



**King County**  
**King County Councilmember Joe McDermott**

September 5, 2019

Mr. Peter Rogoff, CEO  
Sound Transit  
401 S. Jackson  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Rogoff,

I am writing to express my deep frustration with the slow progress on reforming fare enforcement at Sound Transit. Given the persistent inequities faced by people of color and the housing crisis plaguing our region, retooling Sound Transit's fare enforcement system should be an urgent priority.

For over a year, you have said that you need to look at this problem more closely. Meanwhile, rider experience continues to suffer. People of color and people with low-incomes are negatively impacted by a fare enforcement system that prioritizes a criminal justice approach over customer service. Enough.

We build transit systems so people can access opportunities – so they can get to school, training, and meaningful work. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said urban transit systems are a “genuine civil rights issue” and he was right. It is not enough to build out the system. If we are not also intentional about fares and fare enforcement, then we risk operating a service that perpetuates institutional racism and widens rather than closes opportunity gaps.

Sound Transit has heard from many people on social media outraged by a picture of a high school student stopped by fare enforcement on the first day of school. I understand the ensuing outrage – we need to be welcoming kids to school and removing barriers to education. It is not enough to say Sound Transit only issued warnings and not tickets. I agree with Mayor Durkan's request that all warnings issued to students during the first week of school be expunged. I also urge Sound Transit to evaluate how fare enforcement officers engage with riders, especially youth.

While it is understandable why this incident grabbed so many people's attention, my fare enforcement concerns remain much broader.

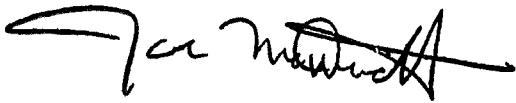
I appreciate that the agency wants to get fare enforcement right and you have concerns about working across several jurisdictions. It is clear, however, that changes are needed now, and Sound Transit has an opportunity to set regional expectations for how customers deserve to be treated. I am confident that Sound Transit can start to reform our fare enforcement program now while continuing to improve it as we work with the public to better understand their experiences and needs. Changes I believe can begin to move now include:

- Reducing the fine level
- Developing additional resolution options, including non-monetary options
- Removing civil infractions for fare violations

Additionally, I request a public presentation to the Sound Transit Board on the status of the fare enforcement work and the cross-functional work group. The presentation should include a summary of what work has happened to-date, the work still planned (including the survey being developed and your outreach strategy), a timeline for completing that work, and a draft list of recommendations based on what you have learned. At this point in the process, it is not unreasonable to expect an exceptionally aggressive timeline on implementing this work.

I look forward to working with you and our board colleagues to create a more equitable, customer-centered fare enforcement model and improved rider experience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe McDermott". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joe McDermott  
King County Council  
District 8