



516 Third Avenue, Council
Chambers, 10th Floor,
Seattle, WA 98104

King County

Meeting Agenda

Regional Transit Committee

Councilmembers:
Steffanie Fain, Chair
Sarah Perry, Pete von Reichbauer

Sound Cities Association:
Vice Chair: Ryan McIrvine, Renton; Neal Black, Kirkland; JC Harris, Des Moines;
Susan Honda, Federal Way; Jim Ribail, Carnation; Pamela Stuart, Sammamish;
Toni Troutner, Kent; Tracy Taylor, Auburn

Alternates:
Vishal Bhargava, Bellevue; Larry Goldman, Lake Forest Park;
Councilmember Julie Hsieh, Mercer Island; Mayor James Mayhew, Snoqualmie;

City of Seattle:
Alexis Mercedes Rinck, Rob Saka
Alternate: Dionne Foster

Lead Staff: Mary Bourguignon (206-263-3296)
Committee Clerk: Blake Wells (206-263-1617)

3:00 PM

Wednesday, September 16, 2026

Hybrid Meeting

Hybrid Meetings: Attend King County Council committee meetings in person in Council Chambers (Room 1001), 516 3rd Avenue in Seattle, or through remote access. Details on how to attend and/or provide comment remotely are listed below.

Pursuant to K.C.C. 1.24.035 A. and F., this meeting is also noticed as a meeting of the Metropolitan King County Council, whose agenda is limited to the committee business. In this meeting only the rules and procedures applicable to committees apply and not those applicable to full council meetings.

HOW TO PROVIDE PUBLIC COMMENT: The Regional Transit Committee values community input and looks forward to hearing from you on agenda items.



Sign language and interpreter services can be arranged given sufficient notice (206-848-0355).
TTY Number - TTY 711.
Council Chambers is equipped with a hearing loop, which provides a wireless signal that is picked up by a hearing aid when it is set to 'T' (Telecoil) setting.



There are three ways to provide public comment:

1. In person: You may attend the meeting and provide comment in the Council Chambers.
2. By email: You may comment in writing on current agenda items by submitting your email comments to committees@kingcounty.gov. If your email is received by 1:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting, your email comments will be distributed to the committee members and appropriate staff prior to the meeting.
3. Remote attendance at the meeting by phone or computer (see "Connecting to the Webinar" below).

You may provide oral comment on current agenda items during the meeting's public comment period. You are not required to sign up in advance. Comments are limited to current agenda items.

You have the right to language access services at no cost to you. To request these services, please contact Language Access Coordinator, Tera Chea at 206-477-9259 or email tera.chea2@kingcounty.gov by 8:00 a.m. three business days prior to the meeting.

CONNECTING TO THE WEBINAR:

Webinar ID: 883 1320 7140

By computer using the Zoom application at <https://zoom.us/join> and the webinar ID above.

Via phone by calling 1-253-215-8782 and using the webinar ID above.

HOW TO WATCH/LISTEN TO THE MEETING REMOTELY: There are several ways to watch or listen in to the meeting:

- 1) Stream online via this link: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/kctv>, or input the link web address into your web browser.
- 2) Watch King County TV on Comcast Channel 22 and 322(HD) and Astound Broadband Channels 22 and 711(HD)
- 3) Listen to the meeting by telephone – See "Connecting to the Webinar" above.

To help us manage the meeting, if you do not wish to be called upon for public comment please use the Livestream or King County TV options listed above, if possible, to watch or listen to the meeting.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

To show a PDF of the written materials for an agenda item, click on the agenda item below.



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3. Approval of Minutes p. 4

July 15, 2026 meeting minutes

4. Chair's Report**5. Public Comment****6. General Manager's Report****Briefings****7. [Briefing No. 2026-B0103](#) p. 7**

Transition to zero-emission fleet, opening of fully-electric Tukwila Base

Sunny Knott, ZE Program Director, Metro Transit Department

Adrian Down, ZE Program Deputy Director, Metro Transit Department

Patricia Spanjer, Tukwila Base Activation Lead, Metro Transit Department

8. [Briefing No. 2026-B0104](#) p. 32

RapidRide update on I, J, K, R

Jerry Roberson, AICP, RapidRide Expansion Program Lead, Metro Transit Department

9. [Briefing No. 2026-B0105](#) p. 51

ORCA use and distribution

Rachel Wilch, Strategic Planning Manager, Fares Program, Metro Transit Department

Other Business**Adjournment**

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King County

1200 King County
Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Meeting Minutes Regional Transit Committee

Councilmembers:

Steffanie Fain, Chair

Sarah Perry, Pete von Reichbauer

Sound Cities Association:

Vice Chair: Ryan McIrvine, Renton; Neal Black, Kirkland; JC

Harris, Des Moines;

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Lead Staff: Mary Bourguignon (206-263-3296)

Committee Clerk: Blake Wells (206-263-1617)

3:00 PM

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

Hybrid Meeting

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chair Fain called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present: 13 - McIrvine, Troutner, Honda, Black, Fain, von Reichbauer, Turner, Harris, Stuart, Bhargava, Goldman, Hsieh and Mayhew

Excused: 4 - Saka, Perry, Rinck and Ribail

3. Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair McIrvine moved approval of the June 17, 2026 meeting minutes. There being no objections, the minutes were approved.

4. Chair's Report

Chair Fain congratulated Metro Transit Department on its performance during the World Cup; announced plans for a future joint meeting with the Transportation, Economy, and Environment Committee; and provided an overview of the agenda.

5. Public Comment

The following people provided public comment:

*Joe Kunzler
Pankaj Parag*

6. General Manager's Report

Michelle Allison, General Manager, Metro Transit Department, briefed the committee on ridership and service throughout the World Cup, Juneteenth, Pride Month, and the Fourth of July; fall service changes; and Metro's Next Stop; and answered questions from the members.

Briefings**7. [Briefing No. 2026-B0076](#)**

Metro's Next Stop (Planning for Future Investments)

DeAnna Martin, Chief of Staff, Metro Transit Department, briefed the committee via PowerPoint presentation and answered questions from the members.

This matter was presented.

8. [Briefing No. 2026-B0086](#)

Metro's transit safety planning and Regional Transit Safety Task Force update (including efforts to prevent trafficking via transit)

DeAnna Martin, Chief of Staff, Metro Transit Department; and Rebecca Frankhouser, Director, Safety, Security, and Quality Assurance Division, Metro Transit Department; briefed the committee via PowerPoint presentation and answered questions from the members.

This matter was presented.

Other Business

There was no other business to come before the committee.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 PM.

Approved this _____ day of _____

Clerk's Signature



Metropolitan King County Council Staff Report

Committee:	Regional Transit Committee		
Agenda Item:	7	Analyst(s):	Mary Bourguignon
Proposed No.:	2026-B0103	Meeting Date:	September 16, 2026

OVERVIEW

TOPIC: During today's briefing, Metro staff will discuss Metro's progress on transitioning to a zero-emission fleet, including the opening of the fully electric Tukwila Base.

SUMMARY

Zero-emission goal. In early 2020, King County adopted goals for Metro to significantly lower its emissions, including that Metro's 1,000+ buses should be 100% zero-emission by 2035, and that Metro's other fleets (such as its Access paratransit and vanpool vehicles) should achieve zero-emission status gradually within that same timeframe.¹

However, in response to increasing costs, technology limitations,² and a shortage of domestic bus manufacturers,³ the County took action in 2025 to delay the zero-emission transition timeline for Metro non-bus fleets.⁴ In addition, as part of the 2026-2027 biennial budget, Metro proposed to delay the transition of its revenue bus fleet from 2035 to the mid-2040s or beyond.

To implement this new timeline, Metro has proposed changing its approach to fleets, bases, and operations, including:

- Purchasing a mix of bus fleet types (such as diesel hybrid), rather than limiting future purchases to battery-electric buses only
- Making improvements and expansions to Metro's all-electric trolleybus fleet⁵
- Revising the plan to convert bus bases to all-electric operations, focusing instead on partial base conversions, and

¹ KCC 18.22.010.A (Ordinance 19052)

² Metro's 2025 report, Maximizing Climate Benefits through Transit, reported that zero-emission technology available in 2025 could meet only half of Metro service needs (2025-RPT0105, [link](#))

³ The King County Auditor reported on these challenges in its 2024 report, Zero Emissions: Metro Transit Working to Mitigate Risks to County's Ambitious 2035 Goal ([link](#))

⁴ KCC 18.22.010.A (Ordinance 19986)

⁵ Metro currently operates 174 electric trolleybuses on routes within Seattle.

- Moving forward with the planned 2026 opening and continued operations of the fully electric Tukwila Base.

Metro is developing an updated zero-emission implementation plan to provide more information about next steps and budget needs, as well as a new target date to achieve a 100% zero-emission revenue bus fleet.

Tukwila Base. Earlier this year, Metro opened Tukwila Base, which is located adjacent to Metro's existing South Base in Tukwila. Tukwila Base is Metro's first all-electric base, with capacity to house a fleet of 120 battery-electric buses (BEB) with 10 megawatts (MW) of power from Seattle City Light and 123 BEB pantograph chargers.

