

Parking Management Program Community Engagement Report

Phase 1– Research

Program Summary

In September 2016, King County Metro Transit’s partner agency Sound Transit began selling permits for priority access to parking spaces in its park-and-rides. Metro is considering a similar pilot program and did a survey to gauge public opinion on permit sales for carpools and vanpools, as well as a range of other possible parking management options.

This document summarizes the feedback we received during a public outreach and associated comment period that took place from July 18 to Aug. 25, 2016. The feedback will be used by Metro’s transportation planners to shape a park-and-ride pilot program that Metro plans to launch in early 2017.

Background – Parking Management Program

In coordination with Sound Transit, Metro is moving forward with parking management strategies because customers are reporting increasing difficulty finding parking spaces at many Metro park-and-rides. Some people who use these lots or garages aren’t transit users — instead, they’re going to nearby businesses, apartments, or construction sites.

Of the 54 permanent park-and-rides Metro operates, half are at 80 percent capacity or higher, and some fill up completely before the morning commute ends. In addition to being inconvenient, the “first-come-first-served” system now in place is an equity issue, primarily for later arriving riders with fixed school or work schedules.

Only 34 percent of customers report being satisfied with current parking at our park-and-rides. Cities are also concerned, and have asked Metro to explore solutions to the growing issue.

The public input we received will guide Metro’s launch of a parking management pilot program that incorporates elements of Sound Transit’s approach as well feedback and ideas from Metro customers.

Basis for Action

Metro’s Strategic Plan for Public Transportation calls for us to collaborate with WSDOT and other public and private partners to address transit parking capacity demand through a range of approaches that use resources efficiently and let more people access transit.

Metro’s newly released long range plan, Metro Connects, outlines our long-term vision to provide greater non-motorized access to transit services and facilities in addition to the traditional park-and-ride model. The plan calls for Metro to make near-term improvements to parking access and formation by pursuing strategies to make the best use of existing resources.

Additionally, the vision calls for expanding parking for transit riders by 60 percent while investing equally in an integrated network of transportation alternatives that includes non-motorized connections, bike parking, carsharing, private shuttles, and on-demand car services such as taxis, Uber, and Lyft to help riders reach transit service with less reliance on single occupancy cars, and support demand management of our existing parking resources.

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Metro’s Parking Management Program Goals

- Improve the performance of our parking assets
- Increase access to public transportation
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Ensure consistency with regional transportation partners and services

Phase 1 Outreach – Rider Survey and Public Input

Metro is currently exploring a range of options to both manage and expand parking supply. For this first phase of outreach, we focused on seven park-and-rides that will likely later be included in a permit parking pilot program.

On July 18, we launched a public information campaign to solicit public opinion and suggestions on the following range of options:

- **Free or low-cost carpool permits for transit, vanpool, and/or carpool users with two or more passengers.** When applying for the permit, drivers would verify that they regularly use public transportation. Parking spaces would be reserved for permit holders until 9:30 a.m. For applications that meet the requirements, permits would be issued on a first-come, first-served basis and would be reviewed and renewed monthly or quarterly. At least half the parking spaces at each park-and-ride would stay available for customers without permits and would be used as they are today. (This option would be similar to Sound Transit’s permit parking program.)
- **Permits to solo drivers for a fee.** Rates would be set by the King County Council. Discounts would be available for low-income customers. When applying for the permit, drivers would verify that they regularly use public transportation. Parking spaces would be reserved for permit holders until 9:30 a.m. For applications that meet the requirements, permits would be issued on a first-come, first-served basis and would be reviewed and renewed monthly or quarterly. At least half the parking spaces at each park-and-ride would stay available for customers without permits and would be used as they are today.
- **Daily paid parking for all vehicles.** Rates would be set by the King County Council. Discounts would be available for low-income customers.
- **Reducing the maximum length of stay at Metro park-and-rides from 72 hours to 24 hours.** Sound Transit currently limits stays to 24 hours.
- **Increasing on-site security to enforce park-and-ride rules and improve safety and security for customers and their vehicles.**
- **Improving bike and walk conditions, adding bike parking, restriping to fit in more stalls, and expanding our leased-lot program to add new park-and-rides.**

