



City Council Workshop Agenda

September 23, 2025 at 6:30 PM

City Hall Council Chambers - 210 W 6th Ave and Virtual

The City of Kennewick broadcasts Council meetings on the City's website at

<https://www.go2kennewick.com/CouncilMeetingBroadcasts>.

Written public comment is accepted pursuant to KMC 2.04.047.

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1. Ground Ambulance Transport and Mileage Rates

Council Agenda Coversheet	Item Number: 1.	Date: 9/23/2025	Category: Info Only
	Item Type:	Presentation	
	Subject:	Ground Ambulance Transport and Mileage Rates	
	Department:	Fire	
<u>Summary</u>			
City staff are presenting research and analysis on past, current, and potential future ground ambulance transport and mileage rates, which have not changed since 2012, despite increases in the costs to deliver ambulance services. The current established flat rates of \$660 for residents and \$990 for non-residents are among the lowest ground ambulance transport rates in Washington state and the lowest in the Tri-Cities region. Furthermore, the \$660 resident rate is below the \$804 amount that Medicare reimburses for an Advanced Life Support 2 (ALS2) level of service, which occurs with approximately 2.1% of patients transported by the Kennewick Fire Department. In an effort to ensure the City is able to fully recover allowable expenses and to reduce the impact on the general fund, City staff are presenting background information on two potential options for updating ground ambulance transport and mileage rates. The first option (Option A) would increase rates to \$695 as a resident rate for Basic Life Support (BLS), \$762 as a resident rate for ALS1, \$828 as a resident rate for ALS2, and \$11 per mile transported. A second option (Option B) would increase rates to \$810 as a resident rate for BLS, \$900 as a resident rate for ALS1, \$990 as a resident rate for ALS2, and \$15 per mile transported. City staff are also recommending that non-resident rates be established at 150% of the corresponding resident rates, as has been the current practice since 2012. The tiered fee approach is proposed in such a manner that patients would be billed a rate commensurate with the level of service they receive when being transported, as opposed to a single, increased flat rate for all levels of service. City staff is planning to bring forward a resolution for City Council to consider on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, with recommendations to update ground ambulance transport and mileage rates. Any approved revisions to ground ambulance transport and mileage rates must first be reported to the Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner by November 1, 2025, in order to take effect January 1, 2026.			
Attachments:			
1. Presentation			

KENNEWICK FIRE DEPARTMENT

Guided by principle, strong ethics & driven to serve others with compassion. We are trained, disciplined & effective.



City of Kennewick Ambulance Transport and Mileage Rates



Transport and Mileage Fee History

How long has Kennewick had transport and mileage fees in place?

- 48 years... since 1977

Last rate update occurred in 2012.

- Rate changes:
 - 🚒... Resident transport rate increased *from \$578 to \$660*
 - 🚒... Non-resident transport rate increased *from \$867 to \$990*
 - 🚒... No change to mileage rate; **\$10** per mile since 2005

Key facts to remember:

- Costs to deliver ambulance services have increased since 2012.
- Medicare allows for reimbursement above what the City currently charges.
- City Staff are planning to bring forward recommended rate increases at October 7, 2025 Council Meeting.
- Rate changes must be submitted to the Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner by November 1, 2025.
- New rates would be effective January 1, 2026.



Authority to Set Ambulance Service Rates

Revised Code of Washington

RCW 35.21.766 affirms the authority of the City to establish a system of **ambulance service to be operated as a public utility** and provides statutory guidance in **setting rates**.

Kennewick Municipal Code (KAC) Chapter 9.36

Section 9.36.080 states, "Each person who utilizes the ambulance service (**"patient"**) **shall be billed** by the City **at the rates set by Resolution.**"



Public Access to Ambulance Service Rates

Revised Code of Washington

RCW 48.49.205 requires **all local governmental agencies** with established rates for ground ambulance services to submit their rates to the **Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC)** for public access.

