

# Embracing Paratransit Transportation: A Coordinated, Community Approach

Faith Trimble, FLT Consulting, Inc.  
Sound Transit  
Seattle, Washington

## ABSTRACT

This paper takes a look at how Sound Transit - the regional transit authority in Washington State's Central Puget Sound area - is working with the broader community to improve regional mobility for people unable to transport themselves due to income status, age, or disability.

It explores paratransit services as a community responsibility, rather than solely an ADA complementary transit responsibility.

Utilizing the coordination concepts and tools provided by the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility "United We Ride" initiative and Washington State's Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation, Sound Transit is facilitating a multi-faceted project which will:

- Identify regional transportation needs and develop a strategic plan to address the most critical needs in the Central Puget Sound region;
- Utilize intelligent technology systems to streamline trip bookings between five transit agencies;
- Develop an on-line, customer searchable database of transportation providers filtered by the customers' particular special transportation needs; and
- Develop a public information plan that gets the word out about the region's mobility options.

Sound Transit's approach is unique in that it is community centric. It includes the entire community of transportation providers — school districts, social service agencies, private providers, ferries, the medical community, faith-based organizations, non-profits, and of course, transit agencies.

The stakeholders in this three-county area are courageously – and cautiously – planning how to most cost efficiently serve the paratransit-dependent population through a regional, community network.



Figure 1. Photo provided by Sound Transit

## INTRODUCTION

### Paratransit: Whose Job Is It, Anyway?

It's common knowledge that transit agencies are responsible for public transportation, including paratransit services. But are they really?

According to the 2001 American Household Survey, just over half of American households report having public transportation services available [1]. Presumably they mean transit services. But transit is only part of the public transportation picture.

In 2003, the United State General Accounting Office (GAO) published a study on all the federally-funded transportation programs in the nation [2]. They found that 62 federal programs funded an estimated \$2.4 billion on transportation services in 2001. Approximately 75 percent of that amount - \$1.8 billion – was expended by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Let's repeat that – the Department of Health and Human Services is the largest funder of public transportation – NOT the Department of Transportation which comes in at \$317 million.

Other known federal agencies funding transportation include the Department of Veterans Affairs (\$161 million), Department of Education (\$134 million), Department of Labor (\$26 million), Department of Agriculture (\$13 million), Department of Housing and Urban Development (\$8 million), and Bureau of Indian Affairs (not available).

So whose job is it to provide public transportation? Apparently, transit agencies are not in it alone. This is good news in an environment of ever rising paratransit demand and related costs.

***The Transit Challenge - Managing paratransit demand***

Let’s face it. Providing complementary paratransit service under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is NOT good business for transit agencies. It’s expensive, it generally serves a small percentage of the total population at a high cost, and it’s not a revenue generator.

Nationwide, ADA paratransit budgets are increasingly eating into total transit budgets - which constrains funding for cheaper and more efficient fixed route services. In Washington State, approximately 15 percent of transit agency budgets statewide are consumed by 3 percent of ADA demand response passenger trips. Compare this to vanpooling, which consumes 2 percent of transit budgets with roughly the same amount of passenger trips as demand-response (see Table 1).

Plain and simple - by the very nature of the service, paratransit, demand-response transportation is expensive. To manage demand on paratransit services, a popular and reasonable approach has been to encourage and train paratransit riders to utilize fixed-route services, when appropriate.

Research is showing that approximately 20 to 30 percent, or more, of all ADA paratransit applicants are able to use fixed-route service, at least part of the time [3]. Travel training for those individuals uncomfortable

with riding the fixed-route buses is paying off for transit agencies. In 2000, King County Metro - based in Seattle, WA, saved \$417,000 in paratransit costs at an expense of \$161,580 in travel training. The result of this type of demand management is a more efficient transportation system.

***The Demand Management Secret***

Another non-published practice typically employed by transit agencies to manage ADA paratransit demand is to reduce the eligible population – either by applying stricter eligibility standards, such as conditional eligibility or reducing the service area. Keeping public awareness about ADA paratransit services at a minimum is yet another unspoken but real strategy to keep demand down.

If people don’t know about the service, or if the service is too difficult to figure out, demand manages itself. The result of this type of demand management is also a more efficient transportation system, but at the unfortunate expense of people who need the transportation most.

