What is the goal of the new Fare Violation Program?
Fares are an essential part of funding our regional transit system and Metro is required to recover nearly a third of its operating costs from fare revenue. However, Metro recognizes that some riders may not be able to pay a steep penalty for fare evasion – especially those who could not afford the fare itself. The primary goal of the Fare Violation Program is to minimize the chances of someone entering a cycle of debt and court interactions over a fare evasion incident, therefore minimizing fare enforcement’s contribution to negative outcomes, and lasting future barriers, for some of King County’s most vulnerable residents. Metro’s Fare Enforcement team wants to help our riders sustain access to transit by empowering them to “ride right”.

How is the new Fare Violation Program approach different?

Before
- Civil Fine for fare evasion ticket: $124
- Court referral for civil violation; a history of fare evasion may result in criminal misdemeanor charges
- Short resolution time set by courts
- Unresolved cases led to 3rd party debt collections + court delinquencies
- Fines and court hearings never address root cause for fare evasion; access to fares tools & resources
- Results created unintended, extenuating adverse impacts to individuals

Now
- Administrative Fine for fare evasion: $50 (reduced to $25 if paid within 30 days)
- Administered by King County Metro, no referrals to courts
- 90 days resolution period, including proactive outreach to assist with resolution options
- Unresolved violations may lead to 12-hour expulsion from service, per violation
- Resolution options are designed to promote connection to fares resources to sustain access to transit service
- Outcomes will not impact individuals’ credit or personal records

What are the benefits of the new program?
This new program will help reduce negative inequitable outcomes by:
- Eliminating the cyclical impacts from court or collections as a direct result of a fare evasion violation, categorized as a low-level offense
- Offering a reduced, “right-sized” penalty fee and multiple alternatives, non-monetary methods for resolving a violation
- Allowing riders more time to resolve their violation
- Proactive outreach to connect riders to appropriate resolutions and resources for sustainable results
- Clear, understandable progression of violation outcomes
Fare Violation Program
Balancing fare enforcement with equity and social justice

How will the Fare Violation Program work?
This program offers a reduced penalty fee of $50, or less, and multiple options for resolving violations. Riders have 90 days to resolve their violation. Fines paid within 30 days are further reduced to $25. Individuals who do not resolve their violation within 90 days may be expelled from Metro service for 12 hours per violation. Individuals found riding without a valid proof of payment during the expulsion period may face further consequences for trespassing administered by Metro Transit Police or local law enforcement. Metro will proactively conduct outreach to individuals during the 90 day resolution period in order to encourage and assist individuals in resolving their violation and prevent interruption in accessing Metro service. Standardized fare inspections onboard coaches is operationally the same, however, the conversation between the rider and the fare enforcement officer has improved to offer our riders a better opportunity to “ride right”.

How was the new program developed?
Metro developed this new program in partnership with transit and community advocacy groups, fare enforcement officers, and others. Our key stakeholders in the development process included Transportation Choices Coalition, Transit Riders Union, Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness, OneAmerica and Puget Sound Sage.

What has Metro done to address the 2018 RapidRide Fare Enforcement Audit findings?
A 2018 audit conducted by the King County Auditor’s office found King County Metro’s fare enforcement model may be contributing to negative and inequitable outcomes, particularly for riders experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity. Based on the preliminary audit findings and input from enforcement program staff and other key stakeholders, Metro immediately implemented the following actions, which are still in effect today:

- Suspension of criminal referrals related to fare evasion for adults (juveniles were not at risk)
- Increase the fare evasion warning opportunities for youth
- Institute new equity training requirements for fare enforcement officers
- Created a Fare Enforcement Quality Assurance Supervisor position
- Allow fare evasion warning and violation records to expire after one year¹
- Motioned for all open fare evasion-related court cases to be closed and collection action withdrawn

How will Metro better evaluate fare enforcement and learn more about riders impacted?
Metro’s fare enforcement conducted a study period in August and September 2018, intended to gather data that would help Metro better understand barriers to fare payment and eligibility for reduced fare products. Information gathered during this time was applied in shaping the new program and will inform future strategies related to fare enforcement and income-based fare programs in King County Metro. Metro recognizes the importance of performance management, will continue to build upon the data measures identified through this

¹ Emerged as a recommendation, but was already a practice prior to feedback
study, and remains committed to working with advocacy groups and other stakeholders to evaluate the success of the Fare Violation Program.