

**Regional Coordinated Public Transit
and
Human Services Transportation Plan
for the
Thurston Region**

Draft
December 2006

**An Update of the
2002
Area-Wide Job Access and
Reverse Commute Transportation Plan**

Prepared by the Thurston Regional Planning Council in cooperation with
Thurston County Human Services Transportation Forum, Intercity Transit, TOGETHER!
and other Community Partners

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Executive Summary

Background and Planning Process

Residents of the Thurston Region rely on transportation for independence, employment, health, and quality of life. When people with special needs – age, income, disability and rural residents – have limited mobility choices, they may become isolated and unable to participate in vital activities or receive critical services. Without reliable transportation, these residents face severe barriers in obtaining and retaining employment, taking care of essential needs such as health care and shopping, participating in recreational activities, and other critical functions.

Regional policymakers recognized the challenges facing people with special needs and dedicated time and other resources to coordination efforts. The Regional Transportation Plan, adopted by the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) in 2004, contained goals reflecting a commitment to accessibility:

Barrier Free Transportation:

Goal: Ensure transportation system investments support the special travel needs of youth, elders, people with disabilities, literacy or language barriers, and those with low incomes.

Appendix: Policy 1

The Council also elected to facilitate the Thurston County Human Services Transportation Forum (HSTF or Forum) – a coalition of social service and transportation providers, governmental entities and others. The group has documented needs, explored alternatives, and implemented service. Programs such as Rural & Tribal Transportation (R/T) and Village Vans have improved the lives of many people in the Thurston Region. Every day, these services transport people to jobs, training, essential services and other important destinations.

Beyond the commitment of regional policymakers, the state and federal government has stepped up to encourage coordination. The Washington State Legislature's creation of the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) recognized that duplication of efforts was wasteful and that coordination would result in more services for more people. ACCT's planning funds, technical assistance, and grant programs have made the local and regional successes possible. The federal government's United We Ride initiative in 2004 and provisions of SAFETEA-LU both encourage and require coordination – at the planning and service levels.

This Plan is an update of the Area-Wide Job Access and Reverse Commute Transportation Plan for Thurston County developed in 2002. The update required convening the Forum with a task of reviewing the 2002 Plan in light of new planning requirements. In addition to regular Forum meetings, the planning group conducted individual and group interviews and meetings, documenting changing needs and the

successes of regional initiatives. The planning group also identified several additional goals that fit under the overarching goal statement of the Regional Transportation Plan:

- Increase mobility options
- Improve individual service
- Increase coordination with other systems and programs
- Improve efficiency

During the first and second quarters of 2007, the Plan will go through several review processes, with the Forum and the general public. Policymakers on the Transportation Policy Board and Thurston Regional Planning Council will review the draft, with the Council scheduled to take action at its June 2007 meeting.

Current Conditions

For purposes of this planning process and coordination strategies, people with special transportation needs are defined as people "including their personal attendants, who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or purchase transportation."

In the Thurston Region, the county-wide average of households earning less than \$15,000 is 12 percent, according to the 2000 Census. The percent of families below the poverty level in other rural and Tribal communities include 18.5 percent in Bucoda, approximately 13 percent in Grand Mound and the Nisqually Indian Reservation, and 19.7 percent for the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation.

Overall, the population is getting older. In 2000, the median age of the county's population was 36.5 years, up from 33.6 in 1990. In 2005, nearly 26 percent of the region's 244,099 population was under 19; and over 11.5 percent 65 and older. Included in that number was the 1.67 percent aged 85 and older. Projections estimate that 21.3 percent of the population will be 65 and older in 2025.

The 2000 Census reflects the percentage of people who report having a disability in Thurston County to be 18.8 of the population. For the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, the percentage is 23.1. Social service providers note that people tend to under-report in this category.

In addition to the Rural & Tribal Transportation Program (R/T) and Village Vans – initiatives of the regional coordination process – other traditional and non-traditional providers serve Thurston County. Intercity Transit delivers a backbone of fixed route and dial-a-lift (DAL) service in the urban areas of Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater and Yelm, and partners on programs outside its service areas. Social service providers transport certain clients to certain types of trips – filling some gaps. The area's nine school districts supply the greatest number of public transportation trips in the region. Intercity services are provided by Greyhound, Northwestern Trailways and AMTRAK. Cross County connections to Pierce, Grays Harbor, Mason, and Lewis counties are available through transit systems or coordinated projects.

Needs and Gaps

Although each part of the region and each client are unique, common themes have emerged as the Forum documented needs and gaps in service for people with special needs:

- **Transportation Services** – Despite improvements in recent years, people with special needs, especially in rural areas have limited mobility options.
- **Available Modes** – Options such as biking, walking and ridesharing are often not viable because of the nature of the built environment, the need to transport children to daycare, and non-traditional schedules.
- **Travel Time** – Cross-town and cross-county trips require hours of travel and wait times. The goal of non-duplication of services means that transfers between systems are a part of every trip.
- **Hours** – Most transportation does not provide service that supports the non-traditional work hours and split shifts that are often a feature of available jobs. Weekend service is weak to non-existent.
- **Cost** – The cost of alternatives other than transit may be prohibitive for many community members.
- **Ease of Use** – Trip planning and traveling on different systems or modes can be daunting. People fear being stranded or arriving at the wrong time. For many people, riding public transportation is a distant, and not always pleasant, childhood memory.
- **Information** – Residents need an up-to-date information resource reflecting all available transportation options, with information on eligibility and contact information.

In addition to individual challenges, there are also barriers to coordination, including insufficient and unsustainable funding, conflicting program requirements and regulations, and a hesitancy to document existing transportation resources.

Solutions

The regional partners have crafted several elegant programs to expand mobility in Thurston County. The operating projects have evolved over time, with improvements included for the 2007-09 biennium. These projects were selected as priorities because they:

- **Increase Mobility Options:** Expand service to rural areas with limited mobility options and support training and employment in the urban areas; and invest in new vehicles to supply safer, more reliable service.

- **Improve Individual Service:** Increasing awareness of mobility options, improve dispatch services; and provide individual trip planning services.
- **Increase Coordination with Other Systems and Programs.** Focus on regional and cross-county mobility management; improve connections with Mason, Squaxin, Grays Harbor and Lewis Transit organizations.
- **Increase efficiency:** Improve trip and route planning through new dispatch capabilities; institute new routes and directional services to increase passengers per trip/hour/mile.

These operating and capital projects are reflected in the Prioritized Project List:

Project Short Title*	Sponsor
Rural & Tribal Transportation (R/T)	TOGETHER! and TRPC
Intercity Transit Village Vans	Intercity Transit
New Dispatch and Scheduling Software System, with Related Hardware	Northwest Connections
Replacement Vehicles	Northwest Connections

Note: the list is not prioritized

**See full project titles and descriptions in Prioritized Project List Section of Plan*

Each of these projects has its own set of performance measures, including number of trips, hours and miles provided, how each project fills gaps and needs, and supports the region’s goals.

In addition to project implementation, the Forum will continue to increase awareness of the benefits of coordination, enhance existing services, develop new projects, and seek policy and funding solutions.

The People We Serve...

The Forum uses traditional performance measures to quantify efficiency and effectiveness, but we also gather stories:

- *“R/T did a fantastic job in helping with the Latino mothers and babies on our trip to Olympia. This is a major accomplishment considering the language barrier they experience.”* Rochester Social Service Provider
- *“We’ve been taking time from our own jobs to transport him. Now we’re all very excited that he can be on his own – great for his self confidence.”* Parents of a developmentally disabled young adult
- *“I’m so relieved not to be a burden to my children any more.”* Senior citizen
- *“I was able to get to extra training, so got a promotion at work.”* Rural resident
- *“My daughter’s grades went from C’s to A’s because the transportation service allows her to stay after school for extra assistance.”* Nisqually Tribal Member

Stakeholders and Planning Process – A History of Coordination

In the Beginning...

Unlike other communities, who convened stakeholder groups because of recent state and federal requirements, the Thurston Region realized the need to begin coordination efforts nearly ten years ago.

In 1997, the Thurston Regional Planning Council and Intercity Transit convened the Human Services Transportation Forum to explore the coordination of transportation services in and around Thurston County. The convenors recognized that a growing need for transportation services coupled with shrinking transit funding called for innovative, cooperative strategies. A wide range of transportation and social service providers were identified and invited to participate.

The group began to meet regularly and identify goals, objectives, and boundaries. While recognizing that many residents travel to adjacent counties for goods, services, and jobs, at that time the group elected to limit their considerations to the county boundaries for planning efforts.

The Forum designed, distributed, and tallied a Transportation Survey to quantify the "who, what, where, why and how" of service needs and provision. Approximately fifty entities, such as the Area Agency on Aging, Morningside Industries, and the Childcare Action Council, responded. The groups identified common issues and needs.

HSTF facilitated a series of focus groups on the topics of Children and Youth, Brokerage and Risk Management, and Dial-A-Lift. Issues and ideas from these sessions were collected and added to survey data.

In early 1998, HSTF applied for a grant from the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) to implement a demonstration project for coordinated services. While the project was not funded, the process of working together on the application strengthened the group.

In the fall of 1998, with cuts to social and transportation services, a growing low-income population, and an increased focus on social equity in transportation, renewed interest in the HSTF arose. With the assistance of the local ACCT staff, the Thurston Regional Planning Council joined with community partners to apply for an ACCT Planning Grant. Upon successful award, the partners reconvened the Forum. The Transportation Survey was revised and distributed and the group began compilation. At monthly meetings, the HSTF discussed demonstration projects and models in other areas, identified needs and potential solutions, and worked on the plan. HSTF wrestled with identifying a core group to serve as decision-makers. Special efforts were made to identify needs and develop solutions for the Tribal communities.

