



STATE OF WASHINGTON

GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ISSUES AND EMPLOYMENT

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Pullman & Colfax, Washington Outreach Summary

Introduction

The Community Outreach Subcommittee of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) held two meetings in Pullman: a Town Hall Forum on April 26th, 2018 and a Leadership Breakfast on April 27th, 2018. Both meetings were held at the Holiday Inn Express and Suites located at 1190 SE Bishop Boulevard in Pullman.

We want to acknowledge Janel Goebel, the County Developmental Disabilities Coordinator, Teresa Driver, Director of Employment Services at Boost Collaborative and Mary Marsh, a counselor with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, for their guidance in recommending accessible meeting locations. They also identified leaders in the disability community and other stakeholders important to our outreach efforts.



Holiday Inn Express and Suites

The following report presents a summary of the issues discussed. Suggested actions and program resources are provided. A list of meeting attendees who provided their contact information is included as well.

Outreach

To encourage community attendance and leadership participation, an advance team visited Pullman to confirm accessible meeting and lodging facilities. While in town, they personally met with representatives from the local schools, the Pullman Regional Hospital and the Neill Public Library.

Meeting flyers and letters of invitation were sent to over 150 stakeholders in the disability community. Public service announcements detailing information about the Town Hall Forum were sent to local radio stations and print media.

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Whitman County Demographics

Whitman County is located in the southeastern part of Washington State within the Palouse region of the Pacific Northwest. It is mostly agricultural land specializing in farming barley, wheat, dry peas, and lentils. Whitman County is the top wheat producing county in the nation. The estimated population for Whitman County was 48,851 in 2016.

Colfax is the County seat and is located one-hour south of Spokane and 20 minutes from Pullman. In 2016, the estimated population for Colfax was 2,826 according to the United States Census Bureau, making Colfax the second largest city in Whitman County behind Pullman.

Pullman is a productive agricultural area known for its many miles of rolling hills and the production of wheat and legumes. It is home to Washington State University and the Cougars. In 2017, the Office of Financial Management estimated Pullman's population at 33,280.

Local Success Stories

- **WSU ROAR** (Washington State University Responsibility Opportunities Advocacy and Respect) – is a two-year inclusive postsecondary education program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The program will provide individualized programs of study in education, social skills, and vocational training through person-centered planning. Next fall, the program will start with four students and in year two, they plan to increase the students to ten. WSU ROAR students will live communally on the Pullman campus during the University's fall and spring semesters, and complete WSU audit courses with same-aged peers. Most importantly, the WSU ROAR program will welcome young adults with I/DD to be part of the Cougar family experience. For more information, their email address is coe.roar@wsu.edu. You can also follow them on their Facebook page (Full URL: <https://www.facebook.com/WSUROAR/>.)
- **Special Olympics of Whitman County** – welcomes athletes of all intellectual and physical ability levels and offers the opportunity for each athlete to compete to the best of their ability. The program fosters healthy living, courage, joy, and lifelong friendship. Seasonal sports including bowling in fall, basketball in winter, and track and field in spring, provide social, physical, and emotional growth opportunities for community members with I/DD ages 8 and up.
- **Special Olympics Young Athletes** – is a free sport and play program for children with and without intellectual disabilities, ages 2 to 7 years old. Young Athletes introduces basic sport skills like running, kicking and throwing. This program offers families, teachers, and caregivers the chance to share the joy of sports with all children.

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- **Affordable Housing** – The Whitman County Disabilities Board began an association with Community Action Center (CAC), a county non-profit providing low-income housing, approximately 15 years ago. In that time, CAC purchased existing homes providing housing for individuals with disabilities and acquired other properties which have been remodeled for that purpose. Currently, they operate six homes for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Mary's Park – an all-inclusive park, will be celebrated on April 30th, 2018. In 2010, 5 acres were donated from the Herb Neil estate for the creation of Mary's Park. The plan for Mary's Park is to make it an interactive ADA accessible park including ADA accessible play equipment, restrooms, green space, rain gardens, equipment storage, a picnic area and shelter, possible RV sites, and parking spaces. It is located on Johnson Road close to the dog park.

Town Hall Meeting Summary

Meeting participants represented a diverse cross section of the community including people with disabilities, family members, service providers and elected officials. We had 45 attendees at the Town Hall Forum and 36 attendees at the Leadership Breakfast. The discussion topics were broad with an emphasis on transportation, affordable housing, accessible parking options and connecting people to existing programs and services.

During the course of our meetings, 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.



Town Hall Meeting Participants

Whether addressing housing options, employment opportunities, parking or access to transportation, two common threads emerged: 1) services are available but there is insufficient funding to assist everyone who is in need and 2) the disability community needs to work together, creating a stronger voice for change.

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Accessible Parking, Sidewalks and Curb Cuts

Participant Comments

Elizabeth contacted members of the Pullman City Council on several occasions requesting to have more disability parking stalls in the downtown shopping district. There are no disabled parking spaces on Main Street, Grant or Grand . There are a couple of accessible spots behind Bruised Books, but you need to be able to use stairs without handrails to get into the store. The other option is to park near the Pullman Library and walk to your destination. If you are a person who also deals with limited energy, these excess trips are exhausting. Because of these challenges, Elizabeth chooses to shop in Moscow because it is more accessible.

Acacia added that her experience is the same. She provided an example of picking up pizza where she parked on Main Street. She unloaded on the street side, the only option, and waited for cars to pass. She then traveled in the street to the end of the block to find a curb cut. Once on the sidewalk, she went all the way back to pick up the pizza. These are the kinds of situations Acacia faces when she shops in Pullman.

Elizabeth shared that many businesses are not accessible; for example, their doors are too narrow for wheelchair access. The business community doesn't seem to be making simple modifications to their stores to allow people with disabilities to feel welcome and to be able to shop.

