

Education and Outreach's 2017-2018 Field Trip Series – Evaluation Report

Project Overview

The **Education and Outreach Committee**, a committee of the King County Mobility Coalition (KCMC), collaborates with human services providers, transportation agencies, riders, and other partners to more effectively and accurately disseminate transportation information within and across King County communities. The committee works together to create a sharing platform that ensures all participants are up-to-date on service changes, fares, eligibility, and new options in the community.

In 2017 and 2018, we conducted 16 one-hour informational seminars on the second Friday of each month with regional transportation providers to provide a thorough education on the respective agency's programs. This **Field Trip Series** model provided attendees the opportunity to learn detailed information about various fixed-route and alternative transportation programs and ask questions they have always wanted to know!

This report will study the trip attendance rate, project goals, successes, lessons learned, notes for improvement, and potential next steps. The goal of this summary report is to inform similar future projects and serve as a guidebook to improving the Field Trip Series—should the Education & Outreach Committee decide to continue its operation in 2019.



Figure 1: Attendees of the Community Transit SWIFT Rapid Transit Field Trip pose in front of the bus they rode

List of Trips

The Field Trip Series visited 13 different transit agencies, community transportation providers, and travel instructors for 16 total trips between September 2017 and December 2018.

1. Snoqualmie Valley Transportation
2. Northshore Senior Center Transportation
3. Hopelink's Medicaid Transportation
4. Hopelink's Demand Area Response Transit (DART)
5. Sound Generations' Volunteer Transportation and Hyde Shuttle Programs
6. King County Metro's Taxi Scrip Program
7. King County Metro's Rideshare Operations
8. Seattle Department of Transportation's Emergency Operations
9. Catholic Community Services' Volunteer Driver Program
10. Community Transit's SWIFT Bus Rapid Transit System
11. First Transit's Travel Instruction Program
12. Eastside Friends of Seniors' Volunteer Transportation Program
13. Harborview Hospital's Transportation Resource Center and Access Evaluations Center
14. Muckleshoot's Tribal Transit Program
15. Wallingford Senior Center's Van Program
16. King County Metro's Community Van Program

Project Goals & Measure of Achievement

The Field Trip series was designed using Committee comments concerning regional providers' ample access to publicly-available information about other agencies' fixed, alternative, and community transportation options, yet lack of understanding around the inner-workings of these programs. Committee members wanted an educational series that allowed event attendees to learn in-depth about programs-of-interest, while having a platform—and captive program managers with expertise on said program—to ask questions. As an added benefit, the Field Trip series served as a central space for networking, allowing providers to develop new partnerships, and general community-building between transportation-sector professionals.

The Education and Outreach Subcommittee members discussed potential field trips for 2018 back in 2017. Two of the four goals were wholly achieved:

- Held a Metro Community Connections trip to learn about Metro's various Rideshare Operations, and a Community Van program trip to delve deeper into this unique transit mode.
- In order to learn about programs in a neighboring County, we conducted a trip with Community Transit's SWIFT Bus Rapid Transit system and had the highest attendance of any trip at 15 people.

One goal was mostly achieved:

- Visited First Transit's travel Instruction programs to provide attendees with key insights into travel training

Decided not to visit Pierce County's travel instruction programs to stay closer to original scope, i.e. King County providers. The final suggestion was not touched upon:

- Another participant wanted to learn about topics ranging from autonomous vehicles and smart cities to programs that bridge the gap between private and public transportation. These are topics that haven't been the singular focus of the 2017-2018 field trips. If the Committee decides to conduct trips in 2019, there should be a trip that covers one of these topics and fits within the Education and Outreach Field Trip project scope.

A Subcommittee member also mentioned the opportunity to visit other programs' facilities was very helpful for her, and after the field trip she felt empowered to pass on the knowledge to her own community.

Outreach

Our partner notification process improved as the trips progressed. Outreach initially began as simple email-based information dissemination. By the fifth trip, we were using Eventbrite RSVP links to ensure that non-subcommittee members could register for a spot in our Field Trips. By our ninth trip, we were creating Mailchimp invitations for each of our events and sending information to our larger coalition network in a digestible and visually attractive format. These eight Mailchimp invitations were opened a total of 700 times.

Attendance

We set a goal for eight attendees per session. Some attendance was lower, and some much higher. Total attendance was 157 for 16 trips, an average of 9.8 attendees per trip. The highest attended trip had 15 attendees, and the least attended trip had four attendees. Generally, we met our per-trip attendance goal. The total non-duplicated attendance—not double-counting attendees who went to more than one session—was 76 unique attendees, including 11 KCMC Hopelink Mobility staff.

