

King County Mobility Coalition

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 21, 2019, 9:30 – 11:30 AM

Hopelink Shoreline's Learning Center

17837 Aurora Avenue North

Shoreline, WA 98133

In Attendance:

Members/Alternates: Alaric Bien, Susan Carter, Scott Christofersen, Dorene Cornwell, Monica Ghosh, Jean Kim, Penny Lara, Jacque Mann, Mitzi McMahan, Hollianne Monson, Aaron Morrow, Sam Nigh, Scott Ninneman, Don Okazaki (co-chair), Julie Povick, Alex O'Reilly (co-chair), Mark Smutny, Kari Ware, Caitlin Wasley, and Linda Woodall

Collaborators: Bree Boyce (Hopelink), Melissa Brown Rotholtz (NKCMC), Brian Camozzi (King County Ombuds), Donnell Dayao (City of Lake Forest Park), Mike Dee (LFP Citizen's Commission), Regina Dove (Transportation Choices Coalition), Taylor Frazier (UW), AJ Gabriel (Hopelink), Lindsey Greto (King County Metro), Roslyn Hower (UW), Allison Jerkovitch (DCHS), Ray Krueger (Hopelink Volunteer), David Lynch (RARET), M'Liss Moon (SVTC), John Niles (Grush Niles Strategic), Cliff Perry (Northshore Senior Center), Erica Ratner (UW), Sara Sisco (Hopelink), Suzanne Spencer (UW), Laura Lee Sturm (U District Let's Go), Ben Tibbetts (Hopelink), and Bill Woolley (Hopelink)

Staff: Staci Haber

Welcome, Introductions, & Brief Announcements

Announcements:

- Seattle Department of Transportation and Transportation Choices are hosting a Transportation Equity Lunch & Learn on Friday, May 24th at Seattle City Hall.
- Northwest Universal Design Council is hosting a How to Plan an Accessible Event, on Thursday, May 30th at Seattle City Hall from 10:00am to 12:00pm.

Consent Calendar

February 2019 Meeting Minutes: The Coalition approved the meeting minutes as drafted.

New Members and Alternates: There are three new Alternate members to participate in the King County Mobility Coalition:

- Scott Christofersen with *The Department of Social and Human Services* is the new Member for the **DSHS** Position.

- Lisa San Jose with *The Department of Social and Human Services* is the new Alternate for the **DSHS** Position.
- Susan Carter with *Hopelink Transportation* is the new Member for the **King County Medicaid Broker** Position.
- Joy Scott with *The City of Auburn* is the new Alternate for the **South King County Cities** Position.

Briefing: Immigrant and Refugee Transportation Needs Assessment

This report was performed by a team of four University of Washington, Evans School of Public Policy and Governance Master's Students in partnership with the King County Mobility Coalition and Hopelink's Mobility Department.

Research Basics:

"What barriers do immigrants and refugees face in accessing transportation services in King County?"

The presenters distinguished between 'Immigrants' and 'Refugees.' Immigrants have 'chosen' to leave their country of origin, and refugees are people who have 'been forced' to leave. The term 'foreign-born' was used when referring to both populations.

Half of King County's massive 250,000 population increase since 2010 has been due to foreign-born individuals and families. Immigrants make up more than 30% of the population in Tukwila, Kent, SeaTac, Bellevue, Redmond, and Sammamish, and refugees settle at the highest density in Kent and Tukwila. Foreign-born individuals are less likely to own a car and twice as likely to be living in poverty in King County.

Methodology

The writers pursued an Exploratory Needs Assessment model which is helpful when researchers are limited by time or resources; gives them flexibility when scoping their project and finding data sources; and allows them to build on all the past research and surveying work done before. The report collects information from three sources:

- A document analysis of 22 reports published between 2013 and 2019.
- Surveying service providers who know these populations well – received 46 responses.
- Immigrants & Refugee Surveys – 13 surveys were dispensed via Hopelink Mobility's Public Transportation Orientation program with six responses.

Service Provider Survey Findings

Travel modes most frequently used by these populations are:

1. Bus/Light Rail
2. Family/Friend drives them
3. Walking

The top Barriers and Needs were:

- Cost: Even low-cost programs are too high cost. Making it lower-cost or free is important. Important to expand transfer windows past two hours.
- Level of Transit Service:
 - Current service is geared towards commuters, not 'off-hours' riders.
 - Geographic availability, number of direct routes, limitations in suburban service areas, and east to west connection are severely lacking.
- Language/Information Barrier:
 - Limited written information. Service navigation becomes difficult, and foreign-born riders are fearful of being lost or asking directions.
 - Translate more documents, increase the amount of transportation training trips (like those conducted by Hopelink's Mobility Department), and offer more transportation technology skills trainings and workshops.
 - Also learned that Language Line services can be inaccurate and there needs to be more reliable service options.