Mark Leeper, Director of the Disability Action Center NW in Moscow, shared he lives in Pullman. He is also the current chair of the Washington State Independent Living Council. Mark explained persons with disabilities have a long history of being an unfunded mandate. These are citizens, your constituents. If you are fortunate to have a long life, you are going to be right there with them. The City of Vancouver, Washington announced they were conducting their ADA self-evaluation, updating their transition plan and wanted input from community members. When Mark mentioned the effort to a Pullman city leader, he was told Vancouver has more money. Mark encouraged the City Council Members present to start the process for change at the top and not rely on the citizens to continue to make the waves.

Mark also mentioned he manages a website called BluePath (Full URL:<https://blue-path.org/>.) BluePath is an accessibility listing website for people with disabilities. It links consumers and families with businesses who want to offer services in a welcoming environment for persons with disabilities. BluePath serves as a marketing web page for businesses and programs that meet a level of accessibility and are committed to making efforts to effectively serve people with a disability. A business in Pullman requested their business be removed from the website. This was the first time Mark had ever encountered this request. It really demonstrates how we all need to do a better job of educating the business community regarding the buying power in the disability market and the importance of being accessible.

Councilman Nathan Weller, a Pullman City Council Member, mentioned he is aware of Liz's concerns and accessible parking was discussed in the Council's goal setting meetings last

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year. It is important for him and the other council members attending to hear the concerns being expressed. He encouraged people to attend the City Council meetings to share their concerns. He also recommended the disability community collaborate to bring issues forward as having more people sharing their personal stories with similar concerns sends a stronger message.

***Note:** The Pullman City Council meetings are held on Tuesdays, beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber in Pullman City Hall located at 325 SE Paradise Street. Complete council agendas and meeting minutes are posted on the City of Pullman website (Full URL: <http://www.pullman-wa.gov/city-council-boards/city-council/meeting-schedule>.)

Acacia shared that she would like to be able to go with her friends to Etsi Bravo, a night club, but it is not accessible. She spoke to them and asked if they had an elevator; the answer was no. They did not apologize or say they were sorry. It is the same with a lot of businesses in Pullman.

Another person commented that she feels isolated and has become a recluse. It is difficult for her to get around in the community. Businesses are not accessible and finding accessible parking takes a lot of time and effort.

Julia indicated the sidewalks need improvements. Because there are no ramps, she travels on grass and in the streets - it is very frustrating. People who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices need to be able to get around.

Councilwoman Eileen Macoll agreed that the sidewalks are a disgrace. She would like to see a delegation from the disability community come and present at a council meeting. She would make sure that people were available to hold doors open; accessible parking spaces would be reserved; and she would make sure the sidewalks discussion would be placed early in the agenda.

Acacia appreciated the invitation, but she works long hours and advocates daily just to live her life. She has no energy left for anything else.

Debbie Sherman, with the Whitman County Disabilities Service Board, shared the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) did a lot of construction on Grand Avenue which was completed in November last year. The curb ramps were less than handy for anyone who uses a wheelchair. The ramps were placed at an angle, were narrow and had no contrast strips, making them difficult to use. She met with the county coordinator and with a WSDOT representative to discuss her concerns. WSDOT retrofitted most of the curb cuts in the downtown area. She shared her story in hopes others would use it as an example of how one individual can make real change.

Councilman Dan Records suggested that if you can't get to the Council meetings, share your concerns on the City of Pullman website (Full URL: http://www.pullman-wa.gov/?option=com_etree&view=displays&layout=user&user_id=147.) Hearing stories

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from community members will shed a different light on the issues. It is easy to say we need more ramps but without understanding the real problems, the issues may not get the attention they deserve. Citizens who come before the City Council with a stronger voice tend to get a better response.

Pullman is in the process of designing their new City Hall. Councilman Records invited the disability community to provide direct input. City Hall needs to be for everyone including individuals with disabilities, senior citizens and people pushing baby strollers. City Hall provides services to everyone; their building needs to be accessible.

Councilman Records met with the Public Works Director Kevin Gardes, the City Supervisor Adam Lincoln, and Councilwoman Ann Parks. They discussed the accessible parking issues in downtown Pullman. A proposal was drafted looking at four different locations where on-street disability parking spots could be designated. One spot would be on Main Street, one on Grand and two spots on High Street. Public Works is developing cost projections on what it would take to add these parking spots.

At the City Council meeting on Tuesday, April 24th, they adopted the priorities for the year. One of the four priorities was Culture and Human Services which includes a comprehensive accessibility review for all of Pullman - not just physical access but the accessibility of all city services.

Another person commented that she uses a van and a standard ADA parking space does not work for van users. She recommends that all designated spots be van accessible, so they work for everyone.

A participant asked if armored trucks are able to use or block disabled parking stalls. Others chimed in and talked about general abuses of vehicles being illegally parked. A person shared that she called the police and asked them to come and ticket the violators but no one showed up.

***Note:** The Washington State Law in RCW 46.19 clearly says to qualify to park in disability stalls you must have a special license plate and/or a placard and an identification card. The law also addresses parking without a placard/plate in section (4) under RCW 46.19.050, Restrictions-Prohibitions-Violations-Penalties. The law states that it is a parking infraction, with a monetary penalty of two hundred and fifty dollars, for any person to park a vehicle in a parking place provided on private property without charge or on public property reserved for persons with physical disabilities without a placard or special license plate issued. In addition to any penalty or fine imposed under this subsection, two hundred dollars must be assessed. The legislature also noted there is a history of abuse of special parking privileges for persons with disabilities.

A Portland Oregon television station, KGW, did a piece on commercial vehicles illegally parked in disabled spaces. To see the article and watch a video click on the link below. (Full

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URL: <https://www.kgw.com/article/news/investigations/it-is-not-their-spot-investigation-finds-delivery-trucks-parked-in-disabled-spaces/283-522253387> .)

Liz added that if Pullman establishes four accessible on-street spots, they must also agree to enforce the law or those spots will be used by others. The city police need to routinely ticket parking violators.

A meeting participant added that the City of Pullman just hired their third enforcement officer so they are moving in the right direction.

