Community College Proviso

NOVEMBER 2026

About ORCA Passport and Choice

Passport: An all-inclusive program that provides a yearly pass covering unlimited access to regional transit. Can cost share up to 50%.

Choice: A flexible program allowing organizations to choose fare products to cover any number of participants, for any period of time, at retail price. No cost sharing requirement.

Getting a transit benefit through an employer or organization increases access to mobility and inspires behavior change

In the 2025-26 school year, of the 10 Community and Technical Colleges in King County

- 1 has Passport
- 3 have no program
- 6 have Choice



In 2025, 462k employees (1 in 3 employees) in King County were enrolled in ORCA Passport through their employer or an organization.

What % of the population used a card at least once in 2025?

A) 70% **322k unique cards used**

B) 39%

C) 26%

D) 53%

In Fall 2025 there were 70k students enrolled in a community or technical college in King County.
53k were eligible to buy an ORCA card through a school transit program.

What percent of the population used a card at least once that quarter?

A) 58%

B) 31%

C) 2% **1.1k unique cards used**

D) 23%

*Active cards may include students and staff

How it started…

- Internal Metro discussions about underserved populations
- Regional discussions with transit agency partners
- Data collection and peer analysis
- Concept for 2027 WSDOT RMG grant application
- Potential legislation > proviso



About the Proviso

Overview: One-time funding for Kitsap and King Counties to implement an affordable community and technical college transit pass pilot program

- The pilot seeks to improve access to education and opportunity by reducing transportation costs and increasing transit accessibility for students.
- Data collected throughout the pilot will support legislative reporting requirements and help inform future transit accessibility strategies.
- Specifically includes Highline College, with the ability to offer pilots at additional schools

Award period: July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027

Joint report due: End of January 2027

Legislative Report

King County Metro and Kitsap transit are responsible for providing a joint report to the legislature that analyzed student participation levels and an analysis of fare funding structures.

Due by end of January 2027

- Joint introduction
- Individual sections for Kitsap and Metro, both covering:
  - Pre-pilot survey data
  - About eligible population/distribution
  - Transit and card usage data
- Joint section on college pass funding and structure model recommendations



Planned supplemental report upon program completion

About the population

College Students in Washington State

- **44%** food insecurity (14% increase since 2022)
- **34%** housing insecurity
- **11%** experiencing homelessness
- **Transportation** is a common resource need

Community and Technical College Students in King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish Counties

- **53%** are students of color
- **50%** female
- **34%** qualify for need-based financial aid
- **13%** self reported a disability

(top) Washington Student Achievement Council
(bottom) WA State College board data Enrollment Data

Pre-selected in the Proviso

Highline College ★

Type: Community College

Student size: 13.5k (8k credit-seeking, 5.5k ELCAP)

Gender: 58% female, 33% male, 9% not reported

BIPOC students: 76%

Receiving need-based financial aid: 56%

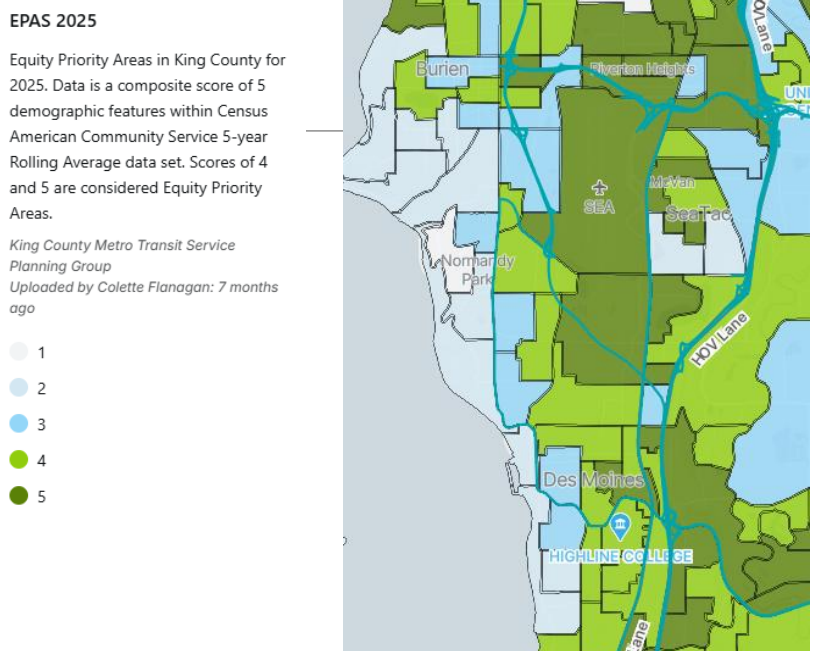
Service area: Tukwila, Des Moines, SeaTac, Federal Way (district 9)

