



2024 REIMBURSEMENTS FROM THE WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE SERVICES FUND

This report provides an overview of reimbursements from the Wheelchair Accessible Services (WAS) Fund for the 2024 calendar year (Jan. 1 through Dec. 31). The WAS Fund, which the City of Seattle and King County jointly administer, is funded through a 10-cent surcharge on every taxi, for-hire vehicle, and transportation network company (TNC, e.g., Uber and Lyft) ride originating in Seattle or King County.

The WAS Fund helps offset the higher operational costs incurred by owners and drivers of wheelchair accessible taxicabs and for-hire vehicles (collectively referred to as wheelchair accessible vehicles, or WAVs). Eligible WAV owners and drivers receive reimbursements from the Fund based on their individual operating data as provided by their affiliated regional dispatch agency.

The categories of reimbursements and reimbursement rates that are available to eligible WAV owners and operators are established by rule. During calendar year 2024, Seattle and King County issued updated rules that changed the reimbursement categories and rates. **Table 1** describes the categories of reimbursement and reimbursement rates that were effective Jan. 1 through Jun. 31, 2024 ([FOR-HIRE-TRANSPORTATION-01-2022](#) / FIN-10-3-4-PR).

Table 1 - WAS Fund Reimbursement Categories effective through June 31, 2024			
Reimbursement Category	Purpose	Recipient	Reimbursement Rates
Dispatched trips to passengers using a wheelchair (TPW)	To offset the additional costs of serving passengers in wheelchairs (e.g., extra time required for wheelchair passenger loading and securement, costs associated with prioritizing TPWs regardless of pick-up and drop-off location)	Driver	Reimbursement rates are based on the zone in which the TPW originates and terminates. Urban, rural, and suburban zones are based on zip codes. ¹ If a TPW originates and terminates in different zones, the greater reimbursement rate applies. Payments are disbursed once or twice per month depending on the transportation provider. • Urban TPW: \$20 • Suburban TPW: \$30 • Rural TPW: \$40
Fuel (Shift)	To offset the higher fuel costs associated with operating a WAV	Driver	\$15/shift of four or more consecutive hours, disbursed once per month.
Off-Peak Shifts	To offset costs of operating during off-peak hours when demand is low but accessible transportation must be available to improve equity of service	Driver	\$45/shift that includes four or more consecutive hours between the hours of 9 p.m. and 5 a.m., disbursed once per month. Off-peak shifts are optional.
Additional Shifts	To offset costs incurred by vehicle owners for making WAVs available for additional shifts	Vehicle Owner	\$30/shift (lasting four or more consecutive hours) that the WAV is operated by a second and/or third driver if the WAV owner or another driver also completed a shift in the same vehicle during the same 24-hour period, disbursed once per month.
Driver Training	To offset the costs of completing one additional WAV-related training course per year, after completing the initial training required for wheelchair accessible taxicab (WAT) endorsement	Driver	Drivers are reimbursed for the cost of the course, plus a stipend for the time it takes to complete the training at the taximeter rate of \$30/hour. Payments are disbursed after drivers complete the course and submit a request for reimbursement. Covered trainings include WAV refresher training, securement training, and safety trainings.
Vehicle Acquisition, Maintenance, & Equipment (VAME)	To help offset the higher costs associated with acquiring, converting, and maintaining a WAV vehicle, relative to the costs of acquiring and maintaining a non-accessible vehicle	Vehicle Owner	Owners are reimbursed between \$1,200 and \$7,435 per year, disbursed quarterly, until the vehicle reaches 10 years old. The maximum annual reimbursement amount depends on the age of the vehicle (based on model year), engine type, and whether the vehicle has all-wheel drive.

¹ Please refer to the zip code table and map included at the end of [FOR-HIRE TRANSPORTATION-01-2022](#) / Public Rule FIN-10-3-2-PR.

