

ORCA for ALL



September 20, 2019

orca4all.org

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



- Our transit ridership is rising, while many cities nationwide are experiencing declines.
- Major voter-approved investments in transit service and infrastructure.
- Leading the nation in transit affordability programs.
- Several programs and laws that encourage employers to reduce drive-alone commutes.

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

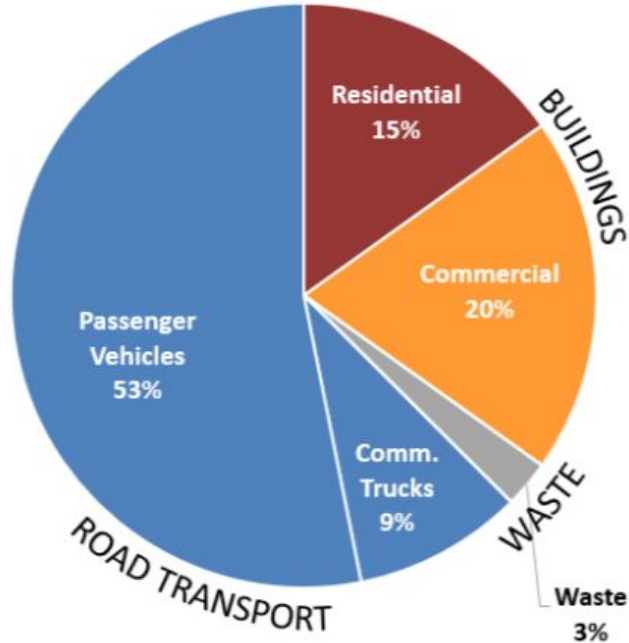


Figure 2: Seattle's 2016 core emissions by sector.

- 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.”

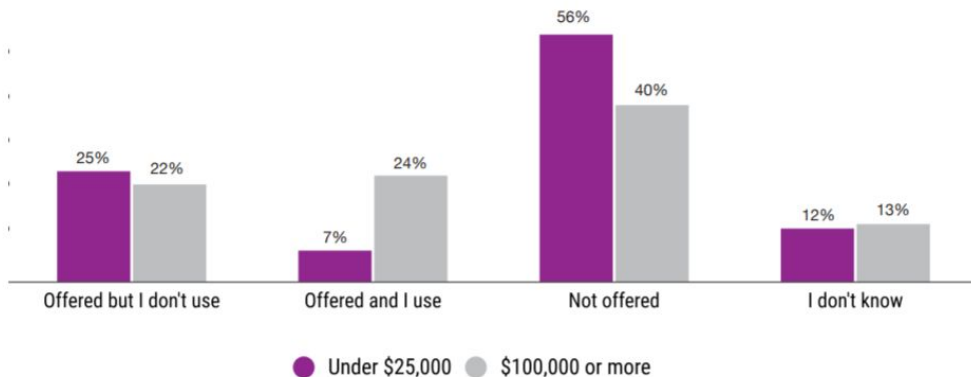
“It's fantastic. It means that there's no second thought about grabbing a bus or train, no scrounging for change or hunting for an ORCA machine.”

“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

Employer benefit: free or subsidized transit



Source: Puget Sound Regional Council, 2017 Household Travel Survey

- High-paid workers are most likely to be offered employer-subsidized transit.
- Low-wage workers, who need affordable transit the most, aren't getting it.
- Seattle's Commute Trip Reduction program focuses on large worksites like corporate headquarters.

Proposal #1

Strengthen Seattle's Commuter Benefits Ordinance by requiring that employers above a certain size subsidized transit for their employees.

This could be a tiered requirement, with the largest employers required to cover 100% of the cost of transit passes and smaller but still large employers required to cover 50%.

Include part-time and temp workers as well as full-time workers.

Be flexible about ways employers can comply with the requirement, while also ensuring that the benefit is easy to access for workers.

Study ways the City can further assist and encourage medium and smaller employers to provide transit subsidies for their employees, without creating undue financial burdens.

Proposal #2

Ensure that all workers employed through city contracts are offered transit benefits comparable to those received by city employees, with a focus on service providers and trades.

For construction workers, add a provision for transit benefits in the Community Workforce Agreements that govern labor agreements for large public works projects.

For human service providers, consider offering a transit benefits grant based on the estimated number of employees funded through their contract with the city, conditional on the provider offering transit benefits to all its Seattle employees.

Gather information, engage stakeholders, and identify funding, with a goal of taking action in a big way on this issue by fall 2020.

Free & accessible transit for all?



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

Create a pathways to free transit for all Seattle residents!

At the same time, work to expand and improve service, including late-night and off-peak service for workers who commute at all times of the day and night.



Learn more at orca4all.org and transitriders.org