The Forum facilitated a series of focus groups with clients, including a local welfare rights group, residents of low-income housing complexes, and youth groups. All have validated both the needs and potential solutions outlined in the plan, although the youth group was alone in suggesting skateboards as a viable transportation choice. During these focus groups, clients were encouraged to continue to participate in the process and were given contact information for follow up purposes.

During this process, Morningside, a rehabilitative enterprise, convened a group to focus on transportation needs of persons with disabilities. The group included the Thurston County Health Department, Thurston Regional Planning Council, Intercity Transit, and other forum members. The group brought general and specific client needs to the table and attempted to find answers. The Thurston Regional Planning Council used GIS technology to map out locations of clients and regular destinations to support ridematching and transit services. After meeting for several months, the ad hoc group concluded that persons with disabilities in the community face the same transportation challenges as others but with more restrictions. They determined that working through the Forum would be the best approach, so disbanded the group.

The availability of the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Grant accelerated finalization of the JARC plan, including identification of "first steps" projects. The group rallied to provide ideas and support. They identified the location of low-income clients, employment patterns, distribution of jobs, and other supporting data. The WorkFirst Local Area Planning Partners were an integral part of this planning.

The HSTF celebrated the award of three projects in the 2000 and 2001 grant cycles and mobilized to detail implementation plans. Having money on the table raised the expectations of the group that coordination might actually work.

In 2001, the Forum also reached out to two other communities – faith based and senior providers. In adding this data to the inventory, the Forum recognized that while both groups face challenges, they also bring resources and a commitment to client services to the table. Most also indicated a strong desire to explore alternatives to actually providing transportation services.

Over the next few years, the Forum continued to meet – in various forms and for many purposes; sometimes to implement a new service or expand or change an existing one; or because new needs and challenges had surfaced; to do more planning; and sometimes in response to new legislation. The core theme of bringing transportation choices to people with special needs and coordinating services was a constant in all activities.

In developing plans, the group studied sample plans and strategies from other areas and incorporated those elements that made sense for Thurston County. The group provided and validated the data that supports this Plan update, and assisted in estimating potential usage and success of each of the projects. In some instances, service providers informally tested concepts on a segment of their client base. Each

partner has contributed important information; provided insight into the special needs of a specific client base; and remained committed to identifying innovative, effective solutions.

Interesting partnerships and broadening of mission have characterized these implementation strategies. TOGETHER!, a social service provider that focuses on youth, especially on the issues of drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse, stepped forward as a key partner in implementing the Rural & Tribal Transportation program (R/T). They determined that their mission should include the transportation that allows youth and other community members' access to the services and programs that support their primary mission.

Updating the Plan and Next Steps

The Plan update provided an opportunity to revisit previously documented needs, services, and gaps. The Forum updated demographic data and analyzed the impacts of R/T and Village Vans, and considered other alternatives and strategies. Because of on-going analysis of services and needs, no substantive issues arose.

Over time, the planning processes and projects of the Thurston Region have matured. With continued funding through 2007, the separate rural and tribal programs have evolved into a single coordinated R/T service. Village Vans has continued to provide work-related transportation for low-income clients, but also added a successful training program for drivers.

Creating the prioritized project list proved painless. Not for the first time, the benefits of being a single county RTPO were apparent to TRPC and the partners. While supportive of many programs of adjacent counties, we did not have to prioritize across county lines.

Thurston's Regional policymakers have been strong and consistent in their support of coordination efforts and programs for people with special needs. When Intercity Transit reduced its service boundaries several years ago, an outcry from rural communities resonated with County Commissioners and rural Councils, galvanizing their interest in potential solutions. As a result of coordination activities, the Thurston Regional Planning Council – for the first time in its nearly 40-year history – became a direct provider of transportation services. Moving from a planning to an implementing stance was challenging, but regional policymakers take pride in their new role.

Both the Transportation Policy Board (TPB) and the Thurston Regional Planning Council have been briefed and have given an informal nod to the project list. The Council will take action on the list in January 2007. Policymakers will evaluate the Plan over the next several months, with Council action slated for June 2007.

The Coordinated Plan is not a static document, but rather a reflection of current and projected future needs, services, and gaps that will change as new challenges, opportunities, and strategies emerge. Like the plan, the projects will also change over

time. While the R/T and Village Vans have improved mobility for residents of the region, they too are dynamic rather than static.

Thanks...

A full list of participants over the life of the Forum is included in the Appendix. Special thanks are given to several stalwart partners: Tenino Mayor Ken Jones, TOGETHER!, Intercity Transit, Northwest Connections, the Lewis, Thurston, Mason Area Agency on Aging, Lewis Thurston Mason Headstart/ECEAP, Catholic Community Services, Paratransit Services, the Nisqually Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, Rochester Organization of Families, Boys & Girls Clubs of Thurston County, Senior Services for South Sound, Mercy Housing and staff of the Washington State Department of Transportation, ACCT, Community Transportation Association of America (and Northwest) for their technical assistance, encouragement and gentle nudging toward coordination.

Appendix: List 1

Service Area

The Plan supports all of Thurston County, which is located in the Southern part of Western Washington at the terminus of Puget Sound. It is the 32nd largest county in the state, with 735 square miles of landmass. Nearly 93 percent of the land area is unincorporated.

Appendix: Map 1

Over 230,000 people live in the county, which is one of the fastest growing areas in the state. Map 2 illustrates the location of the major communities within the county, which include Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater, Yelm, Rainier, Bucoda, Rochester, Tenino, Grand Mound, the Nisqually Indian Reservation and Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation. Many of the communities are located along major transportation corridors, with Interstate 5 traversing the county.

Appendix: Map 2

While the point of origin for trips for some of the projects outlined in the plan are limited to a specific geographical location (i.e., a specific low-income housing complex or the Nisqually and Chehalis Indian Reservations in rural areas), destinations radiate to all parts of the county and beyond. Other projects supply services that are available countywide. The early JARC Plan focused solely on issues within the Thurston County Border, but this update recognizes the need to now also improve coordination across county lines.

Regional Conditions

Unique geographical factors in Thurston County guide transportation policies and strategies. The coastal lowlands, prairie flatlands, Cascade foothills, and numerous lakes, rivers, and wetlands draw people to the area, but also direct where transportation facilities – and development – can locate.

Despite only 52 clear days a year and an average annual rainfall of 51 inches, some residents engage in year-round biking or walking. Grey days and early winter nightfall require a transportation system with safe, well lighted, well maintained, clearly marked sidewalks, roads and trails. Because of decreasing revenues, tribes, local jurisdictions, and the state face increasing challenges to preserve and maintain system safety. There is often a perception that rural communities provide safe, pastoral settings for biking and walking – either as the primary mode, or to connect to other transportation services. However, limited multi-modal facilities and high accident rates on state routes and other two-lane rural roads belie that assumption.

The Interstate 5 corridor runs through the heart of the region, providing access for transporting people, goods and services to the neighboring counties to the south and north. However, the freeway also divides communities, creating gaps for travelers, whether by foot, bike, or automobile.

Despite growing challenges, the region successfully maintains and operates a system comprised of dozens of transit routes and services, over 2,000 miles of roadway, hundreds of miles of bike lanes and sidewalks, almost 90 miles of rail, a marine terminal and a regional airport.

Population

Current Conditions

One of the fastest growing counties in the state over the past five years, Thurston County ranked 5th with 8 percent growth during that period. This growth added over 46,000 new residents between 1990 and 2000. The 2006 estimate for Thurston County's population is 231,100.

The patterns of growth are critical to transportation and land use planning. Between 1980 and 1990, the incorporated county grew at nearly the same rate as the unincorporated county. In 2006, it is estimated that 61 percent of the population lives in the unincorporated areas. Even more critical is the relationship between urban and rural population distribution. 2006 estimates place 24 percent of the population in the unincorporated Urban Growth Areas of the county, while 33 percent live in the rural portions of the unincorporated county. The remaining 43 percent live in the county's cities.

In addition, growth is not evenly distributed among the cities. Over the last six years, the urban areas of the rural communities of Yelm (5.6 percent) and Rainier (1.8 percent) experienced the highest average annual growth rates in the region between 2000 and 2006. In the northern areas of the county, the Lacey urban area (1.5 percent) has been growing at a higher annual rate than the Tumwater (.5 percent) and Olympia urban areas (.5 percent).

The 2000 Census shows a Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation population of 691 – an increase of 41 percent over the 1990 Census. The majority of this population resides in the Grays Harbor County portion of the tribal lands. According to the same source, the Nisqually Indian Tribe grew by 4 percent, increasing from 578 to 599.

Appendix: Table 1, Map 3

Future Population Growth

Forecasters at the Thurston Regional Planning Council develop projections for future population based on a series of assumptions about human behavior, and by interpreting past trends in the local, state and national economy.

Because of the community's many amenities – a multimodal transportation system, and advanced health care and retirement facilities – older adults will comprise a larger percentage of the total population. Especially for seniors “aging in place” in the more remote areas of the county, transportation and other social systems will be under pressure to expand to match changing needs.

Appendix: Table 2, Map 4

Employment and Commuting

Overview

Thurston County is often characterized as a “government town” with that sector providing the largest share of the jobs. However, in recent years, large retail chains supplied jobs, goods and services for local residents, but also attracted consumers from neighboring counties. Food and other service jobs are also growing. These retail jobs – often the first entry into the workforce for low-income residents – pay minimum wage, with limited or non-existent benefits and are on schedules that make using traditional transit service or carpooling difficult. These schedules also exacerbate transportation challenges in childcare management.

