



STATE OF WASHINGTON

GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ISSUES AND EMPLOYMENT

Employment Security Department ■ P.O. Box 9046 ■ MS: 6000 ■ Olympia, Washington ■ 98507-9046

Olympia (360) 890-3778 ■ Toll Free Fax 844-935-3531 ■ Spokane (509) 482-3854

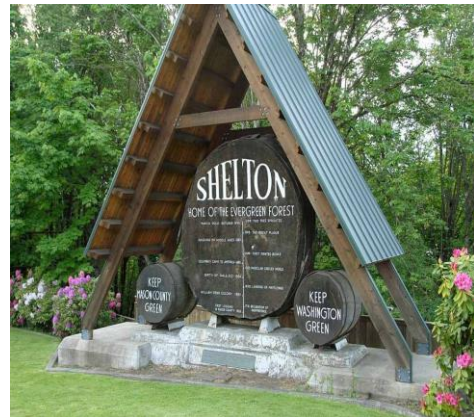
SHELTON AND MASON COUNTY OUTREACH SUMMARY

Introduction

The Community Outreach Subcommittee of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) held two meetings in Shelton, Washington on February 27th and 28th, 2020. The meetings were held at the Mason County Public Utility District Office No. 3, located at 2621 E. John's Prairie Road in Shelton.

On behalf of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment, we want to recognize and thank the following individuals who assisted us in the planning process for this outreach; Mason County Auditor Paddy McGuire and Haylee Dehning, Energy Efficiency Specialist with the Mason County PUD No. 3.

Special recognition needs to be given to Kevin Frankeberger, a newly appointed GCDE member, for sharing his vast connections with essential stakeholders in the community.



Welcome Sign for Shelton, WA

The following report is a summary of the issues identified and discussed during the two-day event. Action items recommended by meeting participants, local resources and promising practices are highlighted. A contact list of the meeting attendees is also included.

Shelton and Mason County Demographics

Mason County is in the western part of Washington State. Mason was first established as Sawamish County in 1854. In 1864, it was renamed Mason County after Charles Mason, the first Secretary of State for the Washington Territory. It encompasses the southern part of Hood Canal and many bays and inlets of south Puget Sound.

Forest products became the largest industry in the county until the 1980's, when the Forest Service eliminated most timber sales to protect the spotted owl. During this same time, the Washington Corrections Center in Shelton expanded, helping to offset job losses. Recreation as well as oyster and seafood production and processing also have increased in importance.

Mason County has become an important community for commuters to Thurston and Pierce counties. In 2018, 54.9% of earned income came from residents working outside the county.

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According to the July 2018 United States Census Data, Mason County has a total population of 65,507. The county's median age is 45.9 compared to the United States' median age of 37.9.

Shelton is the largest city and the county seat of Mason County. Its estimated population in 2020 is 10,364. Shelton is the westernmost city on Puget Sound. Individuals between 35 and 54 years of age make up 27% of the population, followed by those 65 years and over with nearly 16% of the population. Children under 5 is the smallest segment with only 7% of the population. Shelton's four top employment industries are: retail (15%), manufacturing (14%), healthcare (12%) and agriculture (10%). Shelton was the last city in Washington to use a mayor/commission form of government. In November 2017, Shelton adopted a manager/council form of municipal governance.

Scouting/Outreach

To encourage community attendance and leadership participation, a scouting team visited Shelton in early December to identify and confirm accessible meeting and lodging facilities. While in town, the team met with Paddy McGuire, the Mason County Auditor; Mason Transit Authority representatives and school district personnel.

Outreach activities were many. Invitation letters and Town Hall Forum flyers were sent to over 150 community contacts including elected officials, service providers and other stakeholders in the disability community. Service providers were asked to share the Town Hall flyer with their customers and to post it in their offices. GCDE Members made follow-up phone calls to key people encouraging their participation in the outreach meetings. A meeting announcement was included in the community calendar and an article was printed in the Shelton Mason County Journal.

Local Success Stories and Promising Practices

- **Mason County's Public Utility District No. 3** in Shelton was recognized as a best practice. They offer their beautiful and fully accessible meeting facilities free of charge to non-profits for public meetings.
- **People First** is a self-advocacy organization for individuals with intellectual disabilities. A local parent and son are taking the initial steps to establish a People First organization in Shelton.



Mason County PUD No. 3

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- **Property management firms, Gateway Property Management and Mell Property Management**, were recognized for their willingness to work with individuals with disabilities to find affordable housing.
- The county auditor, Paddy McGuire, along with County Commissioners and leaders in the disability community are working to establish a local **Accessible Community Advisory Committee (ACAC) for Mason County**. Establishing a county ACAC can lead to funding opportunities for programs and activities building awareness and inclusion for individuals with disabilities.
- **Moving Mason Forward Resource Coalition** is a community-wide initiative that resulted from a Mason County community health assessment. Moving Mason Forward facilitates better alignment of the community's work to more effectively address the seven health priorities and promote sustainable, lasting change. For information about the Moving Mason Forward Resource Coalition, contact Julie Waters, at 360.432.3271 ext. 28230.
- Mason Transit Authority (MTA) administers a **Volunteer Driver Program (VDP)** providing essential transportation for seniors (60+) who are unable to drive or use public transit to their medical appointments and other essential errands. To provide this service, MTA utilizes volunteers that donate their time and drive their own vehicles. For more information contact the coordinator at 360.432.5702 or 800.374.3747.

Town Hall Forum Summary

The Town Hall Forum was held at the Mason County PUD No 3, in the Skookum Room. Haylee Dehning, Energy Efficiency Specialist with Mason County PUD, was recognized for her assistance in getting approval for our use of their wonderful meeting facilities.

With over 45 people attending, a diverse cross-section of the community was represented, including people with disabilities, family members, service providers and several elected officials.



Town Hall Forum Participants

Discussion topics were broad with an emphasis on transportation, affordable housing, community services.

During the meeting, participants were open to possibilities and excited about making new connections. Action items were identified, and commitments were made to continue the discussion to improve programs and services for individuals with disabilities.