This problem is not going to go away. ADA eligible trip demand, at least for the Central Puget Sound transit agencies, is expected to increase 15 percent by 2010 – within five years [4].

Transit agencies are not alone in struggling with rising demand challenges. Medicaid transportation, student transportation, senior transportation, veteran transportation, welfare to work transportation – all try to meet demand where they can, and “shift” demand where they can in order to save costs. The result is turf battles between agencies with claims of “client shedding.”

The expensive special needs transportation “hot potato” gets tossed from one agency to another. In the meantime, grandma doesn’t make it to her doctor’s appointment because she doesn’t have transportation.

<b>Washington State Transit Agencies: 3% of Demand Response Trips is 15% of Budgets</b>				
	<b><i>Passenger Trips</i></b>	<b><i>% of Total</i></b>	<b><i>Operating Expenses</i></b>	<b><i>% of Total</i></b>
Fixed-Route	150,704,205	92.62%	\$572,986,962	79.76%
Demand-Response	4,837,895	2.97%	\$104,055,599	14.48%
Vanpooling	4,486,441	2.76%	\$14,555,026	2.03%
Commuter Rail	751,163	0.46%	\$13,610,000	1.89%
Light Rail	670,383	0.41%	\$6,715,836	0.93%
Route Deviated Services	924,109	0.57%	\$5,558,250	0.77%
Passenger Ferry	338,520	0.21%	\$907,503	0.13%
<b>Total Statewide Operations</b>	<b>162,712,716</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$718,389,176</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

*Table 1. Washington State Department of Transportation Summary of Public Transportation - 2003*

**Managed Out of a Trip**

So what happens to transportation disadvantaged people who need demand-response type service, but have been “managed” to the point they are not eligible for a trip? What about the people who are transportation disadvantaged, are not served by a transit service area, and don’t qualify for any other publicly-funded transportation service?

Quite frankly, they don’t have transportation that meets their needs. They either must rely on friends and family or go without.

Isn’t it time for the nation, or at least state, regional, and local leaders, to bravely address the fact that many people that need transportation are not getting it – primarily because no one can, or wants to, afford it?

Shouldn’t all the transportation stakeholders be planning for the aging baby boomers – a projected 80 percent increase in the 65 and older population by 2025 – recognizing that one in five Americans age 65 and older does not drive[5]?

Shouldn’t all programs funding transportation stop passing the buck, embrace paratransit services as a community, and collaboratively answer the following questions:

- What are the national, state, regional, and local policies for ensuring mobility for the transportation disadvantaged?
- Who should pay for this expensive paratransit, demand-response type service?
- Should paratransit transportation be funded from general funds or transportation funds? Or both?
- What obligation do transit agencies have in addressing the unmet transportation needs inside their boundaries? Outside their boundaries?
- What roles do the federal, state, and other local governments have in ensuring mobility for the transportation disadvantaged?

- What about social service agencies, education systems, veteran associations, and labor agencies that depend on transportation for their programs to be successful? Should they take on a larger responsibility for transportation?
- What about the community at-large? Churches, senior centers, nursing homes, boarding homes, casinos, hospitals, grocery stores, sporting centers, theatres, etc? Where do they fit in?
- Would it be more efficient and effective to assign to one entity all responsibility and all public funding for transporting disadvantaged populations, rather than disperse it among 62 + programs?
- How about the passenger themselves? Do they have a responsibility to make different choices about where they live if they must rely on public transportation?

**Sound Transit Taking the Lead**

Sound Transit - the regional transit authority– is taking on this issue of coordinating special needs transportation services throughout Washington State’s Central Puget Sound region. Working with the Sound Transit Citizens’ Accessibility Advisory Committee, Sound Transit has been instrumental in determining that there are missing links in the cross regional delivery of special needs transportation.

With a population of over 3 million people, this region includes the counties of King (which includes the Seattle metropolitan area), Pierce and Snohomish. Looking strictly at the population with disabilities, 16 percent of the region’s population is at high risk of needing some type of public transportation. Adding people who are unable to drive because of their income or age status, the population with higher transportation needs easily doubles to 30 to 40 percent of the population (see Table 2).