Table 2 describes the categories of reimbursement and reimbursement rates that were effective July 1, 2024 through Dec. 31, 2024 ([FOR-HIRE TRANSPORTATION-08-2024](#) / [FHT-2-2024-PR](#)).

Table 2 - WAS Fund Reimbursement Categories effective as of July 1, 2024			
Reimbursement Category	Purpose	Recipient	Reimbursement Rates
Dispatched trips to passengers using a wheelchair (TPW)	To offset the additional costs of serving passengers in wheelchairs (e.g., extra time required for wheelchair passenger loading and securement, costs associated with prioritizing TPWs regardless of pick-up and drop-off location)	Driver	Reimbursement rates are based on the zone in which the TPW originates and terminates. Urban, rural, and suburban zones are based on zip codes. ² If a TPW originates and terminates in different zones, the greater reimbursement rate applies. Payments are disbursed once or twice per month depending on the transportation provider. - Urban TPW: \$20 - Urban (98133, 98155, 98177): \$30 - Suburban TPW: \$30 - Rural TPW: \$40
Off-Peak TPW	To offset costs of operating during off-peak hours (9pm to 5am) when demand is low but accessible transportation must be available to improve equity of service	Driver	TPWs that occur between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. will be reimbursed based on following rates: 9 a.m. – 11 p.m.: Additional \$5 11:01 p.m. – 1 a.m.: Additional \$10 1st TPW occurs between 1:01 a.m. and 5 a.m.: Additional \$45 (Any additional TPW) 1:01 a.m. -5 a.m.: Additional \$20
Fuel (Mileage)	To offset the higher fuel costs associated with operating a WAV	Driver	Each driver is eligible to receive fuel reimbursement based on the mileage driven on the WAV while logged into the dispatch system, at a rate of \$0.14 per mile.
Driver Training	To offset the costs of completing one additional WAV-related training course per year, after completing the initial training required for wheelchair accessible taxicab (WAT) endorsement	Driver	Drivers are reimbursed for the cost of the course, plus a stipend for the time it takes to complete the training at the taximeter rate of \$30/hour. Payments are disbursed after drivers complete the course and submit a request for reimbursement. Covered trainings include WAV refresher training, securement training, and safety trainings
Vehicle Acquisition, Maintenance, & Equipment (VAME) and Insurance	To help offset the higher costs associated with acquiring, converting, and maintaining a WAV vehicle, as well as the insurance cost for a WAV vehicle (relative to the costs for a non-accessible vehicle)	Vehicle Owner	Owners are reimbursed between \$1,464 and \$6,700 per year, disbursed quarterly, until the vehicle reaches 15 years old. The maximum annual reimbursement amount depends on the age of the vehicle (based on model year), engine type, and whether the vehicle has all-wheel drive. Eligible owners also receive an insurance reimbursement of \$1,800 per calendar year regardless of vehicle age and type.

² Please refer to the zip code table and map included at the end of [FOR-HIRE TRANSPORTATION-08-2024](#) or [FHT-2-2024-PR](#).

Table 3 displays the total number and dollar amount of each WAS Fund reimbursement type Seattle and King County made in calendar year 2024.

Table 3 - 2024 Total WAS Fund Reimbursements by Reimbursement Category						
Reimbursement Type	Seattle		King County		Total	
	Total #	Amount Paid	Total #	Amount Paid	Total #	Amount Paid
TPW ³	18,516	\$422,310.00	16,282	\$515,975.00	34,798	\$938,285.00
Fuel (shift) ^{4,5BC}	9,509	\$79,875.60	9,509	\$62,759.40	9,509	\$142,635.00
Fuel (mileage) ^{4,6}	579,518.64	\$45,434.24	579,518.64	\$35,698.37	579,518.64	\$81,132.61
Off-Peak Shifts ^{4,5}	342	\$8,618.40	342	\$6,771.60	342	\$15,390.00
Off-Peak TPW ^{3,6}	308	\$5,900.00	717	\$8,270.00	1,025	\$14,170.00
Additional Shifts ^{4,5}	20	\$336.00	20	\$264.00	20	\$600
Driver Training	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00
VAME and Insurance ⁴	59	\$201,644.24	59	\$158,434.76	59	\$360,079.00
Total		\$764,118.48		\$788,173.13		\$1,552,291.61