***Note:** In reviewing the parking legislation, a couple of items seemed important to include with this discussion.

The law allows for volunteers to issue citations. In section (10) under RCW 46.19.050, a law enforcement agency authorized to enforce parking laws may appoint volunteers, with a limited commission, to issue notices of infractions for violations of subsections (2), (3), (4), and (6) of this section or RCW [46.19.030](#) or [46.61.581](#). Volunteers must be at least twenty-one years of age. The law enforcement agency appointing volunteers may establish any other qualifications that the agency deems desirable.

- (a) An agency appointing volunteers under this section must provide training to the volunteers before authorizing them to issue notices of infractions.
- (b) A notice of infraction issued by a volunteer appointed under this subsection has the same force and effect as a notice of infraction issued by a peace officer for the same offense.
- (c) A peace officer or a volunteer may request a person to show the person's identification card or special parking placard when investigating the possibility of a violation of this section. If the request is refused, the person in charge of the vehicle may be issued a notice of infraction for a violation of this section.

Under RCW 46.19.050 in section (12), the law addresses community restitution. For second or subsequent violations of this section, in addition to a monetary penalty, the violator must complete a minimum of forty hours of:

- (a) Community restitution for a nonprofit organization that serves persons with disabilities or disabling diseases; or
- (b) Any other community restitution that may sensitize the violator to the needs and obstacles faced by persons with disabilities.

Marilyn Crandall, Chair for the Accessible Communities Advisory Committee, talked about a grant program GCDE offers to counties. Counties are eligible for grant funding if they establish an Accessible Community Advisory Committee (ACAC), a cross-disability group which is approved by the County Commissioners. The purpose of the ACAC is to improve disability awareness and access for people with disabilities.

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The cross-disability group can be newly established, can be formed from the County's Voter Advisory Committee with the Auditor's approval or it can be an existing group that meets the eligibility qualifications for an ACAC.

After the ACAC is endorsed at the county level, an Assurance Letter is sent to GCDE for approval. Once approved, all the expenses associated with the ACAC meetings are paid for by GCDE. GCDE will pay for qualified American Sign Language interpreters, CART (Communication Access Real-time Translation), assistive listening systems, room rental fees, and travel and per diem for ACAC members to attend meetings.

An ACAC can design programs, activities or barrier removal projects for funding consideration. ACACs are operational in Clallam, Cowlitz, Island, Jefferson, Kitsap, Pierce, Spokane and Wahkiakum Counties. Grant funding has been given to Cowlitz, Jefferson, and Spokane Counties.

To learn more about the Accessible Community Advisory Committees contact Elaine Stefanowicz by emailing her at Estefanowicz@esd.wa.gov or by calling 360.902.9362. You can also visit their website: (Full URL: <https://accessiblecommunities.wa.gov>.)

Mayor Glenn Johnson suggested that GCDE ask to be on the agenda for the Washington Association of Counties' (WSAC) annual meeting to make a presentation. WSAC meets several times a year but their annual meeting is in November. WSAC is located at 206 Tenth Ave. SE, Olympia, WA 98501. Eric Johnson is the current Executive Director and his phone number is 360.489.3031 and his email is ejohnson@wsac.org.

Resources & Accessible Parking Best Practices

- Disability Action Center NW (DAC) provides information and referral services while fostering attitudes, policies, and environments of equality and freedom. They encourage people with disabilities to take control of their lives and to live life to the fullest. They offer a wide-range of services including: ADA training, housing advocacy and independent living skills training. For more information visit the DAC website (Full URL: <http://dacnw.org/contact/moscow-id/>), or you can call them at the numbers listed below.

Disability Action Center NW
505N. Maine St.
Moscow, ID 83843
208.883.0523
800.475.0070 Toll-Free

- BluePath is an organization dedicated to mapping ADA accessible businesses across the Pacific Northwest. BluePath is a place where those with disabilities can find businesses that are easily accessible. It is a non-profit community that serves both consumers and

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businesses to make it easier to get around and get business done. For more information visit their website (Full URL: <https://blue-path.org>.)

- In Washington County, Oregon they have a volunteer parking enforcement program. The program is unique in that it authorizes volunteers to take direct enforcement action by writing citations to motorists who ignore the law. Volunteers receive eight hours of classroom training, and a minimum of 40 hours of field training to prepare for this assignment.

The most common violation cited is for parking in a disabled parking space without a disabled person's parking permit or for unauthorized use of a disabled person's parking permit. This group responds to citizen complaints and actively patrols business parking lots throughout the County.

For more information visit their website (Full URL: <https://www.co.washington.or.us/sheriff/vehiclesparking/disabled-parking-enforcement.cfm> .)

Affordable and Accessible Housing

Participant Comments

Julia shared there needs to be more options for housing that is affordable and accessible. There is a lot of new student housing but there needs to be more housing for the general public.

Debbie explained that her daughter lives in a housing unit operated by the Community Action Center (CAC). She lives with three employed roommates. Most of the individuals who live in these homes have jobs and use Dial-a-Ride to get to and from work.

Acacia added that these housing programs are terrific and provide many opportunities for community inclusion. What she sees is a lack of similar opportunities for people with mobility impairments. As she advances in her career and works toward financial stability, her Medicaid supports are reduced and many are eliminated forcing her back into poverty.

A participant added these residential homes are fantastic, but unfortunately, they are full. There are no options for our current and future students with disabilities completing their high school education

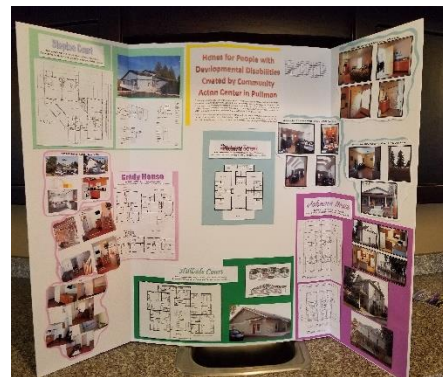


Figure 1 Poster Board Showcasing Homes for persons with I/DD

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***Note:** According to the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) 2017 Caseload and Cost Report, Whitman County has 99 adults and 103 children enrolled in services as of July 2017. The County has 32 individuals in supported living and 1 person living in an adult family home. The majority of DDA's clients live with and receive care and support from a parent or relative.