	King County		Pierce County		Snohomish County	
Total Population	1,737,034	100%	700,820	100%	606,024	100%
With a disability	259,843	15.0%	123,624	17.6%	93,121	15.4%
Age 60+	239,857	13.8%	95,391	13.6%	74,550	12.3%
Age 5-19	434,736	25.0%	211,514	30.2%	181,987	30.0%
Below poverty level	142,546	8.4%	71,316	10.5%	41,024	6.9%
Under 18 years	35,875	25.2%	24,421	34.2%	12,302	30.0%
65 years and over	12,937	9.1%	4,953	6.9%	4,220	10.3%

*Table 2. People Typically with higher transportation needs in the Central Puget Sound Region (2000 US Census)*

## ***Sound Transit Funds Regional Coordination Project***

In addition to financially contributing to the local work of the Pierce County Coordinated Transportation Coalition (PCCTC), the Snohomish County Special Transportation Needs Coalition (SNOTRAC), and the King County Key Partners in Transportation Initiative – Sound Transit has also recently contracted with ***FLT Consulting, Inc.*** to facilitate a regional special needs transportation coordination project.

Sound Transit's approach to the project is unique in that it is community centric, rather than solely relying on transit agencies. It includes the entire community of transportation providers — school districts, social service agencies, private providers, ferries, the medical community, faith-based organizations, non-profits, and of course, transit agencies.

The project builds off of other regional and local efforts including:

- Pierce County Coordinated Transportation Coalition's *Coordinated Transportation Plan* [6]
- Snohomish County Special Needs Transportation Coalition's *Special Needs Transportation Five-Year Strategic Plan* [7]
- King County Coordinated Special Needs Transportation's *Transportation Needs and Options for Older Adults & People with Disabilities* [8]
- Sound Transit's *Paratransit Technology Plan* [9]
- Washington State Department of Transportation's *Washington-Oregon Trip Planner Project* [10]

This project is no small task. Exposing the regional transportation need will put all of the transportation stakeholders at risk of further increasing unbudgeted paratransit demand and/or raising public expectations of what can be reasonably accomplished.

Nonetheless, the stakeholders are courageously – and cautiously – planning how to most cost efficiently serve the paratransit-dependent population through a regional, coordinated, community network.

### ***Sound Transit Taking It On: But Why?***

Why is Sound Transit sticking their neck out? They are a regional transit authority, not a social service organization. Why take the risk of all the stakeholders

pointing the finger of paratransit responsibility at Sound Transit?

Because it's the right thing to do? Yes. But also it's the smart thing to do. By taking the lead in coordinating special needs transportation, Sound Transit is positioning the region to make viable applications to federal, state, and private grants where regional coordination is now valued at all levels. Examples include:

- In 2004, President George Bush issued an executive order that established the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility with the responsibility of coordinating and enhancing access to transportation to improve mobility, employment opportunities, and access to community services for persons who are transportation-disadvantaged [11].
- As part of the granting process for 5310 funds (Elderly and Persons with Disability Funds) and 5311 (Nonurbanized Area Formula Program), the Federal Transit Administration has placed a much higher weight on coordinated transportation funds.
- The Freedom Initiative, which is part of the 2004 Federal transportation budget, has been designed to help people with disabilities return to or to stay in the workplace. The proposed Freedom Initiative funding formula places almost 50 percent of the scoring grant application on coordination efforts.
- The Washington State Department of Transportation and the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation grant processes require applicants to provide a detailed coordination plan to be eligible for grants.

According to the Transportation Research Board's TCRP Report 91 [12], a variety of economic benefits also result from coordinating transportation including:

- **Increased efficiencies:** Trips provided to passengers at a lower cost per trip; reduced cost per vehicle hour or per mile
- **Increased productivity:** More trips per month or passengers per vehicle hours
- **Enhanced mobility:** Increased access to jobs, health care, shopping, social services, and recreational activities.

- **Increased economic development:** Community and employment benefits increase as transportation services increase.

Other non-economic benefits mentioned in the report include, improved quality of life for people, improvement to service quality, centralizing oversight and management, and reporting costs and outputs more accurately.

