NEWS RELEASE – APRIL 3, 2020

Island Transit Responds to Wide-Spread COVID-19 with New Safety Measures to Slow the Spread

Coupeville, WA – In response to COVID-19, Island Transit is operating on reduced service schedules to support Washington State’s Stay Home, Stay Healthy initiative and practicing universal precautions to safeguard our passengers and employees from infection. While we provide critical services to help essential workers get to their jobs and help others access groceries and other essential items, we ask that transit passengers comply with our new health and safety guidelines which now include covering your face while traveling on the bus and in paratransit vehicles.

“Island County Public Health officials consider COVID-19 to be widely spread across our island community,” says Island Transit Executive Director Todd Morrow. “We are operating as if any surface or person could be a possible carrier of the virus and we are acting accordingly by doing our best to protect people while maintaining essential transportation services. These universal precautions are critically important and we ask that all passengers comply.”

New measures to ensure public health and safety include:

1. **Cover your face** while traveling on the bus and paratransit. While medical masks are in short supply and should be reserved for first responders, bandanas and other cloth masks work to prevent you from unknowingly transmitting the virus to others.

2. **Maintain distance** of at least six feet from others. Please observe social distancing at the bus stop and on the bus by spacing seating.

3. **Enter bus through the rear door**. Unless you are mobility impaired and need to use the accessible lift in the front door, please enter and depart from two-door buses through the rear door.

4. **Maintain good hygiene and wash hands**. While there is no soap and water on the bus, passengers should wash their hands in warm soapy water for 20 seconds before and after riding transit. Remember not to touch your face.

5. **Minimize surface contact and wear gloves**: While it’s impossible to ride a bus without holding on to grab bars and other surfaces, be mindful of how many times you touch something.

6. **Do not travel if ill**. If you feel even slightly ill, do not travel on public transit. Call your health care provider.
7. **No paratransit service to long-term residential care facilities.** We have suspended paratransit services to long-term care facilities with the exception of service to otherwise healthy patients in need of life-saving dialysis if other transportation cannot be arranged.

8. **Call Customer Service.** If you have a concern or need assistance with our new Emergency Service schedules, please call Island Transit at 360-678-7771. Our staff is happy to assist you.

In addition to passenger guidelines, Island Transit has implemented the following safety measures for employees, equipment and facilities to help combat the spread of COVID-19:

- **Mandatory health screenings for employees:** Every day, we ask our employees to conduct a health screening before they come to work. This includes taking their temperature at home. If they have signs of a fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches, or sore throat, we ask that they remain at home and contact their health care provider.

- **Cleaning and disinfecting:** Buses and buildings are thoroughly disinfected daily with Clorox Healthcare Hydrogen Peroxide Cleaner Disinfectant, which has been approved by the Center for Biocide Chemistries for combating COVID-19. We thoroughly clean the grab bars, pull cords, poles and other hard surfaces on our buses. These areas also are wiped down with disinfectant intermittently throughout the day and at the end of each shift as much as possible.

- **Social distancing:** We’ve asked our employees to engage in good personal hygiene and social distancing, and provide them the tools to do this while at work. We have blocked off the bus seats directly behind the driver’s seat in smaller vehicles and are in the process of installing Plexiglas protective shields adjacent to the operator’s seat and in customer service areas in our facilities.

- **Personal Protective Equipment:** Operators are given masks and gloves to wear while operating our vehicles. They also are equipped with hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes.

“Island Transit’s first priority is the safety of our staff and the public. We are continuously working with Island County Public Health officials to follow their latest advisories on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” says Morrow. “While Island Transit is operating, it is paramount that everyone follows the state’s Stay Home, Stay Healthy orders. If you are considered an essential worker and need transportation or need to get groceries or medications, our staff is working hard to maintain critical transportation services for you.”
Beginning Monday, April 6, Island Transit will again reduce service on the road under its revised Emergency Service Plan to lower the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for passengers and employees. Customers are currently being notified of these service changes. New schedules are posted at www.IslandTransit.org.

The mission of Island Transit is to provide safe, accessible, convenient, and friendly public transportation services which enhance our Island quality of life.

Contact: Meg Heppner at 360-678-9501 or Todd Morrow at 360-678-9500