While the majority of jobs are housed in the urban cores of the larger cities, employers and workers are scattered throughout the region. The transportation system cannot simply carry workers from large residential community X to large employment site Y, but instead must provide a variety of routes and travel options.

Current Conditions

In Thurston County, total employment in 2004 stood at 120,592 jobs. State employment is the largest employer, accounting for over 23,000 full and part-time jobs. State worksites have experienced consolidations and shifts in location over the past several years. Between 1994 and 1998, state employment in Olympia grew from a 62 percent share to a 66 percent share, but then declined to its current 53 percent share. Over this same time, Lacey’s share in state employment was relatively stable between 1994 and 1998 at 13 percent and 12 percent respectively, and had climbed to 16 percent for the most recent set of numbers. State employment in Tumwater has an inverse relationship to Olympia, that is, it saw a decline in its share of state employment between 1994 and 1998, and then experienced an increase in its share, moving up to 26 percent. In absolute numbers of growth and decline by jurisdiction, Lacey has seen an increase of 36 percent, Olympia has experienced a 2 percent decline and Tumwater has experienced a 46 percent increase.

These changes in siting for the largest employer in the region result in mobility impacts for many employees and potential employees. State agency worksites located on the Capitol Campus and other areas in the urban core enjoy a high level of transit frequency. These areas are also supported by multi-modal facilities, such as sidewalks and bike lanes, broadening mobility options. When state employment chooses to move to the fringes of the urban cores, transit frequency and multi-modal amenities decrease. Local government, including school districts, is the second largest employer. The same transportation issues that arise from siting of state employment away from the urban core apply to the remote placement of school districts.

The next largest employer is Providence St. Peter Hospital. Group Health Cooperative and the Columbia Capital Medical Center are also among the top ten employers in Thurston County. Although these facilities are located close to urban centers and have decent transit service, the 24/7 operations make the use of commute alternatives

difficult. Intercity Transit's service day generally ends at 11:00 p.m., longer than most providers, and service on weekends is more limited. Shift work also makes for difficult carpool matching.

Tribal Government has become a major regional economic force, as the fourth largest employer in Thurston County. Chehalis tribal enterprises, including the Lucky Eagle Casino, Chehalis Tribal Construction, Eagle's Landing Hotel and several convenience stores, employ nearly 600 people, with an additional 150 employed in tribal government and community services. In 2007, the Tribe is scheduled to open a 39-acre Great Wolf Lodge resort and conference center in Grand Mound, creating a new regional destination and employment center.

The Nisqually Indian Tribe employs approximately 175 people in tribal government and community services, with total employment reaching 650 with the opening of the expanded Red Wind Casino in 2004.

Small business also plays a major role in the region's employment. Countywide, only 11 entities (including state government) employ over 1,000 workers, accounting for 18 percent of employment. The majority of firms – 77 percent – employ less than 10 workers, but account for 14 percent of the workforce.

Appendix: Table 3, Table 4, Map 5

Future Projections

Currently, one in four workers commutes outside the region to work, more than travel to Thurston County for employment. These outbound commuters are projected to represent an even higher percentage of the labor force by 2025. Outbound commuters are expected to grow from 26 percent of the civilian labor force in 2005 to 34 percent by 2030. The reasons for this outbound commute are largely driven by the availability of jobs and income potential. Thurston County's job market pales in comparison to the volume of work and higher compensation available in King County and other communities to the north.

Certain employment sectors are expected to outpace others as we look to the future. In 2030, for example, projections show 29,100 jobs in the Retail Trade sector and 62,000 in the Services sector. These sectors, which include restaurant, retail, consumer and health services, often provide low-wage employment with shift work outside the 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. hours. This results in continuing transportation challenges even as job opportunities grow.

Appendix: Table 5, Table 6

Most people are also traveling increased distances for jobs and other destinations. Daily vehicle miles traveled per driver is forecasted to increase to 38 miles per day by 2025. More travel and more miles also equate to more

automobiles. In 2000, 24 percent, or one in four Thurston Region households owned three or more vehicles. However, in the rural communities and among low-income families, vehicle ownership is more of a challenge, with 10.3 percent of Yelm's population and 12 percent of residents of the Nisqually Indian Reservation reporting in the 2000 Census that no vehicles are available.

Education and Quality of Life

Education and Training

Thurston County houses a variety of educational opportunities. These include both private and public primary, secondary and higher education institutions. A number offer programs outside regular school hours, providing greater accessibility to working adults and students. However, this advantage is lessened if transportation options are limited or unavailable during evening and weekend hours.

There are 68 schools in Thurston County (3 colleges, 12 high schools, 13 middle schools, and 40 elementary schools.) While most are comprehensive and offer a full range of academic activity programs, non-traditional schools are also available. New Market Vocational Skills Center, for example, provides technical and professional training classes for high school students in the Thurston, Mason, Grays Harbor, and Lewis counties. Serving an average of 800 students, New Market supplies academic support classes for students returning to school to complete their high school diploma requirements. Students can earn high school or college credits, as well as a variety of industrial certifications and licenses.

South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC) is the largest institution of higher education in Thurston County, with an enrollment of more than 6,000 students. SPSCC offers day and evening classes, basic and continuing education coursework, job skills training, and personal enrichment courses. The College's tradition of vocational training continues, with more than 30 technical programs currently offered. The college also cooperates with private companies and public agencies to provide customized training and professional development. This community college plays an important role in the WorkFirst program, coordinating with other state agencies to improve training and employment for low-income residents.

The Evergreen State College is a public college of liberal arts and sciences. With an enrollment of 4,000, the college provides an evening and weekend program geared to working adults in addition to a full-time academic undergraduate program. In addition, Evergreen offers upper-division and Tribal programs. Three graduate programs offer master's degrees in environmental studies, public administration, and teaching.

Saint Martin's University is a four-year comprehensive university, offering 21 undergraduate programs, six graduate programs, and numerous pre-professional and certification programs. More than 1,000 students attend the main campus in Lacey and 600 more participate at branch campuses

Though located in Lewis County, Centralia College plays an important role in the education of Thurston County residents. The oldest continuously operating community college in the state of Washington, Centralia offers professional, technical, transfer, and

basic skills programs to its 10,444 students from the service area of Lewis County and south Thurston County.

Traditional transit provides some of its highest service levels to the institutions of higher learning in the community. Typically, the routes have extended hours and lower headways. However, for rural residents, for those traveling from non-traditional work hours, or with childcare concerns, mobility choices are limited.

Social Services

Thurston County is home to many organizations and agencies supplying human services. State agencies such as the Department of Social and Health Services, Health, and Employment Security are headquartered in this county. Other public and private entities focus on categories such as emergency services, children's services, health and related services, and family, youth and senior programs. Because many of these services are located in the urban areas of Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater, transportation to these areas is critical for county residents.

Several social service organizations are important members of the Forum, working to plan and benefiting from the services. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Thurston County, the Rochester Organization of Families and the County Health and Social Services Department worked together to coordinate the needs and schedules of after-school programs for at-risk youth to allow for efficient use of R/T services.

Social service providers and clients often report frustration with accessibility to social services. The hours of service, especially for required visits to governmental agencies, may not coincide with the schedules of public transit. Often several destinations are required in a single day, made difficult by the need to transfer and wait for connecting services. Clients also note duplication of services and the need to "tell their whole stories" to each entity because of a lack of information sharing and case management tools. Often general social service providers do not have information on transportation options, assuming that distributing Intercity Transit passes will meet all client transportation needs.

Demographics

Age Distribution

Overall, the region's population is getting older. Census figures show that in 2000, the median age was 36.5 years, up from 33.6 years in 1990. However, there are some interesting distinctions in the age characteristics between the different areas of the County. Yelm, for example, has the youngest population, with a median age of 30.8, and a higher proportion of its population age 19 and under (35 percent) compared to the county average of 28 percent.

The 2000 Census also indicates a younger population on the Chehalis and Nisqually Reservations. For the Chehalis Tribe, the median age is 24.5, with 44 percent of the population under the age of 19. On the Nisqually Reservation, the median age is 25.8 years, with 41 percent of the population under 19. Both Tribes have aggressive training and education programs for their youth, encouraging higher education. Travel to and from the area's colleges, university and other training programs is an important element in planning regional transportation strategies.

The City of Olympia has the oldest median age, at 36 years, and the lowest portion under the age of 19 (24 percent). Olympia also has the highest proportion of its population between the ages of 20 and 64 (62 percent). The county average is 60 percent.

Migration is one factor contributing to the growth of seniors in the region. For the last two decades, the County has been fifth in the state for in-migration of people 55 and older. Amenities attractive to an older demographic – advanced health care and retirement facilities – may draw many retirement-age people to the county. For the same reason, it is expected that as people who live in the Thurston Region retire, they will age-in-place here rather than relocate.

In 2000, persons age 65 and over constituted 11 percent of the total population. That is expected to climb to roughly 13 percent by 2010 and 19 percent by 2020. The first of the "baby boomers" will reach 65 in 2011.

Appendix: Table 7, Table 8

Disability Status

Census 2000 asked about five types of disability: sensory, physical, mental, self-care and mobility. The Bureau defines disability as a long-lasting physical, mental, or emotional condition that makes it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, self-care, learning, and remembering. It can also impede a person from the ability to leave the home alone or work at a job.

In Thurston County, 35,842 people age 5 and over have a disability. This is a ratio of nearly 1-in-5 residents, or 19 percent. Of these, 26.3 percent were 65 years of age and over. This age group is characterized by 41.6 percent with a disability. Of the total

disabled population, 38.5 are employed, comprising 10.6 percent of the employed population. The Disability Statistics Center at the University of California notes that disability is often correlated with poverty. In Thurston County, 29.5 percent of the population with incomes below the poverty line had a disability.

