Event Overview
The Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative (EERC) has organized a series of Mobility Coffee Talks in collaboration with senior centers on the Eastside. The first event took place in Issaquah in August 2018, followed by Redmond in December 2018 and Kirkland in April 2019. The Coffee Talks series focuses on deepening transit agencies’ understanding of the transportation experiences of underserved populations. Older adults, people with disabilities, individuals with limited income, immigrant communities, and refugee populations are encouraged to express their needs, barriers, and transportation goals. The events also aim to increase the visibility of the EERC in the community. Each event is tailored to the specific needs at the respective location, which is determined in partnership with site staff.

The Bellevue Mobility Coffee Talk took place on Wednesday, October 23rd from 1:30 to 3:30pm at the North Bellevue Community Center (in the “Banquet Room”) with 36 individuals in attendance. The Coffee Talk was divided into a two-part event to encourage group participation and then promote individual access to transit education. The first hour of the event, Camille Heatherly (EERC Staff Support) and Hannah Kimball (Bellevue Network on Aging) co-facilitated a guided conversation with participants to discuss what transit users wanted to know or could share about their own experiences. The conversation goal was to get individuals connected with more information on transportation programs and resources. During the Coffee Talk’s last 45 minutes, participants had the opportunity to move amongst the tables of different transportation experts to have their questions answered.

Promotion
The Coffee Talk was promoted through various community partners, including the EERC website and members, the North Bellevue Community Center (flyers and announcements at the lunch program), the City of Bellevue, EERC newsletter, and the King County Mobility Coalition newsletter. Staff from the EERC did further outreach to agencies via phone, email, and in person, to spread the word among their members/clients/residents. These included:
- Bellevue Network on Aging
Hopelink’s collaboration with the CISC was a strong success, due to combined outreach of flyers, word-of-mouth, and partnership between agencies. Two tables were filled by Chinese-speaking seniors with an interpreter seated at each. The promotion through word-of-mouth, flyer distribution and strong partnerships between Hopelink and other human service agencies lead to a great success in attendee turn-out. Using the findings from previous events in Issaquah, Kirkland, and Redmond helped to guide our promotional efforts to ensure a successful turnout.

**Support**
The Coffee Talk taskforce was made up of representatives from the City of Bellevue, Bellevue Network on Aging, Alliance of People with disAbilities, and Sound Generations. Agency representatives contributed to the Coffee Talk through participation in work group meetings, drafting program concepts, printing flyers, event promotion, acting as table facilitators during the event’s small group conversations, and donated pastries and door prizes from the Choose Your Way Bellevue program, Bellevue Network on Aging, and Lime. Two Hopelink volunteers, Diana and Vincent, assisted at the event. Diana helped check-in attendees and agency representatives. Vincent also helped at the check-in table but went on to offer his interpretation services to the second table of Chinese-speakers. Both Vincent and the hired interpreter assured that Chinese-speaking attendants were able to utilize the interpretation services to take part in a valuable educational event. While explaining programs, staff support was designated to the table of each agency representative so that the respective brochures were available to anyone interested. And finally, Hopelink’s Mobility Management team assisted with set-up, note-taking, and more. Thank you to everyone involved!

**Course of the Event**
Eight tables were set up in the room to create a welcoming, interactive atmosphere and allowed participants to sit in small groups. Flowers decorated the round tables. Participants were encouraged to enjoy the food and refreshments. ORCA To-Go was present for the entire duration of the Coffee Talk and presenters encouraged attendees to obtain their own ORCA Regional Reduced Fare Permits (RRFP) while at the North Bellevue Community Center. Hopelink staff were
on-hand at the Travel Programs resource table providing maps and informational brochures about the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative and transportation services across the Eastside.

Hannah Kimball (Bellevue Network on Aging) and Camille Heatherly (EERC Staff Support) co-facilitated the Coffee Talk. Participants were encouraged to share in an open conversation how they currently get around and where they would like to go. Many individuals shared about the benefits of ORCA’s RRFP for older adults and expressed an interest in learning more about other transportation services. Participants shared their experiences with local transit and offered tips on alternative options and helpful, informative resources for easier transportation access. Hannah asked if the participants who drove cars would prefer to take the bus instead. One individual expressed an interest in riding the bus more, but they have avoided it because of their lack of route knowledge and understanding. Older adults were interested in receiving in-depth education on how to find bus stops close to them and create a trip plan. Mandy Wes (Alliance of People with disAbilities) added that cellphone applications like Google Maps, King County Metro Trip Planner app, and the Transit App work well for her to configure her trips. Camille also recommended speaking with Ben Tibbetts at the “Getting Around Puget Sound” transportation resource table to learn more about routes, bus options, and Bellevue’s Ride2 program. King County Metro staff shared about how to access Metro’s free Transit Instruction program for seniors and people with disabilities (including individual training, system training, ramp training, and group trainings/field trips). Attendees shared tips with each other about the different ways ORCA cards can be purchased and reloaded. Don Okazaki (King County Metro) also recommended calling Customer Service at Metro, which will use their Trip Planner program to learn more about bus routes stops and locations, as well as how to go about planning their trips in the future. [Metro Customer Service number: (206) 553-3000. Open M-F 8:30-4:30].