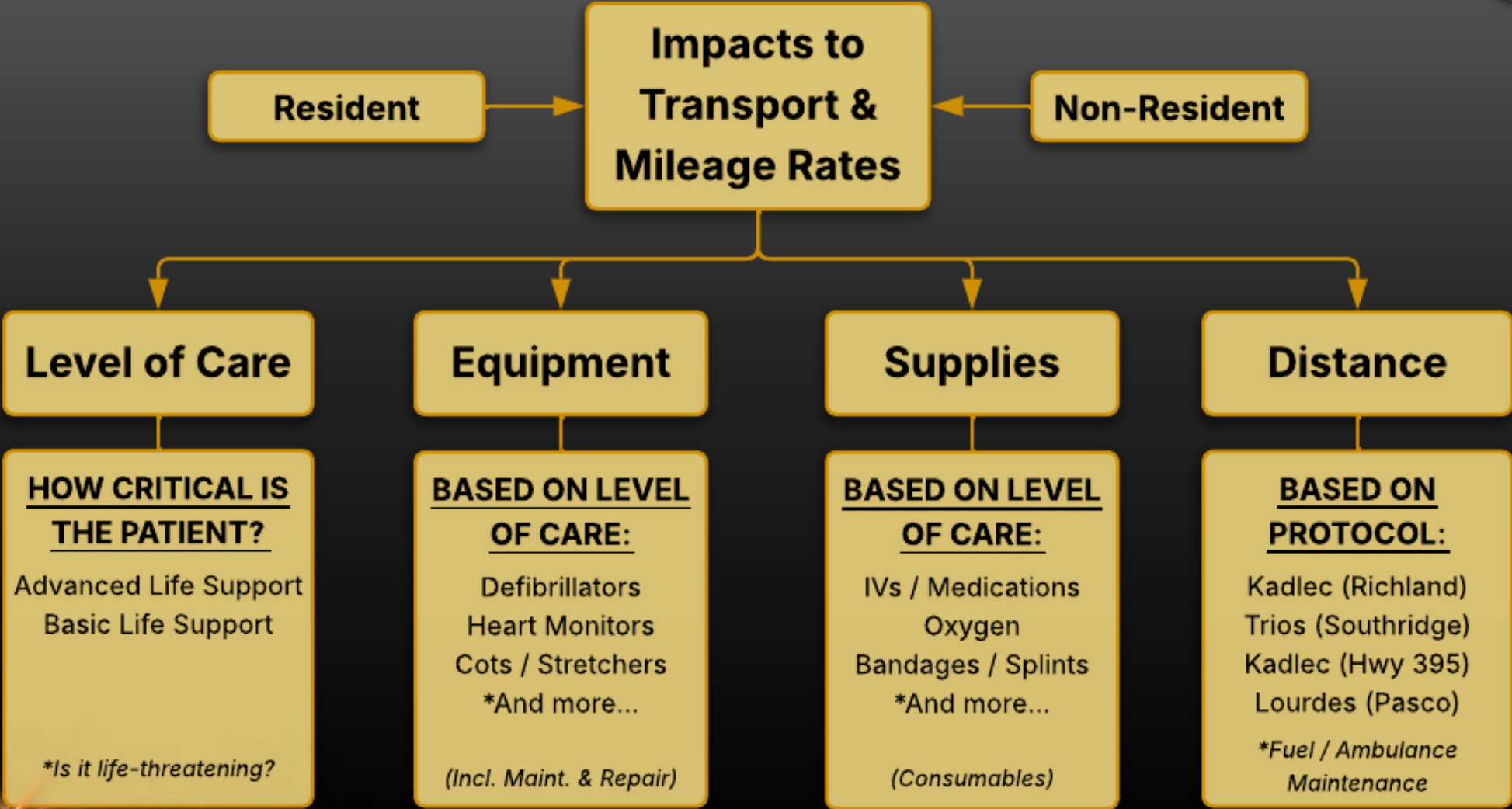
Washington Administrative Code (WAC), Chapter 284-43B-029

Section 4 specifies, “Updated rates must be **submitted by November 1st for an effective date of January 1st of the following year.**”

Ambulance rates cannot be updated outside of this timeframe unless an exception has been granted by the OIC due to an emergent risk to the financial viability of a ground ambulance services organization.



