

Briefing on Link Fares and Fare Structure

Rider Experience and Operations Committee

11/02/2023

Why we are here

- Recap the Board's fares-related work in 2023.
- Provide a reminder and overview of current Sound Transit, regional, and peer agency fare structures and rates.
- Report out on initial results from public engagement on Link fare structure and rates.
- Preview upcoming material to be presented at the full Board meeting in November.
- No action today, information only.

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, and update fare policy.

Understanding the fare revenue equation



Areas of focus in 2023

Major policy topics

- Fare policy – originally adopted in 2010 with a minor update in 2014 (Resolution No. [R2014-27](#))
 - Link fare structure and rate.
 - 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.

Link fare change overview

Link fare change

Existing fare structure and rate

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)

Rationale for a fare change now

- Our last fare change on Link occurred in 2015.
- An expanding system results in a larger distance-based fare table and more fare rates.
- We heard interest from Board members to explore a flat fare structure.

Fare structure

Existing fares across the Sound Transit district

ST Service	Adult fares
1 Line	\$2.25-\$3.50
T Line	\$2.00
Souder	\$3.25-\$5.75
ST Express	\$3.25

Partner Agency	Adult fares
King County Metro Bus	\$2.75
Community Transit	\$2.50/\$4.25
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	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 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	\$ 2.50	\$ 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	\$ 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	\$ 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	\$ 2.50	\$ 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	\$ 2.50	\$ 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	\$ 2.50	\$ 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	\$ 2.50	\$ 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	\$ 2.50	\$ 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	\$ 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	\$ 2.25	\$ 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	\$ 2.25	\$ 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	\$ 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		\$ 2.25

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 → \$2.80	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 Flat fare with airport surcharge	\$3.00/\$5.25/\$10.50 \$2.75/\$10.00	Yes	No

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.

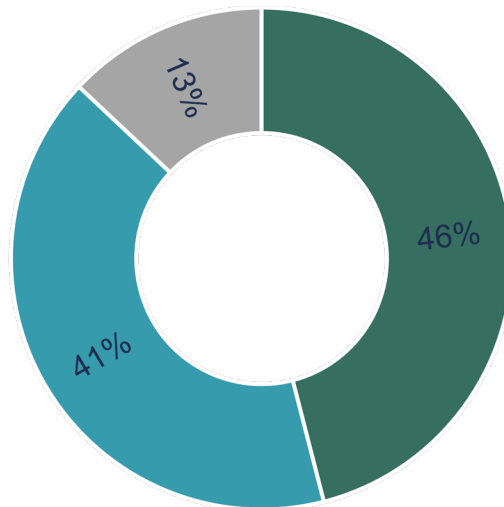
Flat fare considerations

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

Link fares by passenger type (2022)

More than half of passengers don't need to think about distance-based fares

- 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 change:
initial engagement results***

Link fare structure & rates*

Focus of engagement

- Should we maintain a distance-based fare or adopt a flat fare?

	Distance-based fare	Flat fare
Fare rates under consideration	Increase base fare by \$0.25 or \$0.50	\$3.00, \$3.25, or \$3.50

- Seeking input related to simplicity, affordability, and impact on someone's use of light rail based on a change to Link fare structure.
- No changes being proposed to other fare categories like low-income fare, senior/disabled fares, or youth fares.

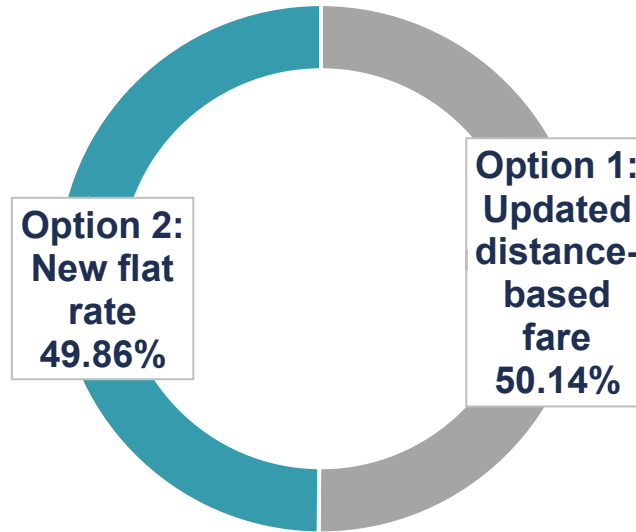
Engagement activities & schedule

Timing & tactics

- Engagement period began on September 25 and ran through October 22.
- Key tactics included an online open house, a passenger survey, engagement with community-based organizations, targeted focus groups, and street teams to drive survey participation.
- Engagement efforts targeted areas and populations likely to be most impacted by a Link fare change, parking program expansion, or both.

