“Getting Around Issaquah” Coffee Talk at the Issaquah Senior Center

Event Overview
In 2018/19, the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative organizes a series of Mobility Coffee Talks in collaboration with senior centers on the Eastside. The goal is to increase awareness of transportation options and focus on underserved populations. The events also aim at increasing the visibility of the EERC in the community. Each event is tailored to the specific needs at the respective location, which is determined together with site staff. The first event took place on Tuesday, August 14th, 2018, 1pm to 2pm at the Issaquah Senior Center (in the “Yoga Room”), right after a popular lunch program from Catholic Community Services.

Promotion
The Coffee Talk was promoted through various community partners, including the EERC website and members, the Issaquah Senior Center (flyers and announcements at the lunch program), the City of Issaquah, the Issaquah Library, the Metro with Dave 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: Aegis of Issaquah, Catholic Community Services, Chinese Information and Service Center, Eastside Friends of Seniors, Hutchinson House, Imagine Housing (Rose Crest at Talus, Andrew’s Arms, Johnson Hill, Mine Hill), Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank, Issaquah Nourishing Network, Sound Generations, St. Vincent de Paul, University House Issaquah, and YWCA Family Village. The event was also promoted through word-of-mouth and flyers at local businesses in Downtown Issaquah.

Support
Many EERC members contributed the Coffee Talk through participation in work group meetings, drafting program concepts, printing flyers, promoting the event, and finally being present day-of. City of Issaquah staff were available during the event for questions, as well as donated pastries and door prizes from the Salmon Friendly Trips program. The main door prize was donated by the University House Issaquah. A volunteer from Hopelink’s Travel Programs was available to assist with interpretation between English and Chinese, if needed. And finally,
Hopelink’s Mobility Management team assisted with set-up, note-taking, and more. Thank you to everyone involved!

Course of the event
Four tables were set up in the room to create a welcoming, interactive atmosphere and allowed participants to sit in small groups. Flowers and transportation-shaped stress balls served as decoration; coffee, tea, water, pastries, and candies were provided. At a resource table, maps and informational brochures about the EERC and transportation services in Issaquah were provided, in addition to a handout created by the EERC with an overview of alternative modes of transportation options in Issaquah.

Linda Woodall (Eastside Friends of Seniors) and Anna Loffing (EERC) 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 participants shared their experiences and had tips for other older adults. Some of the seniors had attended past Metro with Dave trips, where they registered for their Regional Reduced Fare Permit’s and practiced how to ride transit. Cori-Ann Ching (First Transit) provided information about the free Transit Instruction program offered by Metro 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. One third of the attendees reported to have a smart phone and one participant highlighted the King County Metro Trip Planner App as an amazing way to learn which bus route to take.

Attendees were interested in alternative options “beyond the bus” and the experts in the room shared information about additional services such as Access, Medicaid Transportation, Taxi Scrip, and volunteer driver programs 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. Dave Waggoner
brought up the idea to develop an informal network that people in the community can consult if they have issues finding transportation. Dave also pointed out that the Issaquah Senior Center is currently looking for an ADA equipped van to expand its transportation service for programs. The attendees brainstormed ideas, such as connecting with Metro’s Rideshare program or asking Evergreen Chevrolet in Issaquah for a donation. Door prizes were utilized as an incentive for seniors to stay until the end of the event. 19 persons entered a raffle and five of them won prizes (one umbrella and three water bottles with the Salmon-Friendly Trip logo, one gift certificate for a VIP dinner experience for 4 persons at the restaurant of the University House Issaquah).

**Evaluation**

Feedback surveys were designed for both attendees and representatives of organizations as a way to evaluate the event and create a learning opportunity for future events. Six surveys were completed by agency representatives and 12 by attendees. All attendees who completed surveys agreed that overall the event was satisfying. 95.8% of them stated they learned about one or more resources that they didn’t know about previously and that they feel more prepared to find transportation to get to a medical appointment, social event, grocery store, or another destination. 91.7% of respondents said that they are now more familiar with the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative than they were before the event. It was noted that the advertising for the event was successful and led to a great turnout (20 instead of the expected 10-15). Attendees described the atmosphere 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 seen as particularly valuable that older adults shared their own stories and tips in a guided conversation. One person specifically highlighted the 15 minute, one-on-one discussion she had with one of the experts after the event to receive further assistance.

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:

- Several people expressed that increasing the length of time for the event would be beneficial. For instance, attendees would have liked more time allotted for a longer/more in-depth discussion. Another suggestion was to add a second part to the event where attendees can have individualized conversations with the experts in the room based on their interests. (For example, one table for each program.)
- The amount of information was perceived as overwhelming by some participants. It is important to give them a clear idea how they can move forward. The Mobility Line number should be added to the handout. Providing more structure during the Coffee Talk is another way to approach that concern.
• It was also mentioned that the informal resources that are available in the community could be better integrated (such as transportation provided by retirement homes).
• Encouraging participants to raise their hand could help to give those a chance who are less vocal and decrease interruptions from more dominant participants.
• Despite collaboration with the CISC, the outreach to Chinese-speaking seniors was not effective. Finding a budget for translating the flyer can improve that in the future.
• While explaining programs, staff support should be available to hand the respective brochures out to anyone interested.
• It was suggested to have ORCA To-Go present or have already ORCA To-Go events scheduled for within two weeks after the Coffee Talk.
• At the end of the Coffee Talk, the facilitator could encourage everyone to share one takeaway with someone who was not there.

Follow Up & Next Steps
• Hopelink’s Mobility Line is available for anyone who needs assistance with identifying alternative transportation options (425-943-6760). (That service was used by at least one participant in the week after the event.)
• Immediately after the event, a Metro with Dave trip was scheduled to go to the King County Metro Customer Service Office in Seattle Downtown so seniors can apply for Regional Reduced Fare Permits.
• EERC staff support followed up with the Senior Center to coordinate ORCA To-Go and/or Getting Around Puget Sound (GAPS) events, if needed.
• Vicki Rouillard offered to assist with transit instruction for individuals in wheelchairs or other mobility devices. Staff support has followed up after the Coffee Talk regarding volunteering opportunities with Hopelink’s Travel Programs.
• Staff will follow up with attendees (who provided their contact information) three months after the event to see if they tried a new way of getting around or have additional questions.
• Attendees expressed that they would like to see these kind of Coffee Talks at more Senior Centers.
• It was identified as a task for the EERC to continue identifying gaps and advocate for more transportation options for seniors.