## SOUND TRANSIT’S REGIONAL COORDINATION PROJECT

Utilizing the coordination concepts and tools provided by the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility “United We Ride” initiative [13] and Washington State’s Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation [14], the Sound Transit’s multi-faceted coordinated special needs project will:

- Identify regional transportation needs and develop a strategic plan to address the most critical needs in the Central Puget Sound region;
- Utilize intelligent technology systems to streamline trip bookings between five transit agencies;
- Develop an on-line, customer searchable database of transportation providers filtered by the customers particular special transportation need; and
- Develop a public information plan that gets the word out about the region’s mobility options.

### Regional Special Needs Transportation Coordination Plan

The 2010 Regional Special Needs Transportation Coordination Plan for the Central Puget Sound Region is a five year plan on how to best design, build and implement a regional coordinated transportation infrastructure that supports improved regional travel for transportation disadvantaged people throughout King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties in Washington State.

Transportation disadvantaged people, otherwise known as people with special transportation needs, are those that are unable to transport themselves due to their age, income, or disability (defined in the Washington State law: RCW 47.06B.012). This includes seniors trying to get to the doctor or social events, children trying

to participate in after-school events, a person with epilepsy trying to get to work, an unemployed student trying to complete an internship - the list goes on.

Significant resources are expended in the region to provide transportation to people with special transportation needs. Fixed-route transit (buses), demand-response transit (paratransit), Medicaid transportation, taxis and cabulances, veteran’s transportation, senior services, school transportation, volunteer transportation, church vans, intercity buses, trains, and ferries are all part of the broad network of community transportation. However, the transportation need for people unable to transport themselves appears to be larger than available resources.

Broad-based local coordinated transportation coalitions in Pierce, Snohomish, and King Counties have recognized this problem, and are aggressively working to better coordinate transportation resources in the effort to provide more mobility, more efficiently. Each county has developed, or are in the process of developing, coordinated transportation plans that include a needs assessment, inventory of providers, and coordination strategies.

The 5-year regional plan is the logical next step to bring the three counties together to agree on how to most efficiently and effectively collaborate to improve regional mobility as well as support the sustainability of local coordinated transportation efforts.

### *The Potential Vision*

While still being refined, the preliminary working vision for the region is to achieve seamless access to transportation services throughout Central Puget Sound, with the primary goals being:

1. Simplify how individuals, businesses and agencies plan, book, and pay for affordable, flexible, quality transportation delivery.
2. Increase efficiencies and effectiveness of transportation services by coordinating resources, sharing information, reducing duplicative services, and reinvesting savings for more mobility.

Many details still need to be refined, but some initial visioning work has resulted in a loose concept of what a regional coordinated transportation system could look like (see Figure 2).

Under this concept, any passenger would be able to plan, reserve, and pay for a trip over the web or by dialing the national transportation hotline 5-1-1 or human service hotline 2-1-1. Passengers could also continue to use their traditional ways of accessing trips – either contacting the funding agency or transportation agency directly. These agencies would have direct access to the same database of information to schedule a trip for their customer. By

funneling all trip requests through a single point of reference, opportunities to coordinate trips through a variety of transportation providers would be possible.

A regional workgroup is meeting monthly to work out the details of the plan, with an expected completion date by the end of 2005.