Link fare structure preferences

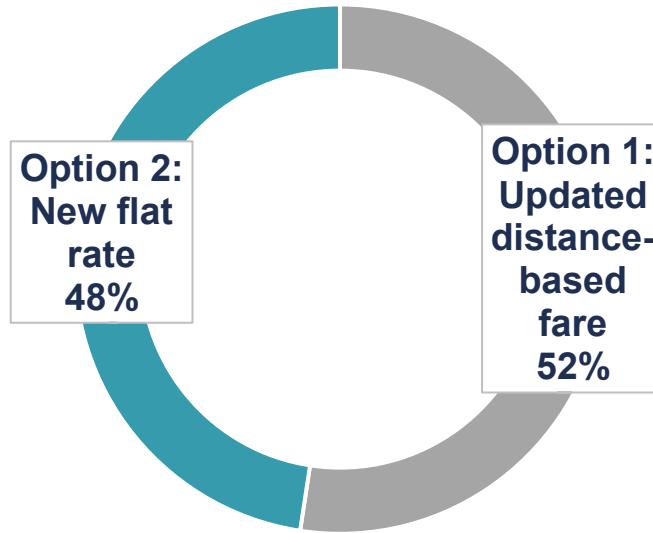
Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?



Overall breakdown | 3,841 respondents

Link fare structure preferences

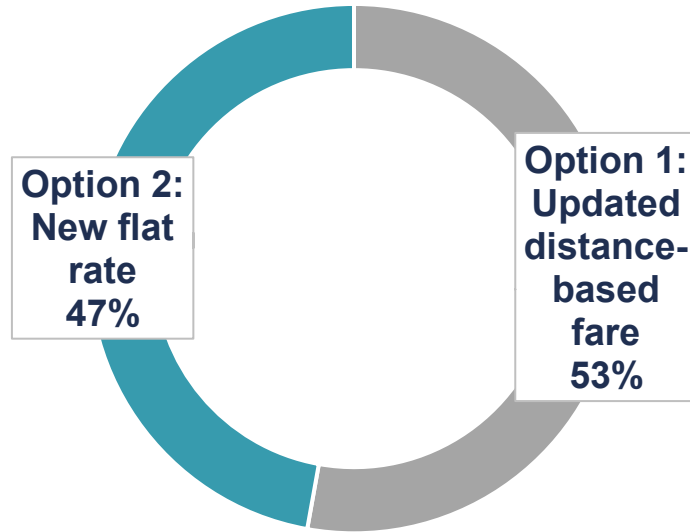
Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?



Full-fare passengers | 2,261 respondents

Link fare structure preferences

Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?

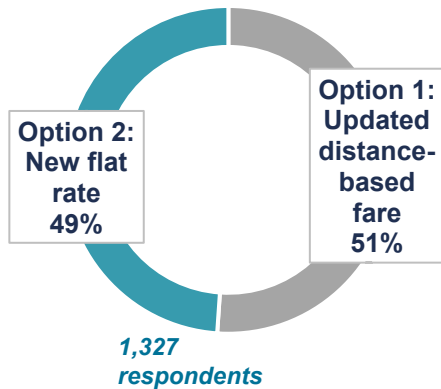


Frequent passengers | 2,296 respondents

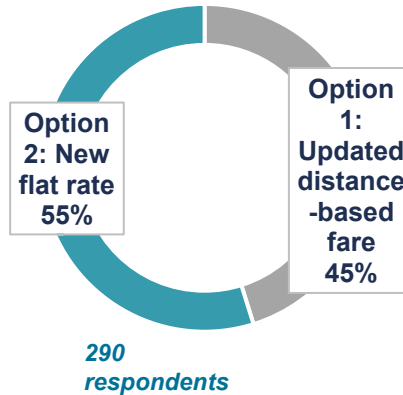
Link fare structure preferences

Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?

