

Fare Strategy Briefing: Fare Structures

Executive Committee

04/06/2023



Why we are here

- Recap the Board's anticipated fares-related work in 2023.
- Review existing fare structures, benchmark against peer transit agencies, and identify considerations as the system expands.
- To seek the Board's feedback on policy questions related to our existing fare structures.

Where we're going

Fares guiding framework

We serve passengers with a fare structure that is regionally integrated to encourage transit ridership through equitable and simple pricing, and financial stewardship.

Toward a comprehensive fares strategy

Upcoming needed Board actions

- ✓ Adopt an equitable and accountable fare compliance policy and expand reduced fare programs.
- ✓ Establish fare rates where none currently exist.
 - ✓ T Line
- ❑ Consider adjusting existing fare structures, fare levels (including parking fees), and categories to meet established targets.
- ❑ Review and consider modifying revenue and farebox recovery targets.

Areas of focus in 2023

Major policy topics

- Fare policy – originally adopted in 2010 with a minor update in 2014 (Resolution No. [R2014-27](#))
 - Fare structure.
 - Farebox recovery targets.
- Parking management program – last Board action in 2018 to allow priced monthly parking permits (Resolution No. [R2018-27](#))
 - Expanded program with daily paid parking.

Fare structure

Existing fare structures within Board policy

- Zone-based fares (based on geographic zones through which a trip travels).
- Distance-based fares (based on trip distance, measured in miles).
- Current fares by Sound Transit mode of service:

Mode	Fare structure	Adult fares	Low-income/ senior/disabled	Youth
1 Line	Distance-based	\$2.25-\$3.50	\$1.00	Free
T Line	Zone-based*	\$2.00		
Souder	Distance-based	\$3.25-\$5.75		
ST Express	Zone-based*	\$3.25		

*T Line and ST Express are flat fares, with \$0 zone surcharge; current policy does not explicitly include a flat fare category.

Fare structure

Existing fares across the Sound Transit district

Service	Adult fares
1 Line	\$2.25-\$3.50
T Line	\$2.00
Souder	\$3.25-\$5.75
ST Express	\$3.25
King County Metro	\$2.75
Community Transit	\$2.50/\$4.75
Pierce Transit	\$2.00
Everett Transit	\$2.00
Seattle Streetcar	\$2.25
Seattle Center Monorail	\$3.50
Washington State Ferries	\$6.25-\$9.45

Fare structure

Current Link fare table for adult fares

Station	Angle Lake	Airport - SeaTac	Tukwila International Blvd	Rainier Beach	Othello	Columbia City	Mount Baker	Beacon Hill	SODO	Stadium	International District	Pioneer Square	University Street	Westlake	Capitol Hill	University of Washington	U District	Roosevelt	Northgate	
Angle Lake		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.50	
Airport - SeaTac	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.50
Tukwila International Blvd	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	
Rainier Beach	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	
Othello	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	
Columbia City	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00
Mount Baker	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	
Beacon Hill	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	
SODO	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	
Stadium	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	
International District	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	
Pioneer Square	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	
University Street	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	
Westlake	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	
Capitol Hill	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	
University of Washington	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	
U District	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	
Roosevelt	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	
Northgate	\$ 3.50	\$ 3.50	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		

Fare structure

Distance-based fare considerations

- Fares depend on how far a passenger travels.
- Distance-based fares require passengers to tap on and tap off. If passengers don't tap off, they are charged the highest fare from their originating station.

Flat fare considerations

- One fare for all rides – simpler for passengers to understand and budget for.
- Flat fares require passengers to only tap on.
- Simplified fare structure may allow for potential transition to fare capping.

***Review of peer transit agency
fare structures and fares***

How do Link and Sounder compare to peer transit agencies?

Existing Link and Sounder adult fare structures

Mode	Fare structure	Adult fares	Notes
1 Line	Distance-based	\$2.25-\$3.50	Base fare of \$2.25 + \$0.05 per mile charge (rounded to nearest \$0.25)
Sounder	Distance-based	\$3.25-\$5.75	Base fare of \$3.05 + \$0.055 per mile (rounded to nearest \$0.25)

How does Link compare to peer transit agencies with light rail?

Agency	Fare structure	Adult fares	Income-qualifying reduced fares?	Fare capping?
Sound Transit	Distance-based fare	\$2.25-\$3.50	Yes	No
Tri-Met* (Portland)	Flat fare	\$2.50	Yes	Yes
MTS (San Diego)	Flat fare	\$2.50	No	Yes
UTA (Salt Lake City)	Flat fare	\$2.50	Yes	No

How does Link compare to peer transit agencies with light rail?

Agency	Fare structure	Adult fares	Income-qualifying reduced fares?	Fare capping?
Sound Transit	Distance-based fare	\$2.25-\$3.50	Yes	No
DART (Dallas)	Flat fare with peak surcharge	\$2.00/\$3.00	No	No
Metro Transit (Minneapolis)	Flat fare with peak surcharge	\$2.00/\$2.50	No	No
RTD* (Denver)	Zone-based fare	\$3.00/\$5.25/ \$10.50	No	No

How does Sounder compare to peer transit agencies with commuter rail?