The percentage of persons with disabilities in high poverty areas such as the Chehalis Reservation is staggering. In the HeadStart program in 2000-01, nearly 12 percent of children have a professionally diagnosed and documented disability. According to Tribal Planning staff, double the norm of disability ratio should be assumed for the reservations: a 65 percent higher rate of drug/alcohol related illnesses, a diabetes rate that is three times the norm, significantly higher rates of rheumatoid arthritis, tuberculosis, and heart disease, and a much higher assault rate which translates to early and high rates of disability. There is also a higher rate of birth defects and mental illness.

As a general rule, organizations that support persons with disabilities assume that roughly 30 percent of persons with disabilities are clients of local, state or federal programs. Coupled with the data that perhaps 95 percent of people with developmental disabilities are unable to drive, this population faces daunting challenges. Cuts to transit service and complimentary paratransit service resulted in persons with disabilities having to leave their jobs because of lack of reliable transportation.

Appendix: Table 9

Language Issues

The Census process has complicated methods for collecting language data; however, several questions identified the level of ability to speak English, and the specific language spoken at home. Further, the Bureau defines as "linguistically isolated" those households in which no member aged 14 and above speaks English "very well." Census 2000 shows that 12.3 percent of Thurston County residents age 5 and older reported that they spoke a language other than English at home. This figure has nearly doubled since 1990, when 6.5 percent reported in this category.

Of those households speaking a language other than English at home, 3.9 percent speak Spanish, 4.1 other Indo-European languages, 4.0 percent Asian and Pacific Island, and 0.3 percent speak other languages.

In this region, 1.7 percent of households were considered linguistically isolated in 2000. The majority of those spoke Asian and Pacific Island languages at home. Geographically, the highest percentages were located in Lacey (2.6 percent) and the Chehalis Reservation (2.7 percent). Social service providers in the region consider this category underreported, with many undocumented residents not reporting, and some inaccurate reporting as a result of language challenges.

Appendix: Table 10

Economics

Income

Thurston County's median household income was \$46,975 in 2000, projected to be \$53,127 in 2005, higher than adjacent counties. Income, however, ranges widely between the local jurisdictions. Lacey continues to record the highest of the incorporated jurisdictions with a median of \$43,848. In the past, the south county towns and cities have had a substantially lower median household income than the north county cities. Data from the 2000 Census, however, shows that for median household income, Rainier ranks third among the county's cities. On its surface, this upward income trend in the rural communities may be a positive. However, with an influx of people from outside the region moving to the rural areas, housing prices and the cost of other services are rising, creating a further challenge for those in the lower income brackets.

Appendix: Table 11, Table 12, Figure 1

Poverty

Data from the 2000 Census provides a glimpse of how wealth and poverty is distributed in the Thurston Region. In 1999, the countywide average of households earning less than \$15,000 was 12 percent. In Yelm and Olympia, approximately 18 percent fit the same category. Further analysis shows that households with the highest incomes are located in the urban growth areas of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater.

Poverty thresholds are determined by considering household size, ages of householders and number of related children. For Thurston County, 8.8 percent of its population was considered to fall below the poverty line in 2000. When comparing cities and towns, the heaviest rates of poverty are concentrated in the south county town of Bucoda, with more than triple the county average. Over the last decade, the rate of poverty has fallen in other small rural communities. However, on the Chehalis and Nisqually Reservations, the rates are close to those in Bucoda (Chehalis 19.7 and Nisqually 13.7 percent). Of the cities, Olympia has the highest rate of poverty, in part due to the concentration of social services unavailable in rural areas.

The Nisqually Indian Tribe, in a 1995 community needs assessment, estimated that there is a 25 to 28 percent unemployment rate among the labor force on their rural Reservation. For the Chehalis Reservation, the enrolled tribal population experiences an unemployment rate, as a percentage of the labor force, of 42 percent. The number of employed persons with incomes below poverty level is 52 percent of the employed labor force. The 2000 census reports that 34.1 percent are not in the labor force.

Poverty rates for households headed by single mothers in 2000 were high across the board, with 29 percent below the poverty line in the County. For Yelm, the number was much higher at 41 percent and for Lacey 36 percent.

Appendix: Table 13, Table 14, Table 15

Racial and Ethnic Composition

With the passage of time, Thurston County is becoming more diverse. In 1970, over 97 percent of the population was White/Caucasian. By 1990, that component had decreased to 92 percent. Changes in reporting choices in the Census make direct comparisons difficult, but in 2006, 86 percent of respondents defined themselves as White only. The Asian population is 4.4 percent, and those who define themselves as two or more races comprise almost 4 percent of the County's population.

The category Hispanic represents those of Hispanic origin, and may denote persons of any race. This population grew from less than 1 percent of the population in 1970 to 5 percent in 2000, with over 9,000 people self-reporting as Hispanic. The American Indian and Alaska Native population was 2 percent, the same as the Black/African American category. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander was 1 percent.

Social service providers – especially in the rural agricultural areas – suggest that Census race and ethnicity percentages are underreported. In the Rochester area, for example, these providers estimate that in the neighborhood of 40 percent of the population are Hispanic, many of whom are undocumented. Even for those categorized as citizens, there appears to be a fear of responding to Census inquiries.

Appendix: Table 16, Table 17

Origins and Destinations

Origins

As reflected in the previous sections, the population is spread across Thurston County. Certainly, there are concentrations in the urban areas and the rapidly growing rural community of Yelm, but the rural areas remain largely low-density.

This current and projected density distribution suggests that traditional transit will be an unlikely option in these communities in the near and longer term. As the population ages, people aging in place will create new “origins.” The region’s prioritized projects attempt to address needs in both the rural and urban areas with R/T focusing on the less dense rural and suburban areas and Village Vans serving the people in the urban area.

Destinations

Map 6 illustrates that most destinations in the County are now located and will continue to be located in the urban areas. For residents, transportation systems need to focus on travel to these clusters for most of needs identified in outreach efforts. These centers house educational and training facilities, medical and social services, transportation hubs and most of the jobs in the region. Map 7 focuses solely on jobs, showing that the greatest concentration of jobs lies in the urban areas of Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater.

Appendix: Table 18, Map 6, Map 7, Map 8

Needs and Gaps

Social services professionals define transportation and childcare as the primary barriers to a successful welfare to work transition.

Transportation professionals speculate that some of the areas worst served by transportation are the rural portions of urban counties.

To supplement analysis of the Census and other reports, people in the trenches of social service and transportation provision helped define the needs of the region's people. Of those with special needs, many:

- Have limited access to reliable private vehicles and may not be able to obtain a driver's license or insurance.

Social service providers estimate that less than 50 percent of their clients have access to vehicles and that at least 20 percent would have difficulty obtaining a driver's license. Persons with disabilities are even less likely to have access to a vehicle and may have conditions that prohibit or limit vehicle operation.

The 2000 Census reports that: 10.3 percent of the population in the Yelm area, 12 percent of members on the Nisqually Indian Reservation, and 11.1 percent of Olympia residents do not own a vehicle. For some, especially in the urban area, this may be a lifestyle choice. However, for many either income or disability may explain lack of an available automobile.

- Have training, compliance, and work schedules that necessitate cross-town travel in the course of a day.

Social service providers estimate that each client makes at least three trips per day for training and job seeking purposes and that those are unlikely to be in the same geographical area.

- Are likely to obtain employment in jobs with non-standard hours and variable non-traditional schedules.

Washington's 2000 WorkFirst Study reported that statewide, almost half of the WorkFirst clients who responded indicated that they were required to work evening or weekend hours, and a third reported that their hours change each week.

- Many have disability challenges that will increase transportation difficulties.

Of those persons with disabilities who are clients of public social service programs, approximately 35 percent reside in rural areas of Thurston County with nearly 8 percent in the Yelm vicinity and 10 percent in the south county areas.

- Are likely to obtain employment in areas that are auto-oriented, rather than pedestrian/transit friendly.

Growing employment in Service sectors often means that people are traveling to strip malls, developments around freeway exchanges, and other situations not conducive to alternative modes. While local jurisdictions are placing greater emphasis on pedestrian friendly conditions at malls and other retail developments, workers still face safety and distance considerations when attempting to walk or bike to work.

- Have limited schedule flexibility in work-related activities.

Historically, low-income clients typically enter employment with small employers in food/beverage preparation, domestic service jobs, miscellaneous sales, sales services, medicine and health, typing/stenography, clerical, personal services, production, and education.

Commonalities of most of these positions include: non-standard hours (including split shifts); locations in strip mall types of developments where commute alternatives are difficult; and can be characterized as “time-card” types of occupations where the schedule flexibility needed for using public transportation or ridesharing is unavailable.

- Often live in low-density areas not well served by public transportation.

Census 2000 documents the high rates of poverty in Bucoda and Grand Mound. On the rural Nisqually Indian Reservation, a 1995 needs assessment indicated a 25-28 percent unemployment rate among the Tribal Labor Force and that the average annual family income is less than \$12,000. For the Chehalis Reservation, the enrolled tribal population experiences an unemployment rate, as a percentage of the labor force, of 42 percent. The number of employed persons with incomes below poverty level is 52 percent of the employed labor force.

- May be remotely located from subsidized daycare opportunities, requiring additional travel distance and time.

Social service providers indicate that most openings in daycare are in the Lacey area, while most clients live in Olympia and rural areas.

- Often have a high need for childcare.

