

C- 5 OTHER ISSUE AREAS

5a. TRANSPORTATION

The eight counties in ALTC’s Public Service Area (PSA) are for the most part vast and rural. 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, Columbia and Asotin counties are five of the eight counties that enjoy a Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA). Garfield County is an Unincorporated Public Transportation Benefit Area (UPTBA). 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 also serves the Selah area. Columbia County Transportation serves the communities of Dayton, Waitsburg and Prescott with rides into Walla Walla.

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, and InterLink in Asotin County.

Collectively the transportation contractors operate with buses/vans and travel an average of 17,467 miles per month. A total of 701 unduplicated persons were served in 2014. Of those served, 64% are low income, 58% are over the age of 75 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.

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES:

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 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, State Rural Mobility and State Para transit/Special Needs Grants.

With the lack of a PTBA in Kittitas, Yakima and Garfield counties 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 ALTC’s service area have limited or no transportation options due to lack of funding. Pahto Public Passage 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.

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

OBJECTIVES:

- ALTC staff will continue to

participate in the Special Needs Transportation Coalition and other transportation meetings to encourage coordinated transportation in Kittitas, Yakima, and the Yakama Nation.

- ALTC will advocate for transportation systems that allow multicounty access by working together for scheduling between various systems. ***June 2018***
- ALTC will make efforts to educate the public and legislators by sharing demographic information of seniors in our PSA and advocate for additional transportation resources in non-transit/rural areas. ***Legislative session 2016-2019***
- ALTC staff will continue writing letters of support for transportation providers seeking additional funding to meet transportation costs in our service area. ***Per request 2016 to 2019.***
- ALTC will continue to encourage transportation contractors to seek resources outside of ALTC to satisfy the financial gaps for senior transportation. ***Ongoing 2016 to 2019***