

ACCT 1:

Report on 1997–1999 Demonstration Projects

Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

On the cover: A school bus in Mason County wears a Mason Transit sign, reflecting an innovative operating agreement that permitted the sharing of school district vehicles by the general public and students participating in after school activities.

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What is the purpose of this report?

In this report to the Washington State Legislature, the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) summarizes the contributions of the 1997–1999 demonstration projects to improving coordination of special needs transportation. The project managers have submitted their final reports, as required by contract. In this report, staff evaluates the success of the first-round projects and analyzes the lessons learned from them.

What does the report contain?

Section 2, “How was the money spent?”, shows how ACCT awarded funding to individual projects. It includes a chart showing the fund distributions as well as local contributions and a map showing project locations.

Section 3, “What did we get for the money?”, identifies key performance measures for each project and how they were met.

In Section 4, “What else did we gain?”, the report provides examples of the ways in which the projects fostered partnerships and provided new insights to the barriers hampering coordination. This section also describes how the projects have created new momentum for coordination efforts and raised awareness of coordination.

Section 5, “What major lessons did ACCT learn?”, synthesizes key learnings from the projects.

Section 6, “How will ACCT respond?” describes how the council plans to incorporate the lessons learned from the 1997–1999 projects in its future work.

In Section 7, “How can the Legislature support coordination?”, ACCT identifies the support it must have to continue improving transportation for people with special transportation needs.

Continuing to implement coordination

While the demonstration projects were underway, ACCT was working with stakeholders to develop a common understanding of coordination. The stakeholders concluded that to succeed, communities must implement coordination locally with support and guidance from state agencies. The concepts were called out in legislation approved during the 1999 legislative session.

Following the directions of the legislation, ACCT sent letters to county government in August of 1999 asking county governments to submit a letter of intent if they wished to pursue an ACCT grant to plan, design and implement coordinated transportation systems for people with special transportation needs. Seventeen counties sent letters of intent. Twelve held community forums to determine:

“

Combining Mason County Transportation Cooperative and Mason Transit Authority has been a very successful marriage.

There were no reported problems with combining school students and adults on the same bus.

”

— Sandi Jones,
Mason County
Transportation Cooperative

1. Whether or not the community agreed to initiate the comprehensive planning and system design project.
2. The geographic boundaries of the project.
3. The lead organization to spearhead the project.

Grant applications were received from Asotin/Whitman, Grant/Adams, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Jefferson, Mason, Pend Oreille, Snohomish, Spokane, Thurston, and Walla Walla. The budget is insufficient to fund the entire planning, design and implementation stages of the project but will at least get counties started. In the meantime, ACCT staff will pursue other sources of funding and will seek additional funding through a supplemental budget during the 2000 legislative session.

The demonstration projects provided many valuable lessons for the upcoming statewide process. ACCT staff is sharing their information and sample methods with other communities to help them get started.

2 How was the money spent?

The 1997 Legislature appropriated one million dollars to the Department of Transportation to fund demonstration projects aimed at improving transportation coordination. The department formed an advisory committee based on the principles of ACCT; the committee solicited, evaluated, and funded seven projects.

The project contracts were signed in November of 1997. Based in both rural and urban areas, the demonstration projects began in early 1998 and concluded at the end of the 1997–1999 biennium.

Table 1. Share of local vs. ACCT state funds

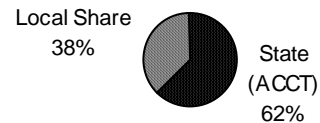


Table 1 shows the relative proportions of state and local funding for the 1997–1999 demonstration projects

Table 2. Funding for 1997–1999 ACCT demonstration projects

Agency	ACCT funds awarded	Local match funds pledged	ACCT funds spent
King County Partnerships	\$140,000.00	\$110,000.00	\$86,640.34
King County AddVANtage	78,785.00	42,422.00	43,086.04
King County ACCESS	135,089.00	93,875.00	87,371.51
Mason County Transport. Auth.	69,410.00	36,765.00	69,410.00
Olympic Area Agency on Aging	125,000.00	39,500.00	112,791.62
People for People	243,431.00	0.00	243,431.00
Senior Services of Snohomish County	160,000.00	158,750.00	160,000.00
Totals	\$951,715.00	\$481,312.00	802,730.51

This table shows both ACCT funding and local funding for the 1997–1999 demonstration projects. It also shows the amounts of grant funds spent.

