

FAQs

Why is Metro implementing paid permit parking?

Lack of available parking and uncertainty about whether riders will be able to find parking are among the top parking-related complaints Metro receives from our riders.

Some of our lots fill before 7:00 a.m. This results in rider crowding at lots and on early buses, while travelers arriving later in the morning have limited access to transit parking. By the time many travelers get to a park-and-ride and discover there aren't any spaces left, they have limited alternatives and may end up driving all the way to their destinations and paying to park in neighborhoods like downtown Seattle and downtown Bellevue.

A permit program can make a big difference for many travelers by providing the peace-of-mind of knowing they will have a place to park without having to arrive earlier than needed. That extra time can mean a lot for busy travelers who may have to drop kids at childcare or can't get to the station by 6 a.m. to find a parking spot.

Why doesn't Metro just build more parking?

New parking is expensive and it takes a long time to build. Structured parking can cost transit agencies up to \$100,000/stall and a garage can easily take five years or more to plan, design, permit and construct. Metro is looking at permit parking as a way to offer customers more immediate relief. Building new parking is still on the table as a longer-term strategy.

This approach is consistent with Metro's long range plan, Metro Connects, which calls upon the agency to manage parking we already have, before we build new permanent parking.

Won't this discourage people from taking transit?

When permit holders know they will be able to find a parking space, we anticipate they will take transit more regularly. Across the board, participating in the permit program will be optional, so customers who don't want to purchase one won't have to. At participating park-and-rides, Metro will only designate the spaces needed to accommodate permit holders – if demand for permits is limited, only a small number of parking spaces will be designated for permit parking. The number of permitted stalls available for both carpool and solo driver permit holders will be capped at 50%. All other stalls will be available for general transit parking on a first-come, first-served basis. After the morning rush hour and on weekends, any open permit parking stalls will also become available for general transit parking.

Doesn't this make it more expensive for low income people to take transit?

Solo driver permits are intended to improve access for all our customers, including low-income riders. There will be a discounted permit fee of \$20 for all participating lots for customers who qualify for the ORCA LIFT low-income reduced transit fare.

What is the goal of permit parking?

As the region grows, Metro is working to keep up with growing demand for transit parking. In addition to expanding parking capacity, and working to make it easier to bike, walk and carpool to transit, Metro is also working to manage the parking we already have more efficiently.

Metro is implementing solo driver permit parking in order to achieve the following parking management goals adopted by the King County Council:

- Encourage use of transit
- Increase ridership in the region
- Improve access to transit parking for low-income populations, communities of color, immigrants and refugees, limited English-speaking populations, transit-dependent populations, individuals who work nontraditional schedules or during off-peak travel periods and other transit riders
- Increase use of carpooling
- Cover program costs

Does Metro have policy support for implementing solo driver permits?

Metro’s long range plan, Metro Connects, was adopted in 2017 by the King County Council. The plan lays out clear priorities with regard to parking: first, Metro is called upon to manage existing parking (including through price), then to look for low-cost ways to expand parking capacity, before finally investing in new permanent transit parking.

Consistent with this vision, in November 2018 the King County Council adopted legislation granting Metro the general authority to charge for parking at park-and-ride lots, and in July 2019 the Council adopted motions allowing Metro to move forward with paid permit parking program at high-demand lots.

Has Metro tried anything like this before?

Metro currently offers free carpool parking permits at 14 park-and-ride lots. Metro has received customer feedback suggesting a desire for solo driver permit option.

How do you justify this to customers whose tax dollars have already paid for these spaces? Aren’t you essentially double-charging people?

Permit fees don’t charge for access to general parking, but rather charge for access to reserved parking that allows a customer to show up anytime in the morning and be certain of finding a space. Permits are optional – customers who do not want to purchase one, including the 78% of Metro customers whose tax dollars fund parking but who currently walk, bike, pool, get dropped off, or take connecting service to transit won’t have to get one.

In addition to offering permit holders increased flexibility, solo driver permits will open access to all different sorts of travelers arriving throughout the morning — not just those who are able to arrive the earliest. They will create operational efficiencies as demand for space on transit spreads out across the morning rush hour. And they offer a valuable customer amenity while covering the costs of permit administration and enforcement.

Doesn’t charging for permits defeat the purpose of using transit to save money?

Permits are optional – customers who do not want to purchase one, won’t have to. A portion of the stalls in participating lots would still be available for general transit parking, and any permit spaces that are open after the morning rush and on weekends would be available for general transit parking as well.