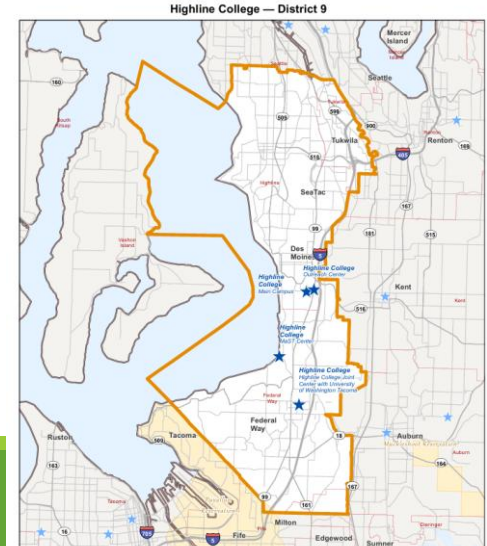
Transit competitiveness: Strong. By Kent Des Moines Light Rail station and numerous bus routes (165, 166, 156, RapidRide A Line)

2025-26 student transit offerings:

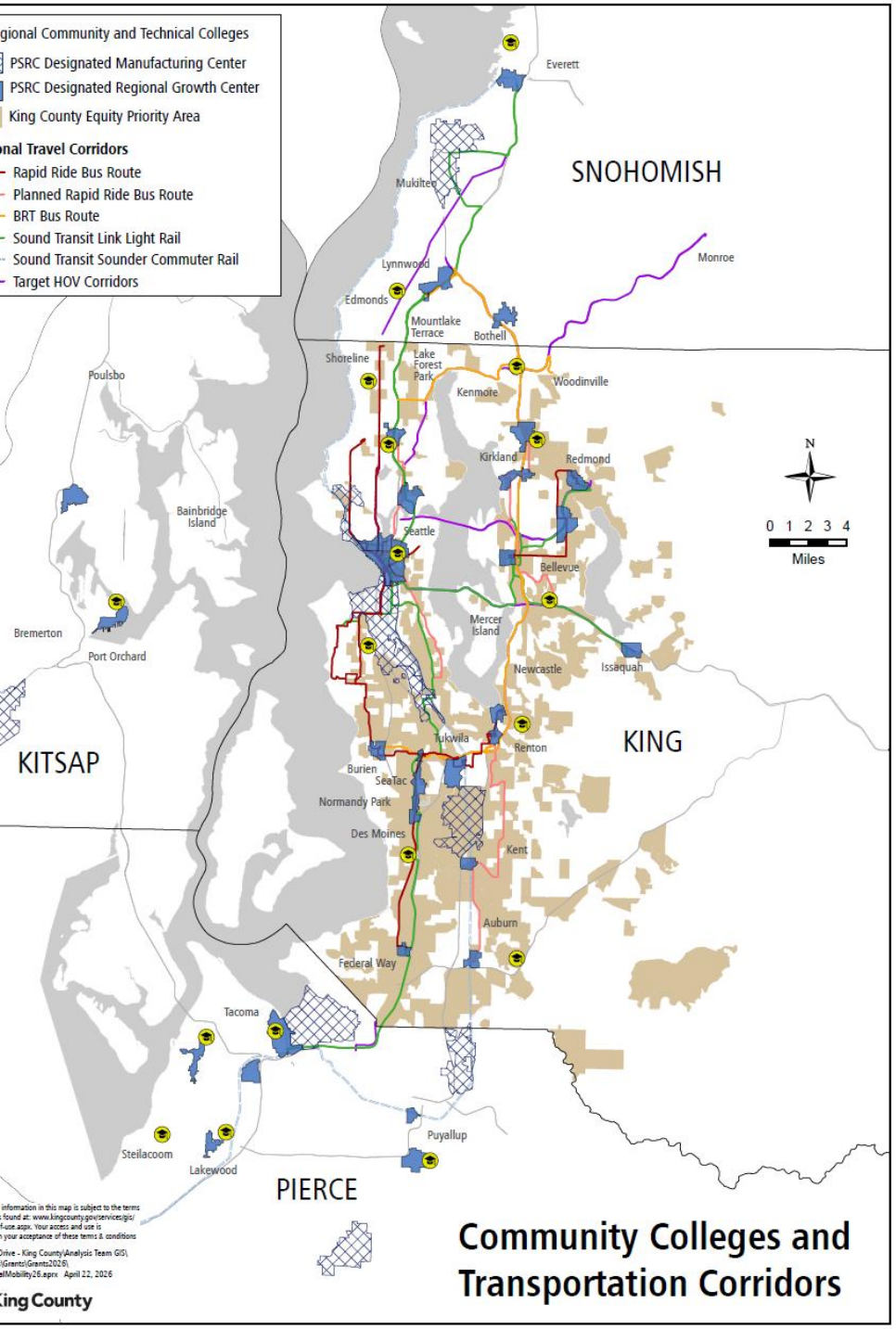
- ORCA only available if students opt-out of parking permit. $50 per-quarter match.
- Funded by $66/year parking, safety and alternative transit fee.
- 271 unique users in 2024-25 school year.

