



King County

Metro Ride Free Area (RFA)

What are the benefits of phasing out the Ride Free Area?

Phasing out the RFA will increase revenue and have a net positive impact on Metro's bottom line. It would make it simpler for riders to pay fares throughout the system. A more consistent fare collection system is expected to reduce fare disputes and fare evasion. In a 2010 survey of Metro's bus operators, eliminating the RFA was listed as the leading strategy to reduce fare evasion.

When was the RFA established?

What was originally called the "Magic Carpet Zone" was established in 1973 to support economic development in the downtown core. It was expanded in 1975 to include the International District and in 1978 to include Belltown. Free rides after 7 p.m. were curtailed in 1987.

How is the RFA funded?

A city subsidy in 1973 funded 100 percent of the fares Metro no longer collected in the "Magic Carpet Zone." Today the city of Seattle pays Metro \$400,000 a year to support the RFA, which is about 18 percent of the \$2.2 million a year it costs Metro to operate the RFA.

How many people use the RFA?

In 2010, there were about 28,000 one-way trips made on Metro entirely within the RFA. About half of the trips within the RFA are made by passengers who use a pass. Another 18 percent have paid for their trip and are making transfers in the RFA. About one-third are taking trips as "free" riders.

How will this affect people who rely on free rides in downtown Seattle?

Metro will spend the next several months working with human service agencies and others to identify ways to ease the burden on people who need bus service to access social services. Metro already provides nearly \$2 million annually in deeply discounted tickets to human service agencies. Metro will also reach out to convention and tourism organizations to identify strategies for making ORCA cards available to visitors.

What are the boundaries of Metro's RFA in downtown Seattle?

The RFA is located between Battery Street to the north, Jackson Street to the south and between 6th Ave. and Elliott Bay. Riding Metro Transit is free in downtown Seattle from 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. daily.