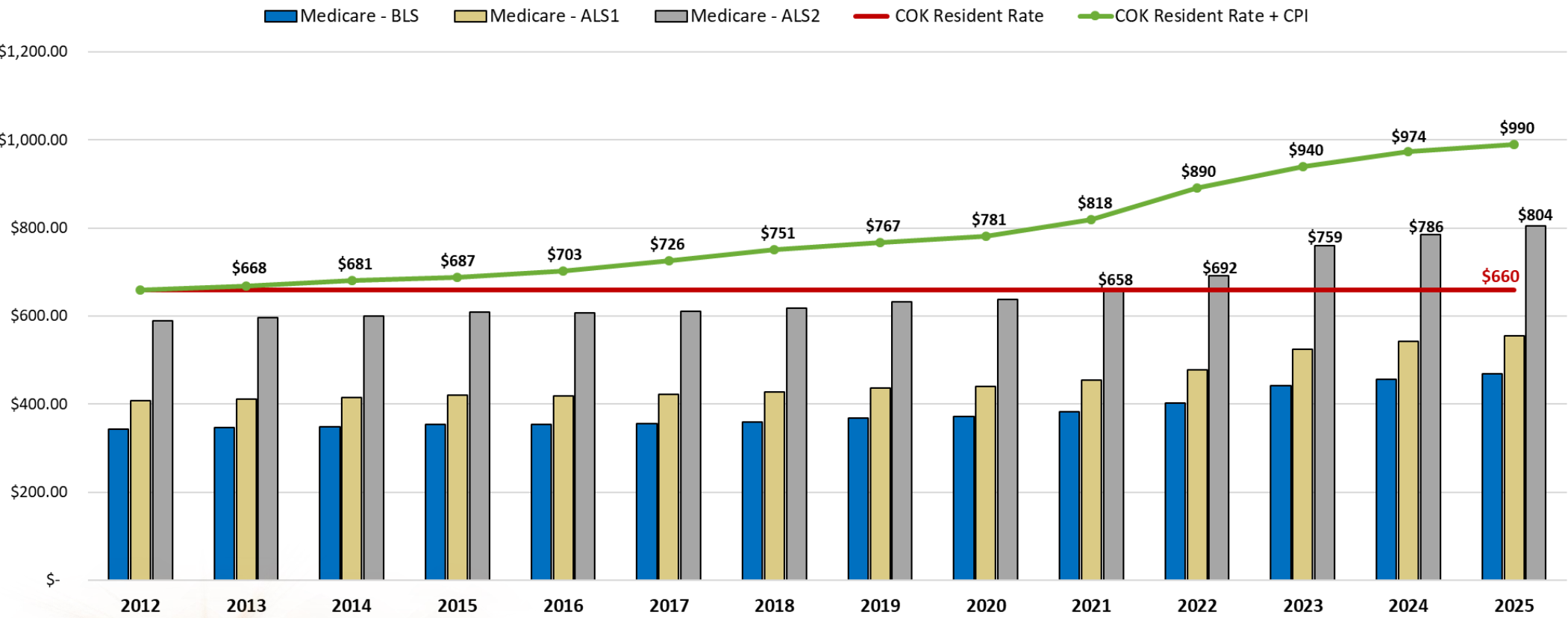
Determining Transport and Mileage Rates





Medicare Allowables since 2012

Comparison of Medicare Allowables vs. Existing COK Resident Transport Rates and COK Resident Transport Rates + WA State CPI



