



*We'll Get You There*

---

## KING COUNTY METRO

---

Field Trip #16: Community Van Program



DECEMBER 14, 2018  
EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE  
King County Mobility Coalition

## Community Connections Overview

- In 2012, as part of King County Metro’s 5 Year Transit Plan, “Community Connections” was created. The Community Connections program’s purpose was to design innovative solutions to the Puget Sound’s growing traffic, congestion, and mobility issues. All of the services piloted through this program provided options to King County communities that were growing—and continue to grow—more rapidly than King County Metro’s 5 Year Transit Plan accounted for; Connections programs also focused on serving populations that experience fare payment barriers. The work completed by this group has been adopted into Metro’s everyday operations. New workgroups will continue to provide alternative service options to communities with mobility needs.
- There are various pilots running under this Metro sub-department, like:
  - **TripPool** – a pilot running in several communities around King County that recruits volunteer drivers to shuttle groups of people between their homes and the local Park and Ride and improve first-mile/last-mile connections. The service areas extend in a three to five-mile radius around the local Park & Ride. Rides are found by using a phone app.
  - **Ride2** – the newest first-mile/last-mile pilot in Community Connections’ cache of options. Two service areas around Eastgate Park & Ride, and in West Seattle—serving the Water Taxi and bus connections from Alaskan Junction—provide ride-hailing service through a phone app.
  - **CommunityRide** – this service runs either Demand Response or Fixed Route service, depending upon the needs of the community.
  - **Community Shuttle** – this program operates small shuttle bus service with Fixed or Deviated Fixed service within communities and fills a certain gap in Metro’s provision of services.
- Melissa Allan painted a picture of how Community Connections fits into the service gap closure in the larger public transportation system:
  - The service gap is represented by a large cylindrical container
  - Metro Transit service is the stones that fill up much of the space
  - Metro’s Access Paratransit and Demand Area Response Transit (DART) Deviated Fixed Route shuttle-bus program is the large gravel that fill service gaps left by the spaces between the stones.
  - Community Connections is the sand that fills in each crevice left by the stones and gravel. These programs will never fully supplant Transit service but nonetheless help to connect riders, who are otherwise burdened by service gaps or entirely left out of the equation, with Transit-equivalent service.

## Community Van Program Model

- Service is open to the general public, and vehicles can accommodate mobility devices and persons with limited mobility. All jurisdictions have 2 vans (6 and 12 passenger, 1 van with an accessible ramp for people with mobility devices). These vans also have ADA placards to use disability parking.
- The Community Van programs are managed by Metro, in partnership with community agencies that serve as the conduits of service in each respective community. These stakeholder partners hire the Community Transportation Coordinators (CTCs)—with up to 20 hours per week funded by Metro—that perform the recruitment, outreach, promotion, and day-to-day operation of their respective sub-programs.

- Program hosts are typically governmental bodies, social service industries or non-profits. The van program is meant to be the most flexible option—without a great deal of eligibility barriers that riders must jump through. If the sponsor was a private institution, the program model would have to curtail to private interests or strict eligibility, which would defeat the purpose of the program.
- CTCs interface with their respective communities to recruit local volunteer drivers interested in driving passengers to various destinations. These drivers are often traveling with their friends to the same destinations. The program helps people within and across communities build social relationships and break down the isolation of auto-centrism. The Community Van program also helps Metro fulfill some of their Commute Trip Reduction goals, which focus on getting King County residents out of their cars and reducing their drive-alone trips.
- There are three currently-operating programs, two of which are in their final stages and will be launching in 2019:

*In Operation*

- Bothell/Woodinville – Metro partners with UW Bothell, City of Bothell and City of Woodinville; the CTC is a UW employee, working in their Transportation Department for 20 hours per week on Community Van work.
- Duvall – This van was the first program, and was launched in 2015. Metro partners with the City of Duvall; the CTC is provided by Hopelink and is an employee, working in their Mobility Department for 20 hours per week on Community Van work.
- Vashon Island – Metro partners with Vashon’s Chamber of Commerce. The CTC is a Chamber employee and lives on the island.

*In Development*

- Kirkland/Kenmore – will operate in partnership with the City of Kirkland and the City of Kenmore. The expected launch date is February 22, 2019. The CTC is a City of Kirkland employee who fills a dual role as the CTC and city Transportation Coordinator. This program will have one van for Kirkland and one for Kenmore. North Kirkland lost their bus service two years ago, so this program was funded to fill that gap. One van will be parked near City Hall in Kenmore, and the other will be parked at the North Kirkland Community Center.
- Shoreline/Lake Forest Park – will operate in partnership with the City of Shoreline and the City of Lake Forest Park. This program will have two vans serving the Shoreline and Lake Forest Park communities. The CTC is a Hopelink employee, working in their Mobility Department for 20 hours per week on Community Van Work.