Parking: limited, but permit included with fee





54%
first-generation college students



Evaluation of Other Potential Schools

Data considered

- Student population size
- Demographic data (ethnicity, gender, % of students who receive need-based financial aid)
- Transit competitiveness and market share (Locus, routes, key corridors)
- Metro Equity Priority score
- Current transportation program offerings, related student fees, and usage rates
- Parking availability, fee and use structure
- Geographic diversity
- At least one technical college
- Existing program offerings (e.g. SDOT supports Seattle Colleges through Transit Access Programs)

Unknowns

- College staff capacity and engagement
- Current student behaviors and barriers

Renton Technical College

Type: Technical college – offers apprenticeships, manufacturing, culinary arts, transportation technology and more

Student size: 7k

Gender: 52% female, 38% male, 9% not reported

BIPOC students: 69%

Receiving need-based financial aid: 53%

Service area: Renton, Kent, Auburn, Tahoma, Enumclaw and South portions of Seattle (district 27)

Transit competitiveness: Limited. Route 111, 105, but Metro Flex serves Renton Transit Center

2025-26 student transit offerings: None

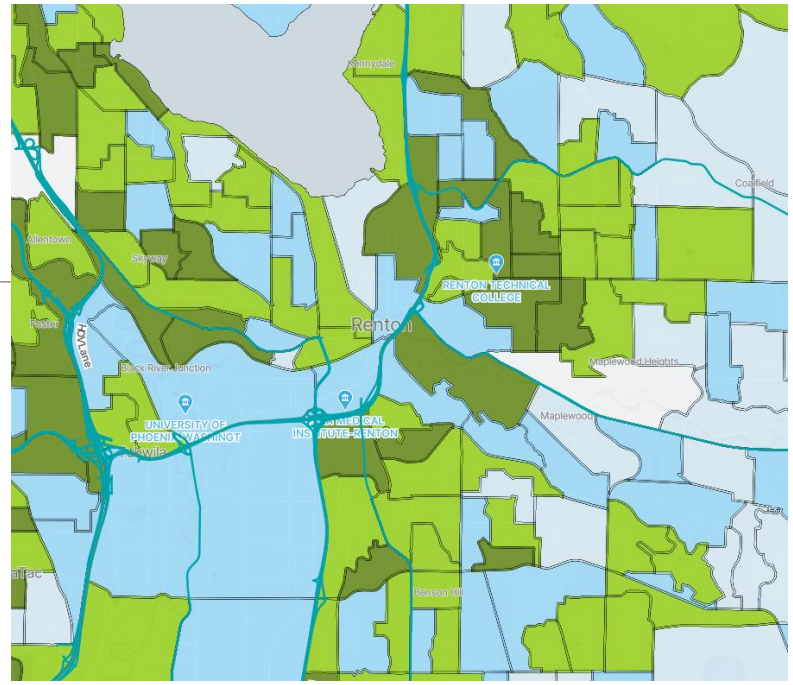
Parking: Limited, but free

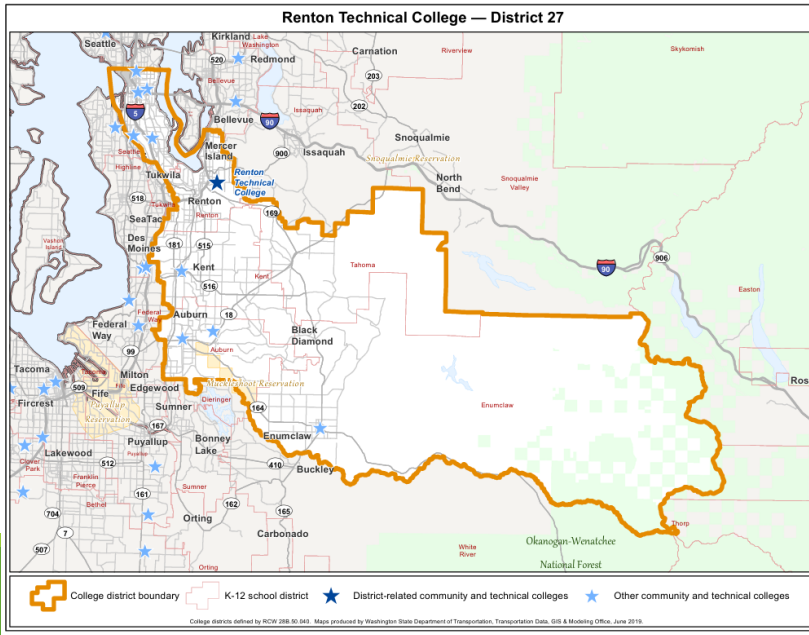
EPAS 2025

Equity Priority Areas in King County for 2025. Data is a composite score of 5 demographic features within Census American Community Service 5-year Rolling Average data set. Scores of 4 and 5 are considered Equity Priority Areas.

King County Metro Transit Service Planning Group
Uploaded by Colette Flanagan: 7 months ago

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5





Shoreline College

Type: Community College

Student size: 5k

Gender: 52% female, 37% male, 1% X

BIPOC students: 50%

Receiving need-based financial aid: 25%

Service area: Shoreline and North Shore (district 7)

Transit competitiveness: Routes 333, 331, 345, 355, Rapid Ride E, and route 5. College offers daily shuttle to Shoreline 185th station. 15 min walk from Aurora

2025-26 student transit offerings:

- Pay $100 per quarter for $200 E-purse (funded by $13/yr sustainability fee).
- 426 unique users in 2024-25