Housing – Resources

Community Action Center

The Community Action Center, in partnership with the Spokane Housing Authority (SHA), administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program for Whitman County. Housing Choice is a federal program administered through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

A participating family will pay at least 30% but not over 40% of their adjusted annual income for their rent and utilities. Housing Choice pays the balance of their rent. There is approximately an 18-month waiting period. The waiting list is currently open; applicants can apply by visiting their office or downloading the application and mailing it in. For more information call their office at 509.334.9147.

Community Action Center also offers emergency housing for individuals and families who are homeless or facing eviction. To access these programs you need to make an appointment with a Family Development Specialist.

Community Action Center
350 SE Fairmount RD. #1
Pullman, WA 99163
509.334.9147
Full URL: <https://www.cacwhitman.org/>

Housing – Best Practices

- **Catholic Charities and Volunteers of America** offer Housing First programs for the chronically homeless in Spokane using federal and state tax credits. Catholic Charities of Spokane and Volunteers of America of the Inland Northwest collaborated to build two neighboring 50-unit permanent supportive housing facilities on the 200 block of East Second Avenue in Spokane.

Here is a link to an article describing the program and funding mechanisms in more detail:
[Housing First Article \(full URL: http://www.thefigtree.org/may15/050115housinghomeless.html\).](http://www.thefigtree.org/may15/050115housinghomeless.html)

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Catholic Housing Communities

P.O. Box 2253

Spokane, WA 99210-2253

Phone: 509.358.4250 ext. 6183

Email: chc@ccspokane.org

Catholic Housing Communities website: (full URL:

<https://www.catholiccharitiesspokane.org/housing>)

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) now knows it saves money to house chronically homeless people before they are sober, drug free, or mentally stable. Housing First may cost **\$12,000 a year per person**. In contrast, when chronically homeless people interact with local police and fire fighters, emergency services, the legal system and various social service agencies, it may cost the city/county \$300,000 a year per person.
- **The Arc of Spokane's Home Ownership Opportunities Program** helps individuals with I/DD 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:

Home Ownership Opportunities

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, 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.

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[WA State Housing Finance Commission website: \(full URL: http://www.wshfc.org/buyers/downpayment.htm\)](http://www.wshfc.org/buyers/downpayment.htm)

Connecting People

Participant Comments

Daniella shared that without the help of the Disability Action Center NW she would be lost. They are leveraging and using their limited funds to make a huge difference in this community. They are a good source for information and assistance. They don't dismiss you; you are a real person with real issues.

Daniella expressed her interest in having support services similar to those available to individuals with I/DD. Supportive living and housing options are needed for many other individuals with disabilities. Having a traumatic injury in her early 20s changed her life. She navigates through the bureaucracy but feels isolated because many of the services she needs, she is not eligible for.

Jamie explained she is attending the meeting on behalf of several parents who could not get respite services to attend on their own. Respite services are difficult to arrange because of the limited number of providers. The state requires specific training to offer these services. The closest place to get the training is in Spokane and it is a lot of hours. She also wonders how to support these families and connect them together?

Brian Holloway with the ARC of Spokane shared that the ARC recently received funding to provide a Parent to Parent program in Whitman County. Parent to Parent provides support and encouragement to parents supporting a child with an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD). Parent to Parent strongly believes talking to someone who has faced similar challenges can be tremendously helpful. ARC gets calls from across the state hearing the same issues shared tonight. Life in rural communities is different and government agencies seem to design programs for people who live in urban areas. The ARC is considering recommending a state plan be developed that addresses the needs of families in rural communities and how they are different from families who live in urban settings.

Debbie explained she served on a DDA committee four years ago. They discussed the differences between urban and rural service delivery. The group agreed that if changes were being proposed to the DDA program, they must be equally workable in the urban area as in the rural communities. According to the Office of Financial Management, there are 16 counties in the state that have a population density of less than 25 people per mile. Changes to programs and services need to work for everyone.

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Connecting People – Resources

ARC of Spokane works to ensure that people with developmental disabilities and the people who care for them, enjoy the highest quality of life possible. They offer a variety of support services and educational workshops.

ARC of Spokane
320 E. 2nd Avenue
Spokane, WA 99202-1402
509.328.6342
Full URL:<http://www.arc-spokane.org>

Education

Participant Comments

Bob Maxwell, Superintendent of Pullman Public Schools talked about school funding for special education and the need for additional money. State funding for special education was capped at 12.7%. He was pleased to announce that Governor Inslee signed a bill this year to increase the cap to 13.5%. What this means is schools receive additional state dollars up to 13.5% even when their special education student population exceeds the cap. For example, if your school district's K-21 full-time enrollment for special education is 17%, you will receive the maximum funding available of 13.5%, the remaining 3.5% of students need to be served within the same allocation. Many students will benefit from this increase and this achievement is largely due to the advocacy of teachers, administrators and parents.

As result of a rate increase approved by the legislature for students with disabilities, next year, Pullman will receive an additional \$54,000. Currently schools receive 0.93% additional allocation from the state for each student enrolled with a disability. Next year the allocation increases to 0.96%. Governor Inslee was hoping for a full percentage point, but Bob was pleased with the 0.03% increase.

Safety Net Funding is available to school districts with an extraordinary need for Special Education funding in excess of state and federal funding otherwise provided. These funds support special education students who typically have several different disabilities, with a high cost for education and transportation. School districts must complete an application, which is a burdensome and a complicated process. The application process is very competitive and schools can be denied if they fail to check a box or transpose a number. Superintendent Maxwell asked GCDE for their assistance to ensure the Safety Net Funding carries over and does not return to the General Fund, as the moneys were earmarked for special education and now those dollars are lost.

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***Note:** Toby Olson, Executive Secretary of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment, explained the Legislature requires every government entity to return any surplus funds. The Legislature develops its budget based on several factors including appropriating surplus funds in the next budget cycle.

Washington State Superintendent Reykdal in an interview on K5News admits that Washington is breaking the law when it places caps on funding and underfunds special education. He is working to alleviate this issue. His comments are found on the K5 News website: (Full URL:<https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/cap-on-funding-leaves-kids-with-learning-disabilities-in-limbo/281-550510661>.)