## Fare Payment

- Drivers pay no fare, while riders must pay flat Metro fares of \$2.75 round trip. This is a reduced value from the standard Metro fare, as riders typically pay the \$2.75 fare each way.
- Van programs accept monthly Adult ORCA, Youth ORCA, income-eligible ORCA LIFT, and Regional Reduced Fare Permit (RRFP) Senior and Disabled fare payment options, but not traditional e-purse payment with any of these fare types.
- Community Van programs also accept digital TransitGo tickets. Transit GO is an alternate fare payment option whereby E-Purse tickets can be digitally stockpiled in a user’s app and be used to pay for multiple trips without having to buy a monthly pass. Using the TransitGo mobile tickets, riders also receive a free Metro transfer within a two-hour window.
- Human services bus tickets are also accepted.

## Drivers & Riders

- For a trip to be fulfilled, there must be one volunteer driver and a minimum of 2 riders.
- The destinations, and rider eligibility criteria, are very fluid and open. This makes the model entirely unique in Community Connection’s catalogue of pilots. Destinations must at minimum begin or end in their home communities. Many vans travel dozens of miles outside of their home community and pick up passengers in other communities along the way.
- Typical destinations include field trips led by other social service organizations on excursions, travel to foodbanks and medical appointments, as well as recreation trips to wineries, malls, festivals, grocery stores, and beyond.
- Riders who are between 13 and 18 must have a parent’s permission to ride in the van by themselves. There is a separate addendum that parents must sign if their children under 13 accompany them—for safety and liability purposes.
- CTCs work to recruit riders and drivers in their respective communities. This involves:
  - Publishing a record of all future and upcoming trips on an online widget tool.
  - Marketing tactics often involve encouraging building community between drivers and riders and dispelling rider fears about riding with strangers—many people in rural and suburban areas where the pilots are located may not be used to riding and driving with people they do not know.
  - Many of the Metro-branded marketing materials don’t explicitly mention that the vans are accessible, but CTCs heavily promote the vans’ accessibility.
- Drivers are approved based upon:
  - Five years of verifiable relatively clean driving history;
  - A driver application;
  - A motor vehicle report regularly run by Metro staff;
  - Accessible Equipment orientation – loading people in wheelchairs, and deploying the wheelchair ramp properly; and
  - A 45-minute phone orientation.
  - Drivers will sign their Certificate of Completion, and then the Driver will receive a letter of approval by Metro.
  - Drivers must notify Metro of driving record changes within 48 hours of an accident, arrest, etc., which can impact their ability to still be a driver.
  - NTSI training for drivers gives them a driver safety insurance discount—a further incentive to drive cautiously and carefully. King County Risk Management has a process for drivers who are approved, but have a change to their driving record during their tenure as a volunteer driver, such as an accident. Drivers may be required to take an NTSI course, at no cost, to remain approved. The benefit to drivers is that once complete, the NTSI certification benefits the driver by offering a safe driver discount for their personal insurance.
  - Drivers are not regularly tested for drugs or alcohol.
- Driver Certifications don’t have a specific expiration timeframe. If their schedules change, or they are not able to use the van for a long period, CTCs can put their Certification on hold/reserve, in case they can return to being a driver later. Drivers remain approved as long as they are active and meet the driver criteria.
- Drivers must log all payment, mileage, and general trip information in the Trip Log:
  - Beginning Time and Odometer;
  - Walk-around to assess initial damage and fuel level;

- Ending Time and Odometer;
  - Ending Walk-around assessment; and
  - ORCA Card #s, TransitGo RF codes, or Human Services Bus Ticket numbers.
- Revenue and non-Revenue trips must all be submitted in logs. Monthly reports are compiled from Trip Logs.

### Program-Specific Differences

- Jurisdictions may accept cash payments from riders in order to purchase fares through Transit Go. The jurisdiction then provides the rider with the TransitGo ticket information. This is helpful for serving populations who are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with technology, and comfortable with cash. The jurisdiction is required to manage this exchange entirely on their end. Currently, Vashon Island is the only community exercising this option.
- CTCs provide monthly reports to Metro and the reports are used in a variety of ways to assess the service and the statistics of each community. Reports allow Metro to determine the most common fare payment uses within a given community, to document requests for trips or needs that are outside of the current program guidelines, and track outreach hours and contacts established. The reporting process summarizes each CTC's monthly efforts, and exhibits each van program's performance metrics at a single glance.
- Vashon works with Youth and Family Services that have employees that are eligible to be with children. Parents have to sign permission slips, and Metro assigns numbers to each child so that CTC trip logs record independent Client Numbers for pre-established groups.
- Another van program has established a long-running relationship with a parent who takes her child, and another community member's child, to a school outside of the community five days a week.

### Contact

**Melissa Allan**

King County Metro – Community Connections  
Transportation Planner II  
Phone: 206-477-1695  
Email: [Melissa.allan@kingcounty.gov](mailto:Melissa.allan@kingcounty.gov)