Parking: $45/quarter

25%
first-generation college students

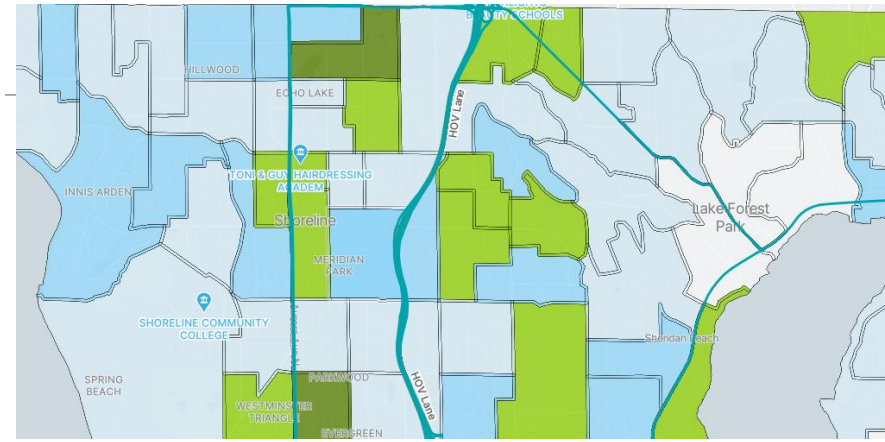
13%
students who work

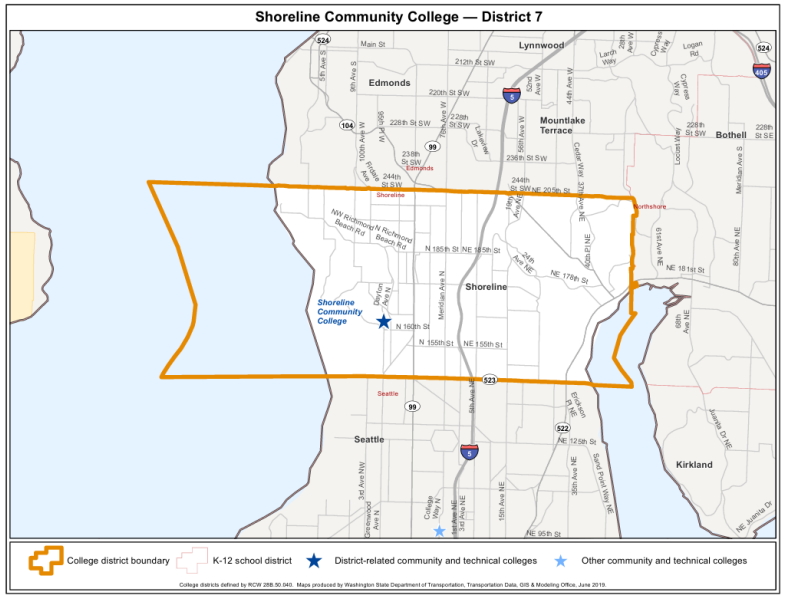
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1
2
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5





"FOR MANY OF OUR STUDENTS, SIMPLY GETTING TO CAMPUS CAN BE A LOGISTICAL AND FINANCIAL HURDLE TO PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION. THIS NEW SUBSIDIZED ORCA CARD PROGRAM HELPS LOWER THAT HURDLE AND ALLOWS STUDENTS TO FOCUS ON THEIR STUDIES, WHICH BRINGS THEM ONE STEP CLOSER TO EARNING THEIR CREDENTIALS OR DEGREES."

- JAMILYN PENN, HIGHLINE COLLEGE INTERIM PRESIDENT

Timeline



ORCA Pass Period: Eligible students can receive a fully-subsided starting late September (Fall quarter start) 2026 through June 30, 2027

Pre-Survey: complete

Focus groups: Complete

Post-Survey: Late Spring 2027

Eligibility criteria

Eligible students

- Students must be currently enrolled in one or more credit
- Can be students taking ELA/ELL, pre-college/college-readiness programs, career/workforce training, vocational program, apprenticeship, or other programs/classes that are working towards a degree or certificate
- 100% online students, as long as they live within King, Pierce, Snohomish, or Kitsap County
- Note: Students who are 19 years of age or younger can get a card but should register their card as a Free Youth Orca Card. If the student already has a Free Youth ORCA Card they are not eligible for another card.

Exclusions:

- Personal enrichment/recreational students (e.g. pottery/yoga)
- F-1/2, J1, M1 visa holders