During today's briefing, Metro staff will discuss Metro's progress transitioning to a zero-emission fleet, including the opening of the fully electric Tukwila Base.

INVITED

- Sunny Knott, ZE Program Director, Metro Transit Department
- Adrian Down, ZE Program Deputy Director, Metro Transit Department
- Patricia Spanjer, Tukwila Base Activation Lead, Metro Transit Department

ATTACHMENTS

1. Metro Zero-Emission presentation

New Energy, Same Mission: King County Metro Zero Emissions Program

Regional Transit Committee
September 16, 2026



Welcome

Sunny Knott

- Zero Emissions Program Director

Adrian Down

- Zero Emissions Program Deputy Director

Patricia Spanjer

- Zero Emissions Base Activation Lead

Agenda

- Metro's Zero Emissions Program: New Energy, Same Mission
- Metro's Non-bus fleet: Recent updates
- Tukwila Base: Celebrating a Successful Opening

Metro's Zero Emissions Program



King County Metro

1300 buses across **8** bases, **900** vanpools,
400 ACCESS/DART, **3** water taxis, and nearly
800 non-revenue vehicles

Delivering **90M** rides annually on Metro vehicles



Zero Emissions (ZE) Program Vision

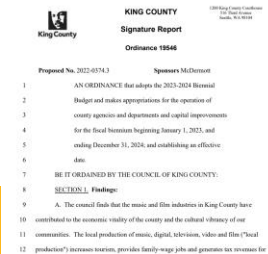
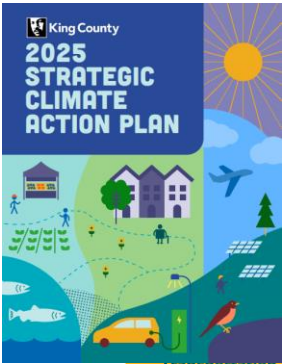
A zero-emissions mobility network that delivers cleaner air, quieter streets, and reliable transportation that communities can count on.



Why transition to a ZE fleet?



Urgent Climate Action



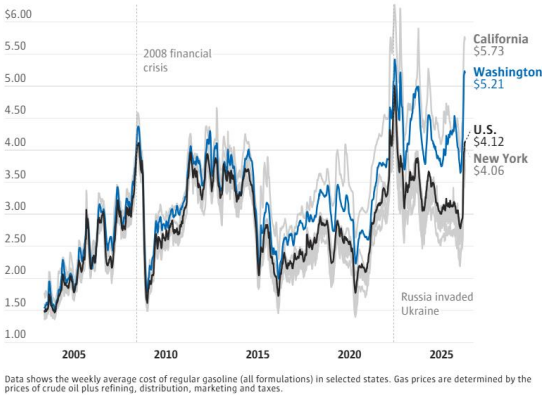
Smart long-term investment



Modernized transit, better public and workforce health



Greater resilience



Taken from Seattle Times article re: diesel pricing

(SCAP, Metro Connects, Strategic plans, KC Ordinance 19052)

How is Metro transitioning to Zero Emissions?

Thoughtful
Implementation

Workforce
Investments

Responsible
Stewardship

Industry
Leadership

Demonstrating
Progress

Moving to ZE: Bus Near-term Milestones



2017-2021

- Feasibility Report and commitment to transition to 100% zero emission
- 174 trolley buses
- 11 Proterra buses
- Opened Eastgate Park and Ride Charging Facility
- Electric bus test



2022-2025

- Opened South Base Test Facility
- 40 BEBs in service
- Transit system electrification study
- BEB Academy +
- 1st sale of WA Clean Fuel Program credits



2026

- Tukwila Base opening
- Returned routes 2, 13, 49 back to trolley
- Renewable diesel for all hybrid buses (*when available*)
- Update Bus Implementation Plan



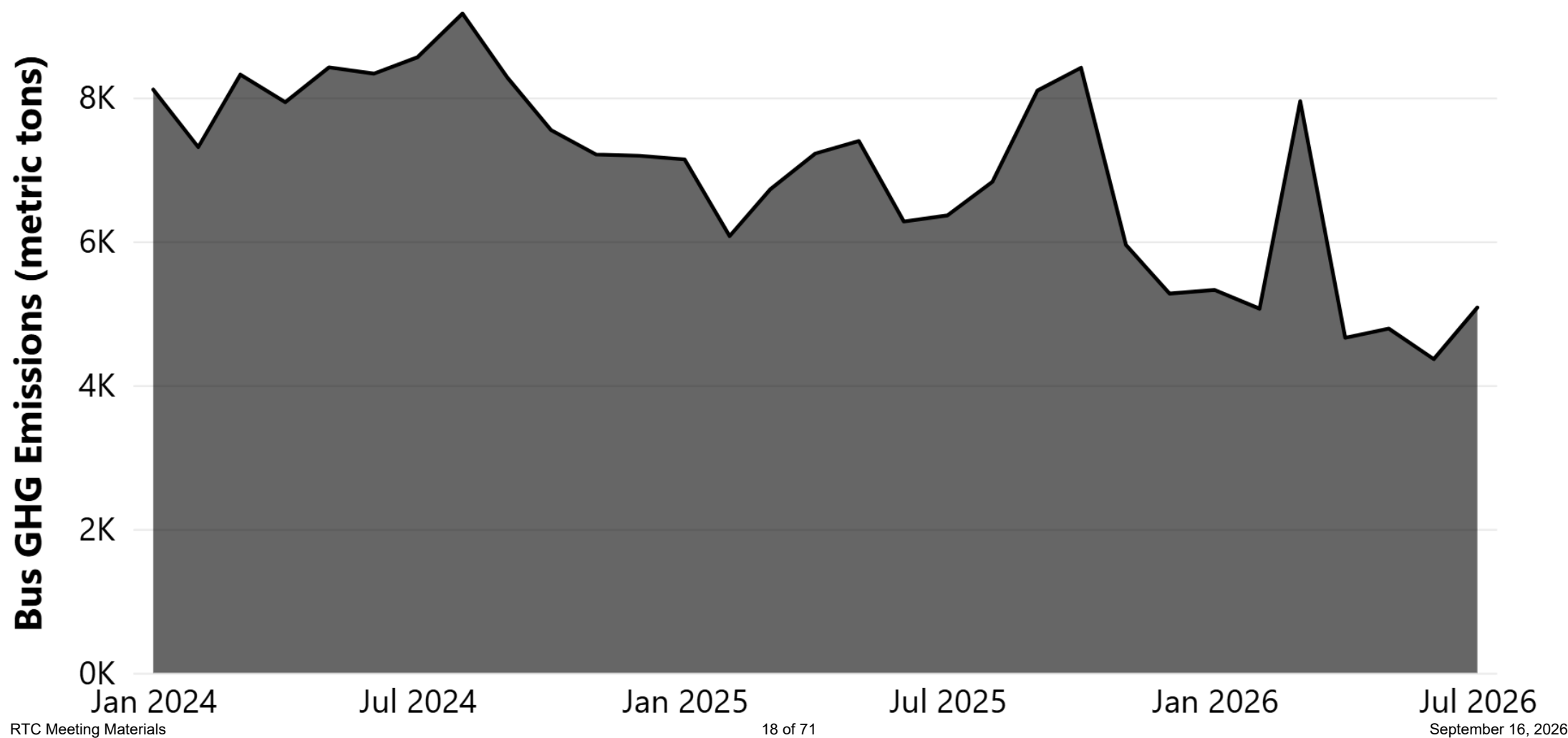
2027-2028

- Grow BEB service to fully deploy 129 BEBs
- Decrease use of hybrids on trolley routes
- New trolley batteries for off-wire ops
- Plan for Central Campus partial conversion
- Solaris BEB pilot
- J Line trolley launches

- Ongoing partnerships with utilities, jurisdictions, transit partners, other agencies
- Workforce training and agency readiness

Bus Fleet Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Metro fleet emissions have declined by nearly 50%, mostly since mid-2024



Non-Bus Fleets: Recent Updates

Non-Revenue Vehicles (NRV)

- Metro has 123 electric NRVs
- Over 30% of light-duty NRVs (sedans, SUVs, and small pickups) are electric, with more coming soon
 - 40% by end of 2026
 - 50% by end of 2027
- 14% of medium-duty NRVs (vans and trucks) are electric, including 24 EV maintenance vans
 - Utilizing WAZIP grant to pilot 2 large EV trucks
 - Shelter cleaning truck
 - Mobile Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) to provide emergency support for battery electric buses and NRVs



Flexible Services

- Continuing to increase electric Vanpool vehicles following successful pilot in 2025
- All propane-fueled Access paratransit vehicles (25% of fleet) using renewable propane
 - Using renewable propane instead of gasoline saved \$1.1 million in 2025
 - Exploring expanding propane fleet
- Piloting electric vehicles in new Metro Flex service areas



Marine Division

- Using renewable diesel when available starting late 2025
- Decarbonization Feasibility Study completed in 2023
 - Electrification possible for West Seattle route
 - Renewable diesel and hybridization possible for Vashon route



Tukwila Base: Celebrating a Successful Opening

Tukwila Base & Metro's Transition to ZE

- Metro's first zero emissions battery electric bus (BEB) base.
- Service delivery began March 2026.
- Redeveloped from previous Interim Base project, initiated in 2018.



Tukwila Base: At a Glance

Service Delivery

- Scaling service profile over 1.5 years
- Full capacity:
 - 200 bus operators
 - 130 daily coach sign outs

Fleet

- 68 40' GILLIG BEB
- 21 40' RapidRide GILLIG BEB
- 31 New Flyer BEBs

Chargers

- 1:1 Bus to Charger Ratio
- 123 charging ports including 3 fast chargers

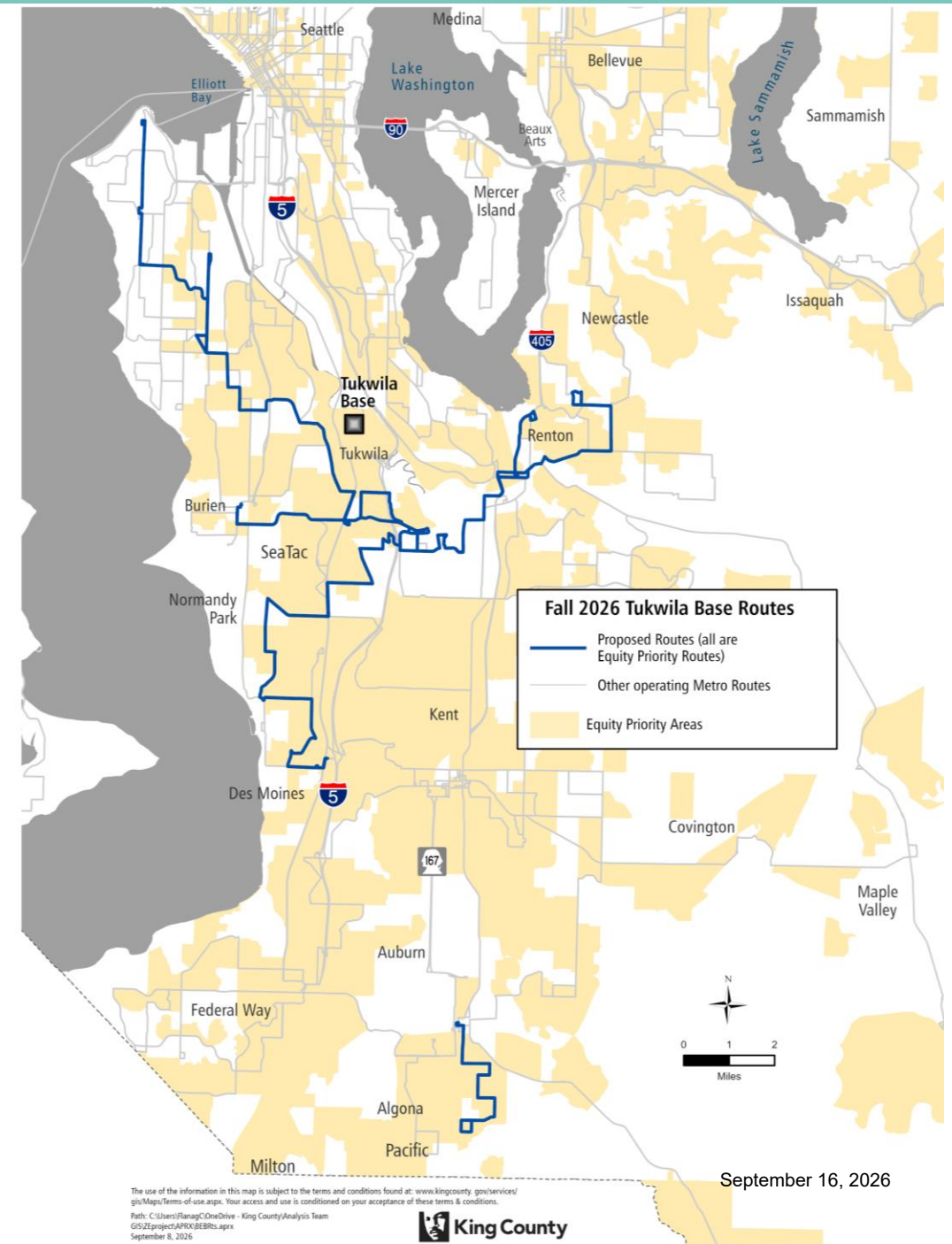
Base Overview

- Size: 544,000 sq ft



Tukwila Base: Service Profile

- Fall Service Change 2026: Routes 105, 128, 156, 184, RapidRide F Line
- Service profile doubled in size for Fall 2026 service change
 - 20,000 daily riders
 - Auburn, Burien, Des Moines, Normandy Park, Renton SeaTac, Seattle, Tukwila, and White Center
- Will continue to transition other routes to Tukwila Base through end of 2027



New Energy with Tukwila Base Activation



- Leverage learnings to inform future zero emissions projects
- Scale operations
- Celebrate along the way!

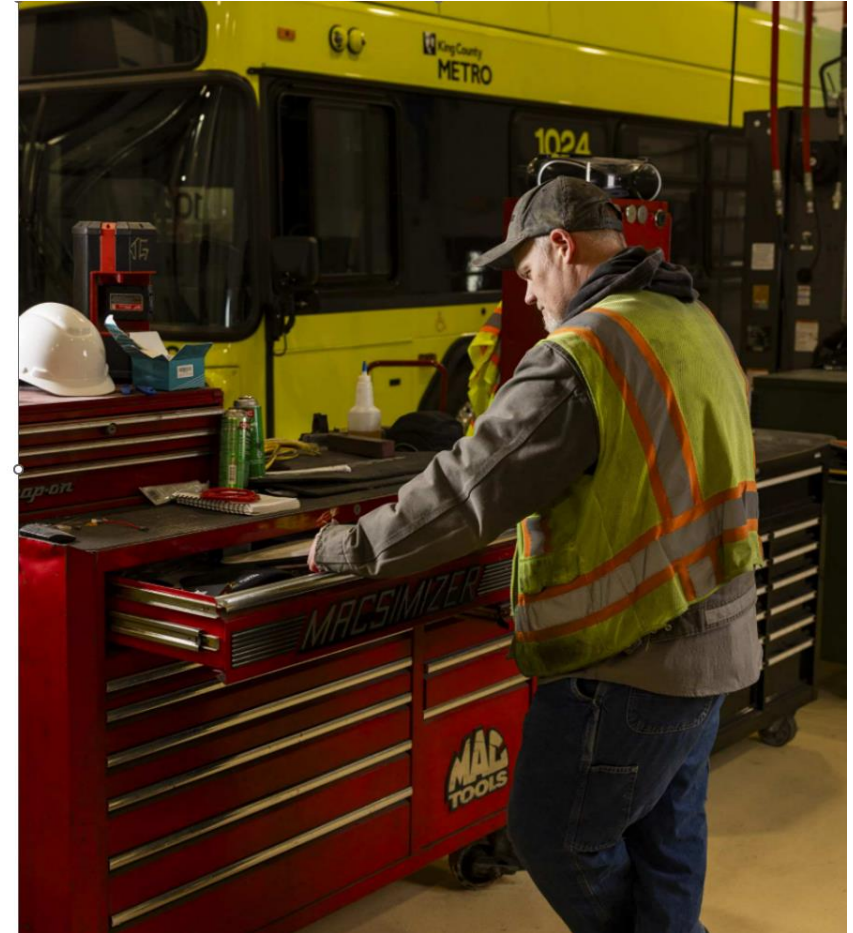
Phased Soft Launch: Testing

- Simulated Service & Small Scale Deployment
 - Energy consumption and route performance
 - Coach range
- Technology systems integration
 - Yard Management, Charge Management, Telematics
- Facilities Readiness
 - Bus chargers
 - Building and safety systems
- Interoperability for Bus Chargers and Battery Electric Buses (BEBs)