## 4 WAYS TO GET A TRIP

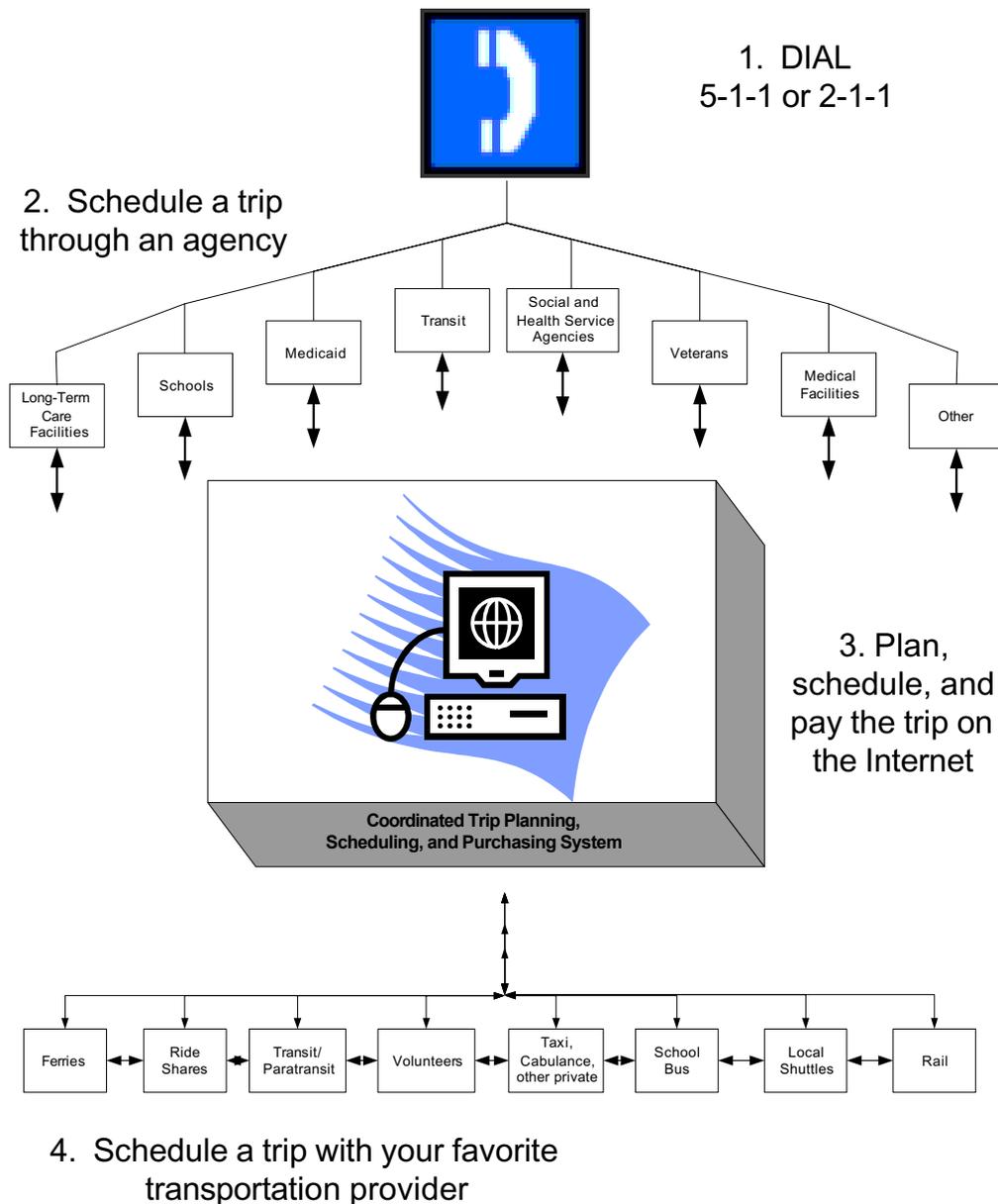


Figure 2. Puget Sound's Vision for Coordinated Transportation - A Work in Progress

## Peer to Peer Network for Transit Agencies

In 2004, Sound Transit, in partnership with officials from Pierce Transit, King County Metro, Community Transit and Everett Transit retained the IBI Group to produce a *Paratransit Technology Plan*. The primary objective of this study was to develop a series of projects to enhance paratransit technologies and data systems, focusing on improving customer service and ensuring reliable connections for customers making inter-county or multi-leg journeys with different paratransit services.

### Inter-County Trips Today

This work found that while the Puget Sound transit agencies provide valuable transportation and mobility to their respective customers and within their respective areas, inter-county trips are more problematic. Approximately six percent of paratransit trips (or approximately 105,000 trips per year) are inter-county trips that require an inter-agency transfer. To the respective paratransit operating agencies, this requires the coordination of trip reservations and scheduling with neighboring agencies requiring the sharing of client data and trip request information, typically done in a manual mode via a fax machine (see Figure 3).

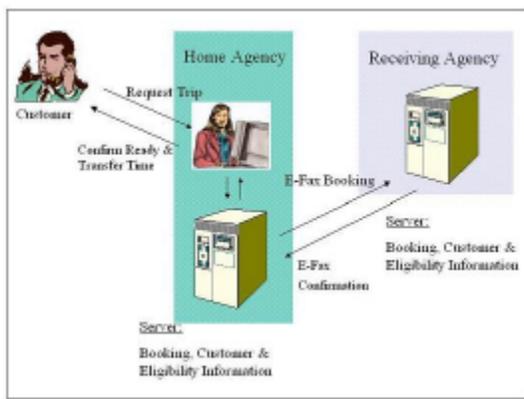


Figure 3. Current Exchange of Trip Data

To the paratransit customer, this can mean that a single trip will result in transfers between operators. Making and checking reservations and trip confirmations and waiting for connecting services at transfer locations can be especially challenging for riders with a disability, so special effort is needed to improve the coordination between agencies to ensure that reservations are easy to make, delays and missed connections are minimized and safety is assured.

