

## **Joint Transportation Committee Special Needs Transportation Coordination Study: Public Forums**

This study of special needs transportation coordination includes convening a series of four public forums. The primary goal of the forums is to allow for dialogue among human service agencies, transportation providers, and customers of special needs transportation. The forums are being held in counties identified as “case studies” for the project, including Lincoln, Pierce, Snohomish and Yakima Counties. The first two forums were convened on May 5 in Yakima, and on May 7 in Everett.

Thirty-two persons attended the Yakima forum, which was convened in cooperation with the Yakima Conference of Governments and People for People, a local private non-profit transportation provider that serves as the Medicaid broker. Those agencies provided invitation lists, assisted with program logistics, and provided background information to help shape the forum proceedings.

Fifty-seven persons attended the Snohomish forum, which was convened in cooperation with the Snohomish County Special Needs Transportation Coalition (SNOTRAC), the local transportation coordinating council.

Both forums were attended by a broad mix of stakeholders, including local human service agencies, tribal representatives, transit operators, Medicaid brokers, state agencies, school districts, and others. The Snohomish County forum was well represented by system users, and by transit agency staff from adjacent counties (King, Island & Skagit).

JTC Co-Chair Representative Judy Clibborn made opening remarks in Yakima and Co-Chair Senator Mary Margaret Haugen opened the event in Everett. After a brief presentation to set the context for the forum, participants were “polled” on their perceptions of the most significant coordination barriers from both the customer perspective, and from that of working within the transportation network of services.

In Yakima County, most people indicated the most significant barriers to be:

- can not get service where they need it
- confusing eligibility standards for various programs.

Those attending indicated a higher level of satisfaction when assessing how well agencies work together, and in their ability to share information.

Results were somewhat similar in Snohomish County where barriers were identified as:

- confusing eligibility standards for various programs
- need to make efficient connections between systems.

Local stakeholders also indicated satisfaction with how well agencies work together.

Project participants also discussed at length some system barriers, and offered a range of potential solutions or strategies to address those gaps. These suggestions will be considered as recommendations are developed for the final draft report.

A comprehensive written summary of each forum was prepared and sent to all those who participated. Those attendees will also be updated as the project progresses. The second set of forums will be held in Lincoln and Pierce Counties in late September.