Table 3. ACCT and local funding for 1997-1999 demonstration projects

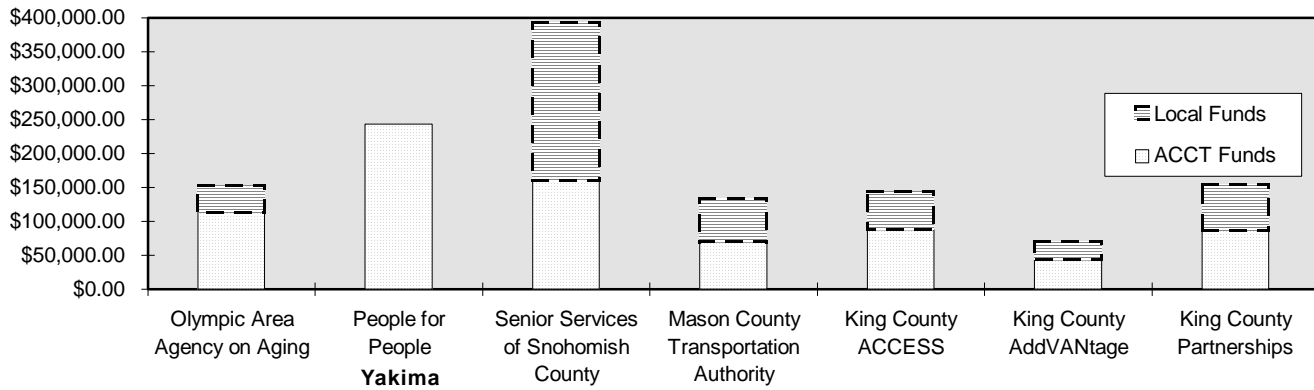
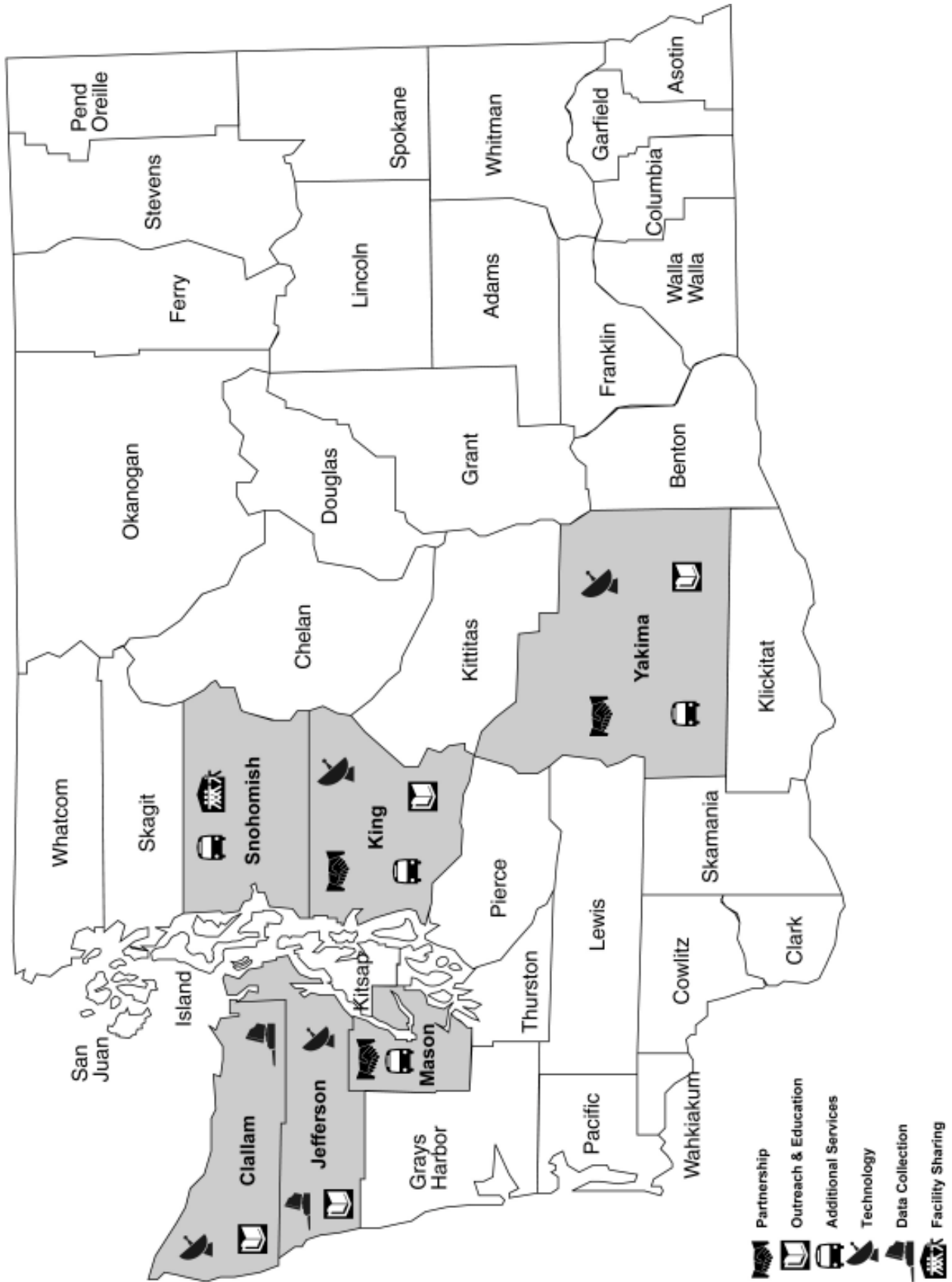


Table 3 shows the relative amounts of ACCT funding and local funding for each of the 1997–1999 demonstration projects.



This map of Washington State shows the locations of the ACCT demonstration projects for 1997–1999 and the types of coordination issues the projects addressed.

3 What did we get for the money?

This section describes performance measures and results for each project. For a discussion of the projects' intangible benefits, read Section 4, "What else did we gain?"

Partnerships for Coordinated Transportation

Located in King County, for this project King County Department of Transportation partnered with a number of agencies and organizations, including the Holly Park Community Council, Seattle Jobs Initiative, DSHS, City of Redmond, and Genie Industries. Funding for the project included \$140,000 from ACCT and \$110,000 in local match.

Project objectives

- Examine the utilization of bus passes distributed to welfare clients by service agencies.
- Explore alternative products to maximize the value of passes to the agencies involved.
- Develop transportation strategies that would involve employer partnerships.