Setting colleges up for success

UNDERSTANDING UNIQUE COLLEGE NEEDS

DISTRIBUTION METHODS

MARKETING AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

OUTREACH PLAN

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

CONNECTING SCHOOLS TO LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER



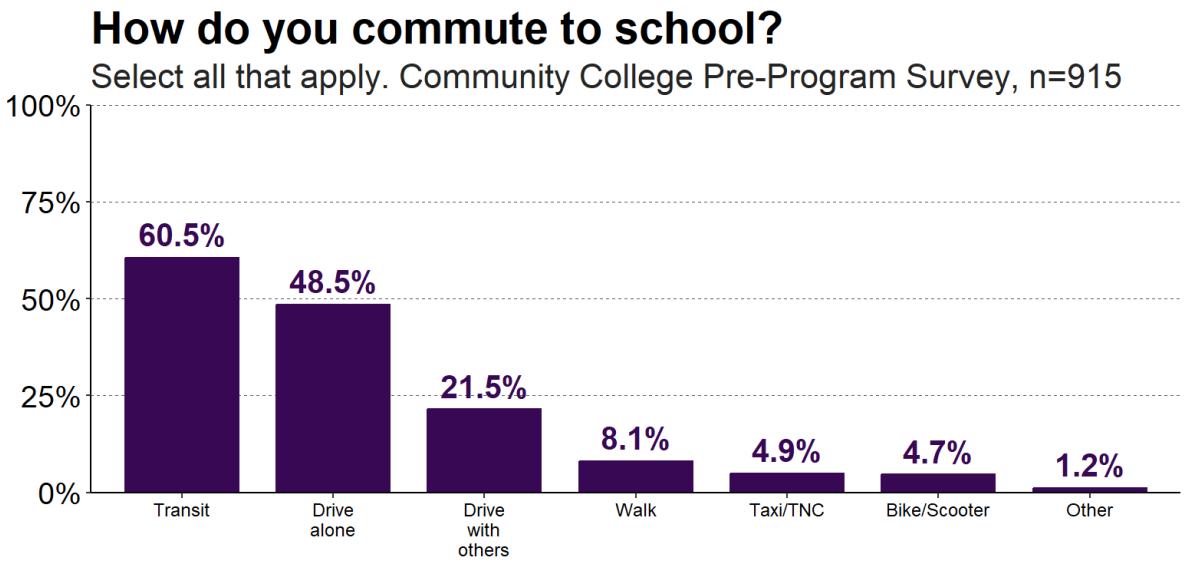


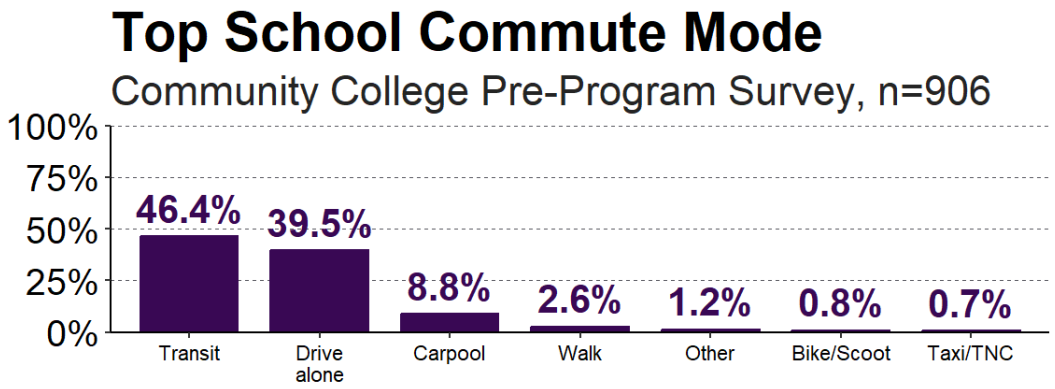


Research goals

- Collect data throughout the pilot to support legislative reporting requirements and help inform future transit accessibility strategies.
- What else we hope to learn:
  - Does access increase local/regional transit use?
  - Impacts on enrollment/attendance
  - Transit mode and fare awareness
  - Transportation behaviors, accessibility, and barriers
  - What % of students are potentially eligible for reduced fares?
  - Transit program funding/structure models
  - Most effective outreach/distribution methods

