible to youth, including options to extend transit pass agreements to additional public school districts, to offer other reduced-fare or no-fare options for youth;

2. Opportunities to make public transit more affordable and accessible to students in postsecondary, job training and apprenticeship programs, including options to extend transit pass agreements to local colleges, universities, postsecondary programs, job training, or apprenticeship programs;

3. Opportunities to make public transit more affordable and accessible to residents of subsidized housing, including options to implement ORCA multifamily development passport programs with local public housing authorities or non-profit housing developers for their residents; and

4. Opportunities to make public transit more affordable and accessible to low-income employees, including options to implement transit pass agreements with local labor unions for employees working for employers that do not provide a transit pass program, or to franchisees or other types of employers of low-wage workers that have not historically provided transit pass programs.

C. For each of the opportunities identified in section B. of this motion, the report should include information about the potential to implement pilot projects in conjunction with the work program on fares. It should also include, for each opportunity, but not be limited to:

1. A potential timeline for each identified opportunity;
2. A cost estimate or range, including information about potential opportunity costs, including but not limited to potential implications for fare box recovery and regional service delivery;
3. A list of potential partners, with an estimate of the share of program costs each partner could be expected to cover;
4. Information about how the identified opportunities would align with King County's equity and social justice goals; and
5. An assessment of how identified opportunities could provide countywide benefits, consistent with the goals of geographic value identified in the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021, as updated by Ordinance 18301, or other adopted county policy.

D. The report shall also include the information on very-low-income fare options required by Ordinance 18409, Section 115, Proviso P1, including but not limited to:

1. A study of the feasibility of establishing a very-low-income Metro fare for individuals who are in households with incomes of two hundred percent or less of the federal poverty level and are unable to afford the ORCA LIFT fare;
2. Estimates of changes in ridership, fare revenue and farebox recovery ratio resulting from the implementation of a very-low-income Metro fare;

3. Strategies to minimize any impacts on the farebox recovery ratio;

4. Analysis of how implementing a very-low-income Metro fare will effectuate the county's Equity and Social Justice Initiative; and

5. The financial and technical considerations that would affect implementation of the very-low-income Metro fare program.

E. The executive should file the report required by this section by September 27, 2018, in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, the director of legislative analysis and the lead staff for the mobility committee, or its successor.