Performance and results

- Surveyed low-income and welfare pass holders and found that they are heavy transit users. Did not recommend a pass discount to public agencies due to high ridership.
- Lowered administrative costs and improved accountability by having

DSHS-Eastside CSO, Seattle Jobs Initiative and King County Jobs Initiative use a voucher program.

- Introduced clients to transportation options at their new employment orientation.
- Reduced costs per trip using the van program. When the Metro vanpool met the client need the trip cost \$1.57. If the trip were provided on Metro ACCESS, the estimated cost is \$24.09. A savings of \$22.52 per trip.
- Created opportunities for jobs and retained jobs by clients seeking jobs. For example, at the King County Work Training Program, 22 clients were placed in jobs with the assistance of the coordinated transportation efforts.
- Pursued discussions with Eddie Bauer, Inc., on a transportation program for a new remote location. Although it did not result in a new transportation program, discussions heightened awareness of how the location of the call center would impact their ability to recruit and retain employees.
- Hired a Transportation Coordinator for Genie Industries. Metro worked closely with the City of Redmond to develop a Metro specialized ridematch program and promotional activities. Metro offered an additional \$15 per month for six months to encourage hiring Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients.

Are elements of the project being sustained?

Based on the success of the demonstration project, King County Metro received \$740,500 in federal funds through Reverse Commute/Job Access program. The grant will provide support for a van program for select community agencies, an employer van demonstration, a ridematch program, and information and evaluation about regional transit and ridematch.

King County AddVANtage Plus Program

This project was located in King County. The project team included King County Metro, Asian Counseling and Referral Service, and the Maple Valley Community Center. The funding for the project included \$78,785 in ACCT funds and \$42,440 in local match.

Project objectives

1. Demonstrate how existing public transportation system resources (vans) could be further utilized, developed and coordinated to assist community-based organizations.
2. Assess and address transportation gaps, and increase transportation opportunities.
3. Develop model contracts between public transit agencies and community based organizations.

Results

- Placed retired commuter vans with the Asian Counseling and Referral Service and the Maple Valley Community Center.
- Developed procedures for van utilization, scheduling trips and

clarifying roles and responsibilities among administration and program staff.

- Established a reliable method for collecting and reporting travel data. Volunteers, administrative, and facility staff scheduled the van. Administrative and accounting staff kept track of van expenses.
- The transportation program provided a great resource for critically under served areas and to isolated ethnic groups. Subsidized program provided greater efficiency to a small number of people who would otherwise have little or no opportunity for transportation. Individuals riding the van created social networks among those often isolated.
- Early promotion and education of van use among the community based organization staff was critical to the success of the program.
- The vans that were placed with the two community based organizations provided 19,000 rides.
- Van productivity exceeded 6 riders per hour.
- Costs averaged \$5.70 per ride.
- The total estimated cost savings to participating agencies was in excess of \$60,000.

Are elements of the program being sustained?

Since the projects were successful, the county and its two partners have agreed to continue the service. King County will provide the vans, maintenance support and assist their partners in finding additional funding as necessary to further the project.

King County ACCESS Transportation

This project was also located in King County. The project team consisted of staff from Metro’s Accessible Services group, DSHS Medical Assistance Administration, and staff from Multi-Service Center (MSC). Funding came from ACCT —\$135,089 — and \$93,875 in local match.

Project objectives

1. Identify technological changes necessary to establish and enhance communication between two special needs transportation programs.
2. Analyze costs and develop a model to reflect the resources being used to deliver services.
3. Improve scheduling of trips to combine demand from the two programs, provide shorter trips for riders, schedule fewer vehicles traveling in and out of common locations, and contain operating costs for both programs.

Results

- Installed software upgrade to allow the accurate tracking of trips by funding sources and to give access to both the operating systems at the same time. The Trapeze Software Group provided support for the needed software changes.
 - Negotiated the first interagency agreement for joint procurement of broker services in time to form the foundation for the 1999 contract procurement. This relationship had been developing for over seven years.
- Investigated areas of service where there was the greatest overlap, that is, medical appointments by geographic distribution and time of day. Conducted an in-depth analysis of riding patterns and created schedules blending the demand from both Metro ACCESS and MSC Medicaid transportation.
 - Analyzed several billing models for approval by DSHS and Metro that resulted in a temporary version for the duration of the project.
 - Identified more than thirty differences between the DSHS medical transportation program and the Metro ACCESS program. Resolved many of the differences by agreeing to adopt the higher level of service prescribed by one of the two agencies.
 - During the last quarter of the project, more efficient routes were created that reduced riding time, improved efficiencies by serving more riders per hour at lower cost, and improving the loading and unloading logistics at sites.
 - Received an opinion from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regarding drug and alcohol testing requirements. Aspects of the requirements had been identified as a major barrier to coordination; the new FTA opinion opened the door for MSC to place Metro trips on its DSHS service providers.

Table 4. How ACCT Funds in King County were used to coordinate trips and reduce costs

Metro ACCESS trips brokered by DSHS	April 98	August 98	March 99	June 99	Total for Grant
Number of trips	1,444	1,656	3,524	2,985	35,181
Cost if Metro ACCESS had provided trip	\$ 20.24	\$ 20.65	\$ 21.29	\$ 21.37	\$ 21.37
Cost when provided by DSHS Medicaid broker	\$ 11.25	\$ 12.00	\$ 15.71	\$ 15.92	\$ 14.24
Savings to Metro ACCESS	\$12,982	\$16,634	\$19,680	\$16,283	\$ 250,679
Medicaid Trips brokered to Metro ACCESS					
Number of trips		36	779	989	5,076
Cost if DSHS Medicaid provider had done trip		\$ 21.65	\$ 19.98	\$ 20.65	\$ 20.22
Cost when provided by Metro ACCESS		\$ 19.14	\$ 8.33	\$ 8.05	\$ 9.04
Savings to DSHS Medicaid Program		\$ 90	\$ 9,073	\$12,414	\$ 56,781

Table 4 shows how coordination reduced trip costs in King County. Both programs had clients better served by the other provider. By grouping clients and using the closest provider to pick them up, the project reduced costs for both Metro and DSHS.



