

# 2017 FARE PROPOSAL

IMPLEMENTATION DATES  
OCTOBER 1, 2017  
OCTOBER 1, 2018



Washington State  
Transportation Commission

## PROPOSAL FOR SCHOOL GROUP FLAT FEE AND HOME-SCHOOL REGULATORY LANGUAGE

Based on a review of fare levels, operational issues and evaluation of current educational system needs, including input gained through an outreach effort to home-school families, the Commission is proposing two changes:

1. Updates to the regulatory language to clarify eligibility requirements and explicitly integrate students learning in a home-schooling environment. This will formalize and standardize operational practices to ensure all students have equal access to the program.
2. An increase to the school group flat fee to align the fare with similar increases across the system. The proposal is to raise the fee to \$5 per group, per one-way trip (\$10 per group, per roundtrip), from the current \$1 per group, per one-way trip (\$2 per group, per round trip). This change would be delayed by one year and implemented in October 2018 to allow school districts to plan for the increase.

### **Proposed WAC Language**

Underlined language represents new text or additions to existing text, and strikeouts represent language proposed to be removed from the WAC.

**WAC 468-300-010 SCHOOL GROUPS** - Passengers traveling in authorized school groups, including home-school groups, for institution-sponsored activities will be charged a flat rate of \$15 per walk-on group or per vehicle of students and/or advisors and staff. All school groups require a letter of authorization and prior notification. In the case of home-school groups, in addition to prior notification, a copy of the filed Declaration of Intent (as outlined in RCW 28A.200.010) shall be submitted to the tollbooth at the time of travel. Notification shall be made no less than 72 hours before the scheduled departure and will include the expected number of school-age children and adults that will be traveling to ensure WSF can satisfy U.S. Coast Guard lifesaving equipment requirements. Failure to provide adequate notification may result in delayed travel. Vehicles and drivers will be charged the fare applicable to vehicle size. The special school rate is \$210 on routes where one-point toll systems are in effect.

### **Background**

WSF currently applies a \$1 one-way fare to school groups whether they are walk-on passengers or passengers riding in vehicles. Vehicle fares are not discounted for school groups. The fare, at its current level, has been in place for more than three decades. The original intent of the program was to provide school districts a less costly way to transport school children and accompanying teachers/parents to participate in cultural or school sporting events. The program has not been substantively updated in more than 30 years. In that time the \$1 group fare has remained constant, while the ferry communities have grown and educational options expanded.



### ***Application of School Group Fee to Home-school Students***

WSF will extend eligibility to home-school groups to formally include students learning in a home-school environment. Currently, WSF implements the following requirements for school groups to be considered for the discounted school group fee. School groups must:

- Travel with a letter of authorization on school letterhead.
- Be accredited from the State Office of Public Instruction.
- Notify WSF via the school group rate website at least 72 hours in advance to ensure that there are the appropriate number of children's life vests on board.
- If proper documentation is not provided, or notice is provided less than 72 hours before travel, groups may be required to pay the appropriate passenger fare for each member of the group.

WSF will now require similar documentation be provided by homeschool students traveling as a group to prove eligibility at the tollbooth. Homeschool groups would need to:

- Submit a copy of the Declaration of Intent that is filed with the applicable local public school district, with a stamped endorsement by the school district.
- Notify WSF via the school group website at least 72 hours in advance to ensure that there are the appropriate number of children's life vests on board.
- If proper documentation is not provided, or notice is provided less than 72 hours before travel, groups may be required to pay the appropriate passenger fare for each member of the group.

Home-school students under the age of eight are currently not required to file a Declaration of Intent with their School District, but may choose to. To be eligible for the school group ferry fare, students learning in a home-school environment must provide a copy of their DOI to WSF, regardless of student age.

### ***School Group Fee***

Several options for the School Group Fee were considered by the Commission, including:

- No change to the fee
- Different levels of increased fares (\$5 - \$10 per group per one-way trip)
- Fares charged per school group passenger instead of per group (e.g. \$1 per student/chaperone)
- Different implementation phasing (e.g. immediate implementation, delayed implementation, and incrementally increasing the fare over several years)

The Commission decided to increase the fare at one time and to keep the implementation operationally feasible by continuing the per group fare as opposed to a per student/chaperone school group fare. A delayed implementation approach was chosen to allow school districts time to adjust to the change.