ALS2 -

Adv. Life Support

- Paramedic-level care req'd
- 3+ IV meds given

ALS1 -

Adv. Life Support

- Paramedic-level care req'd
- 1+ ALS-level procedures req'd

BLS -

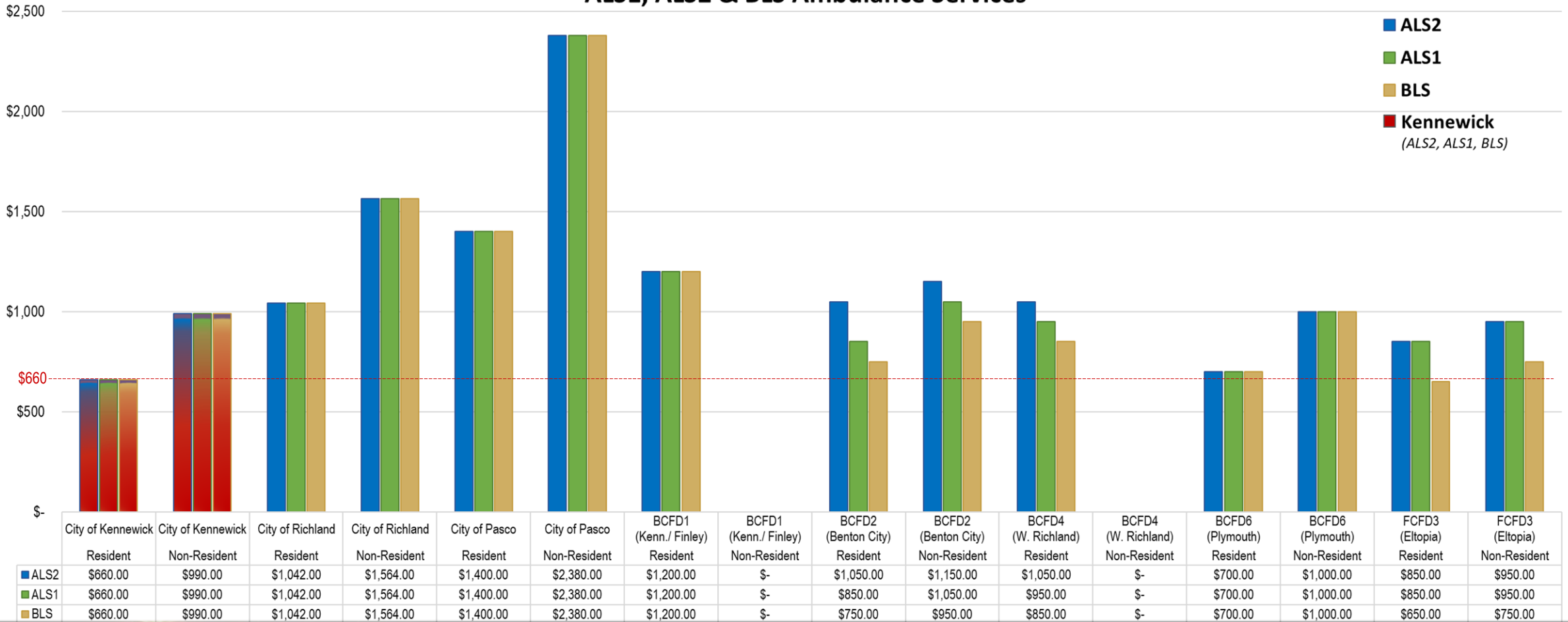
Basic Life Support

- EMT-level care needed
- Not life-threatening

Tri-Cities Regional Area Agencies



2025 Transport Rates for **Tri-Cities Area** Fire/EMS Agencies Providing Emergency ALS1, ALS2 & BLS Ambulance Services





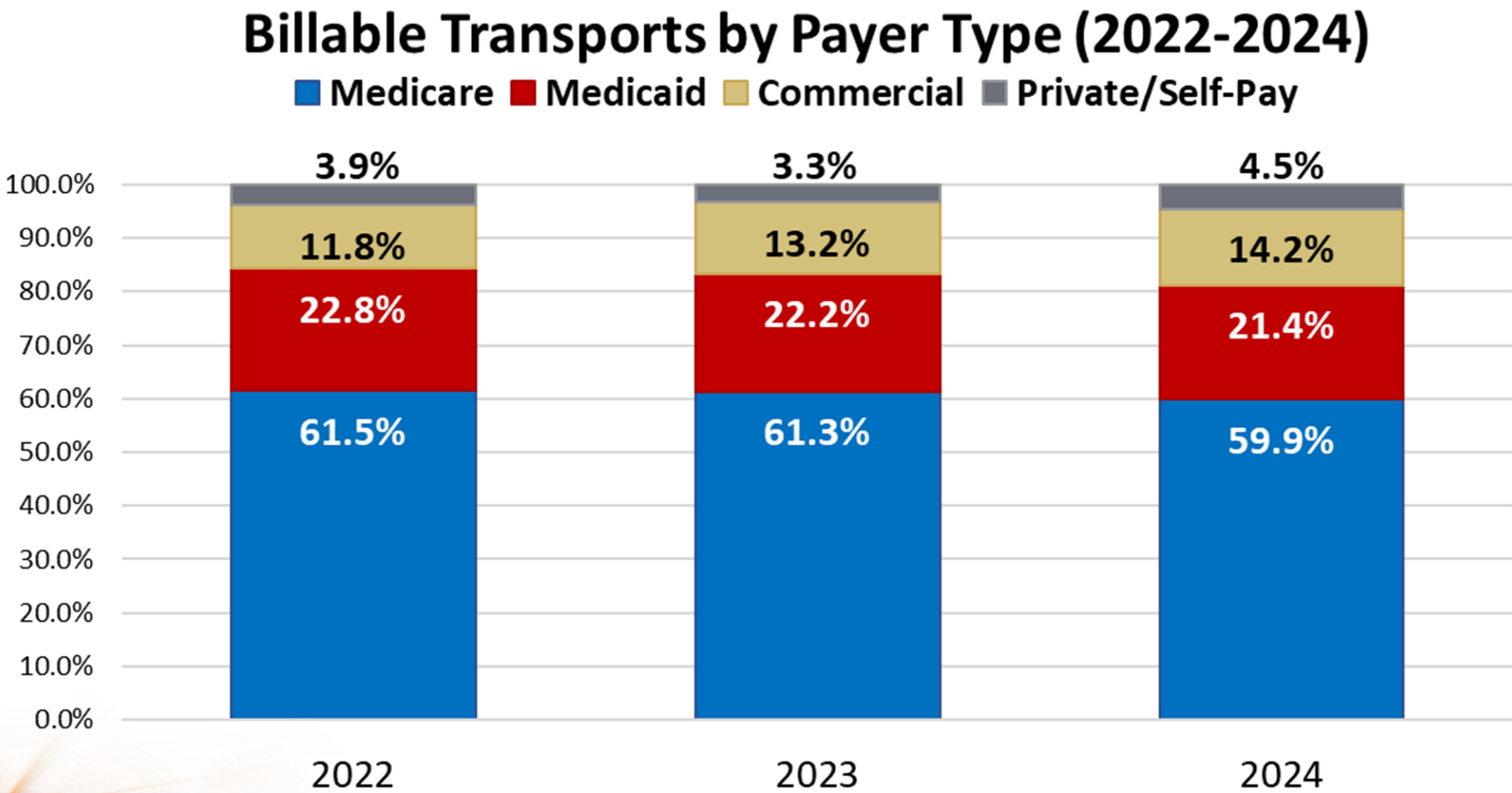
Medicare/Medicaid Allowables vs. COK Rates