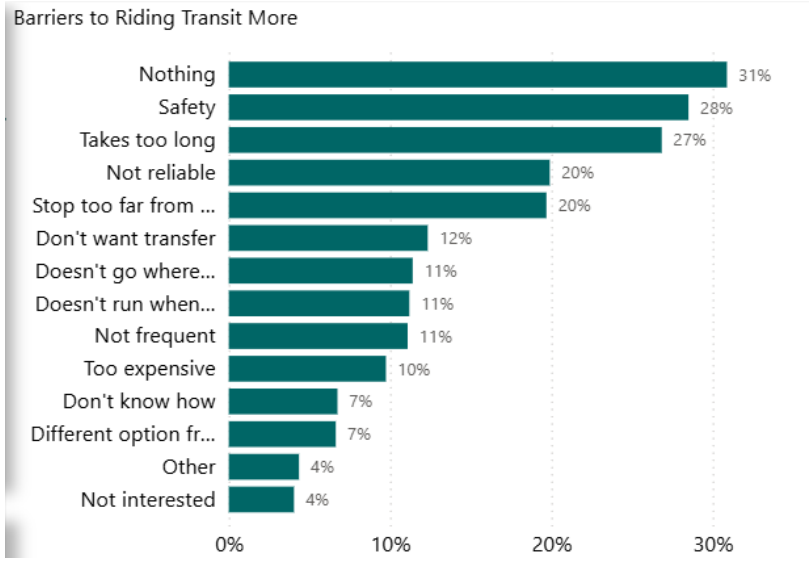
Data Sneak Peek (n=1,174)



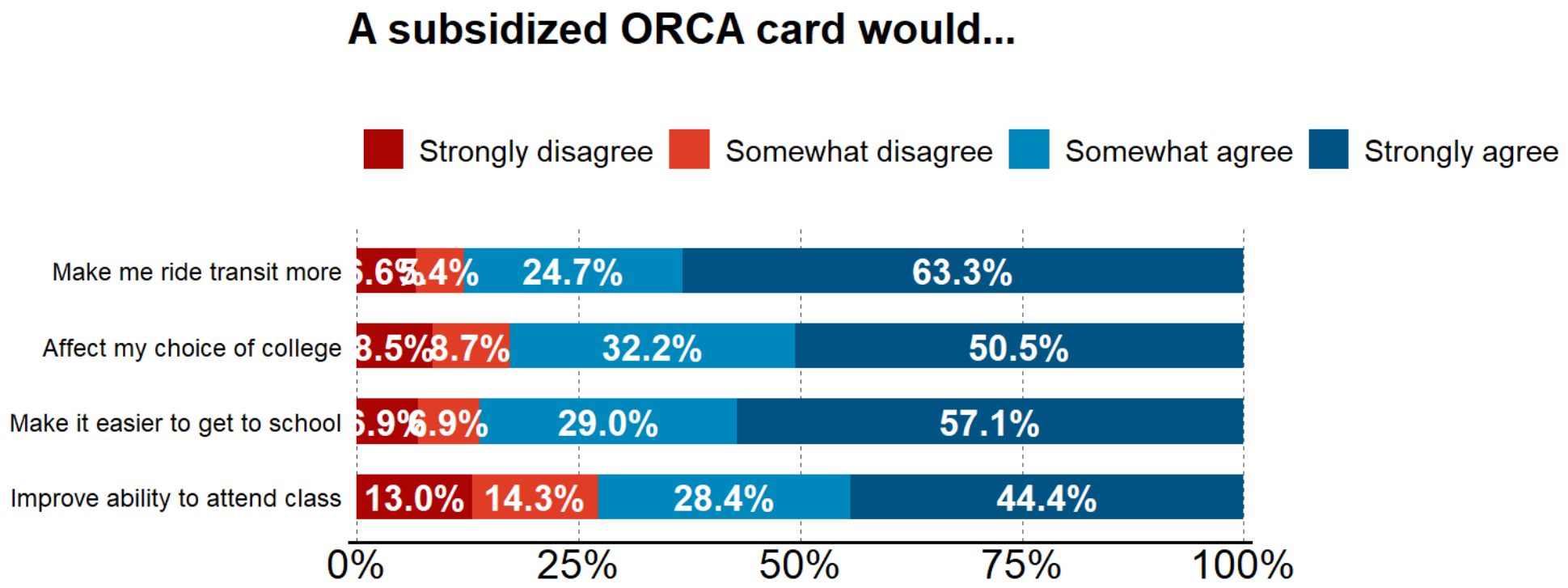


Data Sneak Peek (n=1,174)

- Card distribution and boardings to date:
  - Highline (13k boardings, 619 unique cards)
  - Shoreline (10k boardings, 383 unique cards used)
  - Renton (1.8k boardings, 101 unique cards used)
- Across all 3 schools and all respondents, the top 3 barriers to transit are “nothing,” “transit takes too long,” and “safety” concerns.
- However, non-riders are much more likely to cite “stop is too far from home” and “don’t know how to ride” as a barrier to riding more.