Difference between Immigrant and Refugee Populations:

- Immigrant Community/Support Networks are better. Often choose to move here.
- Refugees often lack material resources. More heavily rely on social services.
- Refugee trauma/mental health needs higher. Bus experiences very different.
- Immigrant communities may have more English proficiency.

Within Refugee communities:

- Geographic access different - Somali in Tukwila and Iraqi in Kent, and based upon their location, they have differing first-mile/last-mile issues and access.
- Cultural and gender norms (former Soviet Union refugees are more likely to rely on friends; Muslim women less likely to be comfortable being alone with drivers).
- Geopolitics (trauma).

Recommendations

- Conduct Phase 2 of the Exploratory Needs Assessment process by drawing data responsibly from a sample size of foreign-born King County residents.
- Use Community-based Participatory Research framework where communities choose representatives to speak on their behalf and are involved from planning stage to end of research. Costly in time, money, and participant compensation.

- Develop a “one-stop shop” for immigrants and refugees – centralized resource (information packet in print, app, or web-page on Metro’s website).
- Reduce fares, reduce parking costs, and make car ownership more accessible.

Discussion

- The presenters noted that technical issues around ORCA LIFT were cited as barriers including the 48-hour money loading window.
- We must look at household composition when conducting future research – important to note foreign-born families living multi-generationally.
- Agencies approach translation by volume (Spanish, Chinese, etc), but it’s important to distinguish between immigrants and refugees to serve the latter.
- Metro’s Transportation Accessibility Committee performed an audit of light rail tunnels and concluded that clearer signage is the greatest priority. Long Beach Transit’s language line pictorial brochure used in communication is a good model to pursue. Circumvents language barriers.
- Strengths-based research is important. During a 2018 event, Chinese participants talked about their technology fluency; important to ‘look across the globe’ at examples.
- King County Library’s Kent location just built a Welcome Center for centralized resources. This would be a good one-stop-shop partner.
- Carshare programs may be better options than personal car ownership. The presenters suggested asking, “will this work best for you?” It’s going to differ across communities. Also important to note, can foreign-born populations access the license program to begin the training to drive?

Alex O’Reilly noted that we do not want this report to sit on a shelf. So, please reach out to Staci Haber with any suggestions on how to move forward with these findings. Alex encouraged attendees to review the full report and come to discuss next steps at our August quarterly meeting.

The Coalition thanked Taylor, Roslyn, Suzanne, and Erica for their presentation.

Briefing: Income-Based Fare Program Update

Background

King County Council mandated King County Metro work on a fare option lower than ORCA LIFT that serves riders earning income below 138% of the federal poverty line – the Medicaid eligibility line. Around 300,000 (13%) King County residents would qualify.

Metro is gathering input from stakeholders, data and market research, guidance from experts, and following the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan on a fast timeline, with a full report by August and Phase I implementation by March 2020.

Study

Metro studied their own four specialized fare options: LIFT (low-income), Regional Reduced Fare Permit (RRFP; seniors and people with disabilities), Human Services Bus Tickets (HSBT; very low-income or experiencing homelessness), and Youth. Take-aways:

- Found that LIFT payment is not helpful for users, and 42% of LIFT-eligible riders are paying cash for full-fare.
- HSBT (1.8 million tickets used) single-use tickets are not meeting mobility needs. People hold on to these instead of using them when caught by fare enforcement, because they are seen as a precious resource. People don't know when they'll get another one.
- RRFP (3.3 million boardings a year) this option may be too difficult for people with disabilities to access.
- Youth: may be out of reach as well due to the limited options for securing a card.

Research

The data and market research for the ORCA Next Generation project – which will revolutionize the way that the ORCA system will operate, expand the retail locations to buy a card, and allow a tiered fare system – consisted of talking to forty-seven transit agencies to learn about their similar programs and focusing specifically on six of those. These lessons also helped to inform this low-income project.