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Transportation

Participant Comments

Patty Perry, who owns and operates the Patty Wagon, is a contracted provider for Medicaid eligible trips and provides fee for service transportation trips. Medical trips can be long distances. For example, they have traveled to Portland, Bellingham and Forks.

Patty would like to expand her services to those on Medicare. Many Medicare recipients have very limited incomes. Patty tried calling several agencies and she can't find anything to help people on Medicare. Medicare recipients can hire the Patty Wagon, but to arrange a trip to Lacey, about 50 miles round trip, would cost about \$134. Patty explained the cost covers insurance, wages and operating expenses; it is not just the cost of gas. Patty would like to provide a service where people are not charged by the mile but by the seat. Her van can transport up to 14 people. If she could schedule a single trip of 14 people to Olympia and Lacey, the cost would be less than \$10.00 per person, making it more affordable.

Kevin Frankeberger is concerned about Mason Transit Authority's Dial-a-Ride program and its recent decision to stop service after 6:00 pm. He and his wife, who is also blind, no longer can go out to dinner, see a movie or socialize after 6:00 pm. He suggests Transit develop a different kind of matrix to measure success. Transit should evaluate the service on something different than the rides per mile. Seniors and persons with disabilities having no other choice are missing out and stuck in their homes.

Kevin suggested the Mason Transit Authority (MTA) consider reestablishing their citizen advisory board. He served on the board for over 13 years. The issue of eliminating evening service should have come before the citizen advisory board for input prior to implementation. Kevin also recommended transit drivers help educate the public, by having transit brochures available on the buses. When drivers meet people, who are not familiar with transit services, they can share information and encourage trying the bus out.

Mike Ringgenberg, Operations Manager for Mason Transit, shared Dial-a-Ride adjusted their service hours because requests for service after 6:00 pm were minimal. Drivers were being sent home early because there was nothing for them to do. We rescheduled the 4 evening drivers to daytime hours. They have seen an increase in daytime ridership between 30 to 40 riders per week. In June, MTA plans to evaluate the program again to see if they need to make another adjustment.

Kathy Geist, MTA Outreach and Transit Planner, shared their drivers are "angels in the outfield." Any time drivers see issues or have concerns, they bring them to her. For example, in Belfair, a gentleman's wheelchair needed repair. A driver was concerned about this person trying to use a walker because it did not appear to be safe; so, the driver alerted her. Kathy discovered it was difficult to find a larger wheelchair for rent. There were no providers in Mason County. She found a resource in Tumwater where people can get medical equipment

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on loan. It doesn't cost anything and there are no time limits on usage. The Belfair gentleman was able to use a loaned wheelchair while his wheelchair was getting repaired.

Drivers also contact her when riders' driveways need to be cleaned or the road to their homes is too bumpy, or there is low hanging brush. Kathy works with four different service organizations where people volunteer to help others. She shared there is a tremendous amount of community; people connecting with people. It is amazing and very heartwarming.

Councilmember Kathy McDowell noted her mother-in-law who is 95, typically drives herself everywhere until she broke her hand and was in a cast. She registered with Dial-a-Ride and used it for grocery shopping. Her mother was very pleased with the service. Drivers were friendly and helped her get on and off the bus. Mason Transit is a priceless asset for the community.

Rebecca Roadman with the Developmental Disabilities Administration, noted that service organizations providing transportation for their customers, find purchasing the extra insurance coverage to be prohibitive and a barrier to their programs. The service organizations are exploring if developing a co-op will lower the insurance costs for everyone.

Jim shared that he receives disability payments from the Social Security Administration. He owns a truck, but it costs a lot to run. He wondered if he would qualify for the Dial-a-Ride. An MTA representative explained the only qualifications to use the Dial-a-Ride are 1) living in Mason County and 2) wanting to travel within Mason County.

Mike Ringgenberg shared information on Initiative 976 (I-976). I-976 would lower state vehicle registration fees, strip local governments' authority to impose their own car tab fees and attempt to repeal or reduce Sound Transit taxes. State and local governments use car tab taxes to fund road and transit projects. Many people tonight have been talking about transportation challenges. One-third of Mason Transit's funding will be impacted by the implementation of I-976. MTA provides 460,000 rides annually. If this initiative passes, MTA would reduce their rides about 1/3 to 300,000 annually. Mike is concerned about how riders are going to get to their medical appointments and to dialysis. Reducing the car tab fees to \$30.00 sounds great, but the impact on our neighbors may be catastrophic.

Note: As of 2020, Medicare Advantage plans are authorized to offer innovative benefits, including Medicare transportation to doctor's appointments. Medicare Advantage is one way to get your Medicare Part A and Part B benefits through a private insurance company approved by Medicare.

Resources

Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA) is part of the Washington State Insurance Commissioner's consumer protection services. SHIBA provides free, unbiased and confidential assistance with Medicare and healthcare choices. They can answer questions about Medicare Advantage Plans that offer transportation services in your area. The SHIBA

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provider for Mason County is **Senior Services for South Sound**, which is in Olympia. The SHIBA contact number is 360.586.6181 ext. 134.

Senior Services for South Sound provides seniors with rides to medical appointments, important senior services programs and other essential errands such as grocery shopping, visits to the pharmacy or other professional appointments! Rides are available Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. To inquire about eligibility or to arrange an appointment, please call 360.586.6181, ext. 128. To ensure they can schedule a driver for your appointment, please give them as much advance notice as possible.

Senior Services for South Sound
222 Columbia St. NW
Olympia, WA 98501
Website: (Full URL: <https://www.southsoundseniors.org>)

Michael Corona, Transportation Director
Phone: 360.586.6181 ext. 128
Email: transportation@southsoundseniors.org

Thurston County Medical Equipment Bank provides free medical equipment and supplies for those who cannot afford to purchase their own. All equipment is lent on a temporary basis to any person in need, for as long as they need it. Borrowers are asked to return the equipment when it is no longer needed.

Wheelchairs	Transfer Benches
Portable Commodes	Shower Benches
Walkers	Hospital Beds
Crutches	Canes
C-Pap machines	...and so much more!