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We shared information through the following channels (see separate appendices):

- Project website: www.kingcounty.gov/metro/parking
- Email to internal and external stakeholders encouraging them to share the survey with riders who use park-and-rides
- Transit Alert via GovDelivery
- Online surveys: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Metro-Parking>
- Direct customer engagement via field surveys conducted Aug. 2-4 at seven park-and-rides being considered for a park-and-ride pilot project. We handed out about 2,500 paper surveys to riders at these park-and-rides:
 - Issaquah Highlands
 - Northgate East
 - Redmond
 - South Kirkland
 - Kent/Des Moines
 - Eastgate
 - South Renton
- Spanish-language online survey (Aug. 9-25) and Spanish Facebook ad campaign
- Metro social media (Facebook, Twitter, blog)
- Blog post: <https://metrofutureblog.wordpress.com/2016/07/18/take-a-survey-share-input-on-park-and-ride-parking/>
- Traditional media
 - Coverage by KUOW, Kirkland Reporter, Kent Reporter, Bothell Reporter, KIRO News Radio, Bellevue Reporter

How we engaged

We gave people a variety of options for providing comment and feedback.

- Most feedback came via an online survey, which got a total of 6,154 responses and 11,730 individual comments
- 32 people commented via Metro customer service or the “Have a Say” website/email address
- 15 people phoned in and left messages on the “Have a Say” voicemail
- 66 comments came in via Metro’s Facebook post
- 588 people mailed in postage-paid surveys
- A Spanish-language Facebook ad reached 35,424 people, and a translated version of the online survey received 968 clicks and 32 responses

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What we learned

HOV permits

The overwhelming majority of people (67 percent) who park at our park-and-rides drive there alone.

However, about half of our survey respondents (49 percent) were supportive of permit parking and reserved spaces for carpools or vanpools.

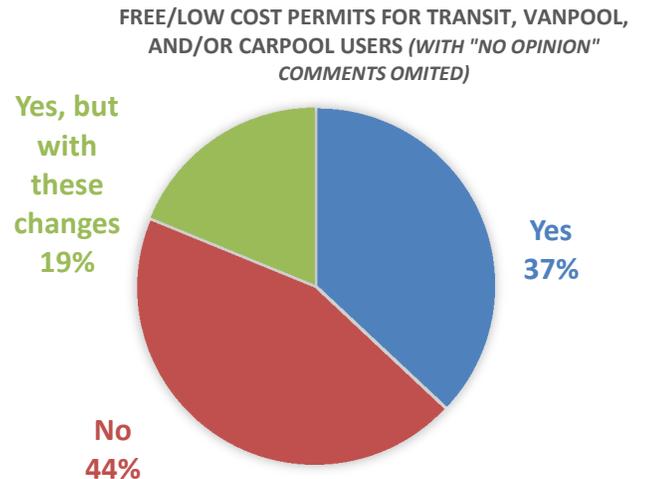
Nearly 33 percent of respondents said “Yes” to a permit program, and 16.5 said “Yes, with changes” and provided open-ended comments and ideas.

When respondents who chose “no opinion” are set aside, support for a carpool permit program is 56 percent. This mirrors a survey done by Sound Transit in 2015, where 62 percent of respondents said permits for vanpools and carpools are the right approach.

Our “Yes, with changes” respondents indicated they would be supportive if parking remained free, permit parking were limited to weekdays during typical commute hours, and if the program included some type of tracking and enforcement to verify carpool status and transit use.

Many respondents said they felt that reserving 50 percent of spaces for permit parking was excessive, and some suggested an earlier cut-off time than 9:30 a.m. Others suggested permits for single occupancy vehicles.