## Automated Inter-Agency Bookings & Confirmations

Within the context of the Sound Transit regional special needs coordinated transportation project, the IBI group will continue system design work for the automation of trip booking and confirmation data.

The purpose of this project is to develop an automated solution to trip scheduling and confirmation, such that a call-taker from one agency could enter trip information once and provide the customer with confirmation of his/her trip at the time of booking.

This concept will not require a new “regional” scheduling system. Rather, it will develop interfaces between existing systems. It is expected that, for this solution to be successful, eligibility parameters will need to be established and “built into” the software.

Figure 4 illustrates the system architecture for the automation of trip bookings and confirmations. The functional specifications will describe how the system will behave under each set of conditions it is expected to handle.

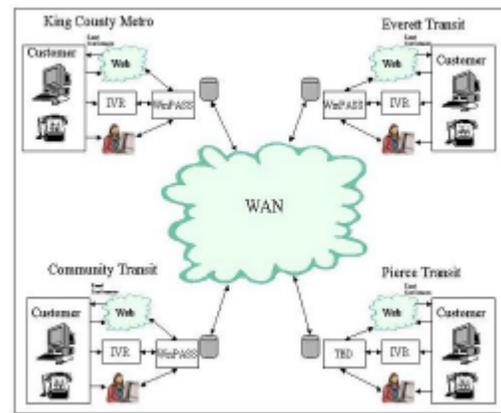


Figure 4. System Architecture

One solution that facilitates the development of a standards-based data exchange approach is usage of the National Transportation Communications for ITS Protocol (NTCIP). NTCIP represents open standards for ITS deployments. NTCIP Center-to-Center Working Group develops and maintains standards, and development application guidance for open systems. This group favors an XML-standard application protocol based on:

1. Web Services Architecture (defined by W3 – World Wide Consortium)
2. XML Direct - a simple file-sharing approach

Whether the region's transit agencies adopt the XML/web services approach is still being discussed. Some of the transit agencies are still in the process of converting their systems to new software, and the design of the regional peer to peer network will take second priority to these system conversions. Depending on the time and availability of transit agency staff, the regional peer to peer network has an expected completion date by the fall of 2005.

*(This section was written by Steve Wilks, IBI Group)*

## **FindARide.org**

Another component of the regional coordinated transportation project is an online, searchable database at [www.FindARide.org](http://www.FindARide.org) to help people with special transportation needs in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties to identify providers that can meet their particular transportation needs.

Users identify their origin and destination, check off the special transportation needs they have, and FindARide.Org provides a list of public and private transportation providers that can meet their needs. Figure 4 provides an example of a provider profile currently available on the website.

All agencies have access to the central database, and can use it to store and retrieve information on transportation providers for their own clients, avoiding the duplication and redundancy of stand alone databases.

Version 1 of FindARide.org, launched in October 2004, includes transportation providers in King County. Version 2 will be launched in September 2005 and will include providers in Pierce and Snohomish counties.

The functionality of FindARide.org continues to evolve under Version 2. Changes will focus on making the site more user-friendly and developing its capacity as a flexible tool that the entire Puget Sound region will be able to use to assist with transportation planning, needs assessments, and customer service purposes.

Another goal of the website is to eventually provide transportation information to the future Oregon/Washington Trip Planner program, and the eventual 2-1-1 and the 5-1-1 information lines.

## ***Washington-Oregon Trip Planner***

The Washington State Department of Transportation and the Oregon Department of Transportation have joined forces to develop a bi-state trip planner. This project is an internet-based, integrated

transportation information system. It is designed to reduce barriers to travel and increase access and use of transportation services within and between Washington and Oregon. Capitalizing on efficiencies of the Internet, the trip planner will increase the availability and amount of travel information, including schedules, routes, and fares.

