



Resolution No. R2022-20

Establish a Zero Youth Fare on Sound Transit Services

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:	Staff contact:
Rider Experience and Operations Committee	7/15/2022	Recommend to Board	Lisa Wolterink, Deputy Executive Director, Grants and Fares
Board	7/28/2022	Adoption	Chad Davis, Deputy Director, Fares

Proposed action

(1) Establishes a Zero Youth fare on Sound Transit services effective September 1, 2022 by superseding the fare rates established in Resolution No. R2020-28 for youth riders on all Sound Transit services with \$0, as shown in Attachment A and (2) directs staff to develop a report of Youth ORCA ridership on an annual basis.

Key features summary

- This action provides for a \$0 fare for youth on Sound Transit services including ST Express bus, Sounder commuter rail, Link light rail and Tacoma Link. Currently, youth fares are \$1.50 on all Sound Transit services.
- The 2022 “Move Ahead Washington Act” sets a deadline of October 1, 2022 to adopt a zero-fare policy for passengers 18 years of age and younger to ride free on all modes in order to be eligible for state Transit Support Grants. Agencies must also report on the number of trips taken by youth.
- Sound Transit is not eligible for Transit Support Grants, however as the regional transit agency linking other transit agencies in the region, Sound Transit’s participation is key to the success of this program.
- Sound Transit staff will coordinate with partner ORCA transit agencies to implement this zero Youth-fare program by means of the Free Youth Transit Pass in the ORCA system, and undertake efforts to ensure youth have easy access to ORCA cards. Sound Transit’s Fare Ambassadors will encourage youth to get the Free Youth Transit Pass and provide information on how to do so.
- This action also directs staff to develop a report of Free Youth Transit Pass ridership, including interagency transfers starting in 2023.

Background

Originally, Sound Transit implemented different youth fares on ST Express, Sounder and Link as these modes were rolled out. These fares were set at roughly 2/3 of the equivalent adult fare and varied by distance on ST Express and Sounder. Since then, Sound Transit has worked to align these fares with King County Metro, our largest regional partner, and to simplify these fares. In the period 2010 to 2013, Sound Transit and Metro aligned youth fares on Link and Metro service at \$1.50. In 2018, the Sound Transit Board acted to reduce the youth fare on ST Express 2-zone service to \$1.50. In 2020, the Board also reduced the Sounder youth fare to \$1.50.

The “Move Ahead Washington Act” enacted in 2022 provides that: 1) to be eligible for state Transit Support Grants, transit agencies must adopt a zero-fare policy that allows passengers 18 years of age and younger to ride free of charge on all modes by October 1, 2022, and 2) transit agencies must provide to the state an annual report of the number of trips taken by youth under this program. While Sound Transit is not eligible for Transit Support Grants, as the regional transit agency linking other transit agencies in the region, Sound Transit’s participation is key to the success of this program.

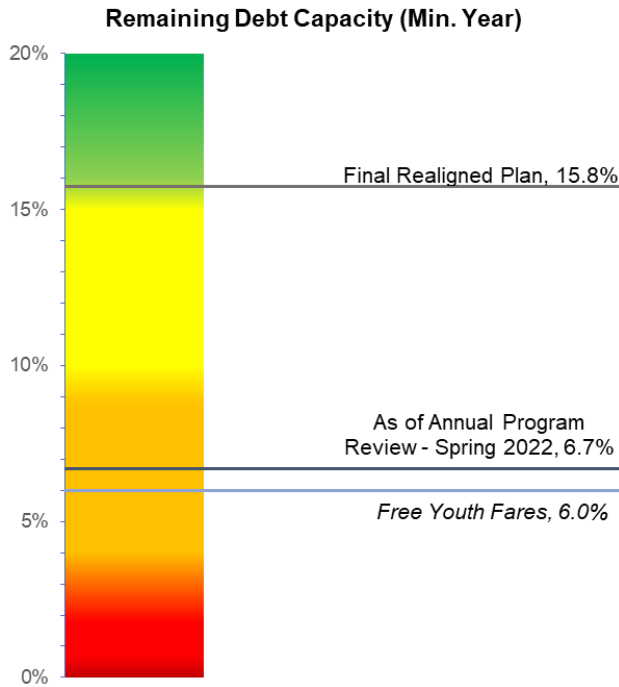
Sound Transit and ORCA partner transit agencies are encouraging youth to use the Free Youth Transit Pass to take advantage of this free fare. This will enable agencies to track ridership by agency and identify trips taken by youth travelling on more than one agency. This information will facilitate compliance with state reporting requirements and allow agencies to identify important inter-agency connections for youth. Use of the Free Youth Transit Pass to access this free fare will also help educate the next generation of riders on how to use ORCA and simplify fare compliance for bus drivers. Youth without a Free Youth Transit Pass may be asked to show a student ID or proof of age and will be provided with information about how to get a Free Youth Transit Pass. Engagement with youth riders will follow Sound Transit’s recently adopted fare engagement policies.

The ORCA transit agencies are working closely together to make it easy for youth to obtain ORCA cards. Currently, about 77,000 Youth have active Youth ORCA cards that will automatically provide them with access to the free fare. ORCA agencies are also working to provide school districts with additional ORCA cards for students in the fall. And the ORCA virtual card is expected to be available for all riders, including youth, sometime in 2023.

Sound Transit staff are also working with staff at partner agencies to develop a plan to track and report ORCA youth ridership by agency, including interagency transfers.