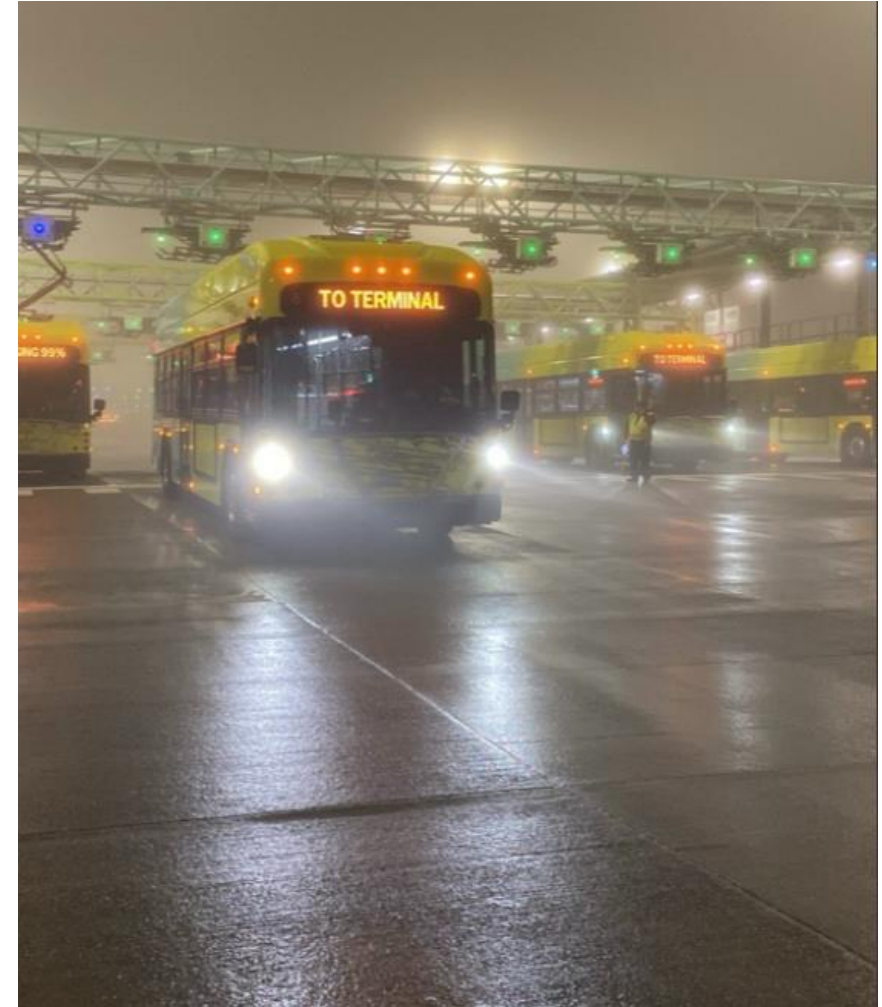
Phased Soft Launch: Training

- Electrician ABB Bus Charger certification
- Mechanic training for GILLIG BEB fleet and telematics software
- Bus Operator qualifications



Start of Service & Preparing for What's Next

- Tukwila Base informs zero emissions transitions through lessons learned:
 - Capital planning and delivery processes
 - Systems integration
 - Operational readiness



Thank you!





Metropolitan King County Council Staff Report

Committee:	Regional Transit Committee		
Agenda Item:	8	Analyst(s):	Mary Bourguignon
Proposed No.:	2026-B0105	Meeting Date:	September 16, 2026

OVERVIEW

TOPIC: During today's briefing, Metro staff will provide an update on the four RapidRide lines under development: I, J, K, and R.

SUMMARY

RapidRide Implementation. RapidRide is the name of Metro's bus rapid transit service. RapidRide lines offer high frequency service; faster, more reliable trip times using speed and reliability improvements, such as exclusive lanes and/or transit signal priority at intersections; improved stations, with shelters and real-time information signs; and red/gold branded buses and facilities.

Metro currently operates eight RapidRide lines (A-H) and is working to develop four more lines (I, J, K, R) for planned openings between 2027 and 2032.

Table 1 lists the eight existing RapidRide lines. Table 2 lists the four RapidRide lines that are currently under development.

Table 1. Existing Rapid Ride Lines

Line	Pathway	Start Date
A	Federal Way to Tukwila	Oct 2010
B	Bellevue to Redmond	Oct 2011
C	Westwood Village to South Lake Union	Sept 2012
D	Crown Hill to Downtown Seattle	Sept 2012
E	Aurora Village to Downtown Seattle	Feb 2014
F	Burien to Renton	June 2014
G	Madison Valley to Downtown Seattle	Sept 2024
H	Burien to Downtown Seattle	Mar 2023

Table 2. Rapid Ride Lines Currently Under Development

Line	Pathway	Planned Start Date
I	Renton to Auburn	2027
J	Downtown Seattle to U District	2027
K	Kirkland to Bellevue	2030
R	Rainier Beach to Downtown Seattle	2032

Metro’s long-range plan, Metro Connects, which was last updated in 2021, committed to the development of RapidRide lines G and H, which have since been opened, as well as I, J, K, and R prior to the mid-2030s.¹

The status of the four RapidRide lines currently under development can be summarized as:

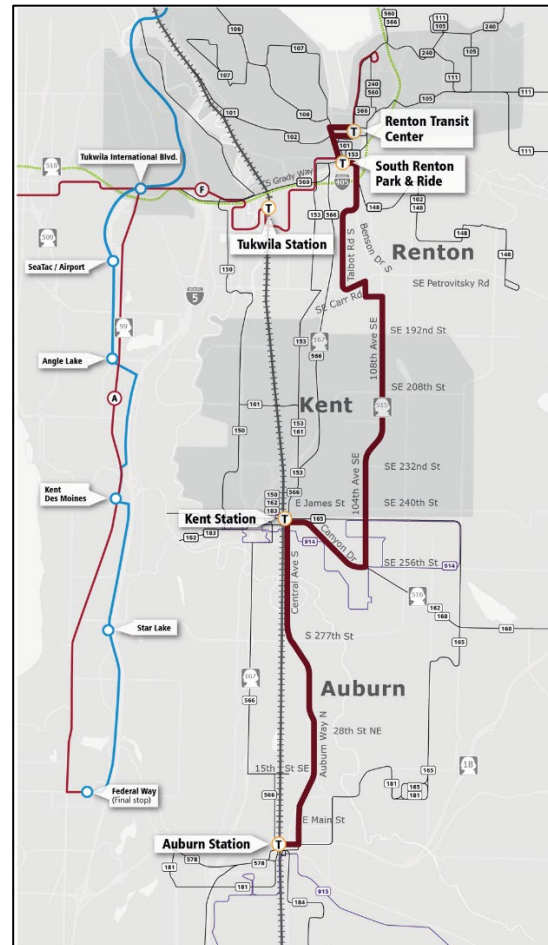
I Line. The RapidRide I Line will travel 18 miles between the Renton Transit Center and Auburn Station, via Kent Station, with 82 station locations. The I Line will replace service on Route 160 and will connect to the RapidRide F Line, Sound Transit’s I-405 bus rapid transit, and Sounder commuter rail.(See Figure 1)

The selection of a corridor for the I Line came from Metro’s Renton-Kent-Auburn Area Mobility Project, which was adopted in 2020² to restructure bus service in the area.

The I Line received a federal Small Starts grant of \$80 million toward its \$174 million project budget.

Construction is currently underway for capital improvements along the I Line route in advance of a planned opening of the route in 2027.³ Service will run every 10 minutes during

Figure 1. I Line Route



¹ Ordinance 19367, Attachment C, page 26

² Ordinances 19097, 19098

³ King County Metro, RapidRide I Line ([link](#))

weekday peak periods, every 15 minutes off peak and on weekends, and every 30 minutes at night. Metro has been coordinating with local community members, as well as with the cities of Renton, Kent, and Auburn, Sound Transit, and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

J Line. The RapidRide J Line will follow a 5.2-mile north south corridor between Downtown Seattle and the University District, largely following the pathway of Route 70.

The J Line will have 20 stations.⁴ (See Figure 2)

It will operate as a trolley route.

The J Line will connect Link light rail, Sounder commuter rail, the South Lake Union and First Hill streetcars, the Seattle monorail, Amtrak service, and other RapidRide lines, as well as regional and local bus service.

In 2024, the J Line was awarded a \$64.2 million Small Starts grant from the Federal Transit Administration toward its estimated total capital cost of \$128.5 million.

Figure 2. J Line Route



King County is funding \$13 million of the total to cover passenger facilities and intelligent transportation system improvements. Remaining funding will come from the Federal Highway Administration, Washington State Department of Transportation, University of Washington, City of Seattle's Levy to Move Seattle, and Seattle Public Utilities.

Construction is being led by the City of Seattle and is currently underway,⁵ with RapidRide service planned to launch in Fall 2027.

Prior to the start of service, the King County Council will be asked to approve a service change ordinance to determine service frequency and allocate service hours to the route.

