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NEWS

New public health Directive requires masks or face coverings on transit

Please protect yourself and everyone on Metro from

COVID-19

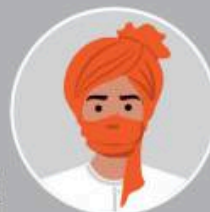


**WEAR A MASK
OR FACE COVERING**



King County
METRO

Moving forward together



Starting Monday, May 18 until further notice, passengers are required to wear masks or face coverings while riding transit, according to a new Public Health Directive from Dr. Jeff Duchin, Public Health – Seattle & King County health officer, along with King County Executive Dow Constantine and Seattle Mayor Jenny A. Durkan.

Additionally, Executive Dow Constantine has directed that all King County employees, including transit operators and crews, wear masks or face coverings when in public indoor spaces or outdoors when they are unable to social distance. Metro has already distributed two reusable, washable cloth face coverings to each of its 4,100 frontline employees, and similarly will provide cloth face coverings to its other employees, too.

According to Public Health – Seattle & King County, a face covering may prevent further community spread of the COVID-19 virus by blocking infectious droplets from spreading when someone with the infection coughs, sneezes, or speaks. It's the latest move to promote safety across our fleet for operators, crew, and passengers.

The new directive requires voluntary compliance, and Metro operators will not prevent passengers without face coverings from boarding. We trust that all riders will comply to the extent they can, acknowledging that wearing a face covering poses unique challenges for some, such as those with disabilities or respiratory issues, or deaf individuals who use facial movements as part of communications. These individuals, along with children under the age of two, are exempt from this directive. It is not always apparent who has an exemption, so other riders should avoid the temptation to police other passengers who aren't wearing a mask.

Metro will reinforce the directive through recorded reminders played on the vehicle's public address system. Transit security officers will continue to provide safety support as well as offer guidance on social distancing and other public health recommendations. Additionally, King County Metro is making 75,000 masks available to vulnerable populations through community organizations.

During this incredibly challenging time, Metro has received very generous in-kind donations from individuals, businesses, and organizations. King County offers its appreciation and thanks for mask donations from ATU Local 587, the Chinese American Civic Association, GTR Technologies, Heather Johnson Stallard, and the Little Masters Club. These donations allow Metro to provide masks to our frontline employees and to members of our community in greatest need.

Metro also ordered additional high-quality fabric face coverings from the Refugee Artisan Initiative, which employs local refugee women to sew these face coverings. Because of Metro's large order, the organization was able to employ four additional refugee women in addition to the existing staff of seven.

As masks and face coverings become the norm, King County remains committed to sharing accurate information and [confronting discrimination](#). Wearing a mask or face covering does not mean a person is ill, and ethnicity has nothing to do with an individual's vulnerability to this disease. We recognize that [CDC-approved face coverings](#), such as bandanas, cloth face masks, masks scarves, and veils, can result in harassment and create safety concerns for people of color. King County, Metro, and the Metro Transit Police condemn racial profiling in the strongest terms across the transit system and throughout our community, and harassment based on race is illegal and will not be tolerated.

Wearing a mask or face covering does not replace frequent handwashing, avoiding touching one's face, and staying apart from others whenever possible.

These are the most important steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 illness.

Public Health – Seattle & King County has developed a [full FAQ](#) about the Directive. Transit-related questions and answers are below.

Is anyone exempt from wearing a face covering on a bus?

Yes. Face coverings should not be worn by children who are two years of age or younger, or children under the age of twelve unless supervised by an adult.

Additionally, if wearing a face covering would be difficult or harmful, an individual should not do so. Examples would be someone who has a physical disability that makes it difficult to easily wear or remove a face covering; someone who is deaf and uses facial and mouth movements as part of communications; someone who has been advised by a medical professional to not wear one; or someone who has trouble breathing or cannot remove a face covering without assistance.

What is the penalty for not wearing a face covering on the bus?

There is no penalty for not wearing a face covering. Violation of this Directive does not create grounds to stop, detain, issue a citation, arrest, or prosecute individuals who do not comply with it. Law enforcement will not be involved in the enforcement of this Directive. Transit security officers on buses will educate and encourage individuals to wear face coverings. Elected and health officials will evaluate if additional steps need to be taken if there is widescale non-compliance with this Directive. It's up to all of us to help follow public health guidance to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community. We

need to be accountable to each other, to our most vulnerable community members, and to our essential workers who are on the frontlines of this crisis.

What do I do if I see someone not wearing a face covering on my bus?

Nothing. People are making the decision about wearing a face covering or mask that is appropriate for them, and it's not always apparent if someone meets the terms for an exemption.

Will Metro have masks available to give to riders who don't have one?

Metro is not planning to distribute any type of face covering on board its vehicles or at Metro stops or facilities due to a number of safety and health concerns for operators, passengers and security personnel. Thanks to generous donations from ATU Local 587, the Chinese American Civic Association, GTR Technologies, Heather Johnson Stallard, and the Little Masters Club, Metro is distributing masks to service providers and community-based organizations serving people who are transit-dependent, low-income populations. In total, King County is distributing 115,000 face coverings and masks through community-based organizations. The City of Seattle is working with community-based organizations to distribute 45,000 cloth face coverings to vulnerable communities, including people experiencing homelessness, older adults, and staff at food banks. Community partners are identifying eligible people based off their existing client lists. Riders who need masks for essential travel should work with their service providers or community-based organizations to receive masks for essential travel purposes.

Why do I need to wear a face covering or mask on buses now, rather than earlier when cases were rising at a faster rate?

The primary strategies to prevent COVID-19 transmission have been and continue to be avoiding people who are ill, physical distancing, good hand washing, and avoiding nonessential contact with others. These strategies have worked together to decrease the intensity and peak of our outbreak and the number of COVID-19 illnesses. Mask use was recommended for people with symptoms, but cloth mask use for well people in public was not initially recommended.

Since our outbreak was identified in February and early March, the importance of COVID-19 transmission from people who do not have symptoms has been increasingly recognized. On April 1, 2020 Public Health – Seattle & King County, in accordance with a new CDC recommendation, issued updated guidance which underscored that face coverings can help prevent the spread of the virus. Around that time, healthcare facilities began requiring that all visitors wear a face covering.

On May 4, 2020 Governor Inslee modified his “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order to reduce restrictions on some public activities that are likely to bring more Washingtonians into close contact with each other. As the state gradually begins to reopen, residents are more likely to come into contact with each other providing opportunities for COVID-19 spread. In addition, because the number of COVID-19 cases has stopped decreasing recently, King County has determined that cloth face coverings should be re-emphasized as part of our strategy to decrease the risk of a resurgence in cases in this unprecedented situation.

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to support the region's needs for essential trips

2 THOUGHTS ON “NEW PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTIVE REQUIRES MASKS OR FACE COVERINGS ON TRANSIT ”

[Add Comment ↓](#)

anonymous 2

May 11, 2020 at 5:19 pm

I agree, this doesn't make any sense Why even bother having this “policy” if nobody is actually going to ENFORCE it? This is just as meaningless as Metro's claims that security staff will be monitoring social distancing on the buses (I and several of my coworkers who regularly commute by bus have yet to actually see any security on the buses) and that the buses will be limited to 12 or 18 passengers (again, I routinely see buses at or very close to capacity, yet the drivers keep picking up passengers and don't turn on the “sorry, coach full” signs.) I

feel like all Metro is doing is saying whatever they THINK passengers want to hear and isn't really paying attention or trying to solve these problems. In fact, I think the commenters on this blog and the Facebook page have a much better sense of what needs to be done about overcrowding, lack of social distancing, and homeless riders not wearing masks even though they're coughing and obviously sick than the people running Metro do. I find that the majority of homeless riders on the route 70 buses are really bad about not wearing masks and sitting too close to other passengers even if the bus is empty enough for them to social distance easily.

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Anonymous

May 11, 2020 at 4:43 pm

So nothing is really changing on May 18th. The rule is voluntary, it won't be enforced, there is no penalty for disobeying it, passengers are asked to turn a blind eye and not take matters into their own hands. This is a suggestion and until contact tracing leads to an outbreak starting on a Metro bus, nothing will ever change and why do people wonder why the public is scared to ride on a "cruise ship on wheels"?

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