Fiscal information

The proposed action is expected to reduce Sound Transit fare revenue by an estimated \$148 million in YOES through 2046. There is no impact to the 2022 Budget. The impact of the \$148M reduction in revenue on remaining agency debt capacity is a reduction of 0.7% in the minimum year (2042). The graph below displays the impact to remaining debt capacity in the minimum year.



Small business participation and apprenticeship utilization

Not applicable to this action.

Title VI Compliance

In compliance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations, Sound Transit conducted a Title VI fare equity analysis of this proposed change. This analysis determined that this proposed change will have no disparate impact on minority riders and will not represent a disproportionate burden on low-income riders.

Public engagement

The goal of the public outreach effort was to solicit feedback from the public regarding this proposed fare change. To achieve these goals, Sound Transit created three methods of providing public input from June 2nd to June 26th, 2022 -- email, voicemail, and a public hearing on June 16th, 2022.

Sound Transit also published a webpage and blog post providing background information and soliciting feedback. These were optimized to be used with in-browser translation tools in an effort to increase access.

To advertise public comment options, Sound Transit published a press release on June 8th, 2022, published a notice about the public hearing in the Daily Journal of Commerce and the Sound Transit website, posted on Sound Transit social media channels and alerted key partners and stakeholders of the public input period.

Engagement Results

Written comment

38 written comments were received via the project email address:

- 33 supported the proposed policy change to free youth fares
- 4 were against creating fares free for youth
- 1 expressed concern over the safety of the system

The complete written comments are included in the Free Youth Fare Change – Public Engagement Report as Appendix A.

Public hearing

- No applicable comments were given at the public hearing.

Voicemail

- No comments were received by voicemail.

For more details, please see the Free Youth Fare Change – Public Engagement Report.

Time constraints

This proposed implementation date for this fare reduction is September 1, 2022. A one-month delay would delay implementation of this fare reduction until October 1, 2022 which would not allow youth to take advantage of the free fare when school begins in September.

Prior Board/Committee actions

Resolution No. R2022-07: Adopted an updated Fare Compliance Policy and superseded Resolution No. R2009-02.

Resolution No. R2020-28: (1) Adopted new, lower fares for Low Income Adults, Youth, Seniors and People with Disabilities for Sounder commuter rail effective March 1, 2021, and (2) superseding the fare rates established in Resolution No. R2018-05 with the rates established by this action as shown in Attachment A.

Resolution No. R2018-05: (1) Adopted new fare rates and fare structure for ST Express bus service, and (2) superseding the fare rates established in Resolution No. R2014-28 and amended by Resolution No. R2015-29 with the rates established by this action as shown in Attachment A.

Resolution No. R2015-29: (1) Selected an Option to set fare rates for the low income fare category and potentially increase fares on Sounder service, (2) selected an option to set fares rates for low income adult fare category and potentially increase fares on ST Express service, and (3) amended Sound Transit fare rates in Attachment A of Resolution R2014-28 with selected options.

Resolution No. R2014-28: (1) Selected an option to set fare rates for the low income adult fare category, and (2) superseded the fare rates established in Resolution No. R2007-06, Resolution No. R2010-11, and Resolution No. R2013-24 with the rates established by this action as shown in Attachment A.

Environmental review – KH 6/16/22

Legal review – AJP 7/8/22



Resolution No. R2022-20

A RESOLUTION of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (1) establishing a Zero Youth fare on Sound Transit services effective September 1, 2022 by superseding the fare rates established in Resolution No. R2020-28 for youth riders on all Sound Transit services with \$0, as shown in Attachment A and (2) directing staff to develop a report of Youth ORCA ridership on an annual basis.

WHEREAS, the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority, commonly known as Sound Transit, was formed under RCW Chapters 81.104 and 81.112 for the Pierce, King, and Snohomish Counties region by action of their respective county councils pursuant to RCW 81.112.030; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit is authorized to plan, construct, and permanently operate a high-capacity system of transportation infrastructure and services to meet regional public transportation needs in the Central Puget Sound region; and

WHEREAS, in general elections held within the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority district on November 5, 1996, and November 4, 2008, voters approved local funding to implement a regional high-capacity transportation system for the Central Puget Sound region; and

WHEREAS, RCW 81.112.080 grants a regional transit authority the power to establish fares; and

WHEREAS, the 2022 Supplemental Transportation Budget adopted by the Washington State Legislature and signed by the Governor established that those transit agencies that enact a fare-free policy for youth 18 and younger and prepare annual reports of youth ridership are eligible for state transit support grants; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit's partner agencies in the Central Puget Sound Area are moving forward to establish fare-free policies for youth; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit desires to coordinate fare structures and fare rates with those of other transit providers within Sound Transit's service area; and

WHEREAS, free fares can reduce barriers to transit access for youth throughout Sound Transit's service area; and

WHEREAS, Sound Transit is committed to providing opportunities for public involvement and conducting equity analyses of potential impacts to minority and low-income populations before considering fare changes and a Fare Equity Analysis has been reported to the Board; and


WHEREAS, public input received via public outreach events, email, the Sound Transit website, telephone, an online survey, and a public hearing has been reported to the Board.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority as follows:

Section 1: The fare rates established in Resolution No. R2020-28 are superseded with the rates established by this action as shown in Attachment A to establish a \$0 youth fare on Sound Transit services effective September 1, 2022.

Section 2: Sound Transit staff will work with staff from other ORCA agencies to develop a comprehensive report of ORCA youth ridership for each agency, including inter-agency transfers, for reporting to the State of Washington.

ADOPTED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on July 28, 2022.



Kent Keel
Board Chair

ATTEST:



Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator