

2023 REIMBURSEMENTS FROM THE WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE SERVICES FUND

This report provides an overview of reimbursements from the Wheelchair Accessible Services (WAS) Fund for the 2023 calendar year (Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2023). 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, 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 (WAVs)). **Table 1** describes the categories of reimbursement and the reimbursement rates for Seattle (FAS Director’s Rule [FOR-HIRE TRANSPORTATION-01-2022](#)) and King County (as established in [FIN-10-3-2-PR](#)).

Table 1 - 2023 WAS Fund Reimbursement Categories

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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban TPW: \$20 • Suburban TPW: \$30 • Rural TPW: \$40
Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) Shift Costs	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 9:00 p.m. and 5:00 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. Additional shifts are optional.
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 certification 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 up to \$7,435/year for six years (\$44,610 total) for new (not previously titled) vehicles, disbursed quarterly. Used vehicles are not eligible for this reimbursement. 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 displays the total number and dollar amounts of each WAS Fund reimbursement type Seattle and King County made in calendar year 2023.

Table 2.						
2023 Total WAS Fund Reimbursements by Reimbursement Category						
Reimbursement Type	Seattle		King County		Total	
	Total #	Amount Paid	Total #	Amount Paid	Total #	Amount Paid
TPW ^A	17,902 TPWs	\$391,255	13,868 TPWs	\$437,823	31,770 TPWs	\$829,078
Fuel ^B	Please refer footnote "B" below.				13,497 Shifts	\$202,455
Off-Peak Shifts ^B					1,062 Shifts	\$47,790
Additional Shifts ^B					506 Shifts	\$15,180
Driver Training	1 Trainings	\$195.13	1 Trainings	\$153.32	1 Trainings	\$348
Vehicle Acquisition, Maintenance and Equipment ^B		\$134,782.50		\$110,042.50	59 WAVs	\$244,825
Total						\$1,339,676

^A 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.

^B 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 2023, 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 entirely by the licensing jurisdiction. In 2023, the owner/operator of County-only WAV was reimbursed by King County. The vehicle age limit was raised from 12 years to 15 years for vehicle acquisition and VAME reimbursements.

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 2023 were calculated monthly in the case of TPW and Shift reimbursements, and on a yearly basis in the case of VAME reimbursements.

Table 3 displays the average number of reimbursements by category. For each category, the average unit and reimbursement per driver or owner is provided.

Table 3.		
2023 Average WAS Fund Reimbursements by Reimbursement Category (Seattle and King County)		
Reimbursement Category	Average Units	Average Reimbursement
Dispatched Trips to Passengers in Wheelchairs (TPW)	37.29 trips per driver per month (71 drivers)	\$973.10 per driver per month
Fuel Reimbursements	18.14 WAV fuel shifts per driver per month (62 drivers)	\$272.12 per driver per month
Off-Peak Shifts	2.33 off-peak shifts per driver per month (38 drivers)	\$104.80 per driver per month
Additional Shifts	4.69 additional shifts per WAV per month (9 WAVs)	\$140.56 per owner per month
Vehicle Acquisition & Maintenance and Equipment (M+E) Costs	59 WAVs	\$4,149.58 per owner (annual)

Average reimbursement amounts reported in Table 3 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 71 in the calendar year 2023. The average monthly TPW reimbursement per driver was \$973.10. This figure was calculated by dividing the average monthly TPW by the average number of drivers per month: $(\$829,078/12 \text{ months}) = \$69,089.87/71 \text{ drivers} = \973.10

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 62 in the calendar year 2023. The average monthly fuel reimbursement per driver was \$272.12. This figure was calculated by dividing the average monthly fuel reimbursement by the average number of drivers per month: $(\$202,455/12 \text{ months}) = \$16,871.25/62 \text{ drivers} = \272.12

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 doing off-peak shifts per month was 38 in calendar year 2023. The average monthly off-peak reimbursement per driver was \$104.80. This figure was calculated by dividing the average monthly off-peak reimbursement by the average number of drivers per month: $(\$47,790/12) = \$3,982.50/38 \text{ drivers} = \104.80

Additional shifts. The average number of additional shifts reimbursements was derived from monthly data submitted to the City of Seattle by taxicab associations with affiliated WAVs. The average number of WAVs doing additional shifts per month was 9 in calendar year 2023. The average monthly reimbursement per WAV was \$140.56. This figure was calculated by dividing the average monthly additional shift reimbursement by the average number of drivers per month: $(\$15,180/12) = \$1,265/9 \text{ WAVs} = \$140.56$.

VAME reimbursements. Total VAME reimbursements for calendar year 2023 amounted to \$244,825. The average annual VAME reimbursement per WAV owner was \$4,149.58 $(\$244,825/59 \text{ WAVs} = \$4,149.58)$. Of the 63 licensed WAVs (including 1 County-only), 59 WAVs received reimbursements.

Voluntary conversions. Voluntary conversion is a process in which drivers choose to change their vehicle to a WAV. Four taxi owners completed voluntary conversions in 2023. All 4 of the voluntary conversions are dual-licensed.

To enhance our comprehension of the historical reimbursement amounts for the purpose of assessing fund sustainability, and to evaluate the recovery of wheelchair accessibility operations post the COVID-19 pandemic, we have compiled data spanning the past seven years. Figure 1 presents a comparative analysis of the annual reimbursement amounts for WAS, illustrating the percentage change relative to the preceding year. Aside from 2020, there has been a consistent increase in the total reimbursement amount allocated for this program. This trend signifies a progressive increase in the funding allocated to this program.