In the meantime, a concerted effort could be made to revise and improve the Safety Net application process. Making the application user friendly and less burdensome ensures districts who need the funds are able to receive them resulting in less surplus monies.

Athena has two boys with special needs. Her oldest son is almost 22. He graduated from Pullman High School and that is when his life stopped. He lives at home and does nothing because he does not qualify for employment services. He is not interested in working at the local thrift shop, a hotel or in the fast food industry. Her other son had a traumatic brain injury at 15. He will graduate this year and wants to be a mechanic. That is all he has ever wanted. There are no mechanic opportunities in Pullman; perhaps if they move to Spokane, the sons could be successful.

Debbie commented that her daughter's experience with transition services with the Pullman High School went really well. She was placed at the Holiday Inn and now, 13 years later, her daughter is still working there. The Holiday Inn continues to provide opportunities for students to test drive and learn more about working in the hotel industry.

Education – Best Practices

- Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is a unique leadership-training program for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities. The program is in its 18th year of operation. Students serve as delegates from their communities at this six-day, five-night event. Young people with disabilities cultivate their potential leadership, citizenship and social skills. There is no cost to attend. GCDE pays for lodging, meals, transportation and all accommodations. The Forum is held on a college campus. This year it will be held at The Evergreen State College on July 22 – 27, 2018. For more information contact Elaine Stefanowicz.

Elaine Stefanowicz, Program Coordinator
GCDE
PO Box 9046
Olympia, WA 98507-9046
360.902.9362
estefanowicz@esd.wa.gov

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Employment

Participant Comments

A person commented that she has a son graduating from high school and is looking for services post-graduation. She does not want him to get pigeonholed into the limited employment opportunities in the area. Most people get placed at the thrift store and she wants more options for her son.

Another mother added that she is facing the same issues. Employment opportunities are limited. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) needs to be more creative and needs to work with more employers and employment providers to increase choice for better employment opportunities.

Julia added that managers need more attitudinal training when it comes to hiring individuals with disabilities.

Debbie Sherman with the Whitman County Disabilities Services Board provided information in a written report to GCDE Staff. The Board explains the current employment service provider is Boost Collaborative, which has offered services for over 50 years. Job development in Pullman provides reasonable opportunities for individuals to compete in a tight labor market impacted by the college student population. Boost, with a 94% success rate in finding jobs for individuals, is always open to exploring new job opportunities throughout the county. More limited opportunities are available in Colfax. As you go further in to a sparsely populated county, the employment opportunities dwindle. Roadblocks to employ are transportation, job availability and housing.

Another person commented that individuals with disabilities tend to have lower incomes and can't afford to have internet access. In this community, access to high speed internet is an issue for everyone. Transitional students who want to telecommute or are interested in starting their own business don't have that option. Having and using a robust social network, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram and the like, is the wave of the future. She hired a person, who happens to use a wheelchair, to work from home. The employee posts their messages to the social network; the biggest challenge is the speed of her internet.

Marcus Poppen, a professor at WSU, works in the field of school-to-work transition at the federal level. He explained how the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) requires Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to provide pre-employment transition services to all potentially eligible students with disabilities. 15% of DVR's budget needs to be directed to WIOA services. He helped develop Washington's comprehensive statewide needs assessment. There are 40,000 potentially eligible students with disabilities in the entire state in a given year. DVR needs to step up and work more closely with schools and their transitioning students. School personnel and parents need to ask DVR what they are doing to help their son or daughter transition to post-secondary education or into the world of work.

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DVR continues to offer services that are compartmentalized; they hire subcontractors to provide a list of approved units of service. Especially in rural communities, more creative processes need to be developed. Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) is a good model. They have spent most of their WIOA monies because they take a broader approach. If the young person is already doing something that relates to employment, they fund it. It is a win-win situation for both parties.

Damiana Harper, a GCDE member and a counselor for the DSB, added that DSB is challenged in areas like Pullman, Lamont, Palouse and the like, because none of the WIOA monies can be used for transportation. DSB can't use the money to get our customers to where they need to be, so transportation services become a parent's responsibility.

Marcus explained as the dollars for WIOA are earmarked in federal legislation, any changes would be by Congress.

Megan Itani, Assistant Director for Special Services for the Pullman School District, said she works diligently with DVR and DDA to provide transition services. She agrees being creative is necessary; creativity brings success. Pullman is growing, Megan can see it in her student enrollment. The Pullman School District started the school year with 290 students with disabilities, today we have 354 students.

Megan works closely with Teresa at Boost, Mary at DVR and Donnett Neu at DDA; and they meet regularly. She is a strong advocate but has had a difficult time implementing all the WIOA requirements in Pullman and throughout Whitman County. She recommends more training be offered to staff, not simply a checklist to mark off as they complete an activity.

Transportation and job opportunities are the major barriers for school-to-work transition.

1. Teaching students how to use the Dial-a-Ride before leaving school is challenging. The challenge relates to the bus service itself; students wait 45 minutes for a bus to take them to a workplace and another 45 minutes to be returned to school. That is ninety minutes spent on waiting.
2. Employer resistance to hire students with disabilities is very real. When Megan contacts employers, she often hears, "We're not ready to do that at this time."
3. Two of Megan's students moved to Spokane after completing school last year. She knows how difficult this decision was for the families but there were no housing options or job opportunities in Pullman. Leaving your family would be hard for anyone; we all depend on our families for support.

Teresa complemented both DVR and DDA for the services being provided in Pullman. Boost Collaborative is only one of the employment providers; Goodwill and Compass are the other two.

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Employment – Resources

- **The Red Book** serves as a general reference about the employment-related provisions of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs for individuals with disabilities and other stakeholders.

2017 The Red Book website: (full URL: <https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/index.html>)

For what's new in 2018, see this site: (Full URL: <https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/newfor2018.htm>.)