Thurston County Medical Equipment
5930 Mullen Rd. SE
Lacey, WA 98503
Phone: 360.456.8810
Website: (Full URL: <https://medicalequipmentbank.org/>)

Dial-A-Ride is a fare-free accessible door-to-door service operated by Mason Transit Authority. The service operates on a demand-response basis. It is a non-fixed route requiring advance scheduling by the customer. It is a shared ride where trips are generated by calls from customers. For more information, call 360.426.9434.

Mason Transit Authority
790 E. Johns Prairie Rd.
Shelton WA 98584
Email: mta@masontransit.org
Website: (Full URL: www.masontransit.org)

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Promising Practices

Van Grant Program - Mason Transit Authority operates a Surplus Vehicle Grant Program. Up to two (2) 12-passenger vehicles can be made available to eligible non-profit or government organizations, community agencies, and organizations with 501(c)(3) status to enhance transportation service provided within Mason County. For more information or to request an application contact: Kathy Geist, Outreach & Transit Planner, at 360.432.5754 or by email at kgeist@masontransit.org.

Community Van Program - Mason Transit Authority (MTA) provides ready-to-go passenger vans for lease to qualifying nonprofit and government agencies. The program was developed to provide alternative transportation options for groups that work to enhance economic development or for social service functions. Groups pay a low per mile and per day fee. MTA fuels and maintains the vans. For more information or to request an application contact: Kathy Geist, Outreach & Transit Planner, at 360.432.5754 or by email at kgeist@masontransit.org.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Participant Comments

Megan Fiess, Shelton City Councilmember, shared her concern about a recent change in the SNAP program which tightens the work requirements. States with high unemployment rates or a demonstrable lack of enough jobs, can have the work requirement waived. This ruling does not apply to children and their parents, those over 50, individuals with a disability or pregnant women. There are approximately 10,812 individuals in Mason County who depend on SNAP. **Note:** The Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) ruling, which would have taken effect on April 1, 2020, has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Megan explained the new rule makes 6% the minimum unemployment rate for a county to receive a waiver. Mason County is on the cusp; their unemployment rate from September 2019 thru December 2019 has been 6.0%, 6.1%, 6.1% and 5.8% respectively. If Mason County's waiver is removed, many people will lose their food stamps and will only qualify if they work 20 hours a week. The work requirement will impact many of our support services such as WorkSource and food banks. Shelton's WorkSource has a staff of 8 wonderful people; this change will increase their workload. Megan is concerned for the people who will lose their food stamps and wonders where they will find all these part-time jobs.

Note: Congress approved supplemental funding for Basic Food recipients in March and April 2020 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. You can learn more about these here: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/BasicFoodEmergencySupplementsApril2020.pdf>

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Kevin suggested Mason County develop a food delivery program in conjunction with the food bank services. People who are homeless don't have phones to call Dial-a-Ride for services. They don't have cars and there is a large homeless community living in the woods. Kevin recommends developing a program that brings food items to where the people are.

Resources

SNAP-Ed Nutrition Program - SNAP-Ed Nutrition Programs focus on improving dietary quality, physical activity and food resource management for adults and youth in Mason County. The Adult Program offers a hands-on approach to nutrition education lessons for food stamp eligible adults. Participants discover the importance of daily physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle and learn how to choose a variety of nutrient-dense foods in appropriate portion sizes. These two approaches support health and well-being. For more information, contact Julie Guyton, SNAP-Ed Manager at 360.427.9670 ext. 684 or by email at jguyton@wsu.edu.

WSU Extension Mason County
Interim County Director: Dan Teuteberg
303 N. 4th Street
Shelton, WA 98584-3417
Phone: 360.427.9670 ext. 680
Belfair: 360.275.4467 ext. 680
Website: (Full URL: <https://extension.wsu.edu/mason/>)

Washington State's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) - You can apply online for SNAP through the Washington Connection website. The Full URL is <https://www.washingtonconnection.org/home/>. You can also apply through the mail. You will need to download the application and complete it. You will find mailing instructions on the application forms. The application form is in PDF format. Make sure you have Adobe Reader or another PDF file viewing program to read/print the file.

Guardianship

Participant Comments

Dick Stigall with the Developmental Disabilities Administration works with 75 individuals in supported living. He is concerned about the cost for a professional guardian. His customers pay between 5% and 7% of their fixed income to a professional guardianship company. The company providing guardianship is based in Olympia. They visit each individual monthly and sign papers on an annual basis. Their involvement is very limited. He also believes many people with guardians may not need the service. Dick recommends legislation be drafted requiring the state to cover the annual costs for guardianship services for individuals receiving disability benefits from the Social Security Administration.

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Another person shared her father-in-law had a guardian when he lived in Arizona and the fees were \$10,000 annually. When he moved to Shelton and began living with her, she successfully petitioned the court and the Veterans Administration and became his guardian.

Resources

Articles on Guardianship by Disability Rights Washington

- How to Avoid Guardianship Pitfalls – Full URL: <https://www.disabilityrightswa.org/publications/how-avoid-guardianship-pitfalls/>
- How To Modify, Terminate, or Complain About a Guardianship – Full URL: <https://www.disabilityrightswa.org/publications/how-modify-terminate-or-complain-about-guardianship-0/>

Disability Rights Washington provides free services to people with disabilities. They are a private non-profit organization that protects the rights of people with disabilities statewide. Their mission is to advance the dignity, equality, and self-determination of people with disabilities. For more information, call 800.562.2702 or 206.324.1521; Language interpreters are available upon request. Please use 711 for Washington Relay Service (TTY). **Note:** they have modified phone hours and there may be delays in reaching someone as they are working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Phone hours are 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Monday – Friday. Disability Rights Washington does not respond to voicemails requesting information and referrals or other assistance.

Disability Rights Washington
315 5th Ave S, Ste 850
Seattle, WA 98104
Phone: 206.324.1521 or 800.562.2702
Website: (Full URL: <https://www.disabilityrightswa.org/>)

Accessible Communities

Participant Comments

Commissioner Randy Neatherlin is often surprised by the individual dedication of the advocates in the community. Generally, it is the work of one or two people, who carry the load to make positive change. The process for change is never easy.