Metro convened a stakeholder group of 40 providers. They will have their final meeting in June. There were some themes that emerged:

1. Prioritize the highest need populations – could lift the LIFT eligibility, but want to work with lowest income residents first, and then move to other issues afterward.
2. Authentic community engagement takes time and is an ongoing process.
3. Metro cannot just raise the LIFT level, because they can only control their own agency decisions. This will change fare enforcement, fare payment, enrollment. Currently talking with the other LIFT agencies to align goals (Sound Transit, etc.).
4. Fares aren't the only barrier –if no one can understand how to use this new option, there will be a huge barrier. Metro's resources are also limited, so this will take from other resources and programs. Are there other funding partners?
5. Consider and balance resource constraints – King County Council told Metro they must still meet their 25% farebox recovery goals.

Four options were brainstormed, two of which are viable:

1. Metro funds a free monthly pass to those who are eligible (Metro staff started off proposing setting eligibility for those under 50% of Federal Poverty Line; feedback was to increase this). Metro has now set this for the current 138% line.
2. Metro provides subsidy for agencies to buy passes, day passes, etc., and move riders towards long-term solutions. Barriers – which agencies would participate and how would Metro determine which agencies qualify?

Conducted community conversations with six agencies: Casa Latina, Urban League, Chief Seattle Club, Byrd Barr Place, Open Doors for Multicultural Families, and Mother Africa to get perspective from key populations.

Q&A and Feedback

- **Q:** What about integrating this with programs like TANF? Which assistance programs are you going to integrate with? **A:** Metro is still weighing this and open to ideas.
- Future considerations should be to consider what are the benchmarks for a tiered fare system to be considered equitable.
- **Q:** Will Access fares be affected? **A:** Currently they will not. Metro is looking at how this will affect fixed route first, and then figuring out Access fare option later.

The Coalition thanked Lindsey for her presentation.

Quick Briefings

King County Metro (KCM)/Sound Transit:

- The Montlake Freeway Station will close beginning June 22, 2019. Metro routes 252, 255, 257, 268, 311, ST Express routes 545, 555, and Community Transit Route 424 will no longer stop in the Montlake area. There will be additional evening and weekend service of ST Route 542 between Redmond and the University District to try to close service gaps. Metro routes 167, 271, 277 and ST routes 540, 541, 542, 556 will continue to serve Montlake Boulevard East and the University of Washington Link station.
- SeaTac Airport's light rail station elevator will be renovated from June 17th to August 3rd. Signs will be posted at the station and near the airport. Airport personnel will be informed of this and help guide people to alternative methods to move about the station area. Expect more reliable service moving forward.
- Via to Transit is a new On-Demand program designed to bridge first-mile/last-mile gap for riders traveling to and from five light rail stations – Mount Baker,

Columbia City, Othello, Rainier Beach, and Tukwila International Boulevard. The pilot service will be available through April 2020.

- During the first quarter of 2020, Sound Transit will be connecting the central link and east link segments. This will impact link service in the International District area. Sound Transit will present at a future KCMC meeting and will be soliciting input on how to reduce the impact on seniors and people with disabilities. They will meet with travel trainers to get input sooner than later to communicate these changes. Already meeting with Lighthouse for the Blind.
- Sound Transit is updating their Title VI program and doing public participation. This process happens every 3 years. Stay tuned for more information.

WSDOT

- WSDOT has concluded their state-wide Special Needs Transportation 2019-2021 Consolidated Grant Program awards. Several organizations in the Puget Sound region received funding. WSDOT awarded \$177 million to fund 137 programs across Washington. \$11 million were awarded to organizations in King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap Counties.
- The Active Transportation survey is active until June 30th. The results gleaned from this survey help WSDOT to update their Active Transportation plan and improve safety and accessibility to communities in Washington.
- WSDOT's 43rd Annual Transportation Conference will be held August 16th-20th in SeaTac – network, build skills, and learn about other programs. They are currently looking for session topics.

Mobility Management, Subcommittee, and Subregional Coalitions' Updates

Please see our KCMC PowerPoint slide deck to view all of our announcements.

For information regarding any of the subregional coalitions, please contact Staci Haber (SHaber@hopelink.org).

Next Steps

Next meeting: *Tuesday, August 20th, 9:30 – 11:30AM, Kirkland City Hall, Peter Kirk Room (123 5th Ave, Kirkland, WA 98033).*

Agendas, minutes and handouts from past Coalition meeting are available online at: www.kingcounty.gov/mobilitycoalition.