- **Work Opportunities Tax Credit (WOTC)** is a federal tax credit incentive that Congress provides to private-sector businesses for hiring individuals from any of ten target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. Two of the target groups are:

1. **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Referred Individual**
A new hire is a member of this target group if the individual with a disability has completed, or is completing, rehabilitative services provided by one of the following:
 - A state-certified agency,
 - An Employment Network under the Ticket to Work program,
 - The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs.
2. **Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Recipient**
A new hire meets the criteria for this target group if the individual is a recipient of SSI benefits for any month during the 60 days before date of hire. Please note that Supplemental Security Disability Income (SSDI) is not the same as SSI.

The objective of this program is to enable the targeted employees to gradually move from economic dependency into self-sufficiency as they earn a steady income and become contributing taxpayers, while the participating employers are able to reduce their federal income tax liability. There is no limit on the number of individuals an employer can hire to qualify to claim the tax credit, and there are a few simple steps to follow to apply for WOTC. Click on the following information for more details:

1. [WOTC Program Brochure \(full URL: https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/WOTC_Program_Brochure.pdf\)](https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/WOTC_Program_Brochure.pdf)
2. [Employer's Guide to the WOTC \(full URL: https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/WOTC_Employer_Guide.pdf\)](https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/WOTC_Employer_Guide.pdf)

If you have questions or want additional information, contact the Washington State WOTC Coordinator Clancy Mullins. His contact information is:

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Washington State Employment Security Department
WOTC Administrative Unit
P.O. Box 9046, Olympia, WA 98507-9046
Phone: 360.902.9691
800.339.3981 (toll free)
Email: CMullins@esd.wa.gov

- **Tax Incentives for Improving Accessibility** - Two tax incentives are available to businesses to help cover the cost of making access improvements. The first is a tax credit that can be used for architectural adaptations, equipment acquisitions, and services such as sign language interpreters. The second is a tax deduction that can be used for architectural or transportation adaptations. Click on this link: [ADA Tax Incentives website: \(full URL: https://www.ada.gov/archive/taxpack.pdf\)](https://www.ada.gov/archive/taxpack.pdf) for a fact sheet with additional information.

Employment – Best 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 that create jobs. The Governor's Trophy is the highest honor given 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. **Nominations will be accepted through August 31st, 2018.** For more information on the Awards Program, visit the [GCDE Website: \(full URL: http://esd.wa.gov/gcde\)](http://esd.wa.gov/gcde), call Emily Heike at 360.902.9440 or email her at eheike@esd.wa.gov.
- **The Business Leadership Advisory Committee (BLAC)** is a business-to-business network promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities in the community and in the workforce. The purpose of BLAC is to reach out to business leaders to have them assist in developing strategies, supports, and marketing approaches that are more business friendly. Members are also expected to act as marketers and mentors to other businesses. The goals for the BLAC are:
 1. Increase the business community's and the general public's awareness of how individuals with developmental disabilities can function in the community and workplace.
 2. Educate community businesses on how to increase profits by hiring individuals with developmental disabilities through Federal tax credits and job carving.

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3. Increase employment for individuals with developmental disabilities; especially in sectors that have not employed individuals with developmental disabilities.
4. Build partnerships between businesses, community organizations and schools interested in promoting the employment of students or new graduates with developmental disabilities.
5. Develop a network of business champions of supported employment, which fosters other businesses to hire, retain, and improve employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Business Leadership Advisory Committee (BLAC)

Clallam County Health & Human Services
Developmental Disabilities

Attn: Tim Bruce, Planner

Email: tbruce@clallam.wa.us

111 E. 3rd Street, Port Angeles, WA 98362

Phone: 360.417.2407

[Clallam BLAC Website \(full URL:](http://www.clallam.net/HHS/HumanServices/blac.html)

<http://www.clallam.net/HHS/HumanServices/blac.html>

Transportation

Participant Comments

A participant commented that Dial-a-Ride services have changed recently, and she is experiencing difficulty with getting people to their appointments on time and rescheduling appointments. Pullman Transit bases their services on the WSU student schedule. Summer service hours end at six p.m. Why can't we have the same service year-round?

Daniella used Dial-a-Ride to pick up a prescription. Because of a Dial-a-Ride's policy, she had to wait two hours before she could get a ride back home.

Councilman Weller serves on the Downtown Transportation Group and he plans to bring these issues to their attention.

Julie shared that she and her son use the Dial-a-ride and it has been a wonderful service; without it she would not be able to work. She agrees there are limitations and holidays are a problem. The drivers are wonderful. When her son is not outside waiting for the bus, they call her to ask about him.

A participant added that she lives in La Crosse, 45 miles away. She is working with other parents who are trying to develop a transportation network, because there are very few jobs available in La Crosse. Having no transportation is really a non-starter for employment.

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Debbie Sherman with the Whitman County Disabilities Services Board provided information in a written report to GCDE Staff. The Board explains transportation in Whitman County, as in all of Washington's rural counties, is problematic. For individuals living in Pullman, Dial-a-Ride and an extensive Pullman Transit system provide an excellent means of accessing jobs, shopping, and medical needs. Countywide outside of Pullman is a completely different situation with limited or no transportation options, especially for those living independently.

Linda helps seniors in her community get groceries because using public transit is difficult and it takes a lot of time. Generally seniors with limited incomes are having a very difficult time getting the things they need. It is not just here in Pullman; it happens across the nation. People can't survive on Supplemental Social Security alone and she would like the federal government to increase the benefit amount.

***Note:** In 2018, the monthly payment for an eligible individual receiving Supplemental Security Income is \$750, which reflects a 2.0% increase from last year.

A participant commented that she used Dial-A-Ride in the past and now it will become her basic mode of transportation. She wishes it would have longer service hours; people with disabilities, like other bus riders, have lives that don't end at 6:00 pm. Making plans light years in advance comes with the service. She has no ability to be spontaneous or to attend church on Sunday.

