



**Here are a few important updates that improve safety and convenience for Access riders.**

## **Improvements to the Rider's Choice Program**

King County Metro and MV Transportation understand the need to be on time for your Access Paratransit Service rides. Whether the ride is for a medical appointment or a social outing, we are there for you.



Because Access is a shared ride system—where other riders are on board with you—we recognize the importance of getting to your destination in a timely manner. After carefully reviewing current policies and procedures and coordinating with the Access Paratransit Advisory Committee (APAC), Access is making the Rider's Choice program more flexible and user-friendly for our riders.

Starting last December, Rider's Choice gave riders the option to be dropped off at their destination before their 30-minute drop-off window opens.

Coming this January 2024, we'll be improving Rider's Choice to make it even more convenient and give our customers more control over their trip:

- If we estimate your ride will arrive at the appointment earlier than expected and you are on board the Access van, you may receive a phone call (text messages will be coming soon!).
- On that call, you will be given the choice of keeping your original drop-off window or opting for an earlier drop-off. You can also be transferred directly to a dispatcher for any questions.

If you do not receive a call or choose your original drop-off window, you will still have the choice of waiting or leaving the vehicle early—communicate this with your driver during drop-off.

With these improvements, you will have four different ways to make *your* choice:

- With your subscription or individual trip reservation, let the reservations team know.
- Any time before your trip starts, ask to speak to a dispatcher.
- During your trip, respond to an automated call or text.
- At drop-off, inform your driver.

Please be sure to share your Rider's Choice experience with our customer service team at 206-553-3000!

### **The state of Access as we enter 2024**

**By Gwen Clemens, Contracted Services Managing Director**

As we enter 2024, we ready ourselves for changes; changes in days and temperature while we look forward to the start of a new year and spending time with family and friends—just some of the things that hold us together and motivate us to do better.

I want to express my gratitude for your patience as we work to improve Access reliability and your ridership experience. We want to share with you some key goals we have achieved this year and briefly touch on items we can all look forward to in 2024!

Key achievements in 2023 include:

- Negotiating a 2-year extension for the current Access Contract. This extension was critical to restoring Key Performance Indicator (KPI) incentives and disincentives. KPI incentives and disincentives are Metro's primary way of enforcing performance standards and encouraging our contractor, MV Transportation, to perform above and beyond contract and customer service minimums.



Gwen Clemens

- Responding to increased costs for wages, benefits, fuel, and vehicle parts experienced by MV Transportation and their partners, such as Solid Ground.
- Updating our pricing structure to reflect changing ridership demands. The contract is primarily based on revenue hours which are driven by ridership demands. Our ridership levels are currently at 69% of 2019 ridership levels.
- Starting work on the new Access Customer Eligibility (ACE) technology upgrade project. This project will modernize the application process for Access Transportation services.
- Planning for a Same Day Service Pilot. This initiative allows Access Riders to have same day service for trips. A contractor, VIA, will be responsible for this pilot project. You can expect to see more information in the first quarter of 2024.
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Triennial Audit and Review in coordination with Sound Transit. There were no findings of ADA deficiencies for Access Transportation.
- Adjusting some of the changes put into place during the COVID pandemic.

### Key projects to look for in 2024

- Full implementation of the Same Day Service Pilot.
- Distribution of the Access Rider Survey. This survey provides us with necessary insight into how the service is being delivered.
- Deployment of Access' first 100% electric paratransit vehicles. This pilot project will see four fully electric paratransit vehicles deployed in service to help Metro better understand operational and customer impacts.
- New ways for customers to opt into Rider's Choice (see: *Improvements to the Rider's Choice Program* on the first page).
- Deployment of a new **FindARide.org** regional trip planner for individuals with specialized transportation needs—this work is being led by Hopelink in partnership with King County Metro.

## Guide Access into the future by joining APAC!

King County Metro's Access Paratransit Advisory Committee (APAC) advises Metro, the King County Executive and King County Council on transit issues and policy related to providing equal access to public transportation for persons with disabilities. APAC is made up of members throughout the county who are Access riders, family members of Access riders, representatives of organizations that provide services to Access riders and representatives of organizations that support Access riders who speak English as a second language.

In 2023, APAC gave guidance to Metro that helped improve on-time performance of Access vehicles and assisted in expanding our community reach and engagement for Metro's ADA Transition Plan. APAC further advised on an innovative new same-day service and has given ongoing general feedback to Metro staff on how to improve Access Transportation for all riders.

**APAC is actively recruiting new members.** If you live in the following King County Council Districts, are an Access rider or meet any of the listed criteria from above and want to share your expertise, community connections, background and experience, please apply. Open recruitment is currently happening for these council districts:

- King County Council District 2
  - Includes Renton, Tukwila, parts of Unincorporated King County and central/South Seattle.
- King County Council District 3
  - Includes Bothell, Carnation, Duvall, Issaquah, North Bend, Redmond, Sammamish, Skykomish, Snoqualmie, Woodinville and Northeast Unincorporated King County.
- King County Council District 6
  - Includes Beaux Art Village, Bellevue, Clyde Hill, Hunts Point, Kirkland, Medina, Mercer Island, Redmond, Yarrow Point and parts of Unincorporated King County.

Applications will be open until February 11, 2024. Visit [kingcounty.gov/metro/APAC](https://kingcounty.gov/metro/APAC) to learn more about how to apply.