AGENCY: Sound Transit
PROJECT: Access to Transit with Next Generation ORCA and ORCA LIFT Programs

**Question #1:** Please elaborate on the differences between the “legacy” ORCA cards and NextGen. A copy of the brochure mentioned during the presentation would be helpful.

**Answer #1:** The region is replacing the legacy ORCA system because the technology is aging and the ORCA equipment is becoming obsolete. Vendors do not service or sell legacy ORCA equipment anymore.

Legacy ORCA is a “card-based system” where information is stored on a chip that is embedded in the ORCA card, with only a copy stored centrally. When an ORCA card is tapped on a reader, the device reads the card and validates or writes to the card remotely adding E-purse value or pass products.

There are two main disadvantages of the current legacy ORCA system:

- Delays with loading products/value. Customers do not have access to their value or pass products purchased remotely for 24-48 hours.
- Customers do not see an accurate card balance online for up to 24 hours.

The Next Generation ORCA is an account-based system, relying on open APIs and standards, which allows for more efficient updates. (For example, Starbucks and other gift cards use account-based systems). The Next Gen ORCA System utilizes near real-time communications and transitions from a legacy vendor to a new vendor. The Next Gen ORCA system will:

- Provide instant account updates. Product/value loads will happen in seconds rather than 24-48 hours
- More retail locations. Next Gen ORCA will more than double the locations where people can add value/products to their Next Gen ORCA account.
- Improved website with better features for individuals and Business Accounts
- Mobile Apps. Customers will have the ability to manage their account and pay from your iphone or other device

The next generation ORCA account based system also allows for continued use of fare collection should the system go offline. The readers will store the taps and send them to the backend for updating when the system comes back online. With Legacy, when a reader goes offline, cards cannot be tapped so no fare payments are captured.

For additional information, please see the Next Generation ORCA website. [https://www.soundtransit.org/ride-with-us/how-to-pay/next-generation-orca](https://www.soundtransit.org/ride-with-us/how-to-pay/next-generation-orca)
**Question #2:** Will the legacy ORCA cards no longer be able to be used once the NextGen cards become available?

**Answer #2:** The Legacy ORCA cards will be usable on next generation ORCA readers, however, the legacy ORCA cards will eventually need to be replaced.

In order to support this “backwards compatibility” (where new next gen ORCA readers would be able to read old Legacy ORCA cards), a data warehouse system was designed to transmit Legacy ORCA information to the new next generation ORCA service integrator and vice versa. However, moving from Legacy ORCA cards to the new Next Generation ORCA cards or mobile app will ensure the new system operates efficiently and as intended. Eventually, all Legacy ORCA cards will be replaced with new Next Gen ORCA cards or the mobile app.

**Question #3:** What percentage of the business passport cards are being replaced?

**Answer #3:** 100% of business passport cards will be replaced with Next Generation ORCA cards.

**Question #4:** Can the sponsor clarify how much of the requested funds would attribute to general maintenance of the program versus increased functionality and benefit to the region—in other words, how much additional benefit would the project/PSRC funding provide beyond what is already realized with the existing program and budgeted O&M?

**Answer #4:**
- This Project does not include any operations, maintenance or staffing costs.
- 0% of the requested funds would go towards general maintenance of a program and 100% of the funds will go towards increased functionality and benefit to the region.
- This Project would pay for the costs of the new Next Gen ORCA cards and $10-20 worth of transit rides preloaded on ORCA LIFT or Next Gen cards. The Project directly benefits the region’s transit riders.
- This Project does not include any general maintenance. There is an existing “ORCA LIFT Incentives” program that provides $10 preloaded on ORCA LIFT cards. However, this existing program is only funded through June 2021. (The program is funded with a WSDOT Transit Coordination grant that expires in June 2021) After June 2021, there is no funding identified to continue providing incentives for people to register for ORCA LIFT. If no additional funding is found, after June 2021, people could still sign-up for ORCA LIFT, but there would be no preloaded rides on ORCA LIFT cards (ie there would be no additional “incentive” for people to register).
- This Project provides ORCA LIFT incentives from June 2021 through 2024 and increases the amount preloaded on ORCA LIFT cards from $10 to $20. ($20 worth of rides provides more than 13 free rides on Link and ST Express, where the ORCA LIFT fare is $1.50). The Project helps improve affordability and accessibility for people with low income. The Washington State Department of Health and Social Services (DSHS) estimates a 50% increase in people needing/registering for ORCA LIFT due to loss of employment from the COVID-19 crisis.