Call Types		Allowable Costs		Kennewick Rates	
% Calls	(EMERGENCY)	Medicaid	Medicare	Resident	Non-Resident
2.1%	ALS2	\$ 168.43	\$ 804.45	\$ 660.00	\$ 990.00
51.5%	ALS1	\$ 168.43	\$ 555.80	\$ 660.00	\$ 990.00
46.2%	BLS	\$ 115.34	\$ 468.04	\$ 660.00	\$ 990.00
100.0%	Mileage	\$ 6.86	\$ 9.15	\$ 10.00	\$ 10.00

% Calls	(NON-EMERGENCY)	Medicaid	Medicare	Resident	Non-Resident
0.0%	ALS1	\$ 276.23	\$ 351.03	\$ 660.00	\$ 990.00
0.2%	BLS	\$ 207.61	\$ 292.53	\$ 660.00	\$ 990.00



Breakdown of Transports by Payer Type





Proposed Rate Change Options

CURRENT (2025)	BLS	ALS1	ALS2	Mileage
Resident	\$660	\$660	\$660	\$10
Non-Resident	\$990	\$990	\$990	\$10

City of Kennewick Ambulance transport rates set in 2012.

PROPOSED (Opt. A)	BLS	ALS1	ALS2	Mileage
Resident	\$695	\$762	\$828	\$11
Non-Resident	\$1,043	\$1,143	\$1,242	\$11

*Rates derived by adding 2024 & 2025 CPI-W to applicable 2024 rates (Medicare ALS2 rate & COK resident rate).

PROPOSED (Opt. B)	BLS	ALS1	ALS2	Mileage
Resident	\$810	\$900	\$990	\$15
Non-Resident	\$1,215	\$1,350	\$1,485	\$15

*Rates based on WA State CPI-W calculations over time (2012-present).