Successes

The program has been an overall success. The key central goals of the series were to give transportation providers and professionals the platform to peek behind popular programs' curtains, ask in-depth and nuanced questions about programs, and meet program staff network with their fellow attending colleagues.

- Much of the information covered in each trip could only have been learned by talking with internal staff that are familiar with the program. The trip series succeeded in allowing professionals to learn information that isn't readily available to the public without having to spend precious staff time cold-calling agencies to secure interview time with program leaders.
- The trips that were recommended by the group were often the highest attended like First Transit's Travel Instruction, Community Transit's SWIFT Bus Rapid Transit, and King County Metro's Rideshare Operations. This showed a strong correlation between Subcommittee buy-in and attendance, a welcome outcome despite a rapidly dwindling Subcommittee meeting attendance as 2018 progressed.
- KCMC Hopelink Mobility staff worked closely with presenters to follow-up on information, worked closely with those who attended to give them more in-depth information, provided the notes to anyone who couldn't attend, and made sure the larger KCMC mailing list was able to access each trip's notes.



Figure 2: A staff member with Muckleshoot's Tribal Transit program displays the salmon adorning their bus - proud representations of their Tribal history

Best Practice

Over the course of conducting the Field Trip series, KCMC Hopelink Mobility staff learned key lessons when planning events, engaging in outreach, and holding Field Trips.

Planning

- Settle upon organizations, programs, or topics that are newly-developed, recently changed, or innovative to draw in higher trip participation.
- The Field Trips were best set up three months in advance. This allowed ample time to book any external rooms or meeting spaces, establish open times in Service Providers' schedules, agree upon Field Trip content and specifics, perform outreach and promotion, and collect RSVPs. We typically touched base with the organizations one month beforehand to finalize agendas and outreach materials. Promoting a minimum of two weeks beforehand was vital to spread the word.
- Be sure to request agenda information; parking, walking, biking, and accessible transit directions to the site; and PowerPoints/presentation documents two weeks prior to the event.
- If the site is not readily accessible by public transit, consider offering informal carpools or dedicated shuttle bus service to the site. Three attendees commuted to the Metro Community Van trip in Redmond via the Community Van starting from Seattle.
- Many transportation venues are Operation Facilities or security-restricted premises, so ask the Service Provider for a map or layout of the venue. Share this with attendees so they know exactly where to go. Make sure the site's entrance and bathrooms are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Promotion & Reservation

- General email notifications to close partners and custom-made marketing materials disseminated through MailChimp proved to be effective tools in spreading to entire partner networks. Both should be used in conjunction to obtain the best attendance level. However, do not rely on the attendance numbers gained from MailChimp and Eventbrite RSVPs, as many attendees may cancel last minute based upon program crises or scheduling conflicts.
- Institute an RSVP waitlist. This will allow you to keep track of the late RSVP-ers who you can notify when some people inevitably cancel their attendance. It is important to note that while some trips needed a waitlist, people who were on the primary RSVP list did not show up. As such, do not turn anyone away unless there is a strict attendance policy at the venue.
- Make sure to use other avenues for recruitment, since mailing to your partners—even if they forward the information around—does not always yield a new and diverse pool of attendees. Be sure to set aside time for cold-calling and cold-emailing.
- KCMC Hopelink Regional Coordinators—who are responsible for engaging stakeholders and running educational programs in East, North, and South King County, as well as Snoqualmie Valley—spread information about the trips to their partners by email and in-person. However, there was low showing from the regional partners. In the future, it

would be beneficial to partner with regional coalitions to spread the word more about trips within specific geographic areas.

Attendance

- Attendees showed up in higher numbers if there was a physical presentation like a tour, an example of travel training, or a trip where attendees had the opportunity to view or ride in a program's vehicles.
- Friday was a perfect time to set up meetings, as many people had space in their calendar free, and the field trip felt like a reward/break from work. Many people also felt one-hour tours were too short. Consider expanding trip times to 1.5-2 hours. We must ensure that attendees have a chance to fully learn about the program to make the trip worth their precious time.
- Consider barriers to attendance on a regional and cross-programmatic level. Our Harborview Medical Center Field Trip occurred the week that WSDOT's Consolidated Grant program funding applications were due. We had high RSVPs from 11 people (not including KCMC Hopelink Mobility staff), yet only 3 attended. Schedule your events around the dates of major grant funding deadlines; conferences; cross-regional events; impending changes in regional, state, or federal law; and beyond.

