

# SNOQUALMIE VALLEY RECORD



Participants in the coalition's November meetings, from left, Duvall Senior Planner Lara Thomas, North Bend Mayor Ken Hearing, discuss the challenges of the transportation system now in place. (Courtesy Photo) Participants in the coalition's November meetings, from left, Duvall Senior Planner Lara Thomas, North Bend Mayor Ken Hearing, discuss the challenges of the transportation system now in place. (Courtesy Photo)

## **Valley organizations form coalition to improve public transportation options for residents**

by [Evan Pappas](#)

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Transportation in and around the Valley continuously faces challenges, but a new group of representatives of organizations in the area is hoping to make some big improvements in the coming years.

Making use of a \$100,000 grant from the non-profit human services organization Easterseals, Hopelink has formed the Snoqualmie Valley Transportation Coalition, a group of representatives from each city in the Snoqualmie Valley and several organizations who would be able to create a

more coordinated vision for the future of travel in and out of the area. The grant will fund the group's projects to make improvements to public transportation in the area over the next year.

Representatives from each city, King County, Snoqualmie Valley Transportation, Mt. Si Senior Center and the Snoqualmie Tribe, among others, were invited to join the group.

Kris Van Dyke, Snoqualmie Valley Mobility Coordinator at Hopelink, said that creating a coalition is an attempt to get a more coordinated effort working toward the same goals.

"Our goal was to get some different voices from the Valley, from organizations and residents to get opinions on where transportation was needed so we could get some goals to improve transportation," he said.

At the first set of meetings on Nov. 14 and 15, the group discussed the various needs and gaps in transportation and talked about connecting people, who may live farther out from any of the current bus stops operated by Snoqualmie Valley Transportation, with the services they need.

The group came up with four goals, Van Dyke said. The first is to identify the existing gaps in the Valley's transportation infrastructure, then do more supplemental surveying, and collect data as to what is currently missing. The second goal is to develop a pilot project using the data to address at least some of gaps in connections. The third is to implement a communications plan to have a consistent marketing push to let people know of the services that exist in the Valley. The fourth and final goal to come out of the coalition's first meeting is to create a five-year transit plan for the area.

"It went really well and it brought a lot of individuals together who might not sit down in a room together," Van Dyke said. "I think of this as a kickoff point, the workshop was to sit down, identify the needs and set up regular meetings. We can start working on these projects for the next year and beyond that."

Amy Biggs, director of Snoqualmie Valley Transportation said the first meeting was a success and she hopes the group will make positive progress in the coming year.

"The process was great, it really got people to focus on the importance of transit in the Snoqualmie Valley and I think that the group will end up being a force in the Valley for good," she said. "It's imperative we have the right people at the table to get the larger region to understand that Snoqualmie Valley is here and we are not going away."

The Easterseals grant was for a year-long project, so the coalition and its work will continue for at least a year. Van Dyke said that Hopelink doesn't want the group to disband after that and will look for ways to continue the work well after 2018.

Biggs wrote and applied for the grant in January and it was awarded a month later. She passed the grant to Hopelink, since that organization would be better able to use the funds to put together the coalition.

“I don’t have time to do mobility management,” Biggs explained. “But Hopelink said, ‘Yes! We totally want to do this!’”

One of the requirements for the grant, Biggs said, was a survey of transit users in the area, so Hopelink conducted a survey that went out to 26,000 homes in the Valley to ask about service levels.

“Eighty-two percent of the (respondents) in the Valley said that transit did not meet their needs. The highest disapproval rate came from Carnation, they came in at 93 percent,” she said.

With the data collected in the last few months informing the coming discussion, both Biggs and Van Dyke hope to see the coalition become a force for positive change and help connect people in the Valley.

“This is my passion, I just want to see people get around, to be an integral part of a network for safe, convenient, affordable transportation, Biggs said.

The next coalition meeting is at 1 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 8, at the Carnation Library. The coalition will discuss future meeting schedules, additional partners to invite to the group, and they will review the needs assessment done by Hopelink. The group will also look at a general overview of the services that are currently in the Valley, and start to determine next steps toward achieving the stated goals.



Courtesy Photo Amy Biggs, director of Snoqualmie Valley Transportation, talks about the state of transportation at the coalition’s first meeting.