The project is currently in Phase 2 – which is designing and implementing a prototype that includes a GIS base map and basic information on fixed route services offered by transit systems, ferries, Amtrak, intercity carriers, private providers, social service and other providers. This Phase is scheduled to be completed in November 2005.

In Phase 3, the capability to plan and schedule trip itineraries throughout Washington and Oregon will be created, building off the current local trip planners for public transit in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. Currently, customers in these counties can build their trip itineraries for fixed-route transit travel, including Sound Transit's Regional Express bus routes, Sounder commuter rail, Washington State Ferries, and the Seattle Center Monorail. The local trip planner does not include paratransit or other non-transit providers at this time.

The website for the local transit trip planner is [http://tripplanner.metrokc.gov/cgi-bin/itin\\_page.pl?resptype=U](http://tripplanner.metrokc.gov/cgi-bin/itin_page.pl?resptype=U).

The trip planner concept mirrors the approach of the “Mapquest” or “Mappoint” websites that create driving itineraries from origin to destination. Instead of driving itineraries, the trip planner creates public transportation itineraries from origin to destination.

The intent is to incorporate FindARide's expanded database of transportation providers, and the special needs search capacity into the Washington-Oregon Trip Planner.

## ***5-1-1 and 2-1-1 Information Lines***

The 5-1-1 travel information system offers real time traffic and weather information to users by simply dialing 5-1-1 from most phones. The new system builds upon the highly successful Washington State Highway hotline that now manages 4.6 million calls each year. Updated every few minutes, 5-1-1 currently allows callers to obtain a variety of information: Puget Sound traffic conditions, statewide construction impacts, incident information, mountain pass conditions, the state's ferry system information, 800 numbers for passenger rail and airlines, and weather.

2-1-1 is the three-digit telephone number assigned by the Federal Communications Commission for the purpose of providing quick and easy access to information about

health and human services. Professional information and referral specialists work with callers to assess their needs, determine their options and a best course of action, then direct them to appropriate programs/services, provide culturally appropriate support, intervene in crisis situations, and advocate for the caller as needed. Transportation information and referral is an integral

service of 2-1-1, since access to services can be a tremendous barrier to people.

The intent is to eventually utilize FindARide's transportation data and functionality as a resource to the 5-1-1 and 2-1-1 information lines.

### **Northwest Transport, Inc.**

#### **Mission Statement:**

We provide trips primarily for, but not limited to, non-emergency medical transportation. Please inquire about trips for other reasons.

#### **Contact Information:**

Local phone number: (206) 824-7977

Hours/days customers can reserve rides or speak to a representative:  
6 AM to Midnight, seven days a week.

#### **Types of trips offered:**

There are no restrictions on trip purpose

#### **Fare Information:**

Call our customer service line to ask about our rates

#### **Trip Schedule Information:**

Advance reservations are required - Minimum advance notice is 12 hours or less

Subscription trips - the same people are taken to the same place for regularly scheduled activities - Arrangements are reviewed When the funding agency asks for a change

Real time scheduling - the trip is scheduled after a request is received

#### **Service Hours:**

Seven days a week, 24 hours a day

#### **We Transport:**

Children under age 6

Personal Attendants/Escorts

Vulnerable or frail passengers with and without attendants

Involuntary passengers (needing restraints or mandated to travel)

Passengers using wheelchairs

Passengers who can transfer from folding wheelchairs

Passengers using mobility devices other than wheelchairs (walkers, canes)

Children requiring car seats

People needing door to door transportation

People needing transportation from the hands of one caretaker to the hands of another

People needing to make stops en-route while the driver waits

People needing driver assistance with bags or packages to/from door - (Bag Limit: No limit)

People traveling with service animals

People who need translation or interpreter services

People who need same day service

People who need help getting up and down stairs and landings - (Stair Limit: No limit)

Passengers with scooters, electric carts, and over sized wheel chairs

*Figure 4. An example provider profile from FindARide.org*

## Public Information Plan

To promote the awareness and use of mobility transportation options that will be made more available for the public via FindARide.org, and ultimately, the Washington/Oregon Trip Planner, Sound Transit has included development of a public information plan under the regional coordinated transportation project. The plan itself will accomplish a variety of goals:

- Promote awareness and secure buy-in from agencies that serve people with special needs
- Promote the benefits for transportation providers to provide and update their information
- Promote awareness and use of FindARide.org and the Washington/Oregon Trip planner to the end users and general public

To achieve these goals, the overall Public Information Plan will explore options for co-branding FindARide.org and the Washington/Oregon Trip planner, identify the most cost effective communication vehicles to deliver the message, and develop the key messages, audience, players and timelines in making sure promotion and awareness is gained.