Time after time, community people identify issues that have never come to the Commissioners' attention. For example, a long-time member of Mason County's Voter Access Committee who happens to be blind, never knew there was an elevator in the building where they meet. The Braille signage was literally over the Commissioner's head. During tonight's meeting, a person let the Commissioner know the form you are required to fill out for Mason County's court system does not allow you to request an interpreter. Commissioner

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Neatherlin is sure if an accessibility assessment was conducted on county processes and buildings, other issues would be identified. He is excited about the possibility of having an Accessible Community Advisory Committee established in Mason County. He described the initial process Mason County has taken to develop an ACAC. With leadership coming from Paddy McGuire and Kevin Frankeberger, they are very close to establishing the ACAC. Over 14 people with disabilities met and are interested in making this Committee a reality.

Warren Weissman noted twelve of the thirty-nine counties in Washington State have an ACAC. One of the benefits of establishing an ACAC is the ability to request funding. The amount of funding available is limited. GCDE receives \$100 of the \$450 fine people pay for parking illegally in the disability parking spots. GCDE uses that money to fund small projects in the counties around the state. Fixing the accessibility of an elevator in a public space would be a good project and something GCDE could fund.

Resources

The Accessible Community Act was created by the Legislature to help communities be more welcoming and inclusive for persons with disabilities and to promote and provide equal access to opportunities within the community. The Act provides funding to Washington State counties to promote disability awareness and increase access for people with disabilities. A county must have an Accessible Community Advisory Committee (ACAC) to be eligible for funding.

For more information on how to create a local Accessible Community Advisory Committee contact Marilyn Crandall, Chairperson of the Accessible Community Subcommittee. Her phone number is 360.387.4868. Elaine Stefanowicz, Program Coordinator with the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment provides staff support and is a resource for information as well. Elaine can be reached by calling 360.890.3774 or by email at estefanowicz@esd.wa.gov.

Affordable Housing and Homelessness

Participant Comments

Dick Stigall with the Developmental Disabilities Administration commented on the lack of affordable housing. Individuals living on a fixed income, like Social Security, have a difficult time finding housing. The housing shortage is across the state. It doesn't matter if you live in an urban or rural community, finding affordable housing is difficult. If you are fortunate to find housing, after you pay your bills for heat, water, and lights, you are in the red. He would like to see more support in Mason County to engage and support individuals with disabilities. Providing more employment opportunities would ensure more self-sufficiency. He would like to see a tax rebate program for people/agencies who want to work with individuals with disabilities. The tax incentive could be at the local level or a provision in state government.

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Dick complimented a couple of local property management companies. Gateway Property Management and Mell Property Management have a great reputation for assisting individuals with disabilities find affordable housing.

Barbara Weza, Director of Community Lifeline, shared they recently received some results from the yearly **Point-in-Time** (PIT) count. They counted 111 individuals who were homeless, of which 44 individuals had physical disabilities, 21 had developmental disabilities and 64 had mental health conditions. Barbara works with people who have barriers to employment and housing. She used to work in the developmental disability arena and experienced the success of supported employment and supported housing. These programs are very effective and would also be successful for people experiencing homelessness. She encouraged service providers to be mindful when doing job development that there are many kinds of disabilities and people with disabilities are found everywhere even in the homeless community.

Mary Johnson is a care provider for her aunt with developmental disabilities. She is also a parent of a child on the Spectrum, a special education teacher and principal at Mountain View Elementary in Shelton. The Shelton School District has 4,300 students; 500 of those students are homeless. The school definition of homeless does not mean they have nowhere to live. It means they are living in a car, a shelter or they are living with another family. They have a hundred teenagers who are couch surfing. They have no families; they are considered undocumented minors. In her elementary school building, she had 57 students, about 10%, who qualify for the McKinney-Vento program which means they are living in a homeless situation.

Note: The McKinney-Vento Act ensures homeless children transportation to and from school free of charge, allowing children to attend their school of origin (last school enrolled or the school they attended when they first become homeless) regardless of what district the family now resides. McKinney-Vento subgrant funds can integrate homeless with non-homeless youth providing a homeless student with uniforms or gear for an extra-curricular activity; paying a fee for a lab or other class that requires a fee; or supporting homeless students in accessing existing academic enrichment activities.

Resources

Crossroads Housing moves homeless families and individuals forward by helping them achieve greater self-sufficiency and stability through permanent affordable housing. They assist people who are experiencing setbacks possibly due to job loss, loss of income, catastrophic medical bills, or family break-ups. Services include housing, case management, guidance, referrals, education in life and parenting skills, employment counseling, and medical advice. For more information call Kaylee Hoyos at 360.427.6919 ext. 206 or by email at khoyos@hcc.net or call Jessica Metro at 360.427.6919 ext. 205 or by email at jmetro@hcc.net.

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Crossroads Housing
71 Sarigison Loop
P.O. Box 1777
Shelton, WA 98584
Phone: 360.427.6919

Housing Authority of Mason County is a public housing agency that helps provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly and persons with disabilities. It manages several funded programs and has a total of 60 subsidized affordable housing units for rental assistance. It administers a total of 50 Section 8 Vouchers. For more information about coverage area and program availability call 360.479.3694.

Housing Authority of Mason County
807 Railroad Avenue
Shelton, WA 98584
Phone: 360.479.3694

Exceptional Foresters Inc's Residential Services provides 24-hour support and assists with living accommodations for people with disabilities in Mason and Thurston counties. Skilled staff provide individualized supports in their clients' homes, ensuring their safety and independence. They offer two residential programs; Supported Living and Independent Living services. For more information contact Brittany Griese at 360.426.0077 or by email at BrittanyGriese@team-efi.org.

Exceptional Foresters Inc.
Kimbel Building, Shelton
2009 W. Railroad Ave.
Shelton, WA 98584
Phone: 360.426.0077
Website: (Full URL: <https://www.team-efi.org/contact-us/>)

Community Lifeline is a nonprofit social service organization that provides job training, and basic services of food, emergency shelter and showers. They collaborate with many community partners to come alongside people providing resources, educational programs and mentoring to move toward self-sufficiency. They also have a Homeless Advocate/Case Manager on staff who can assess and assist with housing needs and community resource referrals.