⁴ Ordinance 19312

⁵ Seattle Department of Transportation, RapidRide J Line ([link](#))

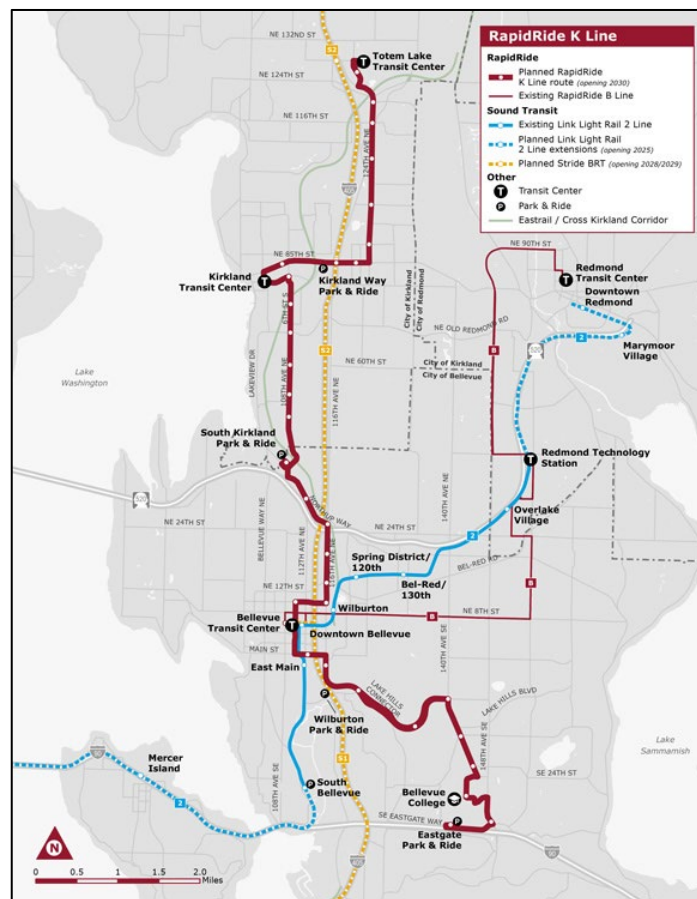
K Line. The RapidRide K Line will follow a 16-mile north south corridor with 70 stations parallel to I-405 between Bellevue and Kirkland.

The K Line will connect Totem Lake Transit Center, Kirkland Way P & R, Kirkland Transit Center, South Kirkland P & R, Bellevue Transit Center / Bellevue Downtown Station (Link), Sound Transit Stride, Bellevue College, and Eastgate P & R. It will follow portions of route 239, 245, 250, and 255.⁶ (See Figure 3)

After being paused during the pandemic, work on the K Line was restarted at the request of the King County Council.⁷

Metro states that work on the K Line is currently at 30% design. Service is currently planned to launch in 2030.

Figure 3. K Line Route



Metro notes that it is applying for multiple federal and state grant programs, including submitting a Small Starts grant application to the Federal Transit Administration in August 2025, to cover a portion of the \$85.3 million total estimated capital budget.

Metro notes that it is currently planning for how King County would be able to fulfill the required 50% local match for a federal grant, noting that additional grants or new sources of funding may be needed.

When the K Line launches, it is expected to operate every 10 minutes during weekday peak hours; 15 minutes during middays, evenings, and weekends; and 30 minutes during late evening hours.

⁶ Ordinance 19951

⁷ Ordinance 19210, Section 113, Proviso P1, as amended by Ordinance 19364, Section 86, Proviso P1, Ordinance 19546, Section 114, Proviso P4

R Line. The RapidRide R Line would be an approximately eight-mile north to south corridor between Downtown Seattle and the Rainier Beach Link light rail station, largely along Rainier Avenue S, that would replace the existing Route 7 (see Figure 4).

After pausing work on the R Line during the pandemic, Metro has resumed planning, community engagement, and coordination with the City of Seattle. The total anticipated capital budget for the R Line is currently estimated at \$91.2 million.

To achieve a 2032 start date, the Executive plans to transmit legislation to the King County Council next month that would propose an alignment (pathway) and station locations for the R Line.

Figure 4. R Line Proposal (August 2026)



During today's briefing, Metro staff will provide an update on the status of the I, J, K, and R RapidRide lines.

INVITED

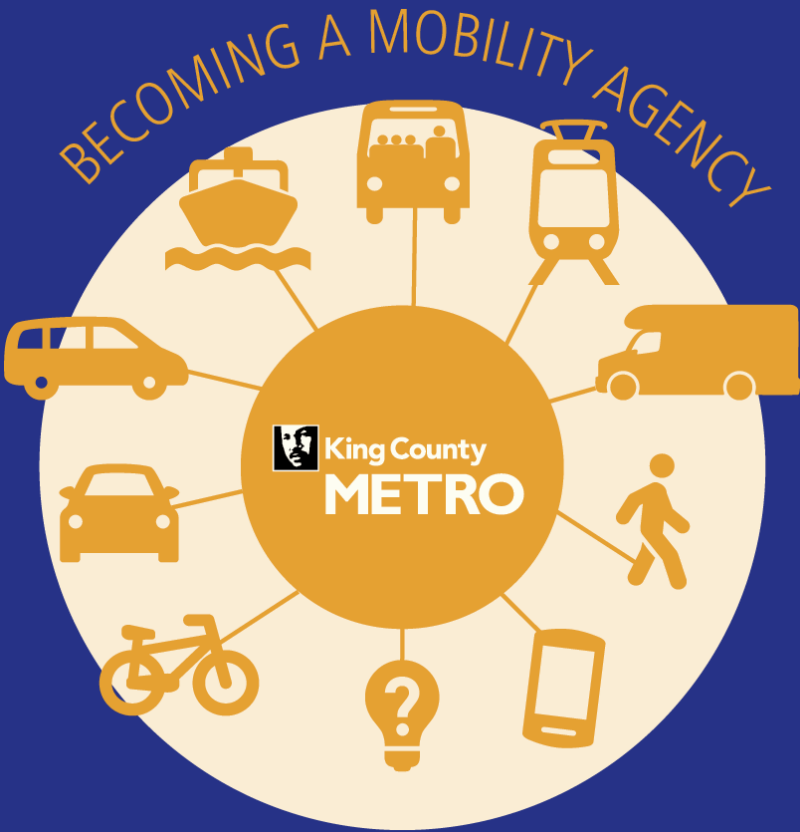
- Jerry Roberson, AICP, RapidRide Expansion Program Lead, Metro Transit Department

ATTACHMENTS

1. Metro RapidRide I, J, K, R presentation

RapidRide Update on Lines I, J, K, & R

Regional Transit Committee
September 16, 2026



Agenda

- **How RapidRide Lines Are Developed**
- **Update on Active RapidRide Expansion Projects**

How RapidRide Lines Are Developed

Introduction

Metro Connects



Climate +
Equity Policies



RapidRide
Prioritization Plan



RapidRide
Projects

Delivery of a RapidRide Line

Community engagement performed during all phases



- Needs assessment
- Alignment + service profile
- Identify capital improvements for stations, speed, access
- Existing conditions
- Design alternatives
- Property acquisition
- Permitting
- Construction mitigation
- Construction communications
- Service launch prep

