

**To:** Board of Directors

**From:** Sophie Luthin, Strategic Planning Manager

**Date:** October 3, 2024

**Subject:** Title VI Analysis, Reduced Fare Changes

## **BACKGROUND**

Community Transit’s current fare structure includes three categories of service with fares based on the service type. This structure has existed since 2019 with the approval of the new ORCA LIFT low-income fare. It was further updated in 2022 with the adoption of a free youth fare policy, and again in 2024 with the removal of the commuter fare category.

*Table 1 – Current Fare Structure*

<b>Service</b>	<b>Adult (19 to 64)</b>	<b>Youth (under 19)</b>	<b>Reduced Fares</b>
Bus and Zip	\$2.50/ride	FREE	\$1.25/ride
DART Paratransit	\$2.50/ride	FREE	\$2.50/ride
Vanpool	Fares based on daily roundtrip miles and van size, split by the number of riders		

## **PROPOSAL**

Staff recommend that the reduced fare for Bus and Zip services be changed from \$1.25 to \$1.00, shown in Table 2, and that the agency implement a Subsidized Annual Pass program.

*Table 2 – Proposed Reduced Fare Update*

<b>Service</b>	<b>Adult (19 to 64)</b>	<b>Youth (under 19)</b>	<b>Reduced Fares</b>	<b>Subsidized Annual Pass</b>
Bus and Zip	\$2.50/ride	FREE	\$1.00/ride	FREE
DART Paratransit	\$2.50/ride	FREE	\$2.50/ride	FREE
Vanpool	Fares based on daily roundtrip miles and van size, split by the number of riders			

The Subsidized Annual Pass program allows residents enrolled in one of six state benefit programs to receive a pass for no cost to travel for free on regional transit services. Qualifying benefits programs include:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/State Family Assistance (SEA)
- Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)
- Aged, Blind, or Disabled Cash Assistance (ABD)
- Pregnant Women Assistance (PWA)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Housing & Essential Needs (HEN)

By the terms of the Federal Title VI Requirements and Guidelines and the agency’s 2022-2025 Title VI Program, should the effect of this change result in 20% fewer benefits to the service area’s minority

and/or low-income population than the population at large, then mitigation measures or adjustments to the proposal must be made.

**TITLE VI ANALYSIS**

Eligibility for the six state benefit programs that qualify residents for the subsidized annual pass program requires income at or below 80% of the federal poverty line, or about \$12,000 per year, plus more requirements. Exact requirements are unique to each program. This analysis includes an assessment of the reduced fare reduction from \$1.25 to \$1.00 for low-income populations making more than \$12,000 per year and fare reduction from \$1.25 to \$0.00 for low-income populations making less than \$12,000 per year. US Census Data indicates that approximately 5% of Snohomish County residents make \$12,000 per year or less.

The impact of the proposed \$1.25 to \$1.00 fare change is estimated to benefit 14% of the population who are low-income and 0% of the non-low-income population. The impact of the proposed \$1.25 to \$0.00 subsidized fare change is estimated to benefit roughly 5% of the population who are both low-income *and* make less than \$12,000 per year. This change will affect 0% of the non-low-income population. The reduction is expected to provide an overall 41% reduction in fare for low-income populations and reduce the average fare paid by all Community Transit riders by \$0.10 (4%). There is no change for minority populations in either scenario except those who are also low-income.

These changes do not meet the agency’s adopted 20% threshold, so there is not a significant difference between minority and low-income riders, and non-minority, non-low-income riders. See additional analysis in tables 3 and 4.

*Table 3- Ridership Information*

Service Type	Ridership Information								
	Minority	Percent Minority	Non-Minority	Low-Income	Percent Low-Income	Non-Low-Income	Subsidized Income	Percent Subsidized Income	Non-Subsidized Income
Average Weekday Boardings	10,355	40%	15,639	3,752	14%	22,242	1,300	5%	24,694

Table 4- Fare Information

Service Type	Fare Information				Average Fare Change			
	Current Fare	Proposed Fare	Fare Change	Percent Fare Change	Minority	Non-Minority	Low-Income	Non-Low-Income
Regular Fare	\$2.50	\$2.50	\$0.00	0%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Reduced Fare	\$1.25	\$1.00	-\$0.25	-20%	\$0.00	\$0.00	-\$938.05	\$0.00
Subsidized Fare	\$1.25	\$0.00	-\$1.25	-100%	\$0.00	\$0.00	-\$1,624.63	\$0.00
	Average Fare Increase				\$0.00	\$0.00	-\$0.51	\$0.00
	Percent Increase				0%	0%	-41%	0%

**CONCLUSION**

The recommendation as put forward by staff is within the agency’s Title VI Program standards and does not require mitigation or other alteration.