

SNOQUALMIE VALLEY TRANSPORTATION

by Amy Biggs

Hi, Fall City neighbors! Snoqualmie Valley Transportation (SVT) is still up and running. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have augmented some of our services so that we are also making deliveries of food from food banks and senior centers. (You can call your local food bank or senior center and find out more about this service.) Masks need to be worn on the buses, and we'll supply one for you if you need it. Our ridership numbers haven't dropped as much as they have in other parts of the county, and we're still on the road getting folks to jobs, stores, and medical services. The Summer Freedom program means that riders age 18 and under ride free between June 1 and August 31.

SVT is also still an integral part of the Snoqualmie Valley Transportation Coalition, a group dedicated to making it easier for valley folks to get around. Learn more at kcmobility.org/svtc, and be sure to check out the "5-Year Transportation Plan" PDF on the website ("Priority of Projects" starts on page 19 of that document).

Sad news: We've lost two of our four Metro bus routes: the 232 out of Duvall and the 628 from North Bend/Snoqualmie to the Issaquah Highlands (and the only bus that went to the Preston Park & Ride). The mayors of North Bend, Snoqualmie, Carnation, and Duvall all requested more information, but the word came back that Metro had to make cuts, starting with the routes and runs with the lowest ridership. The trap we find ourselves in as we perform rural service will always be the same: Using typical metrics doesn't work, since we don't have the population density and the area is big. The transit companies' specialty is high-occupancy vehicles along heavily populated corridors. When they look at the number of rides per mile and the number of rides per hour and compare that to more urbanized areas, we lose. The routes get cut—or the number of runs on the route get cut—making them even more inconvenient, and the ridership drops even more until they are cut altogether. It's a vicious cycle.

Recent surveys showed that 82% of Valley residents

are either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with the level of transit options they have. We here at SVT couldn't agree more. We are your local bus company, and while we are on-time, safe, dependable, and accessible, we understand that it's decidedly inconvenient to take any bus that only runs every 90 minutes or to try and work your life and schedule around a bus out of the valley that only runs every two hours. Most people really appreciate that they



can get just about anywhere within the valley for \$1 using our little buses. Whether you use the door-to-door service or one of the loop buses or the regular fixed-route service, we know that our little buses aren't frequent enough. We understand that people will only use transit for regular commuting if it is a good alternative (cost-wise and time-wise) to driving a car. SVT and the coalition are working with the cities and King County to try to figure out the best way to solve this. This means we need to set minimum service standards and find ways to fund them. By working as a region, instead of as individual municipalities, we have a better chance of achieving our goals and getting you better options.

In the meantime, join the coalition if you can, talk to your leaders, and tell them you want convenient options, and call us if you need a ride at 425-88-7001. Little cities, little buses. SVT does rural right.