Notes and Follow-up

- For many of the smaller programs, it was easy to create and disseminate accurate meeting notes. However, the bigger programs had busier staff, and getting feedback on the notes was difficult to achieve between Field Trips.
- There should be a call-to-action for attendees to disseminate this knowledge to their colleagues and/or clients. We want to capitalize on our attendees' professional circles to spread pertinent information to as wide an audience as possible.

Trip Notes

The trip notes have been read by our most dedicated members. However, the wider coalition base did not read the trip notes. This could be attributed to static placement in our various newsletters and poor promotion of new trip notes. Promotion in the MailChimp email marketing mailers was initially successful with trip note unique clicks in the first mailer comprising 20 of the total 25 clicks, and 14 of the total 16 for the second. However, by the very next mailer, only 9 of the total 15 clicks were for trip notes, with much lower showings for the following 5 mailers. King County Mobility Coalition newsletter readers clicked on and read trip notes even less frequently.

The notes proved a lesson in properly promoting new content within MailChimp templates, as existing readers either lost interest in re-reading and reviewing the notes, new readers could not find the information easily, or a combination of both.

Staff should also consider the accuracy of the trip notes. The field trips have very detailed information on program eligibility and performance metrics that could become outdated very quickly. The Field Trip notes could act as living documents that are regularly updated to ensure that professionals can learn new information about the program and keep abreast of details. Another idea is that new updates could be worked into blog posts hosted on the KCMC website where KCMC partners can come read about the provider’s new information. This would be a more reader-friendly alternative. Ideally, a ‘track-changes/version-iteration’ format would be employed to help people turn on or off color-coding—or another helpful tool—and allow professionals who have read the contents before to find the newest details and save time.

Twenty of the thirty-eight Satisfaction Survey respondents said they found the trip notes to be helpful. One even extolled the virtues of the notes because he/she could not attend most of the trips. However, eleven of the respondents seemed entirely unsure if they were helpful or not, indicating that a large portion of attendees did not read them. One respondent noted they were unhelpful but did not elaborate.

Satisfaction Survey

We sent a satisfaction survey to all the attendees from the 16 trips. We received very helpful feedback on how we performed well and where we needed to improve.

General Information

- More people informed their colleagues on information than their clients

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Provided referrals to clients	27.78% 10
Informed colleagues about the contents of the trip	88.89% 32

- A balanced ratio of different types of organizations responded to the survey:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Transportation Provider	26.32% 10
Human Service Agency	21.05% 8
City, County, or State Jurisdiction	26.32% 10
Advocacy Organization	5.26% 2
Riders, directly	10.53% 4

- Eight of the respondents categorized themselves under ‘Other’ and represented employment support, Veterans, the King County Mobility Coalition, an ORCA LIFT

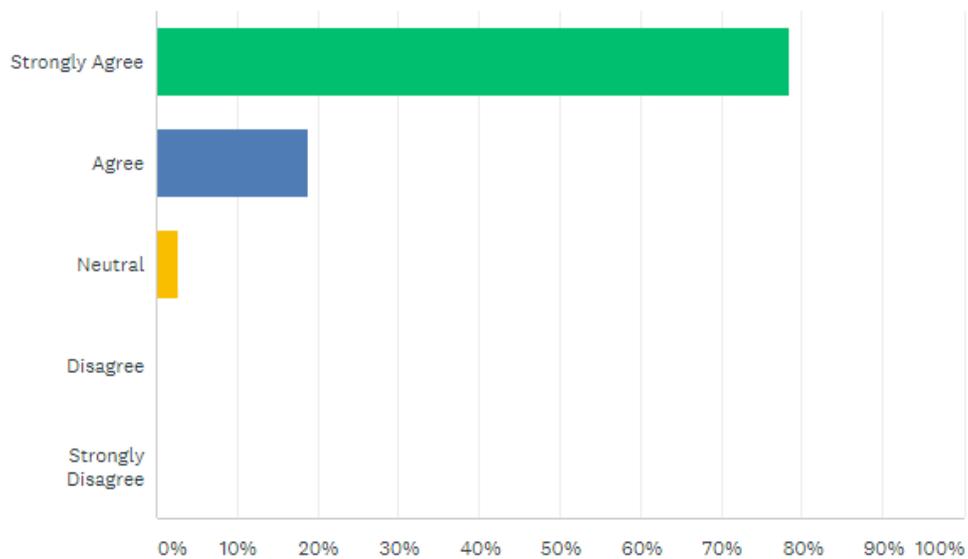
program, an out-of-state transportation provider, a prisoner rights organization, and their own personal interests.