Partnerships are Critical to Success



Staff time

Partnering
agreements

Funding support

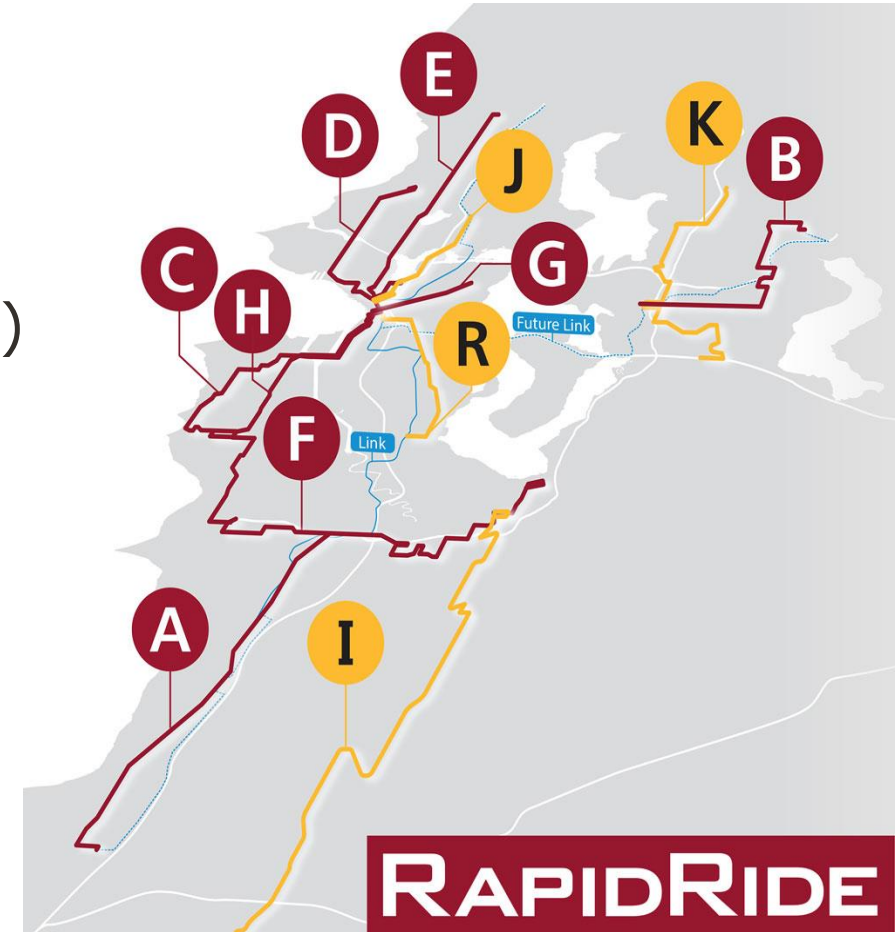
Letter(s) of
support

Outreach and
engagement

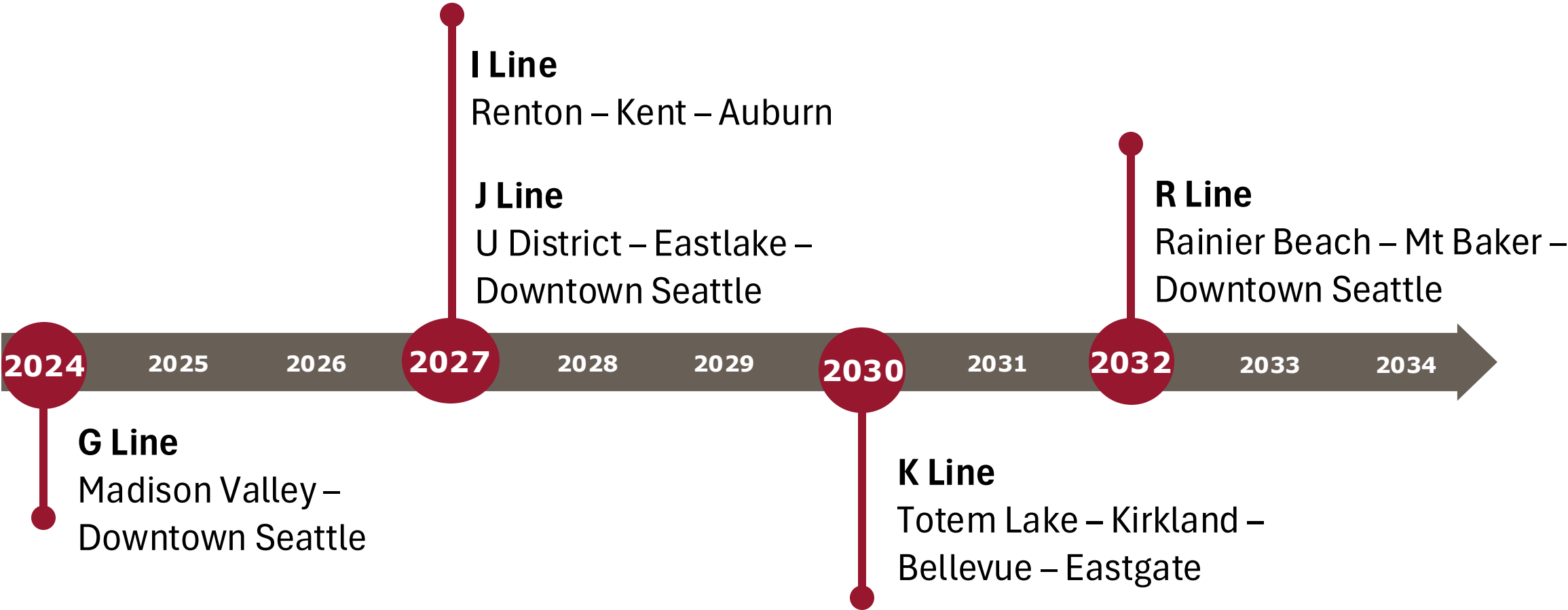
Update on Active RapidRide Expansion Projects

Overview of RapidRide Expansion

- Current (2026) Status of Active Capital Projects
 - I Line & J Line – In construction
 - K Line & R Line – Starting preliminary design
- Value of RapidRide Expansion Investment (I, J, K, R)
 - Total – \$478M
 - Metro's portion – \$240M
 - FTA portion (awarded & planned) plus jurisdictional partner portion – \$238M
- Metro Connects Long-Range Plan
 - Framework for RapidRide expansion
 - Commitment to re-investment in legacy lines



Delivery Timeline



I Line

- 18 miles; 41 station pairs; \$174M investment
- \$79.7M FTA Small Starts Grant awarded to Metro in January 2025
- Groundbreaking March 2026; project currently under construction
- **Ongoing coordination with Auburn, Kent, and Renton**
- Current construction zones in all three jurisdictions with utility relocations, right-of-way acquisitions, and community engagement ongoing
- Service planned to begin Fall 2027