In 2000, of the 2,750 children in households receiving Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) in the infant to 18-year age group, 1,050 are younger than school age and 1,290 require before and after school childcare. Single parents head more than 40 percent of all homes on the Nisqually Reservation.

- Cannot afford on-demand services such as taxis that would shorten trip times and provide more direct, individual service.

The estimated cost for a one-way taxi ride from the rural areas to the urban core (30 miles) in Thurston County is \$90.

- Are unaware of available services.

The Human Services Transportation Forum determined, and the Focus Groups validated, that more than 60 percent of providers and clients are unaware of services. Since rules and rates change frequently, even those with basic knowledge are stymied by a lack of current, accurate information. Many persons with disabilities may face special challenges because materials are not available in a suitable format, the individual may not be able to read, or travel training services may be limited or non-existent. Language barriers may also inhibit certain clients from awareness of available services.

- Have language barriers that make service delivery difficult.

A growing number of English as Second Language clients meet the low-income/TANF profile, as the region experiences growth in racial and ethnic groups. Social service providers identified the nearly 400 Vietnamese families in their client base as having serious language barriers.

In its traditional forms, public transportation is unlikely to fill these unmet needs. It is not well suited for timely cross town travel or the complicated transfers necessary for many childcare and work-related trips during a single day. Standard public transportation operates on a fixed schedule that focuses on core areas with hours that do not match the needs of this clientele. With recent cuts to funding and service, public transportation's ability to assist with trip planning, trip training, and other individual solutions has diminished.

Simply put, the geographical distribution of jobs, training, medical and other services does not match the geographical distribution of special needs. Because of this pattern and the low-density of much of the region, a traditional mass transit solution is not viable.

The combination of a sprawl pattern of development and the mostly urban public transportation benefit area may leave clients with potential service at their point of origin or their point of destination, but not both. Transit is geared toward the traditional commute peaks, resulting in lack of service for the non-traditional work hours in jobs and training often encountered by this population. Prior to the Rural & Tribal Transportation Service, there was no public transportation available to people in many Tribal, rural, and suburban communities.

At a Forum-sponsored focus group, low-income clients were asked: "What are your transportation challenges and what one item would improve your transportation service?" These replies define the "gap" in human terms.

- Car.
- Driver's license.
- A van and driver available for trips.
- A regular schedule for trips, where every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m., there is a trip to South Puget Sound Community College and every Thursday at 8:15, we could travel to the CSO.
- At least half of my problem is that Intercity Transit doesn't serve the rural areas.
- We never know the details about what services we can use. Moreover, the rules keep changing.
- The cost of taxis is too high and that is the only way I can attend my night classes.
- Need reliable transportation. Lateness is bad for school, work, and medical appointments. You need to assert that you have reliable transportation in accepting a job. The school will not be flexible if you are late.

The gaps can be categorized as:

- Available Modes – Growth and development patterns, the need to transport children to childcare, the lack of reliable vehicles and licensure, and other factors limit the use of options such as biking, walking and ridesharing.
- Travel Time – Cross-town and cross-county trips require hours of travel, transfers, and wait times. Since training, social service providers, and potential jobs may be sprawled across the county, many clients leave two to three hours early to ensure timely arrivals.
- Routes – Many rural routes and suburban neighborhood routes are either no longer served by Intercity Transit or have limited services.
- Hours – Most transportation does not provide service that supports non-traditional work hours and split shifts that are often a feature of available jobs. Weekend service is weak to non-existent. Many workers in this category also have schedules that change on a weekly basis, making transportation planning an onerous chore.
- Cost – The cost of alternatives other than transit may be prohibitive for many community members.
- Ease of Use – For many people, riding public transportation is a distant childhood memory. Schedules are intimidating. There is fear of getting off at the wrong stop. Fares are confusing and not coordinated across systems. Eligibility processes are confusing and require early planning.

- Service Information – There is not a single resource that explains all the transportation available to the residents of the Thurston Region. Often service information is outdated or incomplete.

The WorkFirst Local Area Planning Partners indicated that traditional fixed route transit solutions are not the answer for their clients. Transit passes are routinely made available to this client group. They are seldom used.

Transportation Services – Thurston County

While a number of transportation providers serve the region, choices for people with special needs are often limited. Some providers serve only students or clients with certain special needs, such as the senior or disabled community. Other providers supply only specific types of trips, such as medical visits covered by Medicaid.

School Districts

School districts are by far the largest public transportation provider in the area, covering the nine school districts of the Thurston Region: Yelm (2), Rainier (307), Tenino (402), Centralia (401-L), Rochester (401), Tumwater (33), Griffin (324), Olympia (111), and North Thurston (3). A variety of regulatory and custom barriers inhibit school transportation from coordinating with other transportation providers. The Forum and ACCT continue to look for ways to overcome barriers while still meeting the requirements of each entity.

Intercity Transit

Overview

Intercity Transit has been serving the community for 25 years. Funding is supplied by local sales tax, transit fares, contracted services and federal and state grants. A municipal corporation, Intercity Transit provides public transportation for people who live and work in Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater, and Yelm, an area of approximately 94 square miles. This agency operates 23 bus routes, a door-door service for people with disabilities, a vanpool program, specialized van programs, and are active in community partnerships. Intercity Transit's 2006 operating budget is \$21.5 million with a capital budget of \$7 million.

The agency supplies an average of 10,000 rides each weekday on fixed-route service and Dial-A-Lift, providing over 3.3 million rides system wide in 2005. Fixed-route bus service is available weekdays on 23 routes, 16 routes on Saturdays, and 13 routes on weekday evenings and 11 routes on Sundays. The service operates every 15 to 30 minutes on many major corridors during peak weekday travel times and every 30 to 60 minutes during off-peak times. Service is available weekdays from 5:45 a.m. to 11:30 p.m., on Saturdays from 8:15 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. and 8:30 a.m. to 8:15 p.m. on Sundays. Bus service includes:

- 20 routes serving the greater Olympia/Lacey/Tumwater/Yelm area;
- 3 routes providing express service to Tacoma/Lakewood (Pierce County), including connection to the Sound Transit Seattle Express service and Sounder rail;
- Connections to neighboring transit systems including Pierce, Grays Harbor, and Mason counties.

Intercity Transit operates: a fleet of 88 buses and 148 vanpool vehicles; five transit centers, including two main facilities in Olympia and Lacey and primary transfer stations at Westfield Shoppingtown, Tumwater Square, and Little Prairie Center; 890 bus stops, 175 bus shelters, and three park-and-ride lots. Believing in multimodal connections and

accessibility, Intercity Transit has bike racks on all buses, and all vehicles are ADA accessible. All buses are fueled by a cleaner, energy efficient blend of biodiesel and ultra low sulfur diesel

Dial-a-Lift and Travel Training

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 mandated that transit agencies provide a complementary *paratransit* service for people whose disabilities prevent them from using the fixed route bus service. Intercity Transit meets and exceeds the requirements of the ADA with Dial-A-Lift (DAL), a door-to-door, shared-ride public transportation service for people with qualified ADA disabilities that prevent them from using regular Intercity Transit bus service. The Dial-A-Lift service operates at the same times and in the same areas fixed route service operates.

Potential Dial-A-Lift customers must successfully complete an application and eligibility process before being certified to use DAL. People with disabilities that prevent them from getting to or from a fixed route bus stop, boarding or exiting an accessible fixed route bus may be eligible, as well as those persons whose disability prevents them from navigating the system without the assistance of another person. Qualified individuals may request rides on Dial-A-Lift by calling in from one to five days in advance. Intercity Transit offers limited "same-day" service, if time and space permits.

Dial-A-Lift provides over 400 trips on an average weekday. There are currently over 2,000 clients certified to use the service, and about 750 clients ride regularly every month. Intercity Transit's DAL service travels over 50,000 miles every month, providing service to people who live three-quarter miles from a fixed route in Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater, and people who live one and one-half miles from the nearest fixed route

Dial-A-Lift offers a free, one-on-one travel training service for people who want to learn to use the fixed route system. This program helps new riders, seniors, and people with disabilities to successfully and comfortably use the regular fixed route system. Intercity Transit's Travel Training Program contributes in-kind services to support the Rural & Tribal Transportation Program (R/T).

Vanpool Program

In 2007, Intercity Transit's Vanpool Program will celebrate its 25th year of operation. The 139 active Vanpools travel to and from King, Pierce, Lewis, Grays Harbor, Mason and Thurston counties, taking nearly 1,000 cars off the road each day. The fleet consists of 7, 8, 12 and 15 passenger vehicles. The Vanpool Program serves both public and private employers and one end of the commute must be in Thurston County. Intercity Transit requires a group of at least five commuters to begin a Vanpool. Volunteer drivers are approved and trained by Intercity Transit.

Village Vans

Village Vans is an innovative service envisioned by the Thurston County Human Services Transportation Forum in the late 1990s, and elegantly implemented by Intercity Transit. The program was designed to meet a gap identified in the planning process – lack of

transportation for low income families working toward economic independence. At that time, data indicated that over 70 percent of work search problems for this population were complicated by the lack of transportation, making transition from government aid to a living wage job much more difficult if not impossible.

With start-up funding from the Federal Transit Administration Job Access, Reverse Commute Program (JARC) and the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services WorkFirst Transportation Initiative (WTI), Intercity Transit developed and implemented the Village Vans Program which provides advanced reservation, door-to-door transportation to support individuals with low income in their job search activities.

The program continues with funding from JARC and local support as a successful low cost, high impact service helping more than 25,000 passengers with transportation needs. Customer data analysis shows that 75 percent of passengers who were on government aid while using Village Vans are no longer receiving state assistance.