Positive Feedback

- We asked three agreement-based questions where survey-takers had to rate the veracity of each statement from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree.' The results were very positive:

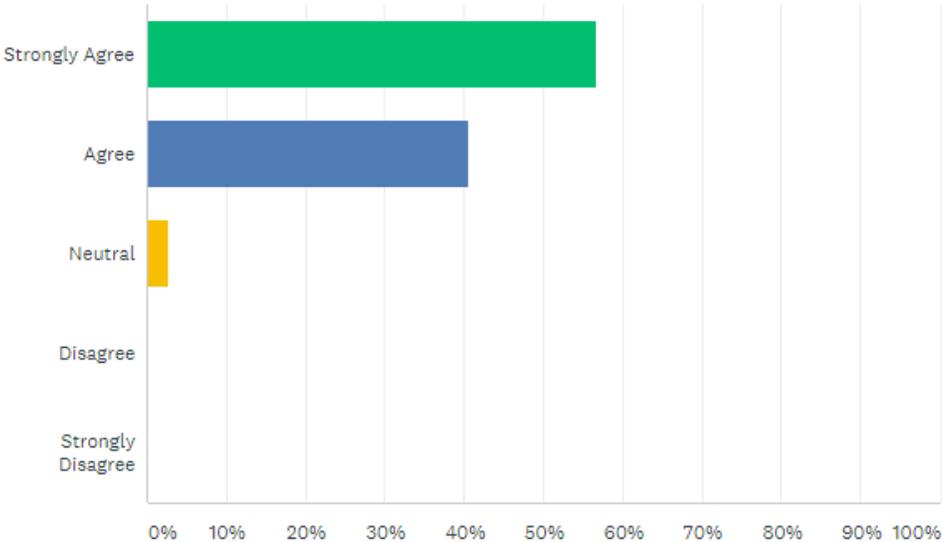
The trip(s) provided a platform for attendees to ask enough questions about a program.

Answered: 37 Skipped: 2



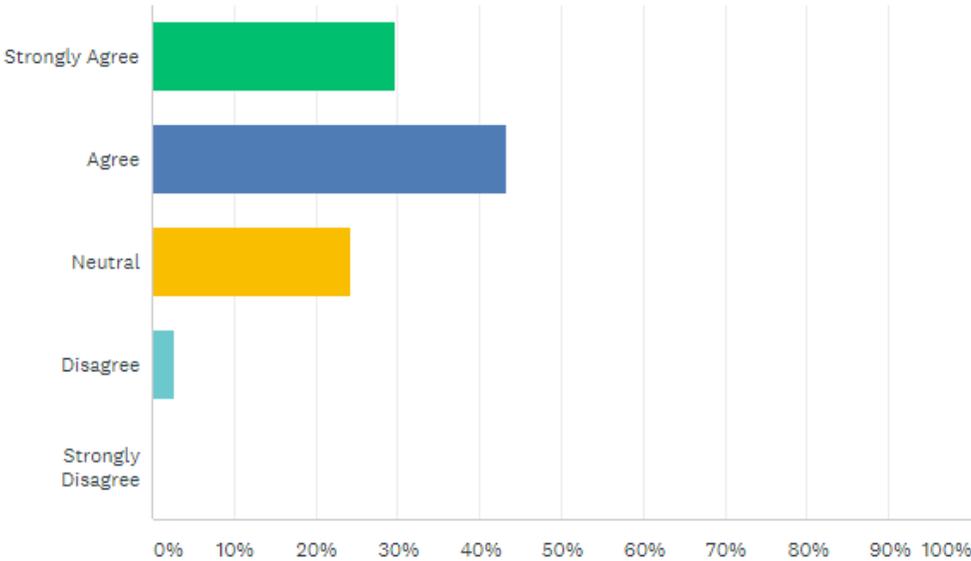
The trip(s) provided interesting and relevant program information that I was unfamiliar with

Answered: 37 Skipped: 2



I made important connections with other professionals through the trip(s)