Planning

RTC Meeting Materials

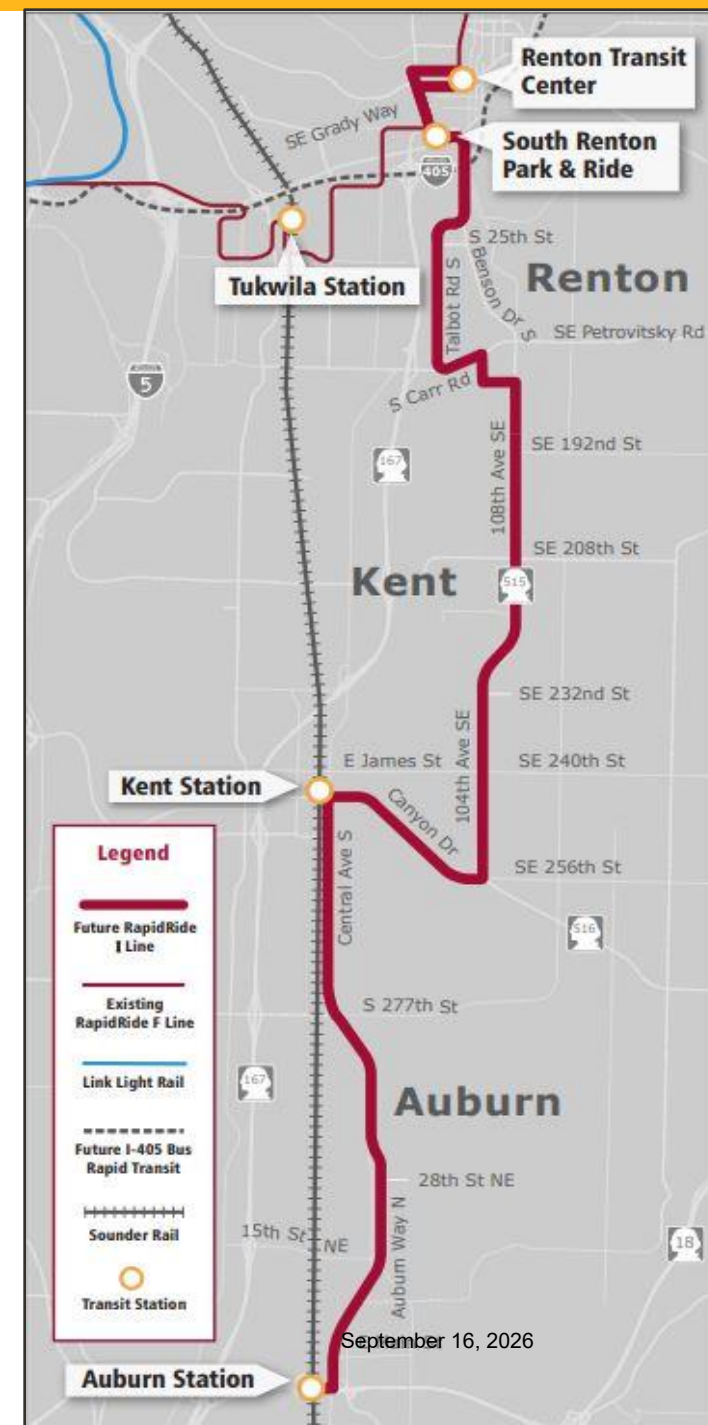
Design

Construction



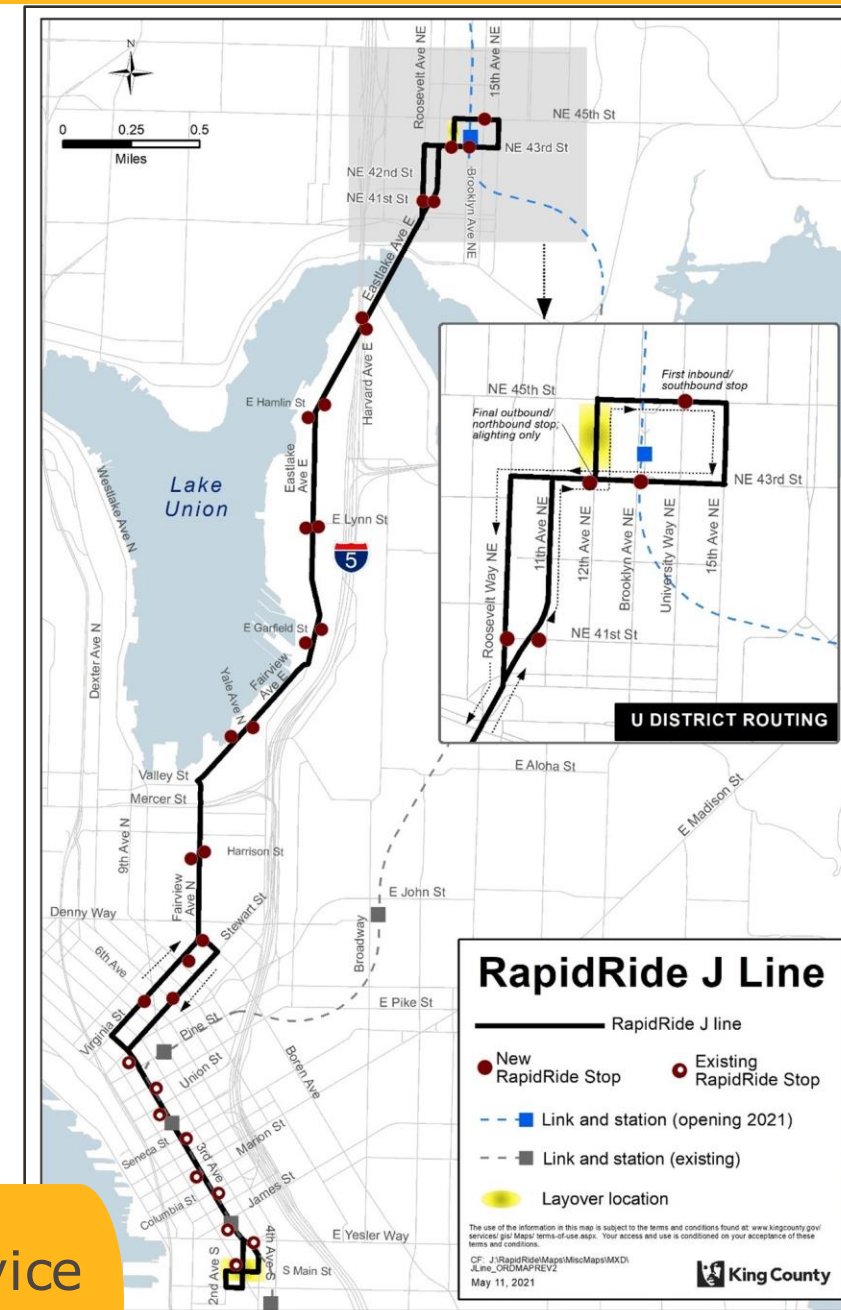
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Service
Start



J Line

- 5 miles; 20 stations; Trolley; \$128M investment
- **Partnership project with Seattle**
 - \$64M Small Starts Grant awarded to SDOT in 2024
 - Groundbreaking in October 2024; project currently under construction
 - SDOT leading planning, design, construction, and engagement
 - Metro delivering OCS, passenger facilities and station technology elements, and will lead pre-launch engagement, communications, and marketing
- Service planned to begin Fall 2027



Planning
RTC Meeting Materials

Design

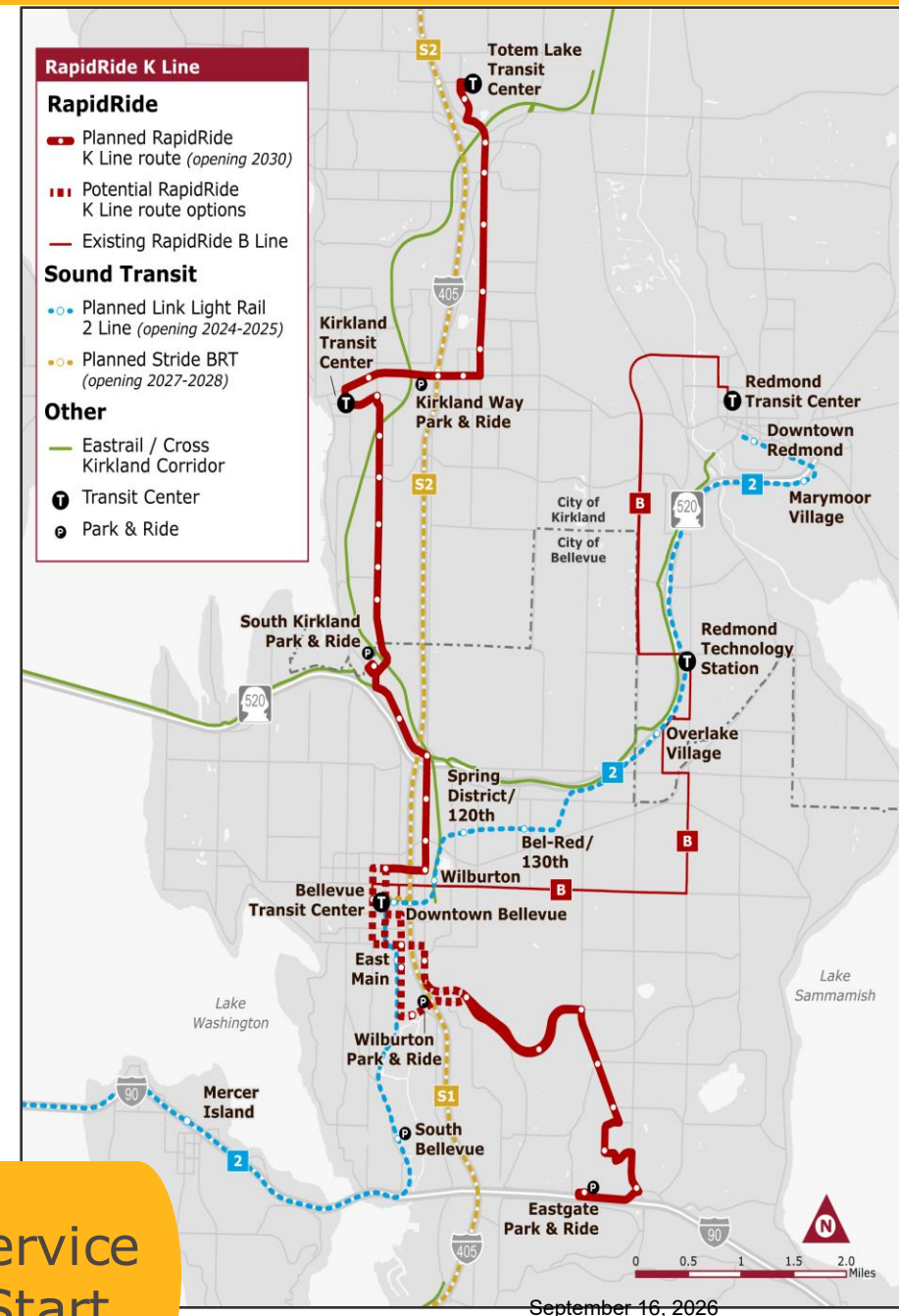
Construction
47 of 71

Service
Start

September 16, 2026

K Line

- 16 miles; 35 station pairs; \$85M investment
- Locally Preferred Alternative adopted by King Co. Council July 2025, setting pathway and station locations
- Connects with RR B Line, Stride BRT, & Link 2 Line
- FTA Small Starts Grant App. submitted Aug. 2025
- Project budget reduced from \$106M to \$85M as part of 2026-27 Council-adopted Budget
- **Partnering with Kirkland & Bellevue**
- Preliminary design to begin Fall 2026
- Service planned to begin Fall 2030



Planning
RTC Meeting Materials


Design

Construction
48 of 71

Service
Start

R Line

- 9 miles; 45 stations; Trolley; \$91M investment
- **Partnering with Seattle** to align R Line scope with Seattle's Transportation Levy scopes for same corridor
- Project budget reduced from \$129M to \$91M as part of 2026-27 Council-adopted Budget
- Conceptual design update completed June 2026
- Preliminary Design to begin early 2027, including work to adjust scope to meet new budget
- Alignment Ordinance goes to County Council for adoption November 2026
- Service planned to begin Fall 2032



Planning
RTC Meeting Materials


Design

Construction
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Service
Start

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Closing and Questions



Metropolitan King County Council Staff Report

Committee:	Regional Transit Committee		
Agenda Item:	9	Analyst(s):	Mary Bourguignon
Proposed No.:	2026-B0105	Meeting Date:	September 16, 2026

OVERVIEW

TOPIC: During today's briefing, Metro staff will share information about ORCA fare card use and distribution.

SUMMARY

In 2009, Metro partnered with a group of local transit agencies to launch the ORCA fare card.¹ ORCA cards provide a free transfer between services (such as between bus and light rail);² allow regular riders to purchase a monthly pass, which is less expensive than paying for a full-fare (\$3) transit ticket every day; and allow transit riders to pay a reduced fare or no fare, if applicable, through reduced-cost/no-cost ORCA products, such as:

- The Reduced Regional Fare Permit (RRFP) ORCA card for seniors and people with disabilities (\$1)
- ORCA LIFT for low-income riders with income below 200% of the federal poverty level (\$1)
- Fully subsidized ORCA for very low-income riders who participate in one of six State benefit programs³ (\$0)
- Free Youth ORCA for riders 18 or younger (\$0).

With the launch of tap-to-pay earlier this year, transit riders who do not have an ORCA card can tap a credit card at any ORCA reader to pay for a full-fare ride.

