

Resolution in Support of ORCA for All

WHEREAS the crisis of climate change demands urgent action, including a rapid shift to low-carbon modes of transportation, especially public transit; and

WHEREAS over half of Seattle commute trips are comprised of single-occupancy-vehicles (SOV), including a quarter of commute trips into downtown, the most congested area of the city; and

WHEREAS employer-provided transit benefits are an effective incentive that shifts the commute habits of workers', thereby lowering transportation costs for workers who use public transit; and

WHEREAS low-income workers typically aren't provided subsidized transit passes; and

WHEREAS low-income workers are the most likely demographic to utilize public transit¹; and

WHEREAS fares only account for 6.7% of the total revenue King County Transit agencies receive²; and

WHEREAS the Transit Riders Union is planning a campaign to increase the employer provision of transit benefits in Seattle and King County,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the 46th Legislative District Democrats, declares their endorsement of the Transit Riders Union campaign to increase employer provisions of transit benefits for low-income workers and approves our name and logo to be displayed in a list of signatories to their mission statement.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED we call on Seattle City Council, Kenmore City Council, Lake Forest Park City Council, and King County Council to investigate their ability to create or expand funding Orca passes for low-income residents, and to ultimately investigate their ability to aid King County Transit Agencies in transitioning to providing free service for all.

Submitted by Hunter Brown, PCO 46-2252, originated by Transit Riders Union, for consideration by the 46th District Democrats. Date of submission: September 18, 2019.

Sources:

1. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/07/who-relies-on-public-transit-in-the-u-s/>
2. <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/where-is-your-king-county-transportation-money-going-and-what-is-it-costing-you-these-are-the-numbers/>

ORCA for All Vision Statement

We believe:

Mobility is a human right. Transportation connects people to housing, shelter, jobs, food, healthcare, education, friends and family, cultural and faith communities, recreation and civic life— all the things humans need to live with dignity and to flourish. For the many who depend on public transit, especially in low-income communities and communities of color, access to a robust public transit system is both a need and a right.

Climate crisis demands urgent action. Half of Seattle's rising carbon emissions come from passenger transportation. Over half of commute trips in our city are still made by driving solo, including a quarter of commute trips to downtown. A rapid shift to low-carbon modes of transportation is needed to avert climate catastrophe.

Living up to these principles will require aggressive investment in infrastructure for transit, biking, walking and rolling; expansion of transit service that is frequent, reliable, fast, serves all neighborhoods and runs 24 hours a day; new disincentives to driving alone; and massively more affordable housing to halt the suburbanization of poverty and shorten the distances people must travel to meet their needs.

But another, equally vital piece of the puzzle is ensuring that all people are enabled, encouraged, and incentivized to use our public transit system. **ORCA for All envisions a near future when every resident and every worker in Seattle and King County has an unlimited transit pass in hand.**

Our region can lead in realizing this vision and set an inspiring example for other cities and counties around the country. Success will require action by governments, employers, and individuals.

We call on **governments** to:

- Implement reduced or free fares such that cost is not a barrier to anyone, and continually work to remove all other barriers and inequities that may impede transit access based on language, race, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQ+ status, immigration status, housing status, neighborhood, age, ability or disability.
- Ensure that all workers employed by governments or public agencies either directly or *indirectly through contracts* receive full transit benefits in the form of an unlimited transit pass.
- Strengthen Commute Trip Reduction laws and make them about climate change and equity, not just about peak-hour congestion. Encourage and if necessary require more employers to subsidize transit for their employees, while taking into consideration the differing abilities of employers to absorb these costs based on size and industry.

We call on **employers** to:

- Offer employees the opportunity to make a monthly pre-tax payroll deduction for transit or vanpool expenses, in compliance with Seattle's new Commuter Benefits Ordinance that goes into effect on January 1, 2020.
- Subsidize transit, preferably in the form of an unlimited transit pass, for employees— *lower-wage workers as well as higher-paid workers, part-time and temp workers and independent contractors as well as full-time workers.*
- Refrain from disciplining workers who are late to work due to a late bus or train.

We call on **individuals** to:

- Make the choice to use low-carbon modes of transportation whenever possible.
- Make sure your employer is complying with the Commuter Benefits Ordinance, and talk to your co-workers about asking for a transit subsidy if your employer does not already offer one.
- Join TRU and the ORCA for All campaign as we use our collective power to push governments and employers to make the systemic changes that are most effective in shifting individuals' habits.

Together we can achieve ORCA for All!