

SNOQUALMIE VALLEY RECORD



Snoqualmie Valley Transportation supporter David Egan and Director Amy Biggs stand together in front of one of the busses. Evan Pappas/Staff Photo

Snoqualmie Valley Transportation celebrates 15 years of service

The Valley community celebrated 15 years of Snoqualmie Valley Transportation service.

By [Evan Pappas](#)

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Community members from throughout the Valley came together on Wednesday, Sept. 26, to celebrate 15 years of Snoqualmie Valley Transportation (SVT) service to the area.

Bus riders, drivers, dispatch and administration gathered at Snoqualmie Valley Transportation's new location on Boalch Ave. NW in North Bend to share stories over lunch and ice cream. SVT is the Valley's local bus company that runs fixed routes, loops, and offers a door-to-door service throughout the Valley, from North Bend to Monroe.

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SVT Director Amy Biggs explained the history of the organization, beginning with its inception in 2003 as a project of the Mt. Si Senior Center. The center received support from The Snoqualmie Tribe, King County Metro Transit, and WSDOT.

In the mid 2000s King County Metro Transit was pulling back many of their bus routes, and much of the service to the Valley was going to be pulled. At the time, SVT mostly was used to pick up and drop off seniors at the senior center, but with a WSDOT grant, buses from the county metro service, and grant writing support from the Snoqualmie Tribe, they were able to begin running buses to replace Metro's routes.

Biggs said she joined SVT in 2012, when the organization had lost funding, and she had helped to secure the contract with Metro's alternative services program. In order to not lose more connections in the Valley, Metro contracted with SVT for the first time to provide service in Duvall, Carnation, Fall City, Snoqualmie and North Bend. Metro had never contracted with a company to provide fixed-route services before, and the success of the SVT route led them to continue more projects in the alternative services program.

"We have a lot more rides. Metro is happy, and because of this project they started a new branch of metro called alternative services, and they started doing all sorts of innovative things," Biggs said. "They started the Duvall Community Van Project, and a Mercer Island shuttle that gets people to Seattle, and they have an Enumclaw/Black Diamond shuttle — it's all based on the success of what happened here."

SVT has continued to run its routes throughout the Valley while also adding more buses and more connections to its service. This past August, SVT began its newest loop route providing easy access between Duvall and Monroe.

David Egan, a Valley resident since the 1970s and a former educator for the Lake Washington School District, attended the celebration last week to show his support for the organization that gives him

access to his nearby community. Egan lives by Ames Lake, and when Metro cut his route in 2007, he was stuck without transportation and had to rely on others to drive him around. When SVT took on route service in 2013 he regained his ability to travel independently.

“For me to be able to go get a cup of coffee in Carnation, or go to Duvall and get a haircut, or go to the library in Fall City — doing all these different things I haven’t been able to do for 12 years — to me it’s huge,” Egan said. “For people who are transit dependent it means all the difference in the world.”

Bus drivers Sean Hickey and Michael Pollina were also at the event, cooking hot dogs for the partygoers. They were both enthusiastic about their riders and the relationships they have formed providing a service to the people who need it.

While they celebrated the past 15 years, SVT also is looking to the future. The goal, Biggs said, is to be an integral part of a long-term strategic plan for safe, affordable transportation in the Valley. With a recent \$100,000 grant worked on in conjunction with the nonprofit Hopelink, SVT sent a survey to 26,000 homes throughout the area.

The survey shows that people need more and better bus services, Biggs said. Some 82 percent of respondents who want a bus are dissatisfied with the service they have, she noted. This is good, she said, because now they have community feedback showing there is a need in the Valley. Potential funding partners, such as the Valley cities, will be interested in meeting the need.

“It brings all the people together. It’s no longer just me saying we need more buses. It’s 82 percent of people who want a bus saying we need more,” she said.

SVT also is working on a five-year transit plan for the Valley and will soon be receiving four new replacement buses.

Biggs reiterated that a strong local bus service is a benefit to everyone, even drivers who may be faced with a broken vehicle and no way to travel.

“Right now if you don’t have a car, you move, or you have to put all your time and energy into how are you going to get from point to point,” she said. “How are you going to get to your job? How are you going to get to the store, food, medicine? Our bus drivers are amazing. Every one of them understands that.”

For more on the services offered by Snoqualmie Valley Transportation, visit www.svtbus.org.



Several of SVT's statistics from 2017 were printed on posters at the 15th anniversary celebration. In 2017, more than 40,000 trips were made using SVT. Evan Pappas/Staff Photo



Driver Sean Hickey talks about his role as a driver with others at the 15th anniversary celebration. Evan Pappas/Staff Photo