Village Vans is a dual program that provides a critical service to low income families by offering free transportation as well as free customized job skills training. Eligible training applicants are referred to the Village Vans Job Skills Training Program from WorkFirst, South Puget Sound Community College, WorkSource, Pacific Mountain WorkForce Consortium, two Department of Labor Senior Community Service Employment Programs, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and other employment support agencies. Community volunteers seeking work experience and job skills training are also eligible. Participants gain current work experience as professional drivers while completing individualized curriculums designed to provide transferable job skills. They also receive guidance and support in their job search. An amazing 98 percent of training participants have found good jobs paying more than minimum wage while in the training program.

Intercity Transit is solely responsible for the continuing financial support of Village Vans with the JARC grant, South Puget Sound Community College, Intercity Transit funds, and the value of local in-kind contributions. Village Vans continues to be an important participant in regular and on-going collaboration and coordination efforts through several groups engaged in improving services to low income families.

Carpool Program

Intercity Transit is part of a six-county Regional Ridematch program for commuters traveling throughout the Puget Sound Region. This system, coupled with a local database and personal assistance, helps customers to identify carpool partners.

Community Vans Program

Intercity Transit makes two 12-passenger vans retired from the vanpool fleet available to non-profit and governmental agencies on a reservation basis. The transit agency houses, maintains, fuels, and insures the vans and charges a per-mile rate for their use.

Rural & Tribal Transportation (R/T)

Reflecting a strong coordinated community effort, Rural & Tribal Transportation (R/T) encompasses years of planning, needs analysis, cooperative effort, regular service monitoring, and frequent modification to provide public transportation services and connections to individuals living outside Intercity Transit's (I.T.) Public Transportation Benefit Area.

Target Population and Service Area

R/T serves the southern and eastern portions of the Thurston Region outside Intercity Transit's service boundaries, connecting to but not duplicating Intercity Transit's routes. Because many services and employment opportunities for this population lie outside Thurston County, R/T also connects to Lewis County and will cooperate with Mason, Grays Harbor and Pierce Counties in trip coordination. Special emphasis is placed on people with low incomes and work related trips.

Types of Service

R/T encompasses several service elements tailored to meet specific community needs:

Rural South & East County Service Element: This fare-based element currently serves the communities of Rochester, Tenino, Bucoda, Rainier and Yelm – transporting residents to the urban areas of Thurston and Lewis Counties. Connections at Intercity Transit's hub in Tumwater and Twin Transit in Centralia facilitate efficient transfers to those systems.

Begun primarily as an on-demand system, the provider and community partners have moved to a more efficient directional service that encourages trips to the north on the even hours and to south on the odd hours.

Tribal Service Element: Taking a different form for each Tribe, this element brings on-demand and variable fixed route transportation to the Nisqually Indian Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation. This is currently a fare-free element – reflecting Tribal culture – but R/T and Intercity Transit are negotiating with the Nisqually Tribe for a pre-paid pass program.

The Nisqually Tribal Reservation has access to Intercity Transit fixed route and dial-a-lift services, but had no way to travel to the transit stop. To support the Tribe, R/T operates a variable fixed route and on-demand service that connects to Intercity Transit transfer points at the Red Wind Casino and in Lacey. Helping people travel from the more remote portions of the Reservation to central services is paramount.

The Chehalis Tribe uses the basic Rural Program with its directional routing and on-demand service. Because of the Tribe's strong educational scholarship program, emphasis is placed on trips to Centralia College.

Intercity Element: R/T's Intercity Service connects the rural communities and cities of Rochester, Grand Mount, Bucoda, Tenino, Rainier, and Yelm; the urban areas of the cities of Lacey, Tumwater, and Centralia (Lewis County) and the Nisqually Indian Tribe and Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation. This intercity route also feeds into the service areas of Intercity Transit and Twin Transit, providing connections along the

I-5 corridor to the north via Sound Transit, Pierce Transit and King County Metro, to Greyhound services in Olympia, and AMTRAK services in Olympia and Centralia.

After School Service Element: Realizing that traditional school transportation efficiently and effectively serves certain trip needs, this element contracts with Laidlaw for after school programs in the Rochester, Bucoda and Tenino areas. Thanks to coordination efforts between the partners, different programs share the ride on the school bus. This element serves both the youth participants, but also parents with non-traditional work schedules.

Senior Service Element: R/T has an agreement in place with Senior Services for South Sound that allows qualified seniors to take advantage of a pre-paid pass when using the regularly scheduled and on-demand services.

Days and Hours

As with the Type of Service, the hours also reflect community needs and connections.

- All services operate Monday through Friday.
- Rural, Chehalis Tribal and Intercity Services operate from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Nisqually Tribal service takes advantage of connections to Intercity Transit, operating from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- After School services operate in the late afternoon and early evening, with occasional special trips on Saturdays, scheduled by social service and educational partners to meet program needs.
- For Rural, Tribal and Intercity service, customers may contact a staffed Dispatch system from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday for trip scheduling or a 24/7 automated information and message system.

2007-09 Services

As R/T looks to the future in the coming biennium, we plan to:

Continue to provide:

- **Intercity service** between Rochester, Tenino, Bucoda, Rainier, Yelm, Nisqually Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, Lacey, Tumwater and Centralia.
- **Fixed route and on demand service** for the rural and Tribal communities of the Thurston Region.
- **Connections to Intercity Transit** (Thurston County) and **Twin Transit** (Lewis County) at hubs that allow for easy transfers - but not duplication of service.
- **After school program transportation**, helping children in low-income communities with safe and meaningful after school activities, that provide tutoring and skill development, also benefiting parents who work non-traditional hours.
- **Trips for elders** through coordination with senior services providers, using pre-paid passes, and rural and Tribal elder programs.
- **Service 5 days a week, 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.**

Expand and Add:

- **Service** to the **Steamboat Island** area, coordinating with Squaxin Island, Mason and Grays Harbor Transit systems. This will serve residents of all three counties and the Squaxin Tribe.
- Community awareness with a **new marketing campaign**, including **web-based information**. With a stable transportation provider and experience-based routing and scheduling, the next step is to undertake a broad marketing effort to increase awareness of the program and ridership. The website will provide information for social service and transportation providers, as well as clients.
- **Infrastructure** in the form of **transit shelters**, and **multimodal improvements** supplied by the Tribal communities.
- **Outreach to Hispanic and other minority populations**, through partnerships with local social service providers and community organizations and specialized focus groups.
- **Increased coordination** with public, private and non-profit transportation services in Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Pierce and Grays Harbor Counties
- **Travel Training** for many residents, who are using public transportation for the first time through R/T. This new emphasis on travel training will also include a train-the-trainer program for community members. As part of the Hispanic outreach, HSTF will seek bi-lingual community members to assist with the effort.
- **Mobility Management**. Historically, the voluntary and under-funded efforts of key players have implemented and maintained R/T. TRPC, I.T. and transportation service providers struggled with sufficient time to manage long range planning strategies. In order to implement and maintain a premier service in the Thurston Region – one that is sustainable, with increased efficiency and effectiveness – one full time equivalent staff is needed.

For many organizations, Mobility Management focuses solely on the client and social service and transportation providers, with trip planning and coordination of eligibility and services being major tasks. In the Thurston Region, we based funding for this initiative on an Associate Planner level position at TRPC; however several persons will likely share the role. Mobility Management will focus not only on one-on-one client support, but also tasks such as:

- Manage Resource Development – seeking sustainable funding including private and government agreements and grants.
- Facilitate the Thurston County Human Services Transportation Forum, and maintain long and short term planning and implementation strategies.
- Develop and implement a park-and-ride and transit shelter plan, addressing the feasibility of public and private partnerships to institute mixed use park-and-ride facilities and agreements regarding installation and maintenance of shelters.

- Work with employers to explore transportation options for people working outside traditional work hours. Explore vanpool, carpool, or worker-driver options with Tribal gaming facilities and other employers.
- Convene policymakers to provide information on R/T and other opportunities for collaboration and to explore transportation funding mechanisms available to local and Tribal governments.
- Work with the ACCT Council on procedural, policy, and legislative issues.
- Act as a liaison between R/T, the Forum, transportation providers, human service agencies and school districts.
- Focus on regular collaboration with Mobility Management functions in adjacent counties to continue to improve coordination and connections.
- Serve as a key link between the policy level and the management level.

Improve efficiencies and cost-effectiveness

- **Convert on-demand service to routed service** where appropriate based on service demands.
- **Expand cost sharing methods** with Medicaid and other providers.

Appendix: Map 10

Northwest Connections

The contracted service provider for R/T, Northwest Connections has been supplying transportation services for people with special needs for the past 30 years. Northwest Connections provides transportation services for the Medicaid program, Veterans Administration, and other local and state programs. A leader in customer service and driver training, this non-profit organization brings important technical assistance and on-the-ground service experience to the Forum.

Yelm Community Center

Yelm Community Center is a multi-service community social service provider serving the rural Yelm and Rainier areas with routes and demand response services. This general population transportation service is free and open to all people. Vehicles are wheelchair accessible. Service hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, with field trip transportation for elders, youth and people with disabilities Tuesdays and Fridays.

Senior and Youth Programs

Seniors

The Lewis, Mason, Thurston Area Agency on Aging (AAA) funds transportation programs for seniors. There are no set fees for service, rather services are provided on a donation basis. This funding supports the transportation programs of Senior Services of South Sound, who contracts with R/T in a pass program for certain seniors in the rural portions of the County.

