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Puget Sound Educational Service District



Road to Independence

Sustaining Rural Mobility, and the Drivers Who Make it Possible

WSDOT Consolidated Grant · July 2027–June 2031
Sustaining an Operating Project

Davina Miller-Leach, RTI Transportation Manager

Why RTI Matters to Riders

> ***Without it my son would not be able to work.***
>
> Parent of an RTI rider

> ***RTI enables me to get at least four additional hours or more a week at my job.***
>
> RTI rider

100% ride RTI to get to work

83% say RTI helped them get, keep, or add hours at a job

92% identify as a person with a disability

Source: 2026 RTI Program Evaluation Survey

The Safety Net Between Special Needs Providers

Beyond the service area

Rural homes and job sites past fixed-route and paratransit boundaries

Between eligibility rules

Riders who need support but don’t qualify for ADA paratransit

Across the county line

Trips between east Pierce and south King County

When another provider can’t serve a rider, RTI does.

We fill the gap and connect riders back into the network. We complement other providers; we don’t duplicate them.

How RTI Works

Demand-response

Curb-to-curb rides, booked 7 days to 24 hours ahead

Weekdays, 7 am–4 pm

Scheduled around riders' work shifts

No fare

Free for referred and approved riders

Who rides

Low-income older adults, young adults with disabilities, veterans

Accessible

Walkers, care attendants are welcome, and coordinate with Beyond the Borders for non-ambulatory

Service area

Rural east Pierce and south King County, from Buckley to Auburn and Tacoma

Three High-Priority CMP strategies

1.1

HIGH PRIORITY

Coordinate across providers

Dispatch handoffs with Beyond the Borders; warm referrals through Connect Pierce and Pierce County ADR

4

HIGH PRIORITY

Demand-response for rural areas

Curb-to-curb rides in low-density communities that fixed-route transit can’t reach

6

HIGH PRIORITY

Access to essential destinations

Every surveyed rider uses RTI to get to work; trips also reach health care and employment services

Source: PSRC 2026 Coordinated Mobility Plan

Coordinated at Every Level

REGIONAL

PSRC Coordinated Mobility and Accessibility Committee (CMAC)

COUNTY

Pierce County Coordinated Transportation Coalition · King County Mobility Coalition

TRANSIT

Pierce Transit · Beyond the Borders

REFERRAL & EMPLOYMENT

Connect Pierce · Pierce County ADR · Access Pierce · Career Path Services · Trillium

COORDINATION IN ACTION

A rider's new job ended at 7 pm, three hours after RTI closes.

RTI set up a handoff with Beyond the Borders. The rider gets to work and home again.

Two providers, one seamless trip.

Building the Region's Driver Workforce



1 REACH

Early learning staff share the pathway with ~4,600 families a year



2 DRIVE

New drivers start behind the wheel of RTI vans



3 TRAIN

Tuition-free Class B CDL training, four classes a year



4 ADVANCE

Passenger and school bus endorsements open careers across the region

4 CDL classes every year

12 drivers credentialed, 2023–2026

$72K in-kind training value

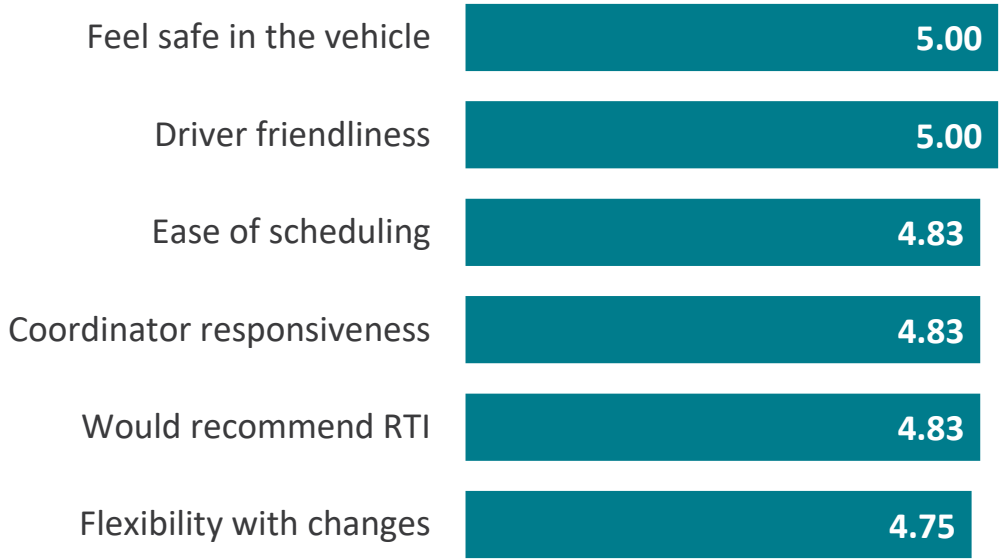
Riders rate RTI 4.83 out of 5

4.83

out of 5, overall rider satisfaction

“I feel like my son can have a sense of independence and be safe while doing so.”

Parent of an RTI rider



Average rating on a 1–5 scale, RTI Program Evaluation Surveys.

We Listen, and the Program Responds

How we listen: Annual Rider Survey · Regular Contact with Riders, Families, and Employers · Coalitions

WE HEARD	WE DID
Riders want round trips; 100% would use them if available	Coordinated after-hours handoffs with Beyond the Borders
Driver shortages limit how many rides we can give	Free CDL training; recruiting at libraries, colleges, and early learning
We needed a fuller picture of riders' lives and needs	Enhanced the annual survey with demographic and lifestyle questions

Sustaining what works

Built around each rider

Curb-to-curb rides, scheduled around each person's job and needs

A workforce pathway

From RTI van driver to credentialed transportation professional

A proven partnership

Running since 1999, with $406K in partner in-kind match

Thank you. We welcome your questions.

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