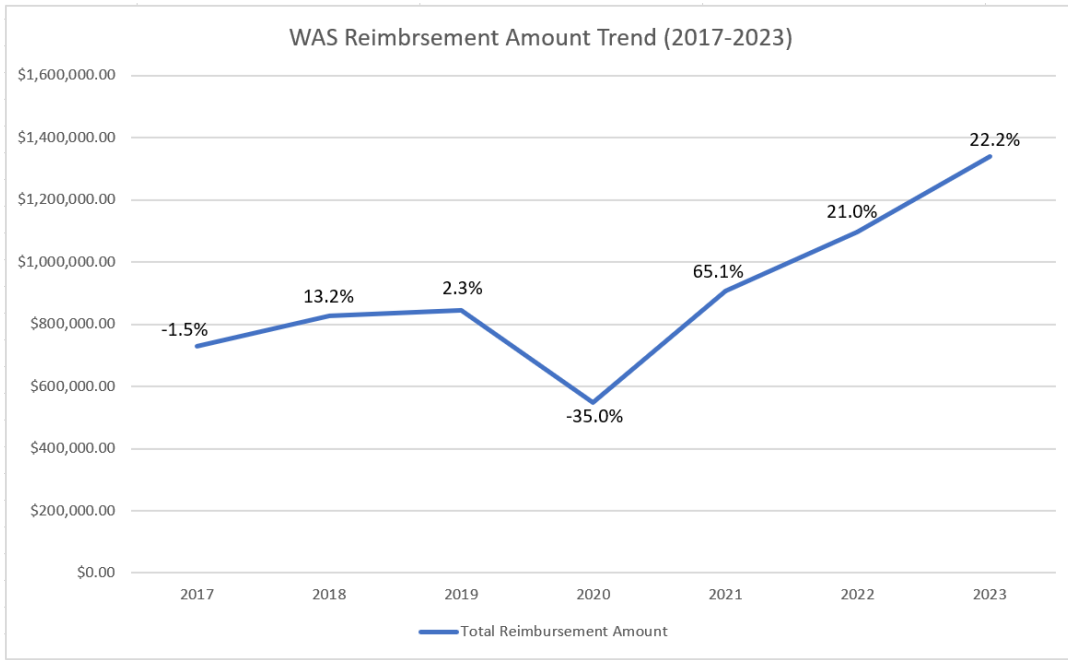


Figure 1. Wheelchair Accessible Services (WAS) reimbursement amount between 2017 and 2023

In reference to the trip amount data, Figure 2 shows the trend of TWP trip number. Figure 2 shows that the number of trips has rebounded to the levels observed prior to the pandemic. This resurgence is accompanied by an upward trend in trip frequency. This positive trajectory suggests a robust recovery and a growing demand for the service, reflecting a return to pre-pandemic operational norms for wheelchair accessible trips and potentially even an expansion beyond those levels.

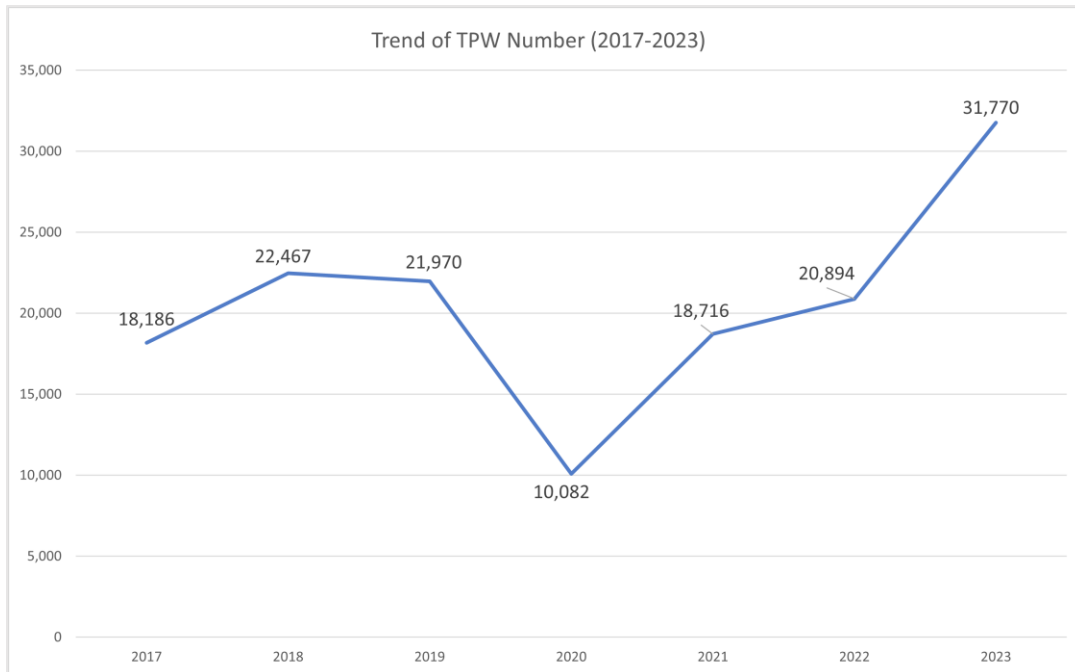


Figure 2. Number of trips with passengers in wheelchairs between 2017 and 2023