Because of the requirements of funding sources, there are certain program guidelines, restrictions and definitions apply:

- **Transportation Services** - Services designed to transport older persons to and from medical and health care services, social services, meal programs, senior centers, shopping and recreational activities so such service will be accessible to eligible individuals who have no other means of transportation or are unable to use existing transportation. Personal assistance for those with limited physical mobility may be provided.
- **Available Funding** - Title III of the Older Americans Act and/or the Senior Citizens Services Act (SCSA) may fund this program. For either funding source, the only eligibility requirement is age 60 or over.
- **Regular Specialized Transportation** - The transportation of passengers using provider-owned vehicles utilizing special equipment when required or necessary to accommodate those with limited physical mobility. Drivers are usually paid, but volunteer drivers may also be utilized.
- **Volunteer Transportation** – The transportation of passengers using privately owned vehicles. Drivers are volunteers, generally reimbursed for expenses incurred. These services may be used along with or as an alternative to regular specialized transportation.
- **Target Population** - The target population for transportation services is persons age 60 and over who:
 1. Need transportation to medical and health care services, social services, meal programs, senior centers, shopping and recreational activities; and
 2. Cannot manage their own transportation because:
 - a. They do not have a car; or
 - b. They cannot drive; or
 - c. They cannot afford to drive; and
 - d. They cannot use public transportation; or
 - e. Public transportation is not available or accessible.

Individual organizations also provide senior transportation services, including the Yelm Adult Community Center. The Thurston Region is home to a growing number of senior facilities, including assisted living and other supportive environments. Most facilities provide at least some level of transportation services for its residents, including weekly shopping trips and recreational excursions, as well as transportation for medical appointments. Many of these businesses have expressed concerns about the cost and liability of these services and an interest in coordinating with other providers.

Youth

The Thurston Region provides many resources to serve the community's youth. These include after school programs like those of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Thurston County, the Rochester Organization of Families and the Thurston County Parks Department. Transportation for these critical programs for at-risk youth is provided by R/T. Other organizations, such as Community Youth Services make use of Intercity Transit, R/T and their agency vehicle depending on the program needs.

Other Private and Non-Profit Programs

Of the many private and non-profit social service programs in the Thurston Region, most are targeted to a specific target population or trip purpose. Many of these organizations have participated in the Thurston County Human Services Transportation Forum and actively work to identify ways to share resources and coordinate to provide more service and increase efficiency and effectiveness of all funding.

Taxicab, cabulance, airporter and limousine services are also available to residents of the Thurston Region. Most are either cost-prohibitive or designed for a specific trip purpose. The one-way cost, for example, from the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation area to downtown Olympia would be approximately \$90.00. DC Cab, the major taxi company in the area provides contracted trips for state and local social service providers, as well as private travel. DC Cab has also participated in and provided technical assistance to the Forum.

Transportation Services - Adjacent County Programs

Mason Transit

Mason Transit has operated since 1992, providing county-wide public transportation service to this largely rural county. This service includes routed, route deviated and dial-a-ride service with destinations in adjacent counties making connections to six public transit systems (Kitsap, Jefferson, Clallam, Grays Harbor, Intercity, and Pierce) and Squaxin Tribal Transit. Eight routes and dial-a-ride services operate from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Service is free within Mason County, with a \$1.00 fare charged outside the county boundary. Special rates are available for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Mason Transit is a leader in coordinated transportation services, including shared school/public transit services and volunteer driver training to support elders. This agency also makes use of the Road-to-Work education program in partnership with Mason County WorkSource to assist residents seeking training and jobs through the Washington State Employment Security Department with transportation issues.

In addition to regular bus service, Mason Transit also supports a worker-driver bus program for Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Kitsap County, has a growing vanpool program, and supplies travel training. All vehicles are wheel chair accessible and equipped with bike racks. Mason Transit also operates five park-and-ride lots in Shelton and Belfair.

Pierce Transit

Pierce Transit was formed in 1979 and serves a 414 square mile area with an estimated population of 721,000. The service area includes the cities and towns of Bonney Lake, Buckley, DuPont, Fife, Edgewood, Fircrest, Gig Harbor, Lakewood, Milton, Orting, Puyallup, Ruston, Steilacoom, Sumner, Tacoma and University Place, along with extensive unincorporated areas of Pierce County.

Pierce Transit provides 50 local bus routes, specialized transportation for people with disabilities (SHUTTLE), vanpool, ridematching and intercounty express service to Seattle, Sea-Tac Airport and Olympia provided in cooperation with Sound Transit and Intercity Transit. The agency's fixed-route system includes routes that operate on more than 900 miles of city streets, county roads and state highways from Seattle through Tacoma and on to Olympia. Local fares are \$1.50, with variable fares for outside Pierce County and a reduced fare program for certain riders.

Serving these areas is a fleet of over 250 buses, all wheelchair accessible and all running on compressed natural gas. Eleven Transit Centers and Stations, over 3,300 bus stops, more than 200 covered bus shelters and 20 park-and-ride lots are provided for our patrons. Pierce Transit's fixed-route service carried more than 14 million passengers in 2005.

Pierce Transit also partners on the Beyond the Borders program. Seniors, people with disabilities, or low income residents of Pierce County, who live outside of the Pierce

Transit service area, are eligible for free transportation services from their residence to several Pierce Transit bus stops, facilitating transfers to all of Pierce Transit's routes.

Grays Harbor Transit

Located in Grays Harbor County, this transit system's hub is in the Aberdeen/Hoquiam area. Making use of the Greyhound Station in Olympia, one route connects Olympia to Grays Harbor destinations. Weekday service hours vary by route, but many operate from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00. On weekends, the service hours and number of trips are limited. Fares start at \$.50, and discounted tickets and passes are available.

Twin Transit

Twin Transit serves the Centralia and Chehalis areas of Lewis County, including the Amtrak Station and Centralia College. The service operates from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., with route variations. Twin Transit charges \$.50 for a one-way fare. The Thurston Region's Rural & Tribal Transportation Program (R/T) connects Thurston County residents to Lewis County destinations at several of Twin's hubs.

Transportation Services - Intercity Providers

The area is served by several other transportation providers that supply intercity services:

Greyhound/Northwestern Trailways

For years, Greyhound was a viable option for longer distance travel for Thurston County residents. With recent cuts to services and stops, the only access to this service is at the Olympia terminal. A combination of Northwestern Trailways and Greyhound vehicles supply five daily trips along the I-5 corridor. R/T, Village Vans and other services can either deliver people to the terminal or transport riders to Intercity Transit's fixed route service for connections.

Appendix: Map 11, Map 12

AMTRAK

The rail service operates five daily north/south trips and two daily east/west trips. Intercity Transit, and several cab companies serve Centennial Station. Intercity Transit's route provides service between the AMTRAK Station and downtown Olympia, serving the Lacey Transit Center on the way. The bus trip to downtown Olympia takes nearly 45 minutes one way. Delays on the Coast Starlight make transit connections difficult.

Appendix: Map 13

Squaxin Tribal

Considered a model tribal transit program at state and national levels, the Squaxin Island Tribe has operated a formal community transit service called Squaxin Transit since 1999. The service includes fixed route, deviated route, call response, demand response, and Dial-a-Ride transportation services provided free to the general public, Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Squaxin Transit serves on- and off-reservation areas and makes numerous daily connections with Mason Transit in Kamilche and Grays Harbor Transit in McCleary. Squaxin Transit operates a similar service, often running at capacity, in the Steamboat Island Road area of Thurston County (part of the Squaxin Reservation is in this area of Thurston County). It is currently the only fixed route transit service in the fast-growing Steamboat Island Road area.

Squaxin Transit uses two ADA accessible, 12- and 15-passenger cutaway minibuses, currently running beyond their fully operational life. It uses two part-time drivers and one supplemental driver, and cell and land-line phone dispatching/communication. In the past, Squaxin Transit operations have been funded by WSDOT Rural Mobility grant, Mason Transit in-kind, and Squaxin Island Tribe in-kind and cash contributions.

Squaxin Transit and Mason Transit both use the Kamilche Transit Center located just off the intersection of WA Highway 101 and WA Highway 108. Owned and operated by the

Squaxin Island Tribe since 1999, the Kamilche Transit Center is the primary connection point between the two transit providers.

The Squaxin Island Tribe also provides a variety of demand response public transportation services through other tribal programs (i.e. Education, Health, Elders) with staff and volunteers. In 2007, the Tribe will develop a Squaxin Transit Service Enhancement Plan to evaluate and optimize all tribal public transportation services with potential planning funds from the Federal Transit Administration Tribal Transit program.

Lower Columbia Community Action Council (CAP)

This rural public transportation service has operated since 1997, linking communities along the I-5 corridor to the major transit systems in Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, and Thurston counties. This service fills a documented gap, permitting riders to travel by public transportation from Vancouver in the south, to Bellingham in the north, and to Aberdeen on the coast.

L.E.W.I.S Mountain Highway Transit

Developed by the White Pass Community Services Coalition, this is a general public, route-deviated transportation service that provides access to communities between Packwood and the Twin Cities, and from Morton through Eatonville to the Elk Plain Wal-Mart. The fare-based service (\$2.00/trip) operates Monday through Friday with departure times beginning at 3:40 a.m. and ending at 8:42 p.m. This service is important to Thurston County residents because of the connections to R/T services in Centralia.

Solutions

Over the past ten years, the Forum and other community partners have explored gaps, needs and problems with transportation in the Thurston Region. In addition to focusing on needs, the group wrestled with solutions. They worked with other ACCT-supported coalitions across the state and with WSDOT and other technical staff. Not content to look just locally, the partners also reviewed literature on programs around the United States and world.