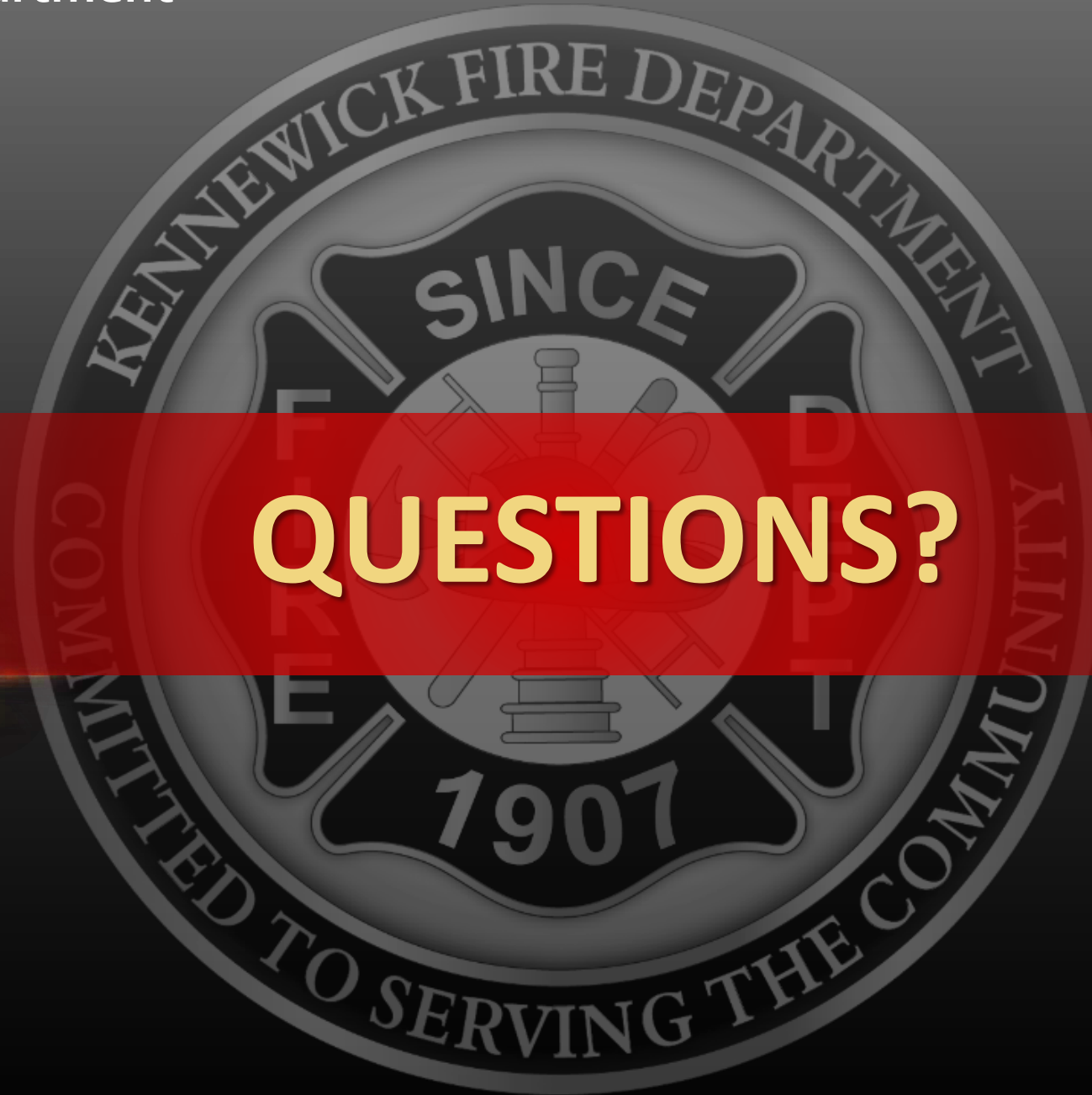
Protections for COK Low-Income & Seniors

% Patients	Payment Type	Rate Change Impact
4.5%	Private/Self-Pay	Yes ; includes personal payments, as well as cash payments made directly to individuals from legal settlements and auto insurance claims.
14.2%	Commercial Insurance	Yes ; WA State's Balance Billing Protection Act requires payment up to 325% of Medicare allowables.
21.4%	Medicaid	Fully protected ; low-income citizens are protected from increased ambulance transport costs by WA State's Balance Billing Protection Act, effective 1/1/2025.
59.9%	Medicare	Fully protected ; senior citizens are protected from increased ambulance transport costs by WA State's Balance Billing Protection Act, effective 1/1/2025.



New billing protections for ground ambulance patients take effect

For more information about the state's Balance Billing Protection Act, visit the WA State Office of the Insurance Commissioner's website at <https://www.insurance.wa.gov>.



QUESTIONS?



Frequently Asked Questions

 Do I receive a bill if I am not transported?

- **No.** The City of Kennewick does not bill when an ambulance arrives at an incident location and does not transport a patient.

 Do my taxes cover the cost of a transport?

- **No.** Your taxes cover the costs required to have and maintain a fire department staffed with qualified emergency medical personnel.

 Why do I receive a bill if I already pay the ambulance utility rate?

- The ambulance utility fee pays for fire stations, equipment, apparatus, training and wages that enable the **availability** of emergency services;
- Ambulance transport fees cover the **costs associated with using ambulance transport services** (medications, consumable supplies, fuel, etc.).