In the King County ACCESS Program, ACCT Funds were used to improve scheduling of trips to combine demand from the two programs and provide shorter trips for riders.

Are elements of the program being sustained?

Metro and DSHS are in the process of negotiating a new contract for the broker function in King County. The intention is to maintain certain levels of administrative funding to support the

ongoing work of coordination. Both parties see the benefits of continuing the search for ways to coordinate and are anxious to further develop the cost allocation and billing methodologies.

Mason County Transportation Authority

The project was located in Mason County. For this project, Mason Transit worked closely with the Shelton School District, DSHS, and Mason General Hospital. Project funding included \$69,410 in ACCT funds and \$35,765 in local match.

Project objectives

1. Build a transportation coalition with local agencies to establish community consensus relative to rational expectations and achievable goals.
2. Identify transportation deficiencies.
3. Develop coordination and collaboration addressing identified deficiencies in the transportation system.
4. Increase transportation opportunities.

Deficiencies identified

- Lack of transportation to medical services not located in the county.
- Insufficient transportation to rural regions of the county.
- No transportation for students to attend extracurricular activities.
- Reduced options for people who lack the ability to walk a short distance and board a vehicle.

Performance and results

- Developed and staffed a position of Mobility Coordinator. This person identified those with special needs transportation problems and worked with social security agency staff to resolve them.
- Developed a Volunteer Driver intake form and process to monitor volunteer performance and provide

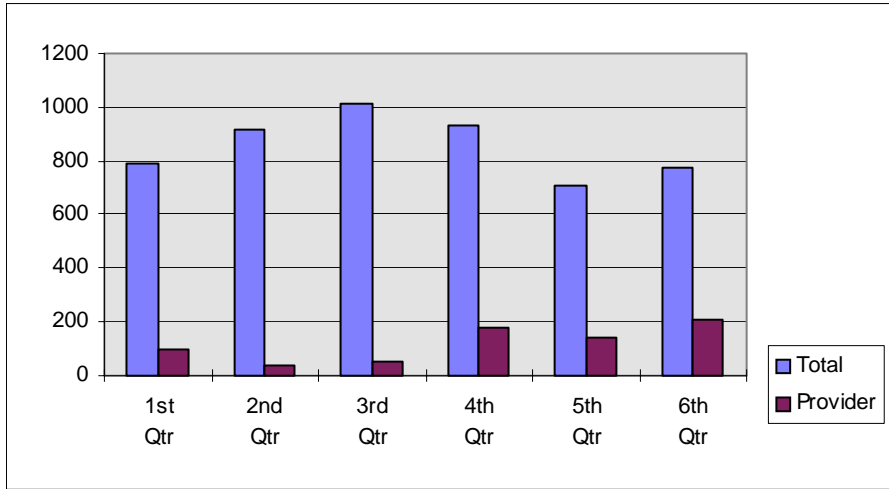


A transit bus meeting a school bus in Mason County, one of the services resulting from the coordination project there.

recognition. Volunteer miles increased 13,000 miles after two quarters.

- Consolidated volunteer driver trips to out of county medical services to reduce travel expenses.
- Identified local transportation resources and developed a directory.
- Established a minimum standard for contracting with local providers to include driver training, liability and vehicle maintenance.
- Developed agreements with specified local transportation providers such as Exceptional Foresters that would meet the identified transportation deficiencies.
- Improved existing dispatch functions of the Mason Transit Authority to facilitate integration of transportation services with other providers including volunteers.
- Established a “Transport Chair” program in coordination with Mason General Hospital which provided individuals with temporary loan of a wheelchair after a hospital discharge.

Table 5. Total Trips Coordinated by Mason Transit



1st Qtr	789 trips Jan-Mar 98	4th Qtr	930 trips Oct-Dec 98
2nd Qtr	918 trips Apr-Jun 98	5th Qtr	706 trips Jan-Mar 99
3rd Qtr	1,013 trips July-Sept 98	6th Qtr	772 trips Apr-Jun 99

A total of 5,128 coordinated trips were provided during the project. Quarterly changes were the result of the level of volunteer activity.

