

6. TRANSPORTATION



People For People demonstrates a new vehicle lift system in Yakima County

The eight counties in the SE/ALTC Public Service Area (PSA) are for the most part vast and rural. SE/ALTC contracts for transportation services in their PSA communities that have no public transportation available. Services are provided for seniors sixty years of age and older and persons with disabilities, who have no car, are unable to drive, cannot afford to drive, and public transportation is not available or accessible.

Transportation is a critical part of accessing services that maintain health and well being. Seniors, especially those who are rurally isolated, need rides to buy groceries, clothing, attend medical appointments, meal sites, or simply go to a social gathering.

What may seem like simple tasks of daily living to the able person can become major challenges when seniors have lost their ability to maneuver a vehicle safely in urban and rural areas where distance, weather, and traffic are factors.

Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla, and Asotin counties are four of the eight counties that enjoy a Public Transportation Benefit Area

(PTBA). Garfield County is an Unincorporated Public Transportation Benefit Area (UTBA). Most community residents are opposed to a public transportation system because of the additional local taxes needed to fund such a service. The city of Yakima has a transit system that operates within the city limits and serves Selah and the Terrace Heights area.

Lack of awareness of and support for public transportation hinders the development of a service needed for the increasing number of seniors who remain in their communities without adequate transportation.

CONTRACTED TRANSPORTATION SERVICES:

The provision of contracted transportation service is provided by HopeSource in Kittitas County, People for People in Yakima County, Volunteer Chore Services transporting in Benton County's rural area of Prosser, and InterLink in Asotin County.

Collectively the transportation contractors operate with a total of 33 buses/vans and travel an average of 16,362 miles per month. A total of 556 unduplicated persons were served in 2008. Of those served, 43% are low income and 45% live alone.

The contractors transport seniors to meal sites, medical facilities, grocery stores, and other necessary destinations. The contractors make efforts to continue the service via applications for state, federal, and county funds.



HopeSource delivers congregate meal participants to the Ellensburg Adult Activities Center

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES:

SE/ALTC transportation services have limited funding and therefore cannot meet all of the needs. These providers do their best to coordinate transportation services and augment budgets with other transportation dollars beyond SE/ALTC funds. Additional funding has been requested and obtained for Rural & Special Needs Public Transportation Programs through Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5310 Elderly & Disabled Transportation, FTA 5311 Rural Public Transportation, Rural Mobility, and Para transit/Special Needs Grants.

With the lack of a PTBA in Kittitas, Yakima, Walla Walla, and Garfield counties; SE/ALTC provides significant funding for transportation as compared to the AAAs in urban areas where public transportation options are more readily available.

Transportation to non-medical services are on the rise for seniors who demand to keep “in touch” with their communities. Non-medical services include transportation to religious services, exercise sessions, and

social activities. Rural towns in SE/ALTC’s service area have limited or no transportation options due to lack of funding. ALTC participated in the Mid-Valley Transportation group that advocated and assisted in realizing the Pahto Public Passage transportation service. Pahto provides transportation services to all persons living on the Yakama Reservation. The system coordinates with People For People Community Connector to connect folks with a ride from and to the Yakama Reservation.

With the limited funding resources in Washington State, agencies are continuing to experience funding shortfalls. Volunteers are a major resource of transporting seniors who are unable to utilize existing transportation or where no transportation services are available.

With that thought in mind some counties that are not part of a PTBA have formed Special Needs Transportation Coalitions whose goal is to coordinate transportation services and develop intercity routes in the community. The transportation meetings take place periodically in each local area.



HopeSource provides transportation to Kittitas County Meal Sites

GOAL: SE/ALTC will advocate for coordination of resources to maximize transportation funding among different organizations in our service delivery area.

OBJECTIVES:

- SE/ALTC staff will continue to participate in Special Needs Transportation Coalition and other transportation meetings to encourage coordinated transportation in Kittitas, Yakima, and the Yakama Nation. *Quarterly: Yakima and the Yakama Nation. Kittitas meetings happen periodically throughout the year.*
- SE/ALTC will make efforts to educate the public and legislators by sharing demographic information on seniors in our PSA and advocate for additional transportation resources in non-transit/rural areas. *Legislative session 2008 to 2012*
- SE/ALTC staff will write letters of support for transportation providers seeking additional funding to meet transportation costs in our service area. *Per request 2008 to 2012*
- SE/ALTC will continue to encourage transportation contractors to seek resources outside of SE/ALTC to satisfy the financial gaps for senior transportation. *Ongoing 2008 to 2012*
- SE/ALTC will assure that the seniors served before the Terrace Heights expansion will continue to get uninterrupted transportation services to their current destinations which include congregate meals sites, foot

care, and medical appointments. *By third quarter of 2009.*

- SE/ALTC and the Kittitas County Advisory Board will expand the special needs transportation system to include more regular trips to Yakima and Wenatchee. *2010*
- SE/ALTC and the Franklin County Advisory Board will advocate for transportation services to the Tri-Cities for Kahlotus and Connell for doctor appointments as well as other necessities. *First quarter 2010*