To assess the impact of WAS Fund reimbursements on the typical WAV driver or owner, it is necessary to calculate the average reimbursement amount per driver or owner. Average per-driver or per-owner reimbursements for calendar year 2024 were calculated monthly in the case of TPW and Fuel reimbursements, and on a yearly basis in the case of VAME and Insurance reimbursements.

Table 4 displays the average number of reimbursements by category. For each category, the average unit and reimbursement per driver or owner is provided.

Table 4 - 2024 Average WAS Fund Reimbursements by Category (Seattle and King County)		
Reimbursement Category	Average Units	Average Reimbursement
Dispatched Trips to Passengers in Wheelchairs (TPW)	43.28 trips per driver per month (67 drivers)	\$1,167.02 per driver per month
Fuel Reimbursements	21.71 WAV fuel shifts per driver per month (73 drivers)	\$325.65 per driver per month
	1,724.76 WAV miles per driver per month (56 drivers)	\$241.47 per driver per month
Off-Peak Reimbursement	1.68 off-peak shifts per driver per month (34 drivers)	\$75.44 per driver per month
	2.55 off-peak trips per driver per month (67 drivers)	\$35.25 per driver per month
Additional Shifts	1.66 additional shifts per driver per month (1 WAV)	\$50.00 per driver per month
VAME & Insurance Costs	59 WAVs	\$6,103.03 per owner (annual)

³ TPWs that originate in the urban zone are reimbursed by Seattle; TPWs that originate in the suburban and rural zones are reimbursed by King County.

⁴ Reimbursement costs for these categories are shared between Seattle and King County based on the proportion of TPWs originating in each jurisdiction in the prior year. In 2024, Seattle covered 56% of reimbursement costs in these categories, and King County covered the remaining 46%. If the vehicle is licensed by only Seattle or only King County, reimbursement costs for these categories are covered by both City and County, as per the reciprocity endorsement introduced in the new ordinance effective January 17, 2024. The vehicle age limit was also raised from 12 years to 15 years for vehicle acquisition and VAME reimbursements.

⁵ Effective through June 31, 2024.

⁶ Effective as of July 1, 2024.

Average reimbursement amounts reported in Table 4 were calculated in the following manner:

TPW. The average number of WAV drivers per month (owner drivers or lease drivers) was derived from semi-monthly data submitted to the City of Seattle by the taxicab associations with affiliated WAVs. The average number of WAV drivers per month was 67 in the calendar year 2024. The average monthly TPW reimbursement per driver was \$1,167.02. This figure was calculated by dividing the average monthly TPW by the average number of drivers per month: $(\$938,285.00/12 \text{ months}) = \$78,190.42/67 \text{ drivers} = \$1,167.02$.

Fuel reimbursements. The average number of fuel reimbursements was derived from monthly data submitted to the City of Seattle by taxicab associations with affiliated WAVs. The average number of WAV drivers per month was 73 from January through June 2024. The average monthly shift-based fuel reimbursement per driver was \$325.65. This figure was calculated by dividing the average monthly shift-based fuel reimbursement by the average number of drivers per month: $(\$142,635.00/6 \text{ months}) = \$23,772.50/73 \text{ drivers} = \325.65 . The average number of WAV drivers per month was 56 from July through December 2024. The average monthly mileage-based fuel reimbursement per driver was \$241.47. This figure was calculated by dividing the average monthly mileage-based fuel reimbursement by the average number of drivers per month: $(\$81,132.00/6 \text{ months}) = \$13,522.00/56 \text{ drivers} = \241.47 .