**Table 6. Mason County Volunteer Program
1st qtr 1998 – 1st qtr 1999**

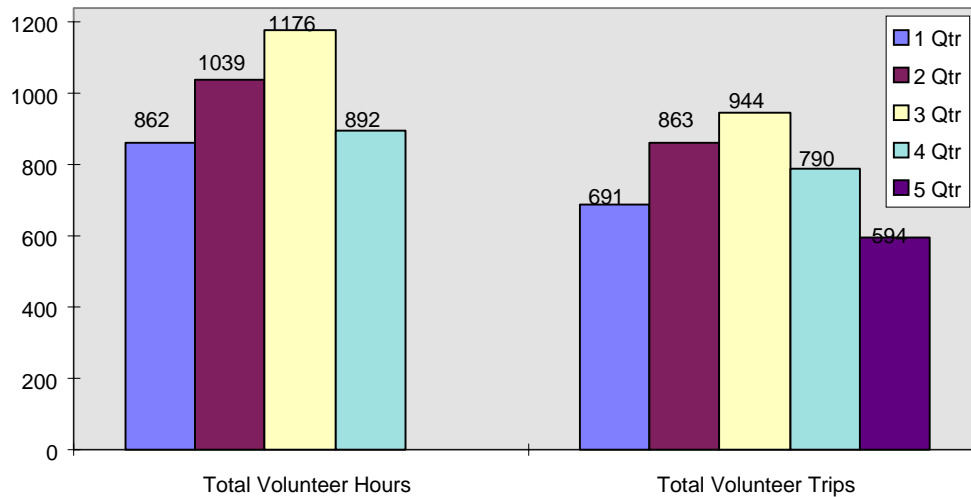


Table 6 shows number of hours contributed by volunteer drivers as well as the number of trips they made for Mason County Transit Authority from the first quarter of 1998 through the first quarter of 1999. Decline in the number of trips is due to few volunteers wanting to travel in inclement weather, and the closure of SR 101 due to a slide. The changing ratio of hours to trips demonstrates how consolidating trips improves efficiency.

- Entered into an agreement with DSHS to provide WorkFirst transportation. Utilized mobility coordinator to offer new participants travel training and enhance opportunities to use transit in job search programs.
- Entered into an agreement with the Shelton School District to provide general public transportation in school buses while these vehicles were providing after school transportation to students.

Are elements of the Mason County program being sustained?

- MTA is making every effort to continue contracting out trips for agencies with existing contracts.
- MTA is working with a number of agencies to recruit volunteer drivers who are compensated for using their private cars. MTA is also working with local health services to investigate the feasibility of developing medical services such as kidney dialysis in the area as a remedy for travel issues.
- MTA is meeting with local agencies that have transportation needs. It is anticipated that a planning grant with ACCT will greatly facilitate efforts to sustain relationships and build a strong coalition, which ultimately will create a coordinated special needs transportation system in Mason County.



At WSDOT's 1999 Public Transportation and Rail Conference, participants had a chance to review the trip-matching capabilities of the new online database developed by the ACCT demonstration project at the Olympic Area Agency on Aging.

Olympic Area Agency on Aging

This project was located in Jefferson and Clallam Counties. Funding included a \$125,000 ACCT grant and \$39,500 in local match.

Project Objectives

- 1 Survey current resident's travel needs.
- 2 Develop and implement programs to shift individuals from paratransit to transit.
- 3 Identify available transportation options and a method for coordinating information.

Performance and results

- Developed a dynamic, easily updated database of transportation and travel options for special needs clients that can be viewed on the internet. This tool not only explored traditional service providers such as agencies offering Medicaid trips, transit operators, taxis and car rentals, it also included home care agencies that provide transportation to medical appointments. In addition to providing transportation options, the database offers services such as meals, groceries, and packages that can be delivered to a client's home while saving a trip.
- Used public transit to conduct long-distance bus tours for more than 50 new bus riders.
- Implemented a promotion resulting in 27 percent one-day increased ridership on Jefferson Transit.
- Held call-in television show on local access channel providing home bound persons and special needs clients with educational opportunities to learn about transportation options.

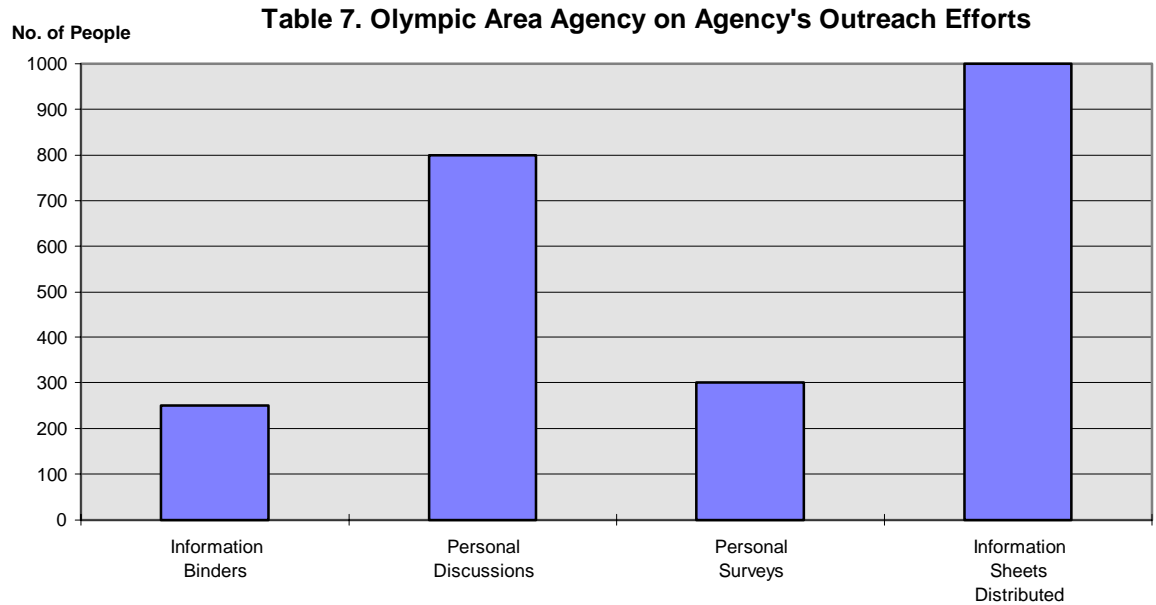


Table 7 shows the strategies Olympic Area Agency on Aging used to communicate with clients in Clallam and Jefferson Counties.