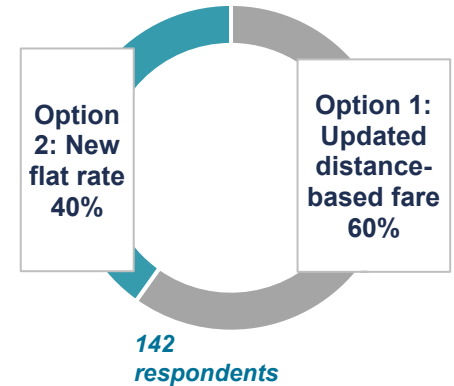
King County



Snohomish County



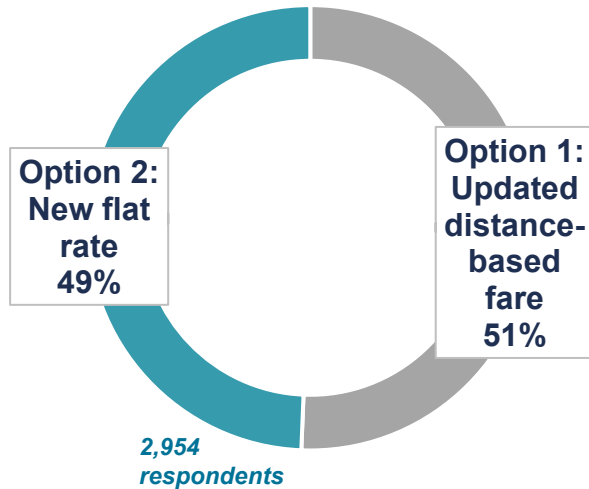
Pierce County



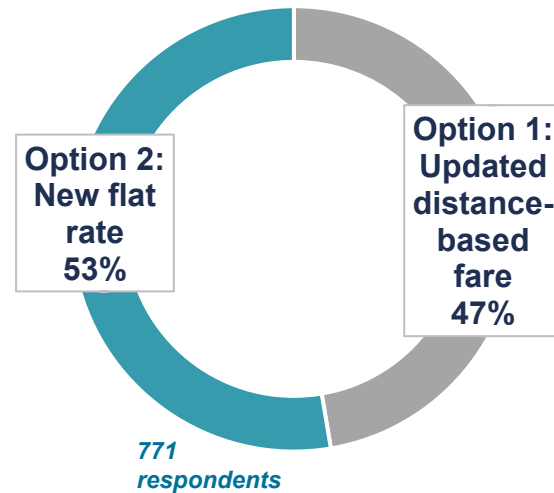
Link fare structure preferences

Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?

Passengers using existing stations



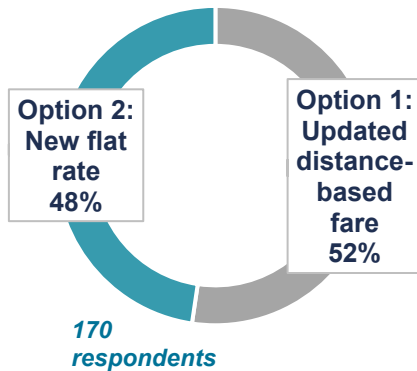
Passengers planning to use ST2 stations



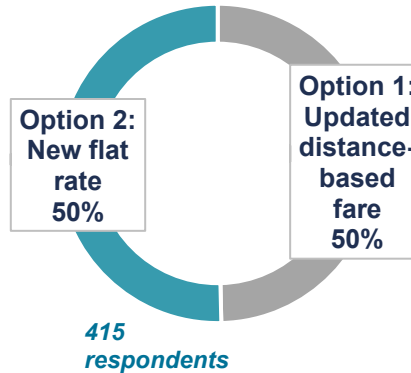
Link fare structure preferences

Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?

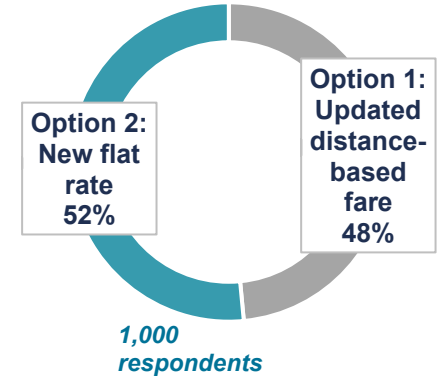
Those earning less than \$50,000



Those earning between \$50,000 and \$99,000



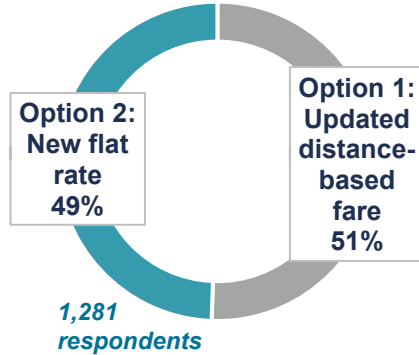
Those earning more than \$100,000



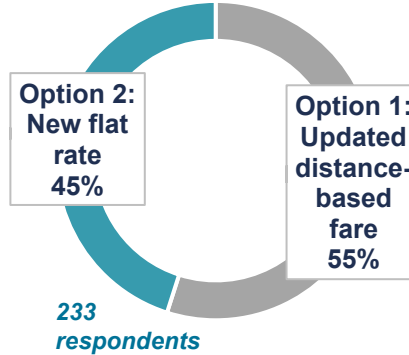
Link fare structure preferences

Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?

