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Transportation coalition closes first year with major achievements, invites Snoqualmie Valley to help with planning for the future

By Carol Ladwig, for Snoqualmie Valley Transportation

If you live in the Snoqualmie Valley and have ever tried to work out how to get to a job, school, shopping center or event without a car, you have an idea of the problems that the Snoqualmie Valley Transportation Coalition is working to solve. If you have ideas about public transportation in rural areas, then you are just the person the coalition is looking for.

In the past year, the Snoqualmie Valley Transportation Coalition has successfully launched a new Snoqualmie Valley Transportation-operated bus route to fill a significant and historic gap in coverage in the valley, begun developing a five-year strategic plan for public transportation here, and filmed a promotional video on the importance of transit in the valley.

Now, as the year-old coalition approaches the end of 2018, it is also approaching a somewhat unclear future. Funding for the group's work was a \$100,000 transportation planning grant from Easterseals, which will be gone by the end of the year. Hopelink, the nonprofit organization administering the grant and coordinating the coalition's work, hopes to maintain and continue the coalition, but is not sure how yet.

Support from the community, and attendance at the second annual Snoqualmie Valley Transportation Coalition workshop, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 29, at Sno-Valley Senior Center, Carnation, will help clear some of those questions up, says Hopelink Mobility Management Program Manager, Brittany Krein.

"At that workshop we will be discussing the sustainability of the coalition as well as some future project ideas," Krein said. It's likely that Hopelink will include the Snoqualmie Valley Transportation Coalition's needs in its funding requests to the Washington State Department of Transportation, she said, adding "We are also going to look at potential grants and staff support, but really, the way we're looking at sustainability hasn't been decided yet."

Hopelink serves as the coordinating agency for the work of several transportation or mobility coalitions throughout King County, noted Staci Haber, Mobility Management Senior Program Manager, and it's the organization's responsibility to make sure Snoqualmie Valley is included. However, she said the budget is tight.

"It's a skeleton budget.... We'll need to not only look at sustainability from the standpoint of what does the coalition want and what do the partners want to keep something like this going," she said. If the

coalition were to launch another major project requiring funding "... we would need to find other sources for that," Haber added.

Since forming, the coalition embarked on three major projects, the creation of a five-year transit plan, which is taking shape with feedback from each Snoqualmie Valley city, a consultation with a travel planner, and the initial data from a \$26,000 community needs assessment, funded by a Puget Sound Regional Council grant.

That assessment, separate from the Easterseals funding and required in order for the group to receive the \$100,000 grant, helped to set the direction for the coalition's work throughout the year.

"They sent mailers to every home in Snoqualmie Valley, and really determined that there would be a huge influx in transportation riders if there were more options available," Krein said.

Survey responses showed a potential 275 percent increase in transit use if riders had more convenient routes and times to choose from. Throughout the valley, the survey results were impactful: 82 percent of respondents were dissatisfied with the public transportation options available.

The second project, a promotional video, highlighting all of the valley's existing transportation options, has been filmed and will be unveiled at the November workshop,

By far the coalition's most successful project to date has been the Duvall-Monroe Shuttle, launched Aug. 1, in a partnership with Snoqualmie Valley Transportation, Hopelink, King County Metro Transit's Community Access Transportation program, SNOTRAC, Community Transit, Snoqualmie Tribe, King County Mobility Coalition and the valley cities of Monroe, Duvall, Carnation, Snoqualmie and North Bend.

The shuttle, circulating between Duvall and Monroe locations every 90 minutes during weekdays, is the pilot project chosen by the coalition to meet the needs in areas underserved by transit. In its first two weeks of operation, more than 35 people rode the entirely new route, bridging the gap between two counties and multiple transit systems. This one-year pilot project is funded through July 31, 2019.

To join the discussion about transportation in the valley, plan to attend the SVTC workshop, Thursday, Nov. 29, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Sno-Valley Senior Center. Registration is free but advance scheduling is recommended. To RSVP, contact Brittany Krein at bkrein@hopelink.org or at 425-943-6796.