- Produced video tape on *The Five Myths of Transit* to encourage persons with special needs and other paratransit riders to try fixed route transit service.
- Prepared and distributed 250 binders of transportation resources with current schedules.
- Raised awareness, through meetings with hospital administrators, of the need for geriatric medical specialties on the Olympic Peninsula to reduce the number of hours special needs clients in the rural areas must travel for care.
- Began discussion with Veterans Administration to consider filling empty seats with non-disabled veterans or the general public when the van travels from Port Angeles to Seattle.

Are elements of the program being sustained?

Special needs clients can use the internet-based database to help them find transportation options. The database can be maintained as needed; however, the Olympic Area Agency on Aging is not funding that effort.

People for People

This project was located in Yakima County and funded by a \$243,431 grant from ACCT.

Project objectives

1. Organize a transportation coordination center that would link transportation resources in Yakima Valley.
2. Increase system capacity through shared rides and improve cost efficiency using existing transportation providers.
3. Implement new dispatching and scheduling software to track available seats, assign trips and identify costs.

Performance and results

- Established a Coordinator position responsible for building partnerships, providing education and program information, problem solving, and project oversight.
- Human Service agencies such as the Private Industry Council were willing to apply program funds that addressed transportation as a system rather than tying funds to individual clients.
- A series of routes were established to serve clients receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), seniors, persons with disabilities and the general public. Through coordination of funding and services, the system offered an additional 37 service hours per day.
- Fiscal procedures and cost models were developed with DSHS, Employment Security and the Private Industry Council to add clients of

those programs to the coordinated system and charge costs more accurately to each program.

- Established a single phone number for all clients to schedule trips.
- Developed a partnership with local school districts and coordinated School to Work trips with other client transportation.
- New entities requested becoming partners with “The Connection” including the Rural Enterprise Community, Labor and Industries and Best Self (a collaboration of public agencies, non-profit organizations and business).
- DSHS Region 2 work plan for Work First agencies has included the statement “all Work First clients in need of transportation will be referred to People for People”.

Are elements of the program being sustained?

- People for People funded the Transportation Coordinator position through the support of the Private Industry Council.
- A Welfare to Work team through the Private Industry Council is considering funding and building a database similar to the tool developed by the demonstration project at Olympic Area Agency on Agency.
- Another result of the demonstration grant in Yakima is the formation of a new user group that will meet to discuss common problems with their software.
- People for People is continuing to refine the cost modeling tool.

Senior Services of Snohomish County

This project was located in rural Snohomish County. Funding included \$160,000 from ACCT and \$158,750 in local match.

Project objectives

1. Provide additional services to individuals in rural areas by increasing feeder services to Senior Centers; adding point-to-point services; expanding services to non-elderly and non-disabled persons, and identifying other opportunities for providing transportation.
2. Collaborate with service providers, operators and the target population to inventory the transportation resources in the community.

Performance and results

- The Transportation Assistance Program (TAP) provided new or additional scheduling and dispatching services and wheelchair accessible vehicles to Senior Centers.
- Coordinated driver training for TAP drivers with the Dial-A-Ride Transportation (DART) program to provide uniform quality service and save training expenses.
- Expanded services to four different ethnic groups.

- Established two additional Senior Centers as out-stationed sites.
- Developed a partnership with Community Transit to produce the *Transportation Options in Snohomish County* handbook targeted to seniors and persons with disabilities. The document was produced in large-print format and available in five languages. Distributed 4,000 copies.
- In 1997, TAP provided 6,912 trips. In 1998 the trips increased by 66 percent and the miles driven increased by 77 percent. Between January 1998 and June 1999, TAP provided 17,752 trips. This included 5,599 trips transferred to DART, and 12,151 point to point trips.
- The TAP project absorbed special needs trips when Community Transit began to implement the Americans with Disabilities Act corridor paratransit service. The coordination between Community Transit and TAP accommodated individuals who would have had their services cut.

Are elements of the project being sustained?

The handbook, *Transportation Options in Snohomish County*, continues to be available in ten languages.

Table 9. Service levels in Snohomish County

Monthly Averages	1997	1998	1999	% Change
Miles	5,449	9,666	13,115	241%
Hours	314	534	728	232%
Passenger trips	576	957	1044	181%

In Snohomish County, ACCT funds were used to develop new service. Table 9 shows the increases in service levels from 1997 to 1999.

4 What else did we gain?

In addition to serving more people and demonstrating trip cost reduction in some cases, the projects produced many less tangible benefits.

Partnerships developed

The demonstration projects provided new opportunities for partnerships between program sponsors, service providers, and stakeholder groups. Because the projects were conceived and implemented locally, each focused on specific local barriers; nonetheless, the partnership experiences had common elements.

New partnerships were formed

In some cases, new partnerships developed between agencies with no history of collaboration.

As an example, in Mason and Yakima counties, the projects explored new operating relationships with local school districts. In Mason County, the project implemented an operating agreement permitting the shared use of school district vehicles by the general public and students participating in after school activities.

Partnerships were improved

In some cases, the projects resulted in improved, or different, coordination arrangements between agencies with existing working relationships.

As an example, in Snohomish County, the project worked closely with community centers and organizations sharing their facilities to aid in the coordination of trips. Coordination also included sharing vehicles between the agencies.