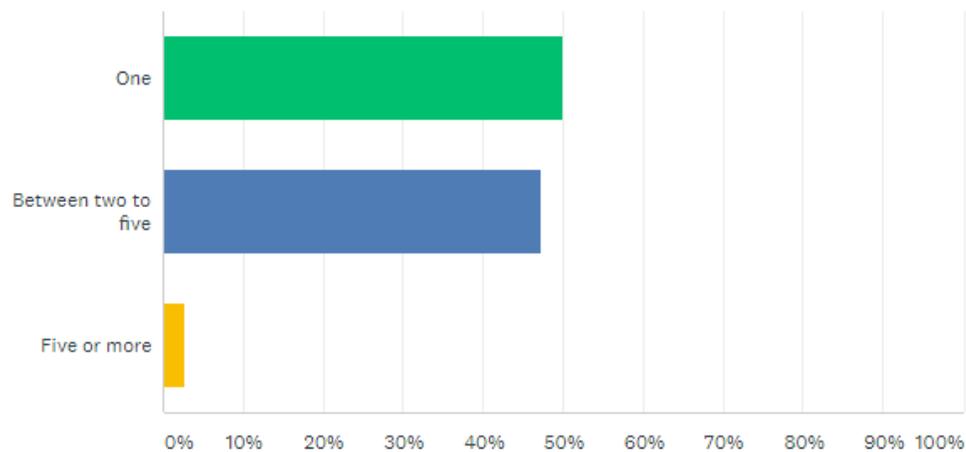
Answered: 37 Skipped: 2



- Exactly 50% of the survey respondents had been to two or more trips, so we received feedback from attendees with the most perspective on multiple trips within the series.

How many trips did you attend:

Answered: 38 Skipped: 1



- Participants noted enjoying a variety of trip benefits like:
 - Exposure to previously unknown services and programs;
 - Seeing transportation issues from a client perspective;
 - Understanding old concerns through a new lens;
 - Visiting a program's space;
 - Learning about a program's background, details of their operations, being given a space to ask questions, and learning about a program's challenges helped them to bring back insights useful for the benefit of their program and their own personal edification;
 - Touring a program's facilities, vehicles, and other major capital;
 - Building community with other attendees and creating future partnerships,
 - And, for developing their own programs.
- Many of the attendees commented throughout the survey that they loved the events.

Critique

Some of the attendees had clear suggestions for improvement:

- One participant would have liked action items that attendees could follow up on after the presentation.
- One attendee noted that more effective advertising may have improved attendee turnout.
- An attendee noted that future events should help arrange for travel from downtown Seattle to remote events. Another person said that it would have helped if the trips in Seattle and the Eastside had been scheduled outside of rush hour to make traveling to the venues easier.

- One person noted that the trips needed more time.
- Several respondents noted that the trip times themselves were inconvenient for them. Other days of the week would have helped people with recurring Friday commitments. One respondent even noted that the second Friday of each month was busy for them, and they would have been able to attend an event if it had been scheduled on the first Friday.

General Information

There were a few suggestions for trips that have not been covered before:

- King County Metro's Ride2 Programs
- Bikeshare providers
- Uber & Lyft
- Kaiser Permanente Transportation Assistance
- King County Central Management

Follow Up & Next Steps

The Education and Outreach Committee will be meeting in 2019 to determine the future of the Field Trip Series. Please reach out to Hopelink Mobility at mobility@hopelink.org, or 425-943-6729 to learn more about this initiative.

Acknowledgements

The Education and Outreach Committee and the King County Mobility Coalition want to extend our sincere gratitude to all of the people who helped make these trips possible. Whether you were a single-time or multiple-time attendee, we appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedules to participate in this series. A special shout-out goes to the 39 attendees who took the time to fill out our survey. We had 76 unique attendees, which means we had over a 51% response rate on our survey, a fantastic percentage! We also want to extend our thanks to the experts who dedicated an hour—and sometimes more—of their time to run through their programs' history and details, and answer attendees' litany of hard-hitting and important questions. And last but not least, we want to show appreciation for the staff of Hopelink Mobility, particularly Ben Tibbetts, who assisted project leads with scheduling, setting up, and running the trip series. We look forward to continued work with you all in the future!

Appendix

Links to the Field Trip Notes

1. [Snoqualmie Valley Transportation](#)
2. [Northshore Senior Center's Transportation Program](#)
3. [Hopelink's Medicaid Transportation](#)
4. [Hopelink's Demand Area Response Transit \(DART\)](#)
5. [Sound Generation's Transportation Programs](#)
6. [King County Metro's Taxi Scrip](#)
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