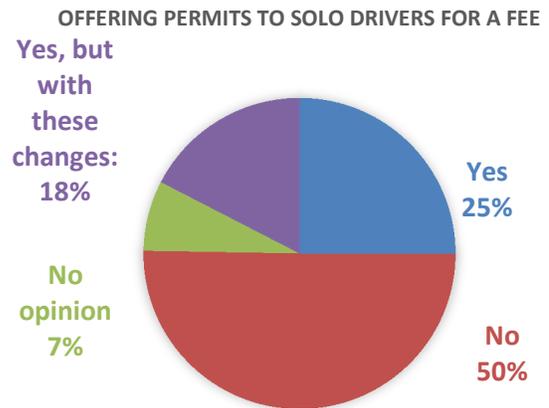
Though the response rate on the Spanish-language survey was much lower, the results showed an exceptionally positive view of permit parking for carpools/vanpools, with nearly 85 percent expressing support (50 percent “Yes” and 14.4 percent “Yes, with changes”).



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Permits for single drivers

Half the respondents were opposed to paid permits for single drivers, while about 25 percent were supportive. An additional 18 percent were supportive with caveats that included affordability and equity, a tie to consistent transit ridership, and some type of enforcement for parking violators. Some liked the concept of a reserved spot. A few asked for reserved spots for late arrivals, and one asked us to consider a special “swing shift permit.”



Charging for all vehicles

Paid parking for all vehicles was opposed by 75 percent of respondents. Only 12 percent said they support the concept, and 9 percent said they’d support the idea if the parking fee were applied to a transit trip or if the fees were somehow reinvested into more parking and transit improvements. Several expressed concerns about affordability and equity. A couple of commenters suggested a dynamic fee structure.

Reducing stays from 72 to 24 hours

People expressed solid support for this measure, with 68 percent saying “Yes” and 7 percent saying “Yes, with changes” that included an extension to 36-48 hours, weekend exceptions, the option to purchase longer parking, and special permits for people with multi-day jobs, such as firefighters or caregivers.

Security

Increasing security for customers and vehicles was widely supported, with 71 percent approving the idea and 6 percent supportive if measures included better lighting, cameras, security patrols, and parking enforcement.

What can we do to improve the parking situation?

In response to this open-ended question, people provided ideas and suggestions on how we could make it easier to find parking.

Adding new capacity, turning lots into multi-story garages, and contracting with churches or nearby businesses to provide overflow parking was by far the top suggestion (49 percent).

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Close to 20 percent of the responses called for adding or improving transit, including more-frequent service, more feeder routes, and transportation alternatives such as shuttles and bike parking to reduce parking demand. Many comments (16 percent) cited a need for greater security and cracking down on parking violators, and there were several suggestions for an ORCA-based scanning system to track transit user parking. Another popular suggestion (14.5 percent) was an app or some type of digital or electronic signage to indicate parking availability.

Many suggested the idea of smaller satellite park-and-rides in outlying areas and more small park-and-rides near Link light rail and outlying areas that could offer shuttle service to major hubs. Several people said they disliked the lack of parking around Link stations. There were also some complaints about restriping and the propensity for “space hogs” to take up two spaces.

Several commenters expressed fear that charging for parking would discourage transit use and encourage more people to drive. Some also thought paid parking and lack of capacity would encourage more “hide-and-rides” in neighborhoods, with a negative impact on street parking. There were also many concerns expressed about the equity of paid parking in a region where affordability and rising costs have disproportionate impacts, but some said they’d be OK with paid parking if the cost could apply to a ride.

Some suggested more disabled parking and transit improvements to better accommodate riders with mobility issues. Others suggested we improve signage and GPS to make our park-and-rides easier to find.

Who did we reach?

Based on the ZIP codes people provided, responses were geographically representative of where our park-and-ride users live. The survey itself—and primarily the field surveys—targeted seven park-and-rides identified as candidate sites for a future permit pilot program, but outreach and messages inviting participation in the survey were distributed to the general public.

What’s next

Our transportation planners will carefully consider the comments and suggestions we received from the public, along with prior plans and studies (including Sound Transit’s parking program pilot reports), as Metro moves forward with a pilot carpool/vanpool parking permit program in February 2017.

Metro will also closely monitor Sound Transit’s permit parking rollout and incorporate their successes and lessons learned into our future planning.

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