Coordination barriers were identified

The individual projects encountered a variety of barriers to coordination. While barriers were specific to the community, they were also characteristic of issues confronting all communities. The communities resolved some barriers. Other barriers, however, continue to present problems. An example of a barrier encountered in each major barrier category will illustrate the kinds of experiences gained on barriers to coordination.

Organizational/structural barriers example:

In King County, DSHS and the local transit operator had been working in partnership for several years. That partnership had identified a single agency to broker both the state Medicaid and local ADA transportation programs. That effort produced two operating agreements, one for each program. This created different operating policies, separate training needs, and categorical trip assignments to providers. The demonstration project

provided the opportunity and resources to better integrate the two programs.

Policy/regulatory barriers example:

Federal policy for the Medicaid Program requires that clients be charged the *usual and customary rate*. The present federal interpretation of that rate—charging only what the public pays at the fare box—creates cost issues for transit and discourages transit participation. This problem was particularly highlighted in the King County project. As a result, DSHS has petitioned the federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for a review and possible exemption from this policy. The DHHS has not yet responded to that petition.

Operational barriers example:

Operating practices differ for pupil and public transportation services. For example, one system requires passengers to pass in front of the bus when exiting; the other requires them to pass behind the bus. One permits standees on the bus, and the other does not. In Mason County, the transit system negotiated an agreement with the school district permitting school bus drivers to operate yellow school buses under contract to the transit system. While working under contract, transit procedures would prevail, and school bus drivers received appropriate training in those procedures.

Information/data barriers example:

In King County, the transit and DSHS broker programs relied on the same software but used different internal protocols. Thus call takers and schedulers had to access separate systems to determine the possibility of sharing rides between the programs.

The project identified the protocol differences and worked with the software company to bridge the two systems. This greatly enhanced the ability of the two programs to pass data and information back and forth.

Funding barriers example:

In Yakima County, the project has been negotiating with agencies to create a *community block grant* for transportation. In this process, each participating program would move funds into a transportation account to pay for trips. In the past, such options were restricted by programs like Work First where the transportation costs had to be tied directly to the clients. Now there is increasing recognition that investing in system developments might benefit all agencies and programs. Local managers have expressed interest, but agreement from state and federal managers needs to be obtained.

Communication barriers example:

In Clallam and Jefferson Counties, clients and their agencies knew little about transportation services. The project developed a computer program providing information about transportation services and how to access them. In addition, a training video was developed to educate clients about services.

The projects showed that coordination is feasible

The projects helped break down existing barriers and show that improved coordination is feasible. This message has encouraged communities to make the effort to improve coordination.

The projects created momentum

The demonstration projects have created momentum and interest in coordination throughout the state. They have raised awareness about coordination issues and demonstrated that change is possible and beneficial.

The new momentum is evident in the number of counties that have expressed a desire to participate in the community planning process. ACCT is supporting this interest through the planning grants made possible by the legislature in 1999.

Unfortunately, the recent passage of Initiative-695 calls into question the ability of communities to capitalize on this momentum. The significant loss of funding for public transportation reduces both the capacity to provide trips and to marshal resources to support community coordination efforts.

Funding has also been reduced for other agencies in our communities, making the coordination of remaining public resources even more of a priority.

The projects generated awareness and interest

The demonstration projects brought together people and agencies with no previous history of working together. The projects opened new lines of communication in communities and revealed common interests and opportunities for mutual benefit.

These projects were observed with interest by other communities and agencies. They increased awareness of coordination issues and benefits and created interest at both the local and state levels.

The increased awareness of coordination is demonstrated by new interest by school districts, proposed changes in existing program policies and procedures, and requests to staff for more information.

5 What major lessons did ACCT learn?

From these demonstration projects, ACCT learned some important lessons. This will assist us in working with communities as they design their coordinated special needs transportation systems.

1. Securing operational funds is of foremost importance to those involved with transportation. This competes with the focus on coordination.

Communities report a large degree of unmet demand for rides. Finding money to purchase or provide rides, and then purchasing or providing rides takes precedence. The focus on operational funds is so paramount, it detracts from the ability to see coordination as an effective strategy for providing more rides.

People often believe that coordination puts them at risk to lose what operational funds they do have. Or they call an activity coordination, even when it is not, if they think it will bring them more operating funds.

2. Organizations focus on their clients, not on a system that will serve all clients.

When people are concentrating on transportation of their own clients, it is hard to engage them in designing an overarching system, which has pay-off down the road but doesn't help with the immediate need. They want to solve transportation problems for their own

clients and lose interest if the focus shifts to the needs of clients of other organizations.

3. Transportation is expensive. It is hard to get purchasers to pay true costs.

There is a fixed cost to transportation that is beyond what many purchasers want to pay. Tax subsidies, operating grants, and project funding often cover much of the cost. These funds may not be perpetually available, yet many transportation programs would not exist without these funding sources. This has an impact on coordination. An organization may be willing to coordinate as long as someone else foots all or part of the bill. But when asked to pay their full share of costs, they lose interest, especially when equitable cost allocation mechanisms do not exist.

4. People accommodate to barriers rather than try to remove them.

Commitment to coordination often isn't high enough for people to do the difficult work of removing barriers. Rather, they find ways to accommodate to the barriers, resulting in a less than ideal solutions and systems that are not truly coordinated. They accept accommodation as a cost of doing business and don't ask if there is a better, more efficient way to do things.