Community Lifeline
PO Box 698
218 N. 3rd Street
Shelton, WA 98584
Phone: 360.462.4439
Email: director@cllshelton.org
Website: (Full URL: <https://cllshelton.org/contact-us/>)

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Promising Practices

The Arc of Spokane's Home Ownership Opportunities Program helps individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their families to navigate the complex process of buying a home. Since 2004, they have helped more than 200 individuals and families purchase safe and affordable housing. For more information contact the Arc of Spokane:

Arc of Spokane
320 E. 2nd Avenue
Spokane, WA 99202
Attn: Theresa Griffith
Phone: 509.328.6326 ext. 8326
Email: tgriffith@arc-spokane.org.
Arc of Spokane Home Ownership Program website:
(Full URL: http://www.arc-spokane.org/home_ownership_opportunities)
Arc of Spokane website: (Full URL: <http://www.arc-spokane.org>)

HomeChoice Downpayment Assistance Loan Program is offered through the Washington State Housing Finance Commission. It is a down payment assistance and second mortgage loan program for qualified borrowers who have a disability or who have a family member with a disability living with them. It funds up to \$15,000. HomeChoice combines with House Key and Home Advantage first mortgage loan programs. One-on-one counseling is required. Contact:

Downpayment Assistance Loan Programs
Attn: Dietrich Schmitz
1000 2nd Avenue #2700
Seattle, WA 98104
Phone: 206.287.4459
Email: dietrich.schmitz@wshfc.org.
WA State Housing Finance Commission website: (Full URL: <http://www.wshfc.org/buyers/downpayment.htm>)

Substance Abuse

Participant Comments

Kevin Frankeberger explained individuals needing methadone to assist in their drug recovery travel daily to Lacey and back. Not only is this service costly, but it is time-consuming. With the \$35 million hospital expansion, he is wondering why a methadone center was not included. New Directions Counseling rents half of the building for outpatient drug and alcohol recovery. Mason County has a substance abuse problem and no one wants to talk about it. He met a woman who was in recovery. Her children were in state custody. She had been living in a tent for over 3 months before there was a sober living bed available. Kevin

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encourages people to get their morning coffee at Safeway and see the many people who are struggling daily to survive in Shelton.

Commissioner Neatherlin complimented the members of the Opioid Stakeholders group that started about 2 years ago. Their work has had a huge impact on the community. Prior to their work, Mason County had no local providers for Suboxone. Suboxone is used to treat opiate addiction and Mason County has several providers now.

Resources

Mason County Opioid Stakeholders group combines resources to battle the opioid crisis in the community and is beginning its second year. It is comprised of county officials and government, private, and non-profit agencies dedicated to proactively addressing the opiate issue. **Note:** could not find contact information on-line.

South Sound Clinic, Evergreen Treatment Services (ETS) offers medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorders to patients in Thurston County and surrounding areas. Their services combine the daily dispensing of methadone or buprenorphine with important wrap-around services like counseling and engagement with a medical provider. For more information call 360.413.6910.

South Sound Clinic, Evergreen Treatment Services (ETS)
6700 Martin Way East, Suite 117
Olympia, WA 98516-5586
Phone: 360.413.6910
Phone: 888.764.7243
Website: (Full URL: <https://www.evergreentx.org/south-sound-clinic/>)

New Directions Counseling, LLC is state-certified and provides the highest quality addiction treatment in a safe and caring environment. They provide solutions for people who have a problem with alcohol or drugs by offering evaluations, group therapy, individual therapy and informational classes relating to alcohol, drugs and chemical dependency treatments.

New Directions Counseling, LLC
506 W. Franklin St.
Shelton, WA 98584
Phone: 360.427.5232
Email: admin@newdirectionswa.com
Website: (Full URL: <http://www.newdirectionswa.com/#page-nav-Section-3>)

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Educational Services

Participant Comments

Mary Johnson, Principal with Mountain View Elementary, explained students and families are having difficulty accessing services. Many children entering school are dealing with significant Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which are traumatic events occurring before age 18. ACEs include all types of abuse and neglect as well as parental mental illness, substance use, divorce, incarceration, and domestic violence. These are children who may not have had prenatal care, were not able to bond with their mothers, experienced domestic violence or other trauma. These are children with social emotional disabilities. In Mary's school she has 116 kindergarten students and 27% are receiving special education services. The good news is most of these students received services in the preschool program. Students who were not enrolled in preschool are on a waiting list for services. Some students have waited between 9 and 18 months for a medical evaluation. Shelton is a rural community and the services are not available in the community.

Mary complemented Mason General Hospital's pediatric outpatient occupational therapy department; it is outstanding. Conversely, there is only one child psychiatrist available and he only accepts appointments once a week. He doesn't accept Medicaid which is another limiting factor.

Resources

Mason General Hospital - has excellent physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech language pathologists who collaborate to help children achieve the highest functional level possible. The therapists are experienced with helping children to develop their motor and language skills so they function with the highest degree of independence, maximizing and improving their quality of life. For more information call 360.426.1611.

Mason General Hospital
907 Mountain View Drive
Shelton, WA 98584
Phone: 360.426.1611
Website: (Full URL: <https://www.masongeneral.com/visit-us>)

PAVE (Partnerships for Action, Voices for Empowerment) provides support, training information and resources to empower and give voice to individuals, youth and families impacted by disabilities.

PAVE
6316 S. 12th St.
Tacoma, WA 98465
Phone: 800.5parent or 253.565.2266
Email: pave@wapave.org

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Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds helps to advance educational equity in three ways:

- 1) Providing information and informal, impartial, and collaborative conflict resolution for families, educators, and community professionals to support students in our state's K-12 public schools.
- 2) Offering free trainings and outreach on a variety of topics to advance educational equity in public K-12 education
- 3) Partnering with policymakers to tackle opportunity gaps

Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds
3518 Fremont Avenue North, #349
Seattle, WA 98103
Toll-free phone: 1.866.297.2597
Phone interpreter services available
Website: (Full URL: <https://oeo.wa.gov/>)

Promising Practices

ACHIEVE is a comprehensive program partially funded as one of the Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) through the Office of Postsecondary Education. **ACHIEVE** is a model demonstration program for Washington. For more information or to schedule an informational meeting, call 206.592.3526. **ACHIEVE** is located east of the main Highline College campus at 23835 Pacific Highway S. in Kent Washington.