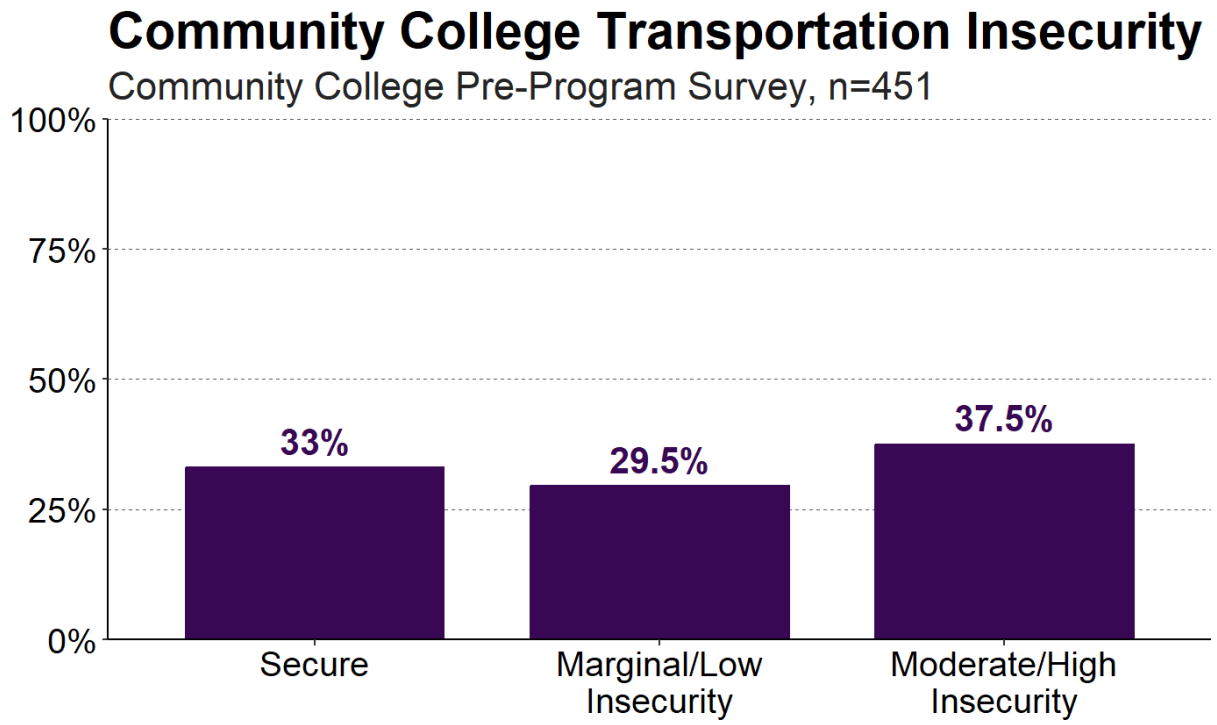


Data Sneak Peek (n=1,174)



Community College Pre-Program Survey, n=944

Data Sneak Peak



	Secure	Low/ marginal	Moderate/ high
Metro Rider/Non-Rider Survey	54%	32%	14%
Renton	35%	19%	46%
Shoreline	32%	34%	33%

TSI-6.pdf



What is next?

- Data, data and more data
- Continuing to support enrollment, outreach and engagement efforts
- Identify ways we can support awareness and adoption of transit, mode shift, and different fare options
- Legislative report
- Partner with colleges to identify ways they can build long, term sustainable programs

“WE ARE DOING ALL WE CAN TO DISMANTLE BARRIERS FOR STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE FROM HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS. BARRIERS LIKE ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION OFTEN MEAN STUDENTS MUST SACRIFICE THEIR EDUCATION. THIS PILOT PROGRAM WILL HELP KEEP STUDENTS IN SCHOOL AND ACHIEVING THEIR GOALS, AND WE HOPE IT WILL BECOME PERMANENT.”

- RENTON TECHNICAL COLLEGE PRESIDENT YOSHIKO HARDEN