Off-peak shifts. The average number of off-peak reimbursements was derived from monthly data submitted to the City of Seattle by taxicab associations with affiliated WAVs. The average number of drivers performing off-peak shifts per month was 34 from January through June 2024. The average monthly off-peak shift reimbursement per driver was \$75.44. This figure was calculated by dividing the average monthly off-peak shift reimbursement by the average number of drivers per month: $(\$15,390.00/6) = \$2,565.00/34 \text{ drivers} = \75.44 . The average number of drivers performing off-peak trips per month was 67 from July through December 2024. The average monthly off-peak trip reimbursement per driver was \$35.25. This figure was calculated by dividing the average monthly off-peak trip reimbursement by the average number of drivers per month: $(\$14,170.00/6) = \$2,361.67/67 \text{ drivers} = \35.25 .

VAME & Insurance reimbursements. Total VAME and Insurance reimbursements for calendar year 2024 amounted to \$360,079.00. The average annual VAME reimbursement per WAV owner was \$7,997.86 $(\$360,079.00/59 \text{ WAVs} = \$6,103.03)$.

Voluntary conversions. Voluntary conversion is a process in which drivers choose to change their vehicle to a WAV. Two taxi owners completed voluntary conversions in 2024. Both voluntary conversions are dual-licensed.

Historical Trends: To understand historical trends and evaluate the recovery of WAV operations since the COVID-19 pandemic, we compiled data for the last eight years. **Figure 1** shows total annual WAS Fund reimbursements and the annual percent change from 2017 through 2024. Aside from the year 2020, there has been a consistent increase in the total annual reimbursement amounts.

Figure 2 shows the total number of reimbursed TPWs over time. The number of trips has more than rebounded since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with 58% more trips in 2024 compared to 2019. This positive trajectory suggests a robust recovery and a growing demand for the service.

Figure 1 - Total Annual WAS Fund Reimbursements & Percent Change (2017-2024)

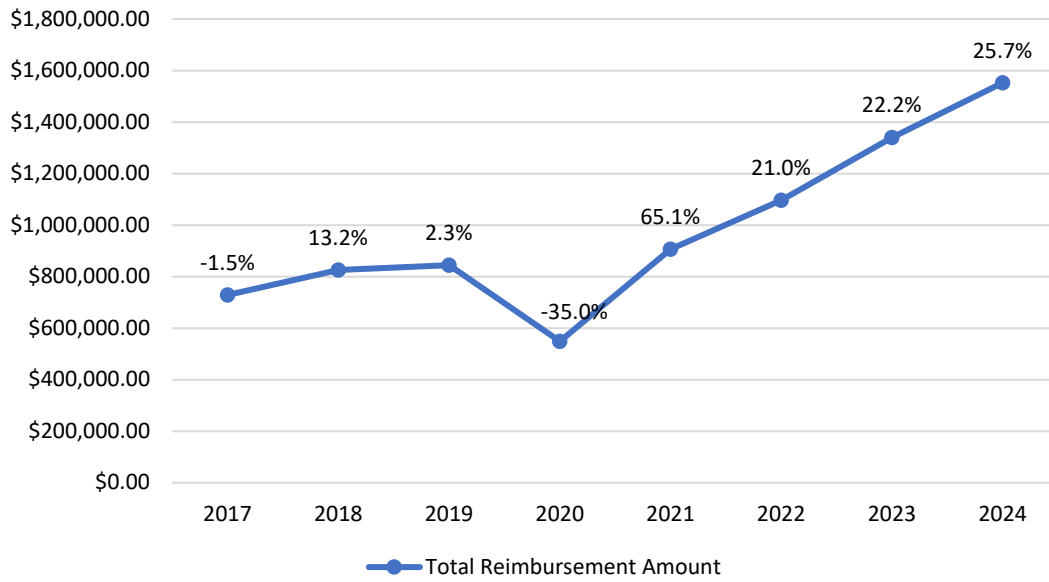


Figure 2 - Total TPWs Reimbursed per Year (2017-2024)

