



## King County Metro Transit fare increase Q & A

### What is the proposed fare increase?

King County Executive Ron Sims has asked the Metropolitan King County Council to increase several Metro Transit fares by 25 cents effective Oct. 1, 2008. This includes fares for adults, FlexPass, and other pass products. A similar increase for Access paratransit service would become effective Jan. 1, 2009.

Specific proposed rate increases include:

- 25-cent increase in adult transit fares, effective Oct.1, 2008
- 25-cent increase in the Access cash fares and an increase in the Access monthly pass price from \$18 to \$27, effective Jan. 1, 2009
- 8 percent increase in Vanpool fares, effective Oct. 1, 2008.

Youth and Senior/Disabled fares would not change as part of this proposal.

	<b>Current Metro fares (July 1, 2008)</b>	<b>Proposed Metro fares (Oct. 1, 2008)</b>
<b>Cash fares</b>		
Adult, one zone peak	\$1.75	\$2.00
Adult, two zone peak	\$2.25	\$2.50
Adult, off peak	\$1.50	\$1.75
Youth	.75	.75
Senior/disabled	.50	.50
Access, per trip	.75	\$1.00 (effective Jan. 1, 2009)
<b>Pass fares</b>		
Off-peak monthly pass	\$54.00	\$63.00
1-Zone Peak monthly pass	\$63.00	\$72.00
2-Zone Peak monthly pass	\$81.00	\$90.00
Access monthly pass	\$18.00	\$27.00 (effective Jan. 1, 2009)
Off-peak annual pass	\$594.00	\$693.00
1-Zone Peak annual pass	\$693.00	\$792.00
2-Zone Peak annual pass	\$811.00	\$990.00

For Metro services within FlexPass packages purchased by employers, the price will increase 12 to 15 percent, depending on the individual contract.

### Why are fares being increased now?

Diesel fuel costs have risen sharply and are expected to remain high. Metro's adopted 2008 budget is based on an average fuel cost of \$2.60 per gallon. (Metro pays a lower price per gallon than you would at the pump because it buys in bulk and is exempt from state taxes.) Metro is currently projecting an average per gallon price of \$3.86 for 2008,

which is expected to create a deficit of more than \$14 million this year alone. Metro will purchase about 12 million gallons of diesel fuel in 2008. Overall, fuel costs are approximately 8 percent of Metro's annual operating expense.

**Didn't you just increase fares earlier this year?**

The fare increase that went into effect in March and July of 2008 had been long planned, and was needed to maintain existing Metro service and offset rising business costs. Prior to this year, Metro had not increased fares since 2001. Even with the expectation that fuel prices would be higher in 2008, the price per gallon for diesel rose higher than anyone forecasted.

**Why aren't you increasing youth and senior/disabled fares at the same time?**

Metro knows that many of these customers are highly transit dependant, live on fixed or limited incomes, and depend on regular transit service for their daily activities. And thousands of students are increasingly relying on its buses to get to and from school. Metro is striving to keep its service as affordable as possible for everyone.

**Why is an increase being proposed for Access service?**

Paratransit operations target the personalized needs of clients with disabilities who rely on door-to-door service for their travel needs. But it is also a service that is extremely costly. Metro's current proposal is to raise Access cash fares by 25 cents and monthly fares by \$9. Customers currently pay 75 cents in cash for each ride and \$18 for a monthly pass. Since the average length of an Access trip is almost 10 miles, these vans use about one gallon of fuel per ride. So Metro is also asking Access riders to help cover a small portion of the fuel cost increase.

**Metro's ridership has been increasing. Don't the additional riders' fares cover the fuel cost increase?**

Weekday bus ridership for the first three months of 2008 is 6 percent higher than the same period last year. The increase in bus ridership is bringing in some new fare revenue, but not enough to cover the rising cost of fuel. Many of those new riders have passes previously purchased by themselves or their employers, and are now using them for the first time or more often. In most cases, this usage does not generate new revenue for Metro.