5. Federal and state contracts can drive local behavior.

Because local organizations conform to contractual expectations, federal and state contracts with local organizations are significant drivers in determining how and if coordination will occur. This includes determining what barriers can and can't be removed

6. Technology can make or break coordination.

The importance of good technology to coordination cannot be underestimated. The complexity of knowing the available transportation resources, grouping trips, scheduling, screening clients, and allocating costs demands sophisticated and reliable technology.

Existing software has limitations and must be modified to meet coordination needs. This can mean high maintenance. Reliance on manual processing due to lack of supporting software makes coordination too labor intensive to be worthwhile.

7. Mobility needs cannot all be met.

It is unlikely that the demand for special needs transportation can be completely met, even with coordinated systems in place. There are many areas of the state where resources are scarce and demand is high.

Following the passage of Initiative 695, the gap between scarce resources and high demand will increase. Communities rely heavily on their transit systems as the core of their service delivery system; that core will seriously erode over the next several years. The inevitable service reductions will further isolate those people in our communities who have the most serious needs for transportation.

8. Written agreements are important.

Coordination partnerships bring together organizations that have different cultures and speak different languages. These differences create a potential for misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Agencies need simple and concise interagency agreements and memoranda of understanding to provide clarity and avert conflict.

9. Dedicated staff is needed.

The existing staff in organizations have full workloads. When someone tries to carve time out of an existing job to work on coordination, it often doesn't happen. When tasks are prioritized, coordination activities don't make it to the top of the list.

Developing partnerships and working with other organizations to coordinate transportation should be the primary job function of somebody in the organization. The key staff person promoting coordination should be a person of creativity who can envision a new way of doing business and who is willing to take risks.

10. Prioritization at the management level is critical.

For coordination to occur, top managers must prioritize it as a goal and measure progress. When the going gets tough there are too many escape hatches and shortcuts that people will take. If top management in an organization expects meaningful coordination to occur, staff will work through the difficult issues and find solutions to the complex problems. In addition, there are times when only management-to-management communication can resolve issues.

6 How will ACCT respond?

To the extent that funding exists, ACCT will respond to in a number of ways to the lessons learned from the first round of demonstration projects.

Provide technical assistance to counties

ACCT staff will provide technical assistance to counties, focusing on the lessons learned through the demonstration projects, research from other states, and experiences from counties during the first year of coordination.

Address barriers to coordination

ACCT has instituted a process for addressing barriers to coordination. As communities or state agency staff identify barriers that cannot be resolved at the local level or through the actions of a single program, they can refer them to ACCT.

ACCT and state agency staff will research the issue and recommend solutions. Some solutions can be implemented by the state programs. Some may require legislative action.

Examples of barriers brought forward for research and action

Some barriers have already been brought forward. Examples are

- Medicaid doesn't pay more than *usual and customary charges* for a trip, even when charges are artificially low due to public subsidies.
- Veterans' vans won't transport non-veterans, even when there are empty seats on the van.
- Background check requirements are all different for school bus drivers, transit drivers, Head Start drivers, and Children's Protective Services drivers.

Factor what we've learned into future awarding of funds

As ACCT awards grants in the future, the council will factor the lessons learned from the initial round of projects elements into the requests for proposals and the criteria for scoring proposals and awarding funds.

7 How can the Legislature support coordination?

The Washington State Legislature can contribute to the success of coordination in a number of ways.

Long term commitment

Coordinated transportation systems won't be achieved within one biennium. Communities need the flexibility to work at their own pace, chipping away at barriers and implementing the elements of a coordinated system in reasonable steps. We need to expect continual progress, while being realistic about how quickly things can be accomplished.

Continued funding

The task of coordinating is complex and difficult. It happens incrementally, as barriers are removed and major system changes are implemented. Achieving statewide goals will take years. Continued funding of ACCT is necessary until coordinated systems are in place across the state.

The passage of I-695 significantly reduced the funding for public transportation. This means that transit systems may lack the resources to work with community partners developing local coordination programs. It also means that fewer transportation options will be available in the community.

In the aftermath of I-695, coordination or remaining public transportation resources becomes even more

important. One immediate way to support coordination would be to appropriate \$750,000 from the state general fund. This would release \$500,000 being held in reserve in the 1999–2001 transportation budget to fund additional coordination activities in communities around the state.

In addition, ongoing financial support for public transportation is essential if the state is to assure that people with special transportation needs can access jobs, training, education, child care, health and social services. Even if the remaining transportation resources are well coordinated, the need for transportation will exceed the options available to people who are disadvantaged.

Coordination is a human services issue

Coordination is not primarily a transportation issue: it is a human services issue. The state makes major investments in a variety of social, employment, educational, and health programs; their success depends on clients being able to get to the services. Support from both the transportation budget and the state general fund would set an example of transcending categorical barriers to reach a common goal.

“

Most welfare recipients want to work. But first they have to get there.

”

— Jobseeker
Transportation Program,
Metro King County

Look for transportation impacts

Through work on the transportation committee and other legislative committees, each member has the opportunity to contribute to coordination of special needs transportation.

When existing programs are reviewed, when new programs are implemented, when program directions are changed, when new facilities are located, or when new policies are enacted, ask: “How will this impact transportation?”

Factor transportation in at the beginning, so that you do not create new barriers to coordination, and so that the infrastructure is in place to support coordination on an ongoing basis. Make it clear that the legislative intent is for agencies to coordinate and then hold agencies accountable.

Support ACCT requests for change

Removing some coordination barriers will require legislative remedies. In the next few years, ACCT will make recommendations to the legislature as to what changes in statute are needed to promote coordination. Respond positively to those recommendations by sponsoring bills and voting for them.