In early planning stages, versions of Rural & Tribal Transportation (R/T) and Village Vans were developed, as well as a Local Travel Agency, Tripless Transportation (encouraging employers to support telework), Sweat Equity (Car Sharing & Skill Building), and State Agency Outreach (encouraging employment at locations well served by traditional transit service). The 2002 JARC Plan also suggested expanded coordination and express service across county lines, an emphasis on working with employers in areas of dense development, increased coordination with school transportation providers, including HeadStart, and exploration of technical improvements such as dispatch, GPS, and electronic fare media.

Some ideas were considered, but rejected. The region chose not to create a non-profit entity with its own fleet of vehicles. Expansion of Intercity Transit's fixed route service area continues to be explored as an option. However, as recent as fall 2006, the Intercity Transit Authority reviewed that option and determined that supporting R/T was a more cost-effective, efficient solution.

Many of those early thoughts and ideas are included as part of the programs in the Prioritized Project List for 2007-09. Rural & Tribal Transportation includes a Mobility Management function similar to the Local Travel Agency. Village Vans has changed to include not only transportation service but also job training. Northwest Connection's vehicle replacement and dispatch software and hardware projects support service reliability and expansion, as well as enhanced technology.

Other strategies remain on the pending list – some are included in R/T's Mobility Management program for the 07-09 biennium:

- Implement a Smart Card electronic fare system that works on all systems.
- Integrate coordinated transportation strategies with state programs such as Commute Trip Reduction.
- Create shared public and private park-and-ride and transit shelters, including maintenance partnerships. Several shelters are part of the Tribal in-kind match for the 07-09 grant application.
- Explore the funding mechanisms available to jurisdictions and Tribes for creating sustainable funding streams.
- Develop a strategy for shared maintenance facilities.
- Create, distribute and maintain a Transportation Resource Directory.

- Integrate with 2-1-1 service, in maintaining a database of transportation options and supplying appropriate referrals.

These solutions and continued coordination will not be possible without the strong dedication of regional policymakers and partner organizations. Both the projects and organizations included in the Project List are key partners with proven solutions. Intercity Transit's Village Van program has successfully helped people find and retain employment and gain important work skills. Intercity Transit also provides in-kind match, technical assistance, and actively works with the Forum. Rural & Tribal Transportation (R/T) transports hundreds of people each workday to jobs, training, essential appointments and for other critical purposes. In addition to being the lead agency for R/T, TOGETHER! brings the message of coordination to its many social service partners in the community. Northwest Connections, the contracted provider for R/T supplies invaluable technical assistance to the Forum's activities. The additional vehicles and dispatch improvements will serve not only R/T, but also other programs such as Medicaid and Veteran's transportation.

Because of a history of coordination and cooperation, the task of creating a prioritized project list was not an onerous one for the Thurston Region. Being a single-county Regional Transportation Planning Organization also aided in the selection process. Projects were selected based on the Regional Transportation Plan Goal:

Ensure transportation system investments support the special travel needs of youth, elders, people with disabilities, literacy or language barriers, and those with low incomes.

And the Regional Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Plan Goals:

- 1. Increase mobility options***
- 2. Improve individual service***
- 3. Increase coordination with other systems and programs***
- 4. Improve efficiency***

Thurston Region 2007-09 Prioritized Project List

The Project List is not prioritized.

Thurston Region 2007-09 Prioritized Project List							
Title & Description	Type	Approximate Cost 07-09	Organization	Goal 1: Mobility	Goal 2: Individual Service	Goal 3: Coordination	Goal 4: Efficiency
<p>Rural & Tribal Transportation (R/T): A coordinated, omnibus program connecting rural communities.</p> <p>R/T serves the southern and eastern portions of Thurston County outside of Intercity Transit's service area. Using a combination of fixed route, variable fixed route, on-demand and routed on-demand service, R/T provides transportation to the Nisqually Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, the communities of Rochester, Tenino, Bucoda, Rainier and Yelm, and surrounding rural areas.</p>	Operating	\$2,075,000	TOGETHER! & TRPC	√	√	√	√
<p>Intercity Transit Village Vans:</p> <p>A demand response, door-to-door, free transportation service for low income job seekers or workers to jobs and other employment support activities in the greater urban area of Olympia, Tumwater and Lacey, Thurston County. Van drivers are low income job seekers getting current work experience and receiving customized job skills training and job placement assistance.</p>	Operating	\$300,000	Intercity Transit	√	√	√	√
<p>New Dispatch and Scheduling Software System, with Related Hardware:</p> <p>Obtain new dispatch and scheduling software system and related computer hardware to preserve and enhance existing service provided under the Rural and Tribal transportation, Medical Assistance Administration, various Transit Agencies and Federal Veterans Administration programs in Rural Thurston and contiguous Counties throughout the Puget Sound Region to ensure safe, reliable and efficient service delivery.</p>	Capital	\$65,000	Northwest Connections	√	√	√	√
<p>Replacement Vehicles:</p> <p>Obtain three (3) replacement minibuses to preserve existing service provided under the Rural and Tribal transportation, Medical Assistance Administration, and Federal Veterans Administration programs in Rural Thurston and contiguous Counties to ensure safe, reliable and efficient service delivery.</p>	Capital	\$160,000	Northwest Connections	√	√	√	√

Short Title

Rural & Tribal Transportation (R/T)

Full Title and Description

Rural & Tribal Transportation (R/T): A coordinated, omnibus program connecting rural communities.

R/T serves the southern and eastern portions of Thurston County outside of Intercity Transit's service area. Using a combination of fixed route, variable fixed route, on-demand and routed on-demand service, R/T provides transportation to the Nisqually Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, the communities of Rochester, Tenino, Bucoda, Rainier and Yelm, and surrounding rural areas.

Project Type

Operations

Approximate Cost 2007-09 Biennium

\$2,075,000

Organization

TOGETHER! And Thurston Regional Planning Council

Supports Plan Goals

Goal 1: Increase mobility options

- Expand service area
- Explore coordination with Commute Trip Reduction and Vanpool Programs

Goal 2: Improve individual service

- Provide Mobility Management services
- Distribute new informational materials
- Increase outreach to minority communities

Goal 3: Increase coordination with other systems and programs

- Connect with Squaxin, Mason, Lewis, Pierce, and Grays Harbor Transits
- Focus on cross-county Mobility Management

Goal 4: Improve efficiency

- Modify routes and schedules to improve connections, ridership/service hour
 - Implement a program that supports – but does not duplicate – other services
-

Short Title

Village Vans

Full Title and Description

Intercity Transit Village Vans: A demand response, door-to-door, free transportation service for low income job seekers or workers to jobs and other employment support activities in the greater urban area of Olympia, Tumwater and Lacey, Thurston County. Van drivers are low income job seekers getting current work experience and receiving customized job skills training and job placement assistance.

Project Type

Operations

Approximate Cost 2007-09 Biennium

\$300,000

Organization

Intercity Transit

Supports Plan Goals

Goal 1: Increase mobility options

- Ensure difficult traveling needs relating to cost, time, distance, destination and schedule are met efficiently and effectively.

Goal 2: Improve individual service

- Provide solutions to unique and individual transportation needs through increased awareness and excellent, consistent customer service.
- Finish development of a Thurston County Transportation Resource Directory and make available to all citizens.

Goal 3: Increase coordination with other systems and programs

- Improve linkage with all other transportation providers by educating citizens on connection availability and collaborating on continual improvement of coordinated service provision.

Goal 4: Improve efficiency

- Reach full potential of recently installed scheduling and dispatching software system improving route efficiency and trip capacity.
 - Continue to leverage local support through the use of volunteer drivers.
-

Short Title

New Dispatch and Scheduling Software System, with Related Hardware

Full Title and Description

New Dispatch and Scheduling Software System, with Related Hardware:

Obtain new dispatch and scheduling software system and related computer hardware to preserve and enhance existing service provided under the Rural & Tribal Transportation (R/T), Medical Assistance Administration, various Transit Agencies and Federal Veterans Administration programs in Rural Thurston and contiguous Counties throughout the Puget Sound Region to ensure safe, reliable and efficient service delivery.

Project Type

Capital

Approximate Cost 2007-09 Biennium

\$65,000

Organization

Northwest Connections

Supports Plan Goals

Goal 1: Increase mobility options

- Tool to help identify available resources in specific areas
- Tool to track trends for improved service availability

Goal 2: Improve individual service

- Tool to improve on-time tracking of vehicles (real time)
- Tool to better quote pick-up/drop-off times

Goal 3: Increase coordination with other systems and programs

- Tool to help identify connecting services with other systems
- Tool to assist in cost sharing between funders

Goal 4: Improve efficiency

- Tool to assist in reducing deadhead miles and hours
 - Tool to assist in reducing duplication and improve system productivity
 - Tool to assist in service evaluation and service mode selection
-

Short Title

Replacement Vehicles

Full Title and Description

Replacement Vehicles: Obtain three (3) replacement minibuses to preserve existing service provided under the Rural & Tribal transportation (R/T), Medical Assistance Administration, and Federal Veterans Administration programs in Rural Thurston and contiguous Counties to ensure safe, reliable and efficient service delivery.

Project Type

Capital

Approximate Cost 2007-09 Biennium

\$160,000

Organization

Northwest Connections

Supports Plan Goals

Goal 1: Increase mobility options

- System reliability by decreased service interruptions
- Reliable connections with other service providers for intercity services
- Increased service hours

Goal 2: Improve individual service

- Safety
- Reliability
- Security
- Dependability

Goal 3: Increase coordination with other systems and programs

- Vehicle capacity for multiple funder, intercity service
- Reliable connections to other service providers

Goal 4: Improve efficiency

- Decreased vehicle down time for major repairs
 - Decreased cost per mile
 - Increased revenue service hours
-

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Policy 1: Regional Transportation Plan, May 2004, Goals & Policies, Goal 3: Barrier-Free Transportation

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