

Reimagining the Sound Transit District:

How a Revised Fare Model Could Transform the Region's Reliance on Public Transportation

Mae Langford*, Program on the Environment, University of Washington
Faculty Advisor: Tim Billo, PoE, UW Site Supervisor: Keith Kyle, SeaSub



How would imposing a fare cap impact the Sound Transit district?



Fig 1. Seattle Subway Vision Map

Background

Creating targeted, equitable transit expansion has the power to center pedestrian traffic and public transportation as the most convenient mode of transport.

Current fare models within the Sound Transit district are flat rate and distance-based fares, but alone, do not offer the most equitable payment.

Fare Cap: caps in prices on daily, weekly, or monthly basis that allow riders to pay a flat rate fee with unlimited rides after the cap in payment has been achieved.

Fare Caps offer the greatest benefits to frequent riders.

Internship and Methods

I completed my internship with Seattle Subway and constructed a hypothetical draft environmental impact statement and participated in public outreach events designed to spark public interest in transit expansion.

My personal research consisted of analyzing case studies of transit agencies, both regionally and nationally, considering distance-based, flat-rate, fare-capped, and free fare models to determine what would best serve the region.



Fig 2. Mae and Palmer at the Ballard Farmer's Market discussing the SLU station deletion

Outside of my internship, I ran a promotion at SBP, where visitors were rewarded for transit-oriented commuting.

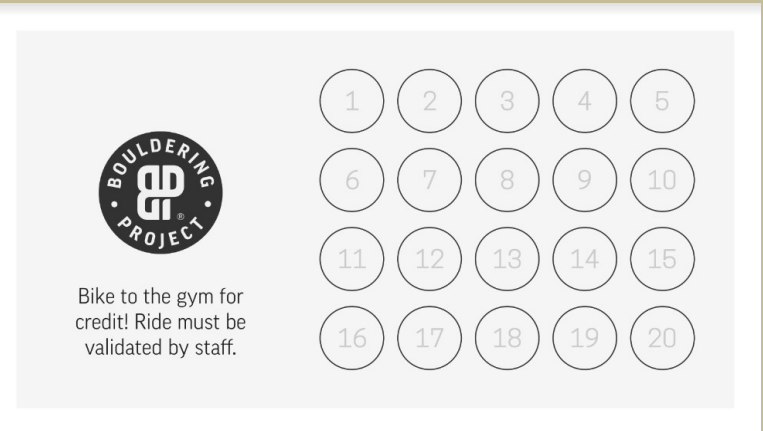


Fig 3 & 4. BP Commuter Card mapping visits to the gym to track eligibility for reward

Results

Fare capping is the ideal model for the Sound Transit district, as it offers tangible benefits to riders, encouraging them to opt for public modes of transport.

Service and Maintenance

Without fare revenue, service and maintenance are threatened, making permanent free fares unsuitable.

Fare payment maintains safety and reliability, while addressing crowding and rider attraction.

Results Continued

Ridership

Fare capping encourages riders to take transit for trips they would have not originally considered to earn “free trips.”

Ridership increases when there are tangible benefits to be earned – fare caps guarantee the best fare, every time.

Revenue Recovery

Forfeiting fare collections for Sound Transit alone could result in a loss of 100 million dollars in revenue each year, which makes fare caps suitable as they continually drive revenue.

Fare caps offer more equitable pricing to riders than current flat-rate and distance –based models.

Service	Adult fares
1 Line	\$2.25-\$3.50
T Line	\$2.00
Sounder	\$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

Fig 5. Lists fare structures for transit agencies in Sound Transit, highlighting the discrepancy in payment., furthering the point that current fare models are unsuitable.

Implications

In the next 30 years, an estimated 5.8 million people will live in the Seattle region. Investing in equitable transit and payment models today will set up the region for success by delivering high-functioning, attractive transit and tangible benefits to riders that encourage their participation in the system.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my family and friends for reminding me I can do hard things. Because of you, I’m learning to be proud of myself.