DO-IT Scholars prepares Washington State high school students with disabilities for success in college and careers. Scholars attend Summer Study sessions, held during three consecutive summers at the University of Washington campus. This allows students to experience college life and work on self-advocacy skills. Throughout the school year, Scholars connect with program staff, DO-IT Mentors and each other using email and e-lists. They also meet in-person at DO-IT events, and complete individual and group projects. They receive valuable information and support for the transition to college. Washington State high school students with disabilities may apply. Priority is given to students in their sophomore year in high school, followed by students in their junior year. For more information and to find an application visit <https://www.washington.edu/doi/do-it-scholars>.

Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is a unique leadership training program for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities. The program is in its 20th year of operation. Students serve as delegates from their communities at this six-day, five-night event. Young people with disabilities cultivates their potential leadership, citizenship and social skills. There is no cost to attend. GCDE pays for lodging, meals, transportation and all accommodations. For more information, contact Elaine Stefanowicz.

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Elaine Stefanowicz, Program Coordinator
GCDE
PO Box 9046
Olympia, WA 98507-9046
Phone: 360.890.3774
Email: estefanowicz@esd.wa.gov

Employment

Participant Comments

Jim Deel shared he takes medication as a result of an injury that prevents him from driving. His work history is in physical labor which he is unable to do. His last job was with Fish and Wildlife and he is unable to do the physical work required. He applies for jobs but never hears back. They don't say no, you just never hear from them. He recently moved in with his mother and is going bankrupt. He worked with an employment agency and he is eligible for the Ticket to Work Program. He needs a good job not just a minimum wage because if he works, he will lose his Social Security Benefits and food stamps.

Daniel Ledgett, a member with GCDE, works for the WorkSource in Longview. He encouraged Jim to try WorkSource again. He encouraged Jim to let staff know he needs somebody to help him. Daniel has confidence the WorkSource staff will be responsive. Daniel gave Jim his business card and told him call him if he was unable to get help.

Pat Bauccio suggested Jim consider volunteering. Being out of the work force and not having current references may be impacting his hiring. She suggests he volunteer at an organization or agency he would like to work for. Often, volunteer work turns into a real job. Also, it helps build your work habits, like getting to work on time, being dependable and working in a team. These are the skills employers look for and having recent history will be helpful.

Megan Fiess explained the Shelton WorkSource is encouraging businesses to hire workers with disabilities. The staff developed a workshop, "Unlocking the Hidden Talent Pipeline," bringing businesses together to talk about what WorkSource is and the benefits of engaging with WorkSource. One of the workshop exercises talks about disabilities. It uses a self-reflection process to broaden the understanding of hidden disabilities and how disability touches all our lives. Staff also explained the advantages of hiring workers with disabilities and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

Mary Halterman is the Library Manager at the North Mason Timberland Library in Belfair. She wanted to let people know about the Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP). The Timberland Regional Library is a partner with the WATAP. The library has a collection of assistive devices that are available on loan from the library for a period of three weeks. It is a free program available to anyone with a library card. The intent is to give

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people a chance to try out different assistive devices without having to invest in what can be a substantial amount of money. She encouraged people to share this information with others who might need assistive technology. They have everything including an assistive Xbox controller, rose-colored glasses that help those of us with migraines and large keyboards. Library staff can also help you find low-interest loans to purchase your equipment through the Northwest Access Fund.

Resources

Northwest Access Fund offers financial products and services designed to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities and seniors in Washington and Oregon. Their mission is to provide funding for people with disabilities to purchase assistive technology and achieve greater independence. Washington and Oregon residents of all ages with disabilities of all types, including seniors with age-related functional limitations, are eligible. For more information call 877.428.5116.

Northwest Access Fund
PO Box 55759
Shoreline, WA 98133
Phone: 1.877.428.5116
Email: info@nwaccessfund.org
Website: (Full URL: (<https://www.nwaccessfund.org/contact/>))

Plan to Work is a free and voluntary service available to individuals in the state of Washington (except southern counties Pacific, Lewis, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Clark, Skamania, Klickitat, Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla) who are currently receiving disability benefits from the Social Security Administration and want to work. They answer questions about how work affects benefits and identify work incentives to support career goals.

Plan to Work
2001 N Division St, Ste. 130
Spokane, WA 99201
Phone: 1.866.497.9443
Website: (Full URL: plantowork.org)

WorkSource is a statewide partnership of state, local and nonprofit agencies that provides an array of employment and training services to job seekers and employers in Washington. Customers access services electronically through WorkSourceWA.com or by visiting your local office.

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WorkSource
Olympics Gateway Center
2505 Olympic Hwy N
Shelton, WA 98584
Phone: 360.427.2174
Website: (Full URL: <https://seeker.worksourcewa.com>)

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal government initiative designed to increase employment opportunities for people who typically experience certain barriers to employment, such as veterans, Supplemental Security Income recipients, vocational rehabilitation program participants, public assistance recipients and others. The credit amount for WOTC can be up to \$2,400 for each qualified new hire with a disability. Veterans with a service-connected disability who have been unemployed for at least 6 months in the past year qualify for \$9,600. The credit is equal to a percentage of the eligible employee's wages, and the employee must work at least 120 hours for the employer to receive credit. For more information on WOTC call 800.669.9271 or email ESDGPWOTC@esd.wa.gov.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is a statewide resource assisting people with disabilities to prepare for, secure, maintain, advance in, or regain employment. DVR partners with organizations and businesses to develop employment opportunities. DVR serves people who seek meaningful, secure employment but whose disabilities may result in one or more barriers to achieving an employment goal. **Note:** DSHS offices are closed to the public in response to Governor Inslee's Stay Home, Stay Healthy directive and in a continued effort to curb the spread of COVID-19 virus. These closures will remain in place until further notice. You can apply for services online at washingtonconnection.org or call 877.501.2233.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Olympics Gateway Center
2505 Olympic Hwy N #420
Shelton, WA 98584
Phone: 360.427.2037
Website: (Full URL: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/location/dshs-dvr-shelton>)

Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is the main entry point to services for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities in Washington State. It's where people go to get help for in-home, out-of-home and community-based services. Most services are not an entitlement, which means that being eligible for DDA does not automatically result in enrollment for services. There can be a long wait, but it's important to take the first step, which is applying for a determination of DDA eligibility.