***Note:** Pullman Transit contracts with the Pullman School District (PSD) and Washington State University (WSU) to provide transportation services that directly benefit their students and staff. These agreements prepay the fares for all WSU and designated PSD students, who ride by simply showing a valid ID. The agreement with WSU also prepays the fare for their staff, faculty and retirees who show their WSU ID. For the 2016-2017 school year, WSU paid \$2,050,715 and PSD paid \$157,463 for this service. These contracts greatly assist Pullman Transit in providing needed services in Pullman.

Teresa's biggest concern is transportation. You train someone to ride the bus, then WSU goes on break and everything changes and half of the routes are gone. You end up retraining your customers and hopefully they still can get to where they need to go!

Transportation - Best Practice

- **Pay Your Pal** is a rural transportation program in Snohomish County that helps individuals with disabilities fund personal transportation. Qualified individuals find friends, neighbors, or others that can provide transportation with SNOTRAC reimbursing the driver for the cost of the ride. Riders must live in rural Snohomish County and not live near a bus stop.

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Once a rider is determined eligible for services, the rider decides when and where they want to go, hires their own driver, and organizes and schedules their rides. Rides are not restricted to certain hours or days of the week. Each rider is responsible for ensuring driver(s) and vehicles are safe and have appropriate insurance. Because of the limited amount of funding, eligibility is reassessed annually, and funds are allocated on a first come, first served basis. Contact:

Pay Your Pal

Snohomish County Transportation Coalition (SNOTRAC)

Attn: Sandy Schurman

11323 Commando RD, Ste. 215

Everett, WA 98204

Phone: 425.265.2226

Email: sschurman@sssc.org

- **Pierce Transit's Care-a-Van Program** grants retiring vehicles to qualifying not-for-profit or governmental organizations that provide rides and services for people with special needs. The vehicles can be used for a variety of purposes such as transporting individuals with special needs to jobs, providing transportation to meal sites, or taking low-income seniors to medical appointments or shopping. Vehicles are awarded quarterly in accordance with Board Resolution 15-061. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. If your organization has a not-for-profit designation and would like to apply for a retiring vehicle, please click on the links below to learn about the program and submit your application. Questions about eligibility or the program should be directed to: Cherry Thomas, Senior Planner for Paratransit at 253.983.3699. Pierce Transit's Care-A-Van Eligibility, Rules, Requirements, and Application Packet can be downloaded from their website: (Full URL: https://www.piercetransit.org/file_viewer.php?id=3371) or access the packet from the following [Pierce County website: \(full URL: https://www.piercetransit.org/care-a-van/\)](https://www.piercetransit.org/care-a-van/)

Health and Medical Services

Participant Comments

Three meeting participants shared their frustration with having to re-certify their disability to the state and federal government. One person explained she has cerebral palsy - a permanent disability; it will not change. She is tired of explaining it to the Social Security Administration. It is a waste of her's and the government's time.

Teresa shared a story about an individual who needed emergency medical assistance and could not find transportation to Chelan. He contacted Coast Transportation, which provides rides to medical appointments using paid and volunteer drivers, and was turned down. Coast is underfunded and can't meet the needs of every caller. Without this medical treatment he was in jeopardy of losing his job. DVR could not help and his personal care provider could

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not help. Boost was able to step in and provide the necessary transportation. People shouldn't have to get to the point where they're in a medical emergency situation.

Teresa is also concerned about the level of mental health services in Pullman. More services and better funding are needed. People lose services because they go to work and earn money; this is counterproductive. Mental health services need to be continued so individuals can be successful on the job. She works with so many people who can't get out of poverty. Many of her clients won't take a job because of the fear they have of losing medical benefits and Social Security.

Melinda Johnson suggested that people receiving Social Security benefits who are concerned about losing their medical benefits or who are worried about what happens to their Social Security check if they have earnings, should contact Plan to Work, a free benefit planning service. If you have a DVR counselor, they also can provide benefit planning. Plan to Work provides personalized information on how earnings affect your benefits. They can help you understand how to report your earnings to Social Security and explain the work incentives available to you to keep more of your earnings. If you are working and have lost your medical benefits, you should check into Apple Health for Workers with Disabilities (HWD). HWD is a Medicaid Buy-In program. There is a monthly premium and it is based on a sliding scale. It cannot be more than 7.5% of your total monthly income - and may be less. For more information on these two programs see the contact information below.

Plan to Work

222 W Mission Ave Ste 120

Spokane, WA 99201

To access services, please call: 1-866-968-7842

plantowork@community-minded.org

[Full URL: www.plantowork.org](http://www.plantowork.org)

Apple Health for Workers with Disabilities (HWD) allows people with disabilities who are working to purchase medical coverage by paying a monthly premium that is based on their income. HWD benefits include:

1. Medicaid benefit package, including Medicaid personal care services
2. Greater personal and financial independence
3. Members can earn and save more without the risk of losing their healthcare coverage

You can apply online at How To Apply online at this website: (Full URL: www.washingtonconnection.org) through Washington Connections; or you can mail an Application for Long-Term Care/Aged, Blind, Disabled Coverage (HCA 18-005) to:

DSHS

Home & Community Services

PO BOX 45826

Olympia, WA 98504-5826

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For more information call toll-free 1-800-871-9275, or in Seattle call 1-206-272-2169.

Miscellaneous Topics

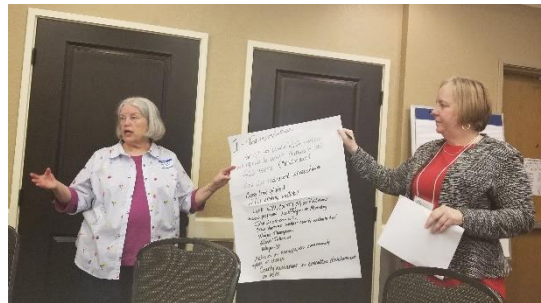
Participant Comments

A participant shared her concerns regarding young children with disabilities. Child care centers need to be accessible and welcoming to children with disabilities. Acceptance is the key; children need to be able to participate in activities outside of the school system.

Acacia wanted to share that the city officials and their subcontractors have a responsibility to ensure their construction sites are meeting the requirements of the ADA. If a path of travel is blocked, signage is required to tell pedestrians how to proceed and where the detour is located.