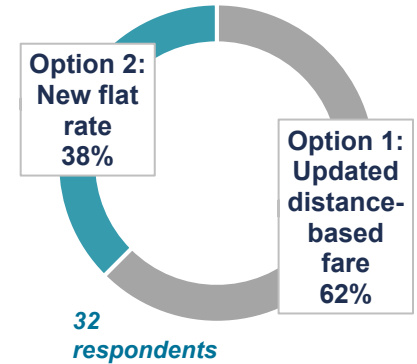
**White or
Caucasian**



**Asian or Asian
American**



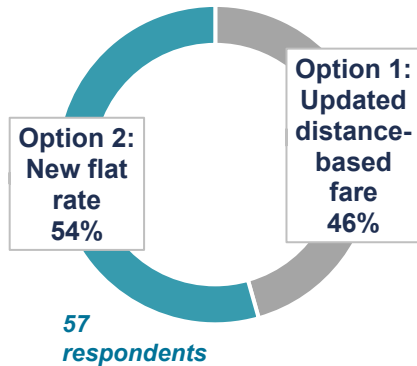
**American/
Alaskan native
First Nations
Indigenous**



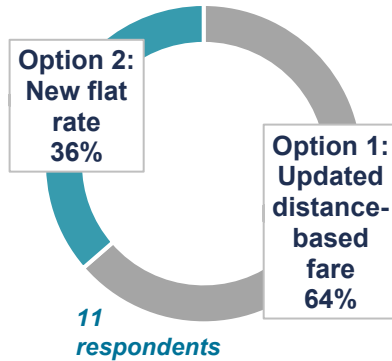
Link fare structure preferences

Which fare structure option do passengers and the public prefer?

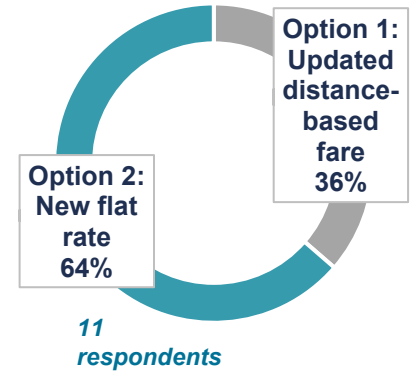
**Black,
African,
African-American**



**Middle Eastern
Northern African**



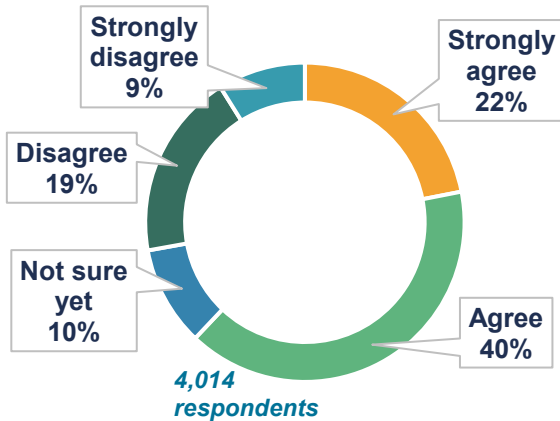
**Native Hawaiian,
Pacific Islander**



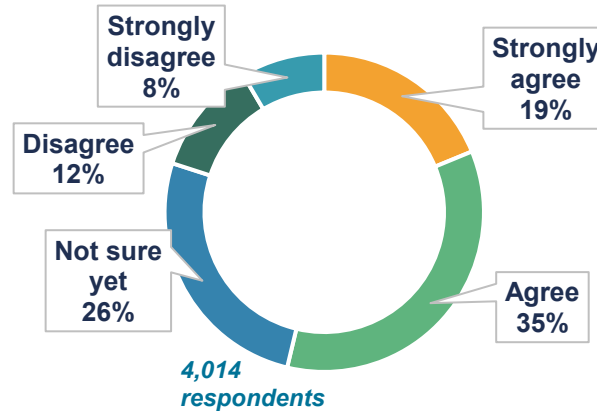
Link fare structure preferences

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements for a distance-based fare?