Hannah asked everyone what they wanted from their transportation or what they looked forward to seeing in the future. Most of the group responded with enthusiasm for the upcoming light rail that will connect Seattle to the Eastside by 2022. There was also some excitement around the Bellevue Network on Aging’s proposal to create a flat-rate charge for private transportation services. With an increase in flat-rate
fares, individuals seeking curb-to-curb transportation services would have greater access to mobility.

Attendees were interested in alternative options “beyond the bus” and the experts in the room shared information about the following transportation agencies:

- King County Metro Access,
- Non-Emergency Medical Transportation,
- Lime’s Bikeshare/ Scootershare/ Carshare programs, and
- Volunteer driver programs offered by Eastside Friends of Seniors, Sound Generations, and Catholic Community Services.

Uber and Lyft were also mentioned as options for locations where there is limited bus service. One participant suggested carpooling as an excellent transportation resource that requires coordination and organization. The attendees learned about the different carpooling services in the region, such as King County Metro’s Rideshare program. They also discussed sharing contact information to organize trips with neighbors, friends, and colleagues.

Door prizes were utilized as an incentive for attendees to stay until the end of the event. The prizes were donated by the Bellevue Network on Aging, the City of Bellevue, and Lime. All guests were encouraged to enter a raffle and eight of them won prizes (one coffee mug with a friendly Bellevue theme, four $15 and one $40 gift certificates to Fred Meyer, and one Lime inscribed helmet).

**Evaluation**

Feedback surveys were designed for attendees and transit agency representatives to evaluate the event’s success and room for improvement. At the close of the event, 14 of about 30 participants completed their optional surveys and 2 of the 10 agency representatives returned their feedback surveys to Hopelink staff. The surveys were not translated, so the interpreters assisted the non-English speaking attendees.

Of the event attendees who completed their feedback surveys, 100% of them agreed on the following:
• Overall, the event was satisfying.
• They felt more prepared to find transportation to get to medical appointments/ social events/ grocery stores/ etc.
• They learned one or more resource that they didn’t previously.

12 of 14 survey respondents said that they were more familiar with the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborate than before the Coffee Talk. It was noted that the advertising for the event was successful and led to a great turnout. The atmosphere was described as very friendly and everyone was very engaged in the discussion. With multiple, local organizations in the room, the event was very informative, and the seniors found a lot of answers to their questions. It was particularly valuable that older adults shared their own stories and tips in a guided conversation.

The following worked well:
• The providers in the room fit the community needs well and the room’s layout was organized clearly by putting each representative at a specific table.
• Further, having each representative introduce themselves and their organization was a way to let people know where they could find resources.
• Use of an easel at the front of the room to write participants comments, issues, or unmet needs made the discussion clear.

Multiple experts could be seen talking to attendees for long periods of time, and believed it was a good way to offer information through one-on-one discussions with transit users.

Although the surveys indicated that the event was successful, there are several things that could be done to improve the event for the next time:
• Multiple respondents shared feedback that facilitators speaking too fast made it more difficult for interpreters. Additionally, they felt that there was not ample time left to pause after questions to offer groups time to rotate to other agency representatives with other questions. This feedback gave the organizers clear feedback to use when creating the structure of a future Coffee Talk event.
• ORCA To-Go booth was placed too close to presenters.
• At future events, the one-pager of transportation options should always be distributed and discussed.
• Surveys should be translated for easier data collection.
• The flyer was translated into multiple languages but lacked a concise message of all providers that would be present. Moving forward, all agencies and providers should be confirmed early so that they can be represented on the flyer clearly.
• Interpreter headsets were not charged prior to the meeting, so in the future, event organizers will check all electronics 24 hours in advance. The interpretations also occurred
too close to each other in the room and caused a distraction. This was exasperated by the headset failure.

- Social media notification to partnering organization were sent out too close to the event day. In the future, this outreach should be done at least a month prior the event. Checking with King County Metro and AARP to see if they are willing to create an “event” via Facebook is an option that will be explored.

**Follow Up & Next Steps**

- Staff will follow up with attendees (who provided their contact information) 1-2 months after the event to see if they tried a new way of getting around or have additional questions.
- It was identified as a task for the EERC to continue identifying gaps and advocate for more transportation options for seniors.