With the increase in transfers between transit services in recent years due to the extensions of the light rail network, as well as the expansion of reduced-cost/no-cost fare options, Metro is planning to propose moving to cashless on-board fare payments on

¹ The ORCA partner agencies are Community Transit, Everett Transit, King County Metro, Kitsap Transit, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, Washington State Ferries, Seattle Center Monorail, and Seattle Streetcar ([link](#)).

² ORCA cards do not provide free transfers to Washington State Ferries or Kitsap fast ferries.

³ Fully Subsidized Annual Pass ([link](#))

Metro buses between now and the end of 2027.⁴ At the same time, the Sound Transit Board has approved a plan to retrofit up to 14 light rail stations with fare gates between now and 2030.⁵ Both of these plans will make it more important for transit riders to obtain and use ORCA cards. Sound Transit fare gates, in particular, will require that young people use free Youth ORCA cards, as they will not be able to pass through a fare gate without tapping an ORCA card (currently, youth are permitted to board a bus or light rail without tapping a card, in recognition of the free youth fare).

During today's briefing, Metro staff will provide an update on ORCA card use and distribution.

INVITED

- Rachel Wilch, Strategic Planning Manager, Fares Program, Metro Transit Department

ATTACHMENTS

1. Metro ORCA presentation

⁴ King County Metro Cashless Fare Engagement Report ([link](#)). Note that before cashless on-board fare payments could begin, the King County Council would need to approve a change to the King County Code to remove cash as an acceptable way to pay a bus fare on board (K.C.C. 4A.700.010)

⁵ Sound Transit, Fare Gates are coming to many Link stations, August 27, 2026 ([link](#))

Fares Update

Regional Transit Committee
September 16, 2026



Agenda

1. Policy Guidance
2. ORCA and Fares Update
3. Looking ahead
4. Closing

1. Policy Guidance

Policy Guidance – Metro Connects



Directs Metro to:

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

Policy Guidance – King County Code



Establishes passenger types and fare rates for:

- Full fare adult riders
- Youth age 18 and under
- Seniors age 65 and over
- Riders with disabilities
- Riders with incomes $\leq 200\%$ of the Federal Poverty Level

Establishes farebox recovery target range of 10-15%

Policy Guidance – 2025 Regional Fare Forum



Gathering of elected officials representing boards and councils of each transit agency in the region. Recommended actions and identified regionally prioritized outcomes to work together towards:

- Affordability
- Alignment
- Improvements to reduced fare enrollment and verification

2. ORCA and Fares Update

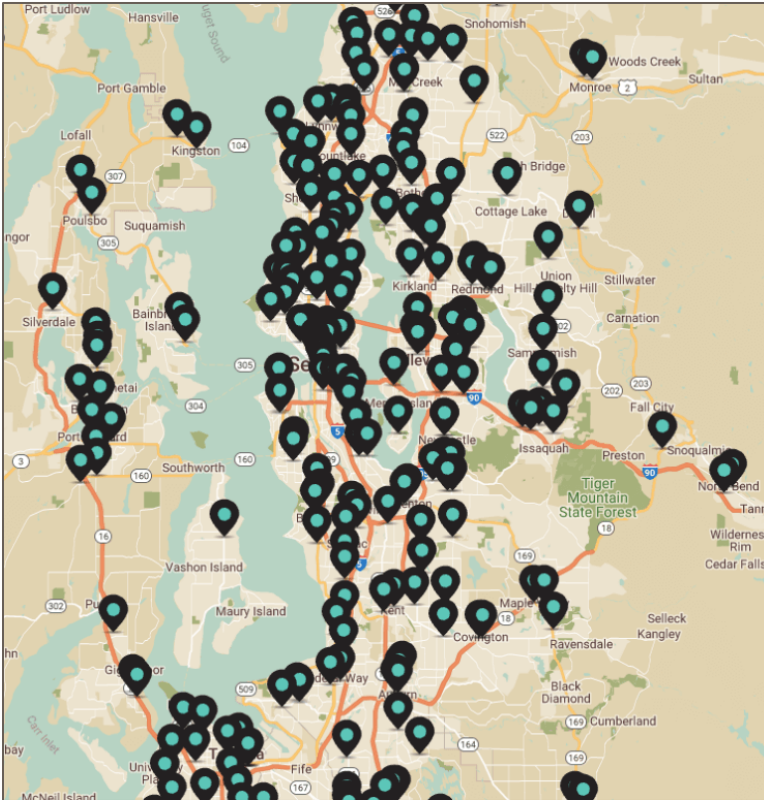
ORCA Overview



One Regional Card for All

- Regional fare system
- Launched 2009, updated 2022
- Jointly operated by seven transit agencies
- Supports transfers, reduced fares, business programs, tap to pay, retail network, and automatic revenue apportionment

Getting an ORCA Card



There are 250 ORCA retail locations and 30 pop-up events each month where riders can get an ORCA card, enroll in reduced fare programs, load value or pass products, or get customer support.

- Visit **myorca.com** for a regional map of ORCA retail locations.
- Visit **kingcounty.gov/metro** and select fares and passes on the menu at right to view this month's Neighborhood Pop Up schedule or request a pop-up event in your area.

Metro Fare Rates



Passenger Type	Price per Ride
Adult	\$3
ORCA LIFT Low-Income	\$1
RRFP Disabled	\$1
RRFP Senior	\$1
Youth	FREE

Metro also offers the **Subsidized Annual Pass** to extremely low-income riders participating in selected state benefit programs. These riders are enrolled in the ORCA LIFT program, and Metro loads a fully subsidized pass on their cards, making the fare FREE to the rider.

ORCA LIFT Low-Income Fare



- Riders with incomes $\leq 200\%$ of the Federal Poverty Level qualify for ORCA LIFT
- Enroll online, by phone, or in person at community partner locations
- 90,000 currently active ORCA LIFT cards, 19% of eligible residents enrolled
- 5.3 million boardings in 2025, up 11% since 2024

Free Youth Transit



- King County Council adopted free fare for youth <19yo
- Youth encouraged to tap but can board without ORCA or ID
- 9.4 million estimated youth boardings in 2025
- Approximate 6% growth from 2024
- Coordination with Sound Transit to prepare for fare gate pilot

ORCA Business Programs



- ORCA Business Programs help employers offer transportation benefits to their staff
- 30% of Metro's boardings come from riders using employer or community provided ORCA cards
- ORCA Business Programs generated 63% of Metro's fare revenue in 2025, or about \$49M (up 12% from 2024)

Tap to Pay



- Tap to Pay launched in February 2025, in time for FIFA Men's World Cup
- Currently available for adult fares only, allows regional transfers similar to ORCA card taps
- Since launch, credit card payments have made up 3% of boardings (and growing each month)
- Attractive option for visitors, occasional riders, and riders who've forgotten other fare media

3. Looking Ahead

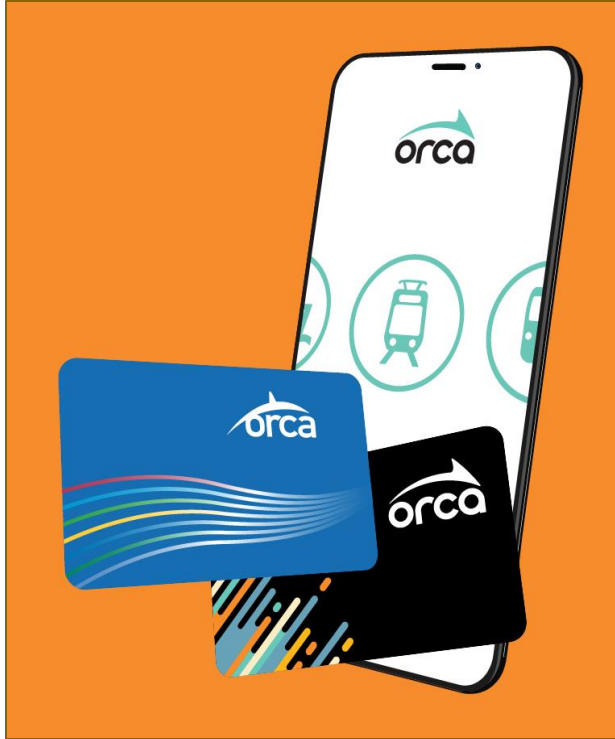
Regional Fare Forum Implementation



Exploring options to increase impact of reduced fare programs through:

- Expanded eligibility
- Targeted solutions for extremely low-income riders
- New partnerships and approaches to verify eligibility and enroll participants

ORCA Product Roadmap



- ✓ Introduce tap to pay for adult fares
- Offer tap to pay to other passenger types
- New mobile platform integration
- Updated technology to support reduced fares enrollment
- Improved product distribution for CBOs, events, and sponsors of transit subsidies
- Paratransit integration

Coordination with Sound Transit and Other Transit Partners



Coordination in lead up to Sound Transit's fare gate pilot to:

- Support enrollment in reduced fare programs
- Explore fare media options for youth
- Plan for youth outreach and education

Closing and Questions