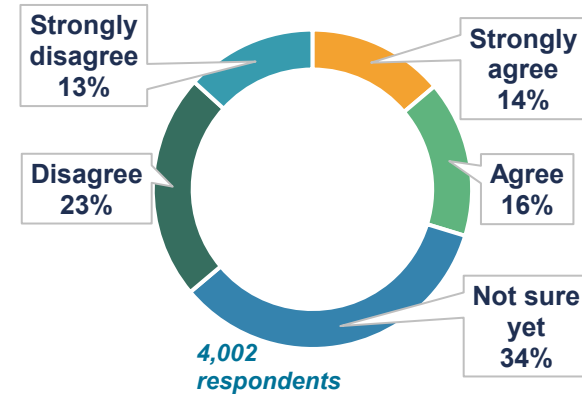
This option is easy to understand



This option is affordable



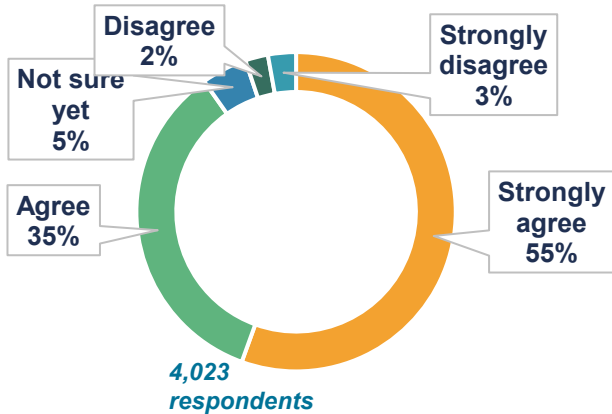
This option would encourage me to use light rail more



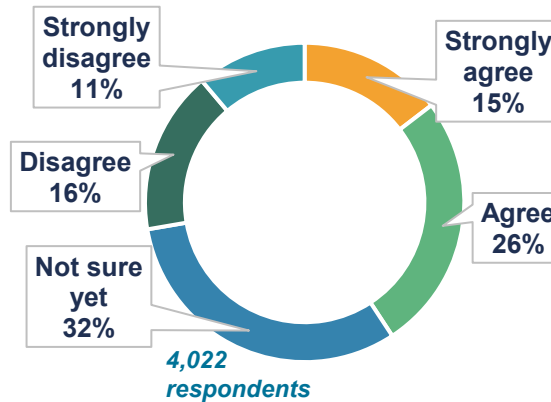
Link fare structure preferences

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements for a flat fare?

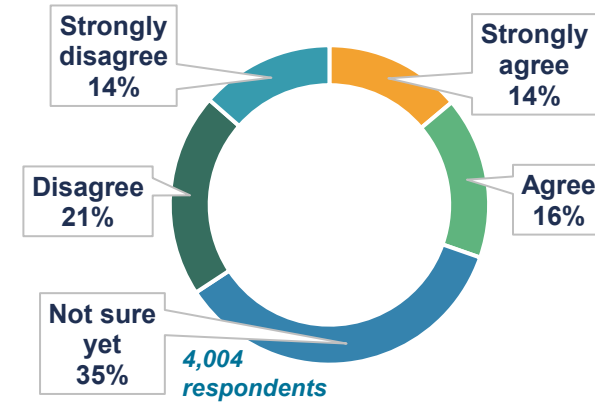
This option is easy to understand



This option is affordable



This option would encourage me to use light rail more



Link fare structure engagement themes

What else we heard

- We are working to summarize themes from information sessions, focus groups, community-based organizations, and the 1,600 open-ended comments received in the passenger survey.
- Initial themes that have emerged:
 - Consider a zone-based fare structure.
 - Fare rates under consideration are too high, or fares should be free.
 - Focus on enforcing fare payment compliance before raising fares.

Next steps

Toward a comprehensive fares strategy

Key dates toward Board action on Link fare change

November

- 11/16: Public hearing.
- 11/16: Board meeting for a more detailed briefing, including:
 - *additional passenger experience, equity, and financial analysis of fare rates under consideration*
 - *mapping out mitigations and next steps following a potential Link fare change*

December

- 12/7: REO for potential action on Link fare changes (including Title VI analysis).
- 12/15: Board for potential action on Link fare changes.

Thank you.



 [soundtransit.org](https://www.soundtransit.org)