We think there will be a lot of interest in the certainty and flexibility permits offer to our customers. We are hearing from commuters that by the time they get to a park-and-ride and discover there aren’t any spaces left, they have limited alternatives and often end up driving all the way to their destinations and

paying to park in neighborhoods like downtown Seattle and downtown Bellevue. Solo driver parking permits would eliminate this unpredictability, while costing less than parking downtown.

What else is Metro doing to make it easier to find parking at its park-and-rides?

Metro's long range plan, Metro Connects, calls for us to expand parking for transit riders by 60 percent. It also calls for us to invest equally in an integrated network of transportation alternatives, including non-motorized connections, bike parking, car sharing, private shuttles, and on-demand mobility services like Ride2, Via to Transit, taxis, Uber, and Lyft. And it calls for us to support demand management of our existing parking resources.

FAQs about program details

How would solo driver permit parking work?

Solo driver permit parking is similar to the carpool permit parking offered today.

- Solo driver permits will be issued for park-and-ride facilities that are both owned and operated by Metro, and that are at least 90% full on most weekdays.
- Customers who drive to a participating park-and-ride to catch transit, join a carpool or join a vanpool will be eligible to apply for a permit.
- A waiting list or lottery system will be in place in case demand for permits exceeded the number of permits available.
- During the first month of permit sales, 10% of permits will be set aside for ORCA LIFT participants. After the first month, and if there is a waiting list in place, ORCA LIFT participants will be prioritized as permits become available until a 10% ORCA LIFT participation target is met.
- After the 10% ORCA LIFT participation threshold is met, or if there are no more ORCA LIFT participants on the waiting list for a given lot, Carpool permit applicants will be prioritized on the waiting list as permits become available.
- At participating park-and-rides, the number of permitted stalls available for both carpool and solo driver permit holders will be capped at 50% of the total stalls at a given lot.
- The 'Permit Parking Only' designation will only be in place Monday-Friday from 4-10 a.m. On weekends and later in the day, any remaining stalls will open up for general transit parking.
- Parking enforcement staff will patrol participating lots. Vehicles parked in permitted stalls during the morning rush hour will be issued \$20 citations for the first three violations. A fourth violation would result in towing and impound. Unpaid citations will result in a \$25 late fee.
- Permit holders will be required to demonstrate regular transit ridership to be eligible for monthly permit renewals. Metro would check ORCA, vanpool or other ridership records to verify 12+ days of ridership/month.

Where would Metro offer solo driver permits?

Metro will implement paid solo driver permit parking at park-and-ride facilities that are owned and operated by Metro and that are at or above 90% full on a typical weekday. At this point the following lots meet these criteria: Redmond Park-and-ride, Issaquah Highlands Park-and-ride, S Kirkland Park-and-ride, Tukwila Park-and-ride, Aurora Village Transit Center, Kenmore Park-and-ride, Bear Creek park-and-ride, Bothell Park-and-ride and Shoreline Park-and-ride. Permits may be offered at Northgate Transit Center, or other park-and-ride facilities meeting the criteria in the future. .

State law currently restricts Metro from offering priced parking permits at facilities that are operated by Metro but owned by the Washington State Department of Transportation, such as Eastgate Transit Center, South Renton Park-and-Ride, Wilburton Park-and-Ride, Kingsgate Park-and-Ride and Green Lake Park-and-Ride. Legislative action would be required to change this state law.

How many stalls will be designated for permit parking?

At participating park-and-rides, the number of permitted stalls available for both carpool and solo driver permit holders would be capped at 50% of the total stalls. The actual number of permitted stalls will depend on demand for permits and how many are in circulation at a given time. If demand for permits is low, Metro will not permit the full 50% of a participating lot.

Does this reduce the number of stalls available to people without permits?

Reserved permit stalls will become available to all transit users after 10 a.m., and on weekends.

When would permit parking designation be in place?

The 'Permit Parking Only' designation will only be in place Monday-Friday from 4-10 a.m. On weekends and later in the day, any available stalls would open up for general transit parking.

How would enforcement work?

Parking enforcement staff will patrol participating lots. Vehicles parked in permitted stalls without a valid permit during the morning rush hour will be issued \$20 citations for the first three violations. A fourth violation would result in towing and impound. Unpaid citations will result in a \$25 late fee.

Does Metro have plans to ticket and tow cars of non-transit riders who unfairly take advantage of free parking?

We know some of our park-and-ride spaces are being filled by people who aren't there to catch a bus, vanpool, or carpool. Instead, they're going to nearby businesses, apartments, or construction sites. Metro operations staff will continue parking enforcement throughout Metro's park-and-ride system. As is true today, unauthorized vehicles will receive written warnings for the first two violations, followed by a tow and impound upon the third violation.

