



**KING COUNTY**

1200 King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

**Signature Report**

**Ordinance 19531**

**Proposed No.** 2022-0391.1

**Sponsors** McDermott

1           AN ORDINANCE relating to public transportation;  
 2           suspending the general financial practices and farebox  
 3           recovery ration sections of the 2016 Fund Management  
 4           Policies for the Public Transportation Fund during the  
 5           2023-2024 biennium.

6           BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

7           **SECTION 1. Findings:**

8           A. Adopted transit fund management policies provide a framework to ensure the  
 9 financial health and viability of the public transportation fund.

10          B. In July 2016, following recommendations from a staff work group and review  
 11 by a special committee on transit, the 2016 Fund Management Policies for the Public  
 12 Transportation Fund were adopted through Ordinance 18321.

13          C. The 2016 Fund Management Policies for the Public Transportation Fund set  
 14 general financial practices and a fund structure for the public transportation fund, as well  
 15 as policies and targets for financial and capital planning, expenditures, revenues, and  
 16 reserves.

17          D. King County government has experienced significant operational and fiscal  
 18 impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Though the impacts have lessened since the  
 19 height of the pandemic, many remain and are expected to continue into the 2023-2024  
 20 biennium, including reduced fare revenue for the public transportation fund.

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21 E. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in multiple extraordinary measures taken to  
22 respond to the pandemic. Motion 15610, passed on March 3, 2020, affirmed the  
23 proclamation of an emergency. Ordinance 19115 ratified the executive's proclamation of  
24 the 2019-2020 biennium budget cycle as an emergency budget crisis, and Ordinance  
25 19201 did the same for the 2021-2022 budget cycle.

26 F. The Metro transit department made operational changes during the COVID-19  
27 pandemic to respond to lower ridership and to ensure the health and safety of employees  
28 and passengers. Changes included reductions or suspension of service on many routes  
29 and the suspension of fares from March 21, 2020, to October 1, 2020.

30 G. The Metro transit department received \$240 million less in bus fare revenues  
31 during the 2021-2022 biennium than had been anticipated before the pandemic.

32 H. In September 2020, the Metro transit department director informed the council  
33 that, during the 2021-2022 biennium, the Metro transit department anticipated not  
34 meeting either the farebox recovery target of thirty percent of passenger related operating  
35 costs or the farebox recovery ratio of at least twenty-five percent of passenger related  
36 operating costs set by the 2016 Fund Management Policies for the Public Transportation  
37 Fund. The council suspended those sections of the fund management policies via  
38 Ordinance 19206.

39 I. Ridership and fare revenue have increased since the height of the pandemic but  
40 remain significantly below 2019 levels. The Metro transit department's actual farebox  
41 recovery ratio was 7.2 percent in 2021 and the department estimates the ratio in 2022 will  
42 be 7.6 percent, 7.7 percent in 2023 and 9.4 percent in 2024.

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43 J. The Metro transit department is also planning for two fare policy changes to  
44 increase accessibility: reducing the youth fare to \$0.00 and a one-year pilot to reduce the  
45 ORCA LIFT fare to \$1.00. Those changes will impact the Metro transit department's  
46 farebox recovery by reducing fare revenue from those categories.

47 K. Ridership and work patterns have not stabilized as the region recovers from  
48 the pandemic. The Metro transit department will continue to monitor how riders use  
49 transit so as to restore and grow service to meet these changing ridership needs. Work  
50 and ridership trends over the next biennium will also help the Metro transit department  
51 understand if the farebox recovery policy might need to be updated in the future.

52 L. As a result of decreased ridership and fare revenue, the Metro transit  
53 department anticipates it will not be able to comply with the general financial practices  
54 and farebox recovery ratio sections of the 2016 Fund Management Policies for the Public  
55 Transportation Fund during the 2023-2024 biennium. The Metro transit department  
56 requests a continued suspension of those sections of the policies in the 2023-2024  
57 biennium.

58 M. The Metro transit department will consider evolving regional conditions and  
59 any fare policy changes during 2023-2024 and will recommend updates to the farebox  
60 recovery section of the 2016 fund management policies, if needed, with the 2025-2026  
61 biennial budget cycle.

62 SECTION 2. During the 2023-2024 biennium, the sections of the 2016 Fund  
63 Management Policies for the Public Transportation Fund relating to general financial  
64 practices, in Section I.A., and farebox recovery ratio, in Section III.A., are suspended.

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65            SECTION 3. All other sections of the 2016 Fund Management Policies for the  
66 Public Transportation Fund remain in effect.


Ordinance 19531 was introduced on 10/4/2022 and passed by the Metropolitan King County Council on 11/15/2022, by the following vote:

Yes: 9 - Balducci, Dembowski, Dunn, Kohl-Welles, Perry, McDermott, Upthegrove, von Reichbauer and Zahilay

KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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Claudia Balducci, Chair

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Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of 11/29/2022, \_\_\_\_\_.

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**Attachments:** None

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