**Will another fare increase mean that my bus will be less crowded than it is now?**

Because fuel prices are affecting everyone's budget, more and more people consider transit an affordable alternative to driving alone. Metro has been working diligently to meet the increased demand for service. One of the reasons Metro is proposing this fare increase is to avoid service cuts, which would almost definitely result in more overcrowding more often.

Metro is using *Transit Now* funding to expand bus service and reduce crowding on heavily used routes. Metro and the City of Seattle have formed a service partnership that will add trips on routes 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 14, 26, 28 and 44 in September.

**The County Executive has also proposed that Metro be allowed to resume bus-wrap advertising. Will that really make a difference?**

Bus-wrap advertising was a significant source of revenue for Metro. In the two years Metro sold full-wrap advertising, 2006 and 2007, Metro earned \$743,000 and \$560,000, respectively. At a time when Metro is experiencing unprecedented increases in fuel costs, it needs the flexibility to pursue revenue-generating options such as this to cover costs and reduce pressure on fares.

**What else is Metro doing to hold the line against rising costs?**

Fuel prices have risen steadily since 2002, and Metro has been taking action over the past six years to reduce fuel use and achieve other cost-savings.

Measures to improve fuel efficiency include:

- Adding hybrid diesel-electric buses to Metro's fleet
- Using on-board computer technology on hybrid buses to optimize fuel economy and overall performance
- Recycling 59 decommissioned Breda dual-powered (diesel-electric) coaches and converting them to all-electric trolleys.

Metro also led a successful effort to win the 2008 Washington Legislature's approval of legislation allowing local governments to pursue fuel hedging. Metro has begun developing a fuel-hedging program that could provide a greater level of certainty around fuel prices.

Metro has taken steps to achieve operating efficiencies in other areas, as well. Inflation and rising business costs during this same period have forced Metro to cut operating costs by \$38 million. These reductions have targeted administrative and customer services, and have prompted the agency to cancel planned and anticipated capital projects in order to avoid direct cuts in service.

**What are other transit agencies doing?**

The American Public Transportation Association recently conducted a survey of U.S. transit agencies to find out how they are responding to high fuel prices. The survey found that 48 percent are pursuing fare increases. Other actions include delaying service improvements, deferring capital investments, seeking additional funding from state and local sources and, in some cases, making service cuts.

Three agencies in the Pacific Northwest—TriMet in Portland, Snohomish County's Community Transit, and Kitsap Transit—have recently announced fare increases ranging from 25 cents to 75 cents. Some of the transit agencies nationwide that have raised fares in response to fuel prices are those serving the cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Charlotte, Cleveland, and Salt Lake City.

**Will *Transit Now* funds be used to cover unexpected costs?**

*Transit Now*, approved by voters in 2006, is an initiative to expand transit services by 15 to 20 percent by 2016. The initiative is intended to help Metro keep pace with regional growth and transit service demand. Metro is following a plan to phase in *Transit Now* service expansions over a 10-year period. Metro has been delivering on pace with the phasing plan and is committed to moving forward. By year's end, Metro will have delivered around 110,000 new service hours—about 17 percent of the new service promised in the 10-year *Transit Now* initiative.

Metro has been using *Transit Now* dollars to expand bus service on high-ridership routes and in growing residential areas, to develop new bus rapid transit service in five corridors, and to improve Metro's Rideshare and paratransit services.

Metro is determined to moving forward with the *Transit Now* program. The same fuel prices that have hit Metro have caused riders to flock to buses, and make the promised service expansions under *Transit Now* more important than ever.

**What will Metro do if the proposed increase is not approved?**

If a fare increase is not approved, Metro must find an ongoing annual reduction of \$22 million. This would require Metro to consider service reductions, which could affect both the level and the quality of service and could include the deferral or cancellation of capital projects.

**How can I express my opinion about the proposed fare increase?**

The King County Council will consider the request for a fare increase this summer. There will be a public comment period as part of the council's review. Please visit the council's Web site, [www.kingcounty.gov/council](http://www.kingcounty.gov/council), to learn about upcoming comment opportunities.