Beyond the Borders
Transportation for Special Needs Riders in East and South Pierce County
Just a bit of history ...

by Michael Jeffries, Publisher

There is no public transportation from 234th Street in Graham to Mount Rainier National Park and all points along the way. If you don’t drive, you have no way to get to the doctor, fill a prescription or get to the court system.

Many local leaders are concerned that lack of public transportation negatively impacts our businesses, our health, our tax base, educational and job opportunities, and our entire economy. Older people cannot access medical care, many youth can’t get to local colleges and some adults trying to get off welfare can’t get to jobs and interviews.

On July 1, the Pierce County Coordinated Transportation Coalition and the Southeast Pierce County Transportation Coalition will make the first bus run from Eatonville to Buckley with Pierce Transit service at 234th in Graham. This initiative demonstrates the area will see new vehicles which already servicing rural areas of our county.

This “coordinated transportation” effort will work with ParaTransit, Pierce Transit shuttles, and other systems to pick up passengers in our area and get them up to the nearest Pierce Transit bus station located at 234th Street and Madison, where they can connect with the $46 bus route to Tacoma or the #402 bus route to Puyallup or beyond.

Shuttles may also run to the South Hill Transit Station, if vehicles are going there already with other "tribute-group" passengers such as those on Medicare.

Jackie Montgomery and Pat and Thomas Trimboli of the Transportation Coalition have been working with local leaders such as George Lockwood to begin a one-day-a-week service to the Rainier area on July 1, 2003. Eventually, this could be expanded to several days each week and then a regular bus route like the three times-a-day service now in East Lewis County along U.S. 12.

Montgomery and her office have applied for many grants. They received a $50,000 grant from the Pierce County Community Action Board, but the funds are not available until January 1, 2004. They also received a Federal HCR (Home Access for Rural Communities) grant for $250,000 for the next two years. This is a "stretching grant" meaning the state government, local communities, and other funding sources must be found to match federal monies. Donations have already come from the Town of Eatonville, approximately $3,000 from a Community Action Fund, the Rural Health Collaborative, the Graham School District, and other local businesses and groups.

You are being asked to make an individual contribution or ask an organization you belong to, to contribute. You may send contributions to Pierce County Coordinated Transportation Coalition at 234th South Street, Way, Lakewood, WA 98499 or to Rev. George Lockwood at the Eatonville United Methodist Church.
In 2012, several communities elected to withdraw from the PTBA
  • Included Sumner, Bonney Lake, Buckley, Orting and Graham/South Hill in East Pierce County

Beyond the Borders expanded to cover special needs riders losing Pierce Transit service

Ridership went from an average of 813 boardings a month to 1,333 boardings a month
  • Demand Rides only at this time

In March 2013, a new Deviated Fixed Route Service was piloted as a way to serve more people at a lower cost in more densely populated areas
Deviated Fixed Routes

Sumner

• Fixed Bus Stops on a time schedule
  • 45 minute headways

• Deviates up to ½ a mile around the route by passenger request

Spanaway/South Hill
Demand Ride Service

• For riders who do not live near a Deviated Fixed Route, shared-ride Demand ride service is available for the following trip purposes:
  • Dialysis
  • Employment (up to $750 trip value per month)
  • Essential/Lifeline trips (max 3 round trips per month)

• Trips are limited to locations inside the Beyond the Borders Service area or to a connection point where they meet with ADA SHUTTLE or Fixed Route Buses

  But in certain cases ...
Boundary Expansion Partnership with Pierce Transit SHUTTLE

• For riders who are eligible for ADA SHUTTLE service and live inside the Beyond the Borders service area
• Beyond the Borders will transport to their destination as long as it is no more than 5-7 miles beyond our service area
  • No waiting for a connection, just a straight trip from Point A to B
  • Convenience for the rider
  • Cost savings for SHUTTLE as Pierce Transit subsidizes a portion of the trip

Other Partnerships

• Pierce County Human Services Aging and Disabilities Resources provides funding to support mealsite service to the Eatonville Mealsite provided by Beyond the Borders
Trends and the Future of Beyond the Borders

- Ridership on the Deviated Fixed Routes peaked in 2015-2016, but has been on the decline since late 2016
- Ridership on the Demand Ride Service has increased during the same period
- Until 2015, funding was JARC - which limited the trip purpose for Demand rides to employment related destinations or dialysis only
- In the 2015-2017 grant award, the funding source changed to 5310 which opened the trip purpose to those needing Essential/Lifeline trips

As a Result:

- The number of special needs riders benefiting from the program is UP
- Unfortunately, costs are also UP as Demand Ride Service is the mostly costly mode of transportation
Times are Changing ... and we’re responding

- Route changes coming in December for the Sumner Deviated Route based on rider requests to expand service into Bonney Lake and boost ridership
- Moving from a 24 hour reservation window to a 48 hour reservation window to more effectively group Demand trips
- Consolidating service hours in Eatonville to reduce costs
- Considering piloting Uber/Lyft type service as a cost effective alternative to costly Demand trips for those riders it is appropriate for