Agency	Fare structure	Adult fares	Income-qualifying reduced fares?	Fare capping?
Sounder	Distance-based fare	\$3.25-\$5.75	Yes	No
Caltrain (Bay Area)	Zone-based fare	\$3.20-\$15.00	No (pilot in effect)	No
RTD (Denver)*	Zone-based fare	\$3.00/\$5.25/ \$10.50	No	No
UTA (Salt Lake City)	Distance-based fare	\$2.50-\$9.70	Yes	No
Tri-Rail (South Florida)	Zone-based fare	\$2.50-\$8.75	No	No

***Current passenger fare
statistics***

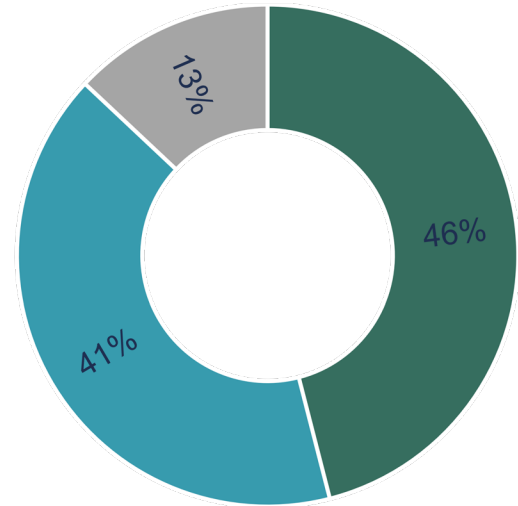
The passenger experience of ST fare structures

Some passengers don't need to think about distance-based fares

- Reduced fare programs are flat or free fares.
- Passengers with employer-subsidized ORCA cards may not need to worry about the cost of their fare at all.
- Staff will perform additional analysis to assess the characteristics of passengers most impacted by a potential fare structure change.

Link fares by passenger type (2022)

- Passengers who have a reduced fare (**13%**) or an employer-provided ORCA card (**41%**) accounted for **54% of Link fare boardings in 2022**.
- **46% of Link boardings pay the adult fare**, whether using an ORCA e-purse, pass products, or via ticket vending machines.



■ Reduced fares ■ Employer-provided ORCA ■ Adult fares

Link fare payment by ORCA fare type (2022)

Link fares range from \$2.25-\$3.50

Passengers paying the ORCA retail cost for an adult fare:

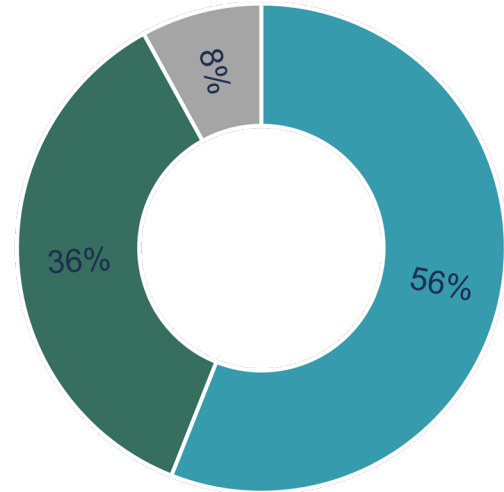
- 63% pay \$2.75 or less
- 37% pay \$3.00 or more

Passengers paying with an employer-provided ORCA card:

- 58% pay \$2.75 or less
- 42% pay \$3.00 or more

Sounder fares by passenger type (2022)

- Passengers who have a reduced fare (**8%**) or an employer-provided ORCA card (**56%**) accounted for **64% of Sounder fare boardings in 2022**.
- **36% of Sounder boardings pay the adult fare**, whether using an ORCA e-purse, pass products, or via ticket vending machines.



■ Reduced fares ■ Employer-provided ORCA ■ Adult fares

Sounder fare payment by ORCA fare type (2022)

Sounder fares range from \$3.25-\$5.75

Passengers paying the ORCA retail cost for an adult fare:

- 35% pay \$4.00 or less
- 65% pay \$4.25 or more

Passengers paying with an employer-provided ORCA card:

- 31% pay \$4.00 or less
- 69% pay \$4.25 or more

Policy questions

Fare structure

Distance-based fare considerations

- Fares depend on how far a passenger travels.
- Distance-based fares require passengers to tap on and tap off. If passengers don't tap off, they are charged the highest fare from their originating station.

Flat fare considerations

- One fare for all rides – simpler for passengers to understand and budget for.
- Flat fares require passengers to only tap on.
- Simplified fare structure may allow for potential transition to fare capping.

Fare policy update

Policy questions

- What information would the Committee need to inform a decision on flat fares vs distance-based fares?
- Key criteria for analysis on flat vs distance:
 - Simplicity
 - Racial equity
 - Financial impact to passengers and Sound Transit
 - Ridership impacts
 - What else?
- What are key considerations about Link fares relative to other Sound Transit modes of service and other services in the region?

Next steps

Toward a comprehensive fares strategy

Next steps

- **May 2023:** deeper dive on farebox recovery targets at Executive Committee; follow-up on fare structures at REO Committee.
- **June 2023:** deeper dive on parking management at Executive and REO Committees.
- **Summer 2023:** public and passenger engagement on potential fare policy changes, Link fare changes, and daily paid parking.
- **Fall 2023/Winter 2024:** potential Board actions to update existing fare policy, change fare levels, and authorize daily paid parking.

Thank you.



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