What if people get permits and don't use them?

Permit holders will be required to average three days of transit ridership per week (12 days per month) to stay qualified. Permits must be renewed monthly. Metro staff members will review information to make sure permit holders meet the eligibility requirements, and revoke permits for those who no longer qualify.

Didn't Metro start a free Carpool Parking Permit program and increase enforcement of people who violate parking rules? How effective have those programs been?

Metro currently offers free carpool permit parking at 14 park-and-rides. Permit holders are generally satisfied with the program and report reduced stress and increased certainty as the biggest benefits. Overall the program has been successful; as of July there were 73 active permits. Carpooling isn't an option for all travelers, however. That's one reason Metro will offer solo driver permits as an option that might work for a broader range of customers.

Metro increased parking enforcement starting in 2017, with a focus on four high-priority park-and-rides: Northgate, Eastgate, South Renton and Kingsgate. The initiative has been successful, resulting in over 400 warnings. Under the initiative, violators receive three warnings followed by impound. Over 85% of first-time violators have not gone on to violate again.

What will happen to carpool permits if Metro decided to start offering solo driver permits?

Carpool permits will remain available alongside solo driver permits.

How would Metro handle waiting lists for solo driver permits?

A waiting list or lottery system will be in place in case demand for permits exceeded the number of permits available.

During the first month of permit sales, 10% of permits will be set aside for ORCA LIFT participants. After the first month, and if there is a waiting list in place, ORCA LIFT participants will be prioritized as permits become available until a 10% ORCA LIFT participation target is met.

After the 10% ORCA LIFT participation threshold is met, or if there are no more ORCA LIFT participants on the waiting list for a given lot, Carpool permit applicants will be prioritized on the waiting list as permits become available.

Who would be eligible for parking permits?

At Metro facilities, individual customers who drive to a participating park-and-ride to catch transit, join a carpool or join a vanpool would be eligible to apply for a solo driver permit. Groups of two or more such customers will continue to be eligible to apply for a carpool permit.

How much would they cost?

At each permitted lot Metro evaluated local market prices for paid parking, parking utilization, location along transit corridor, availability of frequent transit service, and coordination with other public transit service providers that own and operate park and rides to determine a monthly solo driver permit price.

Park-and-ride Facility	Single Occupant Vehicle Monthly Permit Fee	ORCA LIFT Single Occupant Vehicle Monthly Permit Fee	Carpool Monthly Permit Fee
Aurora Village Transit Center	\$90	\$20 across all locations	\$0 across all locations
Bear Creek Park-and-ride	\$90		
Bothell Park-and-ride	\$90		
Kenmore Park-and-ride	\$90		
Redmond Park-and-ride	\$90		
South Kirkland Park-and-ride	\$90		
Tukwila Park-and-ride	\$90		
Issaquah Highlands Park-and-ride	\$60		
Shoreline Park-and-ride	\$60		

Will there be a different rate for low-income customers?

ORCA LIFT participants will pay \$20 across all participating lots for a solo driver permit. The flat \$20/month discounted fee option will be available for ORCA LIFT participants.

Customers who possess a Regional Reduced Fare Permit (RRFP) *and* who are low-income will need to submit a verification that they meet the ORCA LIFT income requirements to qualify for the reduced rate parking permit.

FAQs about permit price:

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Will all transit parking be priced? Will Metro offer paid permits at all park-and-rides?

Metro is not currently planning to implement daily parking fees at any of our park and ride lots.

At this time Metro is only planning to offer paid permit parking in up to 50% of the parking stalls at park-and-ride facilities that are owned and operated by Metro and that are at or above 90% full on a typical weekday. At this point the following lots meet these criteria: Redmond Park-and-Ride, Issaquah Highlands Park-and-Ride, South Kirkland Park-and-Ride, Tukwila Park-and-Ride, Aurora Village Transit

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Center, Kenmore Park-and-Ride, Bear Creek Park-and-Ride, Bothell Park-and-Ride and Shoreline Park-and-Ride.

Metro is not currently considering offering paid parking permits at lots that are privately owned, but leased or shared by Metro.

State law currently restricts Metro from offering priced parking permits at facilities that are operated by Metro but owned by the Washington State Department of Transportation, such as Eastgate Transit Center, South Renton Park-and-Ride, Wilburton Park-and-Ride, Kingsgate Park-and-Ride and Green Lake Park-and-Ride. Legislative action would be required to change this state law.