Leadership Breakfast Exercise

The following morning 36 people attended the Leadership Breakfast representing elected officials, service providers and leaders in the disability community to brainstorm solutions for the top four top issues discussed at the Town Hall Meeting. Participants were led through a modified “Gallery Walk”, a group exercise requiring participants to be actively engaged in a problem-solving process. The exercise provides opportunities to share ideas, review comments from other participants, prioritize issues and work towards possible solutions.



Transportation Group Presenters

Initially everyone brainstormed ideas for the following four questions. Then, four groups were formed to provide possible solutions; each group studied one of the following four questions.

Question 1 Based on the transportation concerns reviewed this morning, what possible solutions might be available?

After the brainstorm session the highest-rated solution was to develop a plan to increase communication across transportation organizations, stakeholders and volunteers. The “Transportation” group developed four recommendations for consideration.

1. Purchase a computer program that tracks mainline busses and Dial-a-Ride vehicles in real time. The program works with a mobile app to notify riders if a bus is late or if

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there is a detour and it sends alerts for bad weather. The program is estimated to cost \$100,000.

2. Bring all the transportation providers together to talk about service delivery in a holistic approach. The players would be John Shaheen, Director of Transportation at WSU, Craig VanTine with Coast Transportation, Wayne Thompson from Pullman Transit, Mayor Glenn Johnson of Pullman and the IT technician for the City of Pullman. Mayor Johnson said he would start organizing this group next Monday, April 30th.
3. Post regular articles in the *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*, the *Daily Evergreen* (WSU), the *Colfax Gazette* and the *Community Update* which is distributed to every household in the City of Pullman, ensuring the public is aware of current transportation services and any program changes.
4. Establish an Accessible Communities Advisory Committee and ask the ACAC to develop projects to improve transportation services in Pullman and throughout Whitman County.

Question 2 What might it look like in Pullman to mobilize the disability community into a unified voice?

After the brainstorm session the top solutions needing recommendations were: creating an advisory council on disability and raising awareness through a community interactive website. The “Developing a Voice for the Disability Community” group developed four recommendations for consideration. The group:

1. Form a Disability Council instead of a leadership council. The Disability Council would mirror individuals with disability, care providers, advocates and community leaders. It would be a community initiative from a community perspective instead of a top-down approach. Even though Mark Leeper was not in attendance, they plan to ask him to be the Council lead. It was also suggested this group coordinate closely with the Whitman County Developmental Board.

Another part of their plan was to ask those present if they would like to join the Disability Council. The following individuals volunteered:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Athena Mowder | Councilman Dan Record |
| 2. Acacia Kapusta | Craig VanTine |
| 3. Daniella Clark | Julian Wheeler |
| 4. Bonnie Gabel | Megan Itani |
| 5. Nancy Backes | Rochelle Dach |
| 6. Mark Leeper | Jordan Frost |
| 7. Debbie Sherman | Andrew Beck |

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2. Find a way to raise awareness about the needs of the disability community through a community interactive website. Once the above group is formed, their first action item would be to focus on the recommendation to establish an interactive disability focused website.

Question 3 What steps could be taken to improve disability parking, curb cut access and parking enforcement for the City of Pullman?

After the brainstorm session two ideas tied for the most popular solutions: developing a comprehensive parking plan for Pullman, and redesign parking spots using angled vs. parallel parking stalls.

The “Disability Parking” Group had the following recommendations:

1. Conduct a comprehensive parking assessment by the city. This can be accomplished by placing the idea in the City Council’s goal setting process.
2. Create a Disability Awareness Council. The Disability Awareness Council would participate in the development of the comprehensive plan, would help identify where the best locations for accessible parking are, and lastly, would be responsible for educating the disability community regarding the goals and outcomes for the comprehensive parking assessment plan.
3. Initiate training opportunities for city staff and possibly City Council Members. Individuals and organizations representing the disability community should be asked to provide training on disability issues related to accessible parking.

In addition to City Council Members and representatives of the disability community, the key people to be involved in these projects are the Public Works Director, a police department official and a representative from the city planning department.

Question 4 What might it look like in Whitman County if you could improve employment opportunities for persons with disabilities?

Two ideas tied for the most popular solutions after the brainstorm session were: exploring the development of a skill center for high school students and employer and co-worker awareness training to improve competitive employment opportunities. The “Employment” Group had the following recommendations:

1. Create training opportunities on disability awareness for all businesses and city and county personnel. Everyone from line staff, managers and business owners need to be included in the training.

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Partnerships need to be developed with the local Chamber of Commerce. A concerted effort needs to be made in the business community to review and update their job descriptions. Often job descriptions do not accurately state what is really required, making unnecessary barriers for job applicants with disabilities.

2. Organize a “Hire Ability Day” where businesses and job applicants meet and discuss opportunities for employment.

Brian Holloway, with the ARC in Spokane, was the person who spearheaded this idea. This project would promote the advantages of hiring someone with a disability. Making an investment with the business community upfront will provide a pay off in the long run of having more employment opportunities available for workers with disabilities. “Hire Ability Day” provides an opportunity for more communication, education and understanding of the benefits to hire workers with disabilities.

3. Establish a skills center in Pullman.

The group was very supportive of having a skills center but realizes that there needs to be funding to go along with this plan. One of the requirements of all schools is to work with transition planning services to ensure students have a work plan and are prepared as much as possible to reach their employment goals. Initially, the Pullman School District needs to assess what are the needs of the business community for future employment opportunities - do they need welders, assemblers or carpentry workers? The school district compiled a list of community members who are interested in serving on a committee to look at the possibility of developing a skills center. Bob will serve on that committee. The school district also needs to assess the capacity to support a skills center program. They need to work with outlying school districts as well. Discussing a skills center program for Pullman will be a financial consideration for the outlying schools. There are three options for a skills center: satellite, core, or regional programs. The satellite program would offer a class by partnering with either Spokane or Walla school districts. The core program would mean the Pullman School District would operate a program at Pullman High School and students from other districts could attend for a half day. The regional program would be for a group of districts to work together to host a skills center. All these options are on the table.