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Developmental Disabilities Administration
2505 Olympic Hwy N, Suite 440
Shelton, WA 98584
Phone: 360.462.2151
Website: (Full URL: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dda>)

Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) provides services for people of all ages who are blind or have low vision in the state of Washington. The agency provides services to more than 2,800 Washington State residents to help them gain or retain employment. Their mission is “Independence, Inclusion, and Economic Vitality for individuals with a visual disability.” For more information call 360.725.3846.

Department of Services for the Blind
4565 7th Avenue SE, Fourth Floor
Lacey, WA 98503
Phone: 360.725.3846
Website: (Full URL: <https://dsb.wa.gov/contact-us/olympia-lacey-office>)

Ticket to Work Program – is a free and voluntary program that can help Social Security beneficiaries go to work, get a good job that may lead to a career and become financially independent, all while they keep their Medicare or Medicaid. Individuals who receive Social Security benefits because of a disability and are age 18 through 64 probably already qualify for the program. Visit <https://choosework.ssa.gov/mycall/> to sign up for free information. Or contact one of our representatives through the Ticket to Work Help Line at 1.866.968.7842 or 1.866.833.2967 (TTY).

Promising Practices

The Governor’s Employer Awards Program is an annual event honoring public, non-profit, and private employers statewide for their exemplary work to recruit, hire, retain, and advance workers with disabilities. Two individual awards are also presented: the Direct Support Professional and the Governor’s Trophy *in Memory of Carolyn Blair Brown*. The Direct Support Professional award recognizes a job developer/coach who has shown extraordinary ingenuity and drive to create and sustain supported employment opportunities. The Governor’s Trophy is presented to an individual with a disability who has developed or influenced programs, services, legislation etc. resulting in positive outcomes dramatically enhancing the empowerment of individuals with disabilities. For more information on the Awards Program, visit the GCDE Website: (Full URL: <http://esd.wa.gov/gcde>), call Emily Heike at 360.890.3776 or email her at ehеike@esd.wa.gov.

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Local Resources

Participant Comments

Tom Davis works with veterans in the criminal justice system. He works within a structure that is key to their success. At Memorial Hall, they make people feel welcome and at home. Everyone has a common bond; they are all veterans. They advocate for their patrons and there is a lot of passion in this organization. There are a lot of services available in Mason County, but passion and advocacy are missing. People use these services, but it is at a distance. The workers are siloed and can't do wrap-around services. They do what they can and send the person to another organization. People get discouraged.

Patty Osier and her son, Cameron, are starting a **People First** Chapter in Mason County. People First is a self-advocacy organization for individuals with intellectual disabilities. There are around 35 chapters in the state. The mission for People First is to teach people how to advocate for themselves. They have an annual advocacy day at the legislature. It is also a social organization. Many years ago, Shelton had a chapter. Cameron currently attends meetings in Thurston County. There are a lot of people in their thirties in Shelton who would be interested in having their own chapter again. Their first meeting has not been scheduled. Patty is looking for community support and encouraged anyone interested in helping this initiative move forward to contact her at 360.463.4813.

Kevin Frankeberger explained as the population ages, people gather disabilities. Baby boomers are the largest segment of the population. As people age, their bodies change. Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) can impact the severity of vision loss due to aging. It is the leading cause of severe vision loss in adults over 60.

Damiana Harper serves as Chairperson for the Outreach Subcommittee, but in her day job, she is the East Region Manager for the Department of Services for the Blind in Spokane. DSB offers an Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) program for people who are 55 and older who are not able to work. This program is not funded in the same way DSB vocational programs are. There is funding for small things like canes, magnifiers, and bigger light bulbs. It's just a matter of getting connected with the service providers.

Leadership Breakfast Exercise

The following morning, 34 people attended the Leadership Breakfast, representing elected officials, service providers and leaders in the disability community, to brainstorm solutions for the issues discussed at the Town Hall Meeting held the previous night. The outreach team reviewed and rated the topics discussed and identified the top three issues:

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Leadership Breakfast Participants

- 1) Restore evening hours for the Dial-a-Ride service and how to address the impact of I-976
- 2) Establish a centralized resource and service network
- 3) Homelessness and the barriers unique to the disability community

Participants were led through a modified “Gallery Walk”; a group exercise requiring participants to be actively engaged in a problem-solving process using three corresponding questions. The exercise provides opportunities to share ideas; review comments from other participants; prioritize issues and work towards possible solutions. This discussion summary has the following elements:

- 1) The question being addressed
- 2) A list of brainstorm ideas
- 3) Pathways for Change - a report out of the group’s ideas and action plans

Question # 1 What are the first steps to developing a marketing campaign to increase ridership and service hours for the Dial-a-Ride?

List of Brainstorming Ideas

- Dial-a-Ride stops after 6 pm
- Can use this service for any reason
- Patty Wagon – medical transport
- Medicaid trip, travels long distances
- Needs to expand medical transport for Medicare recipients
- Dial-a-Ride has no riders at night, staff goes home early because of no work
- Ridership increased with more service available during the daytime hours
- Disability community needs to build awareness and encourage people to use it or lose it
- Relatively small need for evening service; buses were operating empty
- Seasonal adjustments to the Dial-a-Ride, in summer months service hours are longer
- Friday and Saturday evening service
- Transit can change program if need exists in June
- Marketing campaign to encourage ridership
- Hold town hall meetings in the rural communities

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- Partnering with local businesses for discounts on movies and restaurants
- Buy one get one free
- I-976 campaign to educate what will happen if I-976 is passed
- Passing of I-976 will mean 1/3 drop in service hours
- Educate the community on how transportation funding works
- Make sure you tell the story
- Develop a co-op between transit and service providers like the Patty Wagon
- Partner with the Chamber of Commerce
- Encourage more person-to-person marketing
- Social workers encouraged to provide bus information when working with customers
- Merchant Coupons
- Work with service clubs, sport events, summer concert organizers, concerts and plays at the high school and religious organizations
- Contract with the Patty Wagon to fill gaps in the system
- Offer it, they will come
- Promote subscription rides
- Online access for scheduling rides
- Preset trips to Walmart, Fred Meyer and casino
- Lack of communication from transit
- Promote ridership in senior newsletters

Pathways for Change

Group Report Out - Mason Transit Authority (MTA) is collecting data through the end of March to see how many riders are requesting service after 6:00 pm. MTA will create a survey with questions about the change in service hours and how it has impacted riders to get to where they need/want to go. The survey will be sent out to their existing ridership and they will expand distribution within the community. They plan to have the survey completed by April 30th.