## CONCLUSION

Reality is more investment is ultimately needed to build a transportation system that meets the variety of special needs of the public. However, in the meantime, if transit agencies put their heads together with other community transportation providers, it's possible to build a public transportation infrastructure that more efficiently provides mobility options for everyone.

What Sound Transit is doing in the Central Puget Sound may not work for everyone. Nevertheless opportunities to coordinate transportation services abound everywhere in the nation. Coordination can take on all kinds of forms, including changes to land use policies and development patterns, use of intelligent transportation system applications, coordination of appointment schedules with hospitals, joint purchasing of fuel, vehicles and facilities, consolidation of call centers, and sharing of volunteer driver pools.

What it takes is a vision of how mobility should look in your community, the courage to say "we can't do this alone" and build broad-based partnerships, and put the vision of mobility ahead of program politics. It's not easy, but it's worth it. Just ask Sound Transit.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sound Transit's Mobility Initiative Program, led by Marty Minkoff and managed by Michael Miller, is the primary impetus for improving special needs transportation through the Puget Sound Region. The work of this division is making amazing headway in promoting accessibility for the region's public transportation system.

Sound Transit could not be as successful in the special needs coordination project without the willing partnership of the coordinated transportation coalitions in Pierce, Snohomish, and King Counties, as well as the state's support through the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation.

In concert, these state, regional, and local partners will accomplish great things for special needs transportation in Central Puget Sound.

## END NOTES

[1] Surface Transportation Policy Project, *Transportation Costs and the American Dream*, July 22, 2003

[2] United States General Accounting Office, *Transportation Disadvantaged Populations: Many Federal Programs Fund Transportation Services, but Obstacles to Coordination Persist*, Testimony before the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure and Education and the Workforce, House of Representatives, GAO-03-698T, June 2003

[3] Easter Seals Project Action, *Innovative Practices in Paratransit Services*, [www.projectaction.org](http://www.projectaction.org)

[4] Sound Transit, *Paratransit Technology Plan*, IBI Group, May 4, 2004

[5] Surface Transportation Policy Project, *Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options*, April 2004

[6] Pierce County Coordinated Transportation Coalition's *Coordinated Transportation Plan*, FLT Consulting, Inc., January 2002, [www.piercecountyrides.com](http://www.piercecountyrides.com)

[7] Snohomish County Special Needs Transportation Coalition's *Special Needs Transportation Five-Year Strategic Plan*, FLT Consulting, Inc., March 2003, [www.snotrac.org](http://www.snotrac.org)

[8] King County Coordinated Special Needs Transportation's *Transportation Needs and Options for Older Adults & People with Disabilities*, FLT Consulting Inc. and Elway Research, Inc, March 2005

[9] Sound Transit, *Paratransit Technology Plan*, IBI Group, May 4, 2004

[10] Washington State Department of Transportation's *Washington-Oregon Regional Trip Planner Cost Benefit Analysis*, August 2004,  
[http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/library/reports-studies/2004\\_Trip\\_Planner\\_CBA.pdf](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/library/reports-studies/2004_Trip_Planner_CBA.pdf)

[11] The White House, *Executive Order Human Service Transportation Coordination*, February 2004  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/02/20040224-9.html>

[12] Transportation Research Board, *TCRP Report 91, Economic Benefits of Coordinating Human Service Transportation and Transit Services*, Jon Burkhardt, Westat and David Koffman/Gail Murray of Nelson/Nygard Consulting Associations, Inc., 2003

[13] Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility "United We Ride" initiative,  
[www.unitedweride.gov/](http://www.unitedweride.gov/)

[14] and Washington State's Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation,  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/default.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/default.htm)

*This paper was prepared for the 2005 APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference. APTA, its officers and employees are in no way responsible for the contents of this paper and any and all liability arising out of publication or presentation of the paper and/or its contents rest with the author.*