

ORCA for ALL



February 6, 2020

orca4all.org

In many ways, Seattle is already a leader on transit.



- Our transit ridership is rising, while many cities nationwide are experiencing declines...
- Why? Major voter-approved investments in transit service and infrastructure.
- A national leader in free and reduced fare programs.
- Several programs and laws that encourage employers to reduce drive-alone commutes.

But Seattle is still car-dominated, and it's killing us.

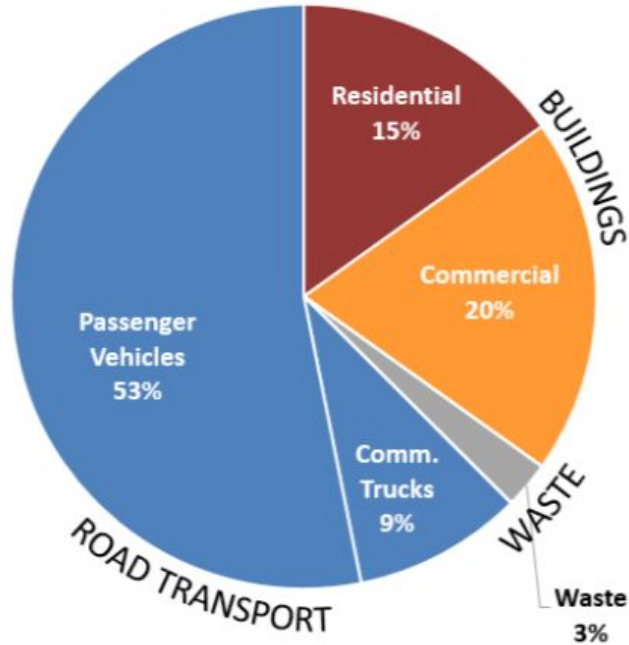


Figure 2: Seattle's 2016 core emissions by sector.

- Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. We're not on track to meet our city's climate goals.
- Passenger vehicles are the largest contributor to Seattle's emissions.
- Pollutants harm health, especially in communities of color that are more likely to live near busy roads.
- People of color, seniors, and people with disabilities are more likely to be killed by traffic violence.

Traffic congestion and long commutes...



- Seattle's traffic congestion is among the worst in the nation, wasting billions of dollars, and time people could be spending on better things.
- Lower-wage workers are more likely to have very long commutes, and to spend a large part of their income on transportation.

Transit benefits are effective!



- Multiple studies have shown that employer-provided transit passes are effective in shifting commuters towards public transit.
- For example, the Atlanta Regional Household Travel Survey found that “employees who were provided free or subsidized transit pass had 156% higher odds to commute on transit... all else equal, compared to their counterparts.”

And workers love transit benefits

From TRU's Commute Survey:

“It means the world for me and my commute.”

“It's fantastic. It means that there's no second thought about grabbing a bus or train, no scrounging for change or hunting for an ORCA machine.”

“In all honesty it's a near necessity for me. There isn't really an excuse for employers in this region to NOT offer it.”

“It is a fantastic relief and makes me feel like I'm making great pay, since I don't have to spend a large portion on transit fares.”

But right now, transit benefits are inequitable

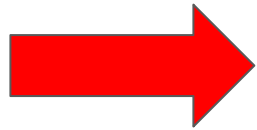
According to TRU's (non-scientific) survey of Seattle workers last year:

Workers making \$100,000 or more...



85% get some transportation benefits

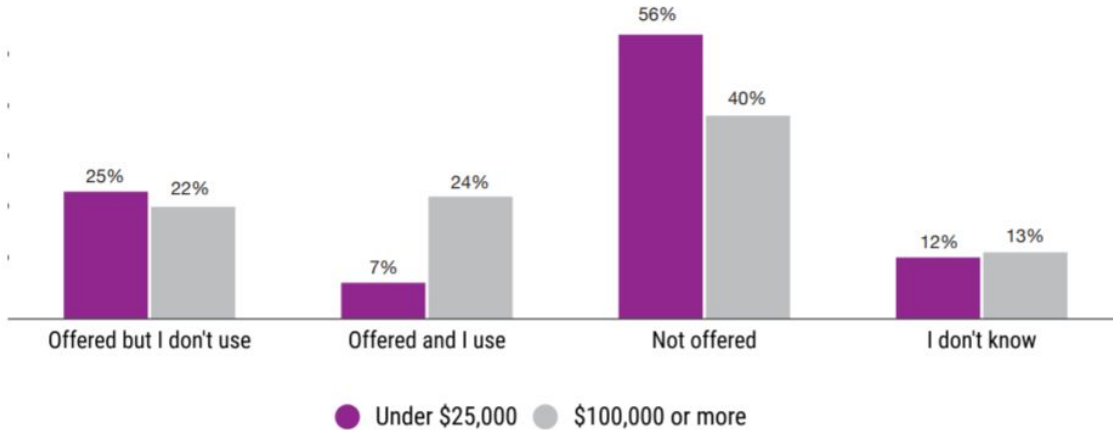
Workers making \$50,000 or less...



50% get some transportation benefits

A similar story in the Puget Sound region

Employer benefit: free or subsidized transit



- High-paid workers are the most likely to be offered employer-subsidized transit.
- Low-wage workers, who need transit benefits the most, are less likely to get them.

Source: Puget Sound Regional Council, 2017 Household Travel Survey

This is partly an outcome of City of Seattle policy

- Seattle's Commute Trip Reduction program focuses on large 9-to-5 worksites, like corporate headquarters.



- This leaves out lower-wage industries like retail and hospitality, and shift work, which is more likely to be performed by low-wage workers.

City policy can fix this!

The city has already begun this work by passing a **Commuter Benefits Ordinance** in 2018, which went into effect this January:

“Businesses with 20 or more employees are required to offer their employees the opportunity to make a monthly pre-tax payroll deduction for transit or vanpool expenses.”

ORCA for All proposes to strengthen this ordinance by adding a requirement that large employers subsidize transit for all their employees.

At the same time:



Support and expand programs that provide free or deeply affordable transit access for low-income and very low-income riders, youth, seniors, etc.

Expand and improve service, including late-night and off-peak service for workers and residents who ride transit at all times of the day and night.

Decriminalize fare non-payment and chart a path to free transit for all!



Learn more: orca4all.org & transitriders.org

Take our new survey: transitriders.org/orcasurvey