The group is interested in developing a marketing campaign to promote using the bus for special events such as the Oyster Rama and the Matlock Old Timers Historical Fair. The Dial-a Ride hours could be expanded during these events to allow for more participation. Partnering with local businesses to develop a program to increase ridership using incentives like 2 for 1 dinners or 2 for 1 movie tickets are being considered. People who take the bus would be eligible for the discount. The marketing campaign will take more time to develop and the target deadline is June 30th. The MTA outreach planner will start contacting local businesses to identify those who are willing to partner with them.

It was also recommended to focus on the 55 and older crowd to start using the bus more often, especially in the evening hours. Ridership has fallen off in the evenings. MTA believes darker hours and wanting to be home at night is the cause.

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Question #2: How might the Shelton/Mason County community design and implement a centralized resource and service network?

List of Brainstorming Ideas

- United Way 211 information and referral
- Ombuds, where are they - direct people to services
- Mason Matters and Community Action
- Mason County resource for drivers
- Get everyone together
- More marketing on what is available
- Funding is a barrier
- Combine resources
- Identify roles and responsibilities
- Attend Resource Provider Meetings
- Identify what is available in the community



Leadership Breakfast Participants

Pathways for Change

Group Report Out - Commissioner Trask wants to gather the local community resources to figure out what is currently being offered in the community and identify the gaps in services. Sharon is going to lead the process with Karin Leaf and Councilmember Megan Fiess. They will assemble the representatives of the community resources to hold a resource provider meeting in the next 30 days.

Local service providers need to connect with the United Way's 211 information system. The group asked Ted Jackson, the Executive Director of United Way, to increase local marketing so people in Mason County are more aware of 211. Information about local resources needs to be provided electronically and in brochures. Brochures can be available on the buses and in provider offices and at schools.

Question #3: What steps might be taken to identify and mitigate additional barriers faced by people with disabilities who are experience homelessness?

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List of Brainstorming Ideas

- Allocate funds and resources to individuals who accept and benefit from assistance
- Increase collaboration of resources and agencies in the community
- Identification of abuses of resources
- Address core reasons for homelessness such as drug use, financial burden, domestic violence, mental health
- Meet and talk to people who are homeless to identify the why
- Tell their stories
- Tiny homes for veterans
- Differentiate individuals that choose to be homeless vs forced to be homeless
- Need more volunteers
- Fill service gaps with other resources like the Patty Wagon
- Accessibility of the current shelters
- Offer a mobile food bank - convert bus/van to serve people living in the woods
- Myth buster, substance abuse is not the majority
- Mason Matters
- City Homeless Coordinator (new)
- Develop a rapid response network
- Warming shelter (guests – rule)

Pathways for Change

Note: When meeting participants were asked to select the concern, they were most passionate about or had skills to help resolve, the homelessness topic was not selected.

Personal Commitment Statements

Please write down the one action step you will complete in the next 30 days to help address the issues identified today to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities.

- JML will relay the top 3 questions to Shelton School District Superintendent's cabinet.

Continue personal research study on disability resource collaboration at colleges/technical schools.

- Karin Leaf will assist United Way and Mason Matters or a new group in requesting all our area resources to provide a list of their services to 211 and coordinate a group with Councilmember Fiess and Commissioner Sharon Trask.

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- Councilmember Fiess will work with the city council, city management, county officials and the business community for the establishment of a thriving community model with an action team who are able to leverage resources and drive change and build capacity for a social service network.
- JF will attend the next possible organizing meeting for an Accessible Community Advisory Committee, hopefully before the next 30 days are up.
- Commissioner Sharon Trask will meet with other key players in addition to Megan and Karin, to formulate an action plan in the next 30 days to build/enhance a social service network.
- Ted Jackson, Executive Director of the United Way of Mason County, will reach out to the various groups and develop partnerships.
- Kevin Frankeberger will 1) present a marketing plan etc. to Mason Transit Authority Board regarding evening Dial-a-Ride services; and 2) he will make himself known to the Mason Transit Authority Board and will encourage board members to be more involved in the change process.
- Patricia Perry will partner with Mason Transit next week to explore opportunities on how to work together to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities.
- Danette Brannin, General Manager for Mason Transit Authority, will
 - 1) Review Dial-a-Ride evening requests to see how many rides have been turned away
 - 2) Survey Dial-a-Ride customers to identify what the evening ridership needs are. The survey will be completed by April 30
 - 3) Data Gathering in Feb & March
 - 4) Survey Creation: March
 - 5) Survey 3 weeks - done by mid-April
 - 6) Results – April 30
 - 7) Marketing campaign to businesses and special events in community
 - 8) Identify businesses such as movie theater, restaurants and the casino, who will participate in the 2 for 1's promotions
- JF will work with Mason County Transit to provide support for outreach to help increase ridership.

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Paddy McGuire, Mason County Auditor

- Paddy McGuire will 1) participate in the resource provider meetings; and 2) continue to explore developing an Accessible Community Advisory Committee in Mason County in 2021.
- Sarah Kerwin will 1) attend more public community meetings to tackle these issues; 2) will try to become more aware; and 3) meet with Blake Chard, Chief Executive Officer to see how Exceptional Foresters Inc. can become more involved in advocacy.