

Access to Health and Wellbeing Workgroup Meeting
Wednesday, April 1st, 2026 9:30am-11:00am on Zoom

Presenters:

James Cooper, Program Operations Manager Harborview Transportation

Abdul Yusef, Resource Coordinator, [Center of Success](#)

Attendees: Belen Herrera (SDOT), Angie Kitheka (Catholic Community Services), Alex O'Reilly (ADAC), James Cooper (Harborview), Nadine Zygaj (Carina), Staci Sahoo (Hopelink), Ryan, Matthew Weidner (Metro Access), Mary Ann Higgins, Julio Perez (SHA), Karen Hartman (Kirkland Senior Council), Rochelle Jones (NEMT), Casey Gifford (King County Metro), Mandy Wes (Disability Empowerment Center), Antoinette Smith (City of Kirkland), Mary Ann Higgins (Homage), Alan Bruckner (SVT)

Staff Support: Grace Georgitsis (SKCMC), Ysabel Yu (NKCMC), Heather Clark (Program Manager of Coalitions), Chitra Subramanian (Community Van), Dean Sydnor (RARET), Erin Funk (EERC), Chelsea Nelson (Find a Ride)

James Cooper, Program Operations Manager, Harborview Transportation

- 2,000 patients everyday, 5,000 staff members, 2,000 parking stalls
 - Math doesn't work
 - During Pandemic tried to help get staff to work by lowering parking costs
- Over 40 patients a day miss appointments because they couldn't find parking
- Region's only level one trauma center, including Alaska
- Urban environment, space is at a premium
 - Can't give everyone a parking space
- Transportation at Harborview means control what you can
 - "You stretch your legs according to the length of your blanket" - Turkish Proverb

- 70% of staff don't drive to work
 - Historically focused on parking in terms of transportation
- Since 2023, reorient culture to think about how to get people through the door
 - Support whatever mode clients choose to use (Access, bus, helicopter)
- Past 2 years used TDM tactics
 - Leased 300 stalls offsite and run staff in shuttles to that lot, staff driving have to ride a shuttle into work
- Preparing to build a 15-story tower to expand footprint, not enough space as it is right now
 - How to construct a new structure in a way that fits urban environment and reflects people's transportation habits
 - Shouldn't spend all the money on parking
- Pay attention to what we provide staff; "staff are the legs that help us fit in our blanket"
 - Call to action: Looking for partners to help figure out a way to subsidize transit trips and incentivize using transit
 - Parking is heavily subsidized, pay rent to county for parking and don't break even
 - Money made in parking is less than rent on garages
- City and region are growing, can't fit more cars

Discussion:

- Staci Sahoo: Thanks so much, anytime we get a speaker from a medical facility that's a transportation champion is a win, how were you able to get the 40 patients a day statistic?
 - James: Required to keep track of patient comments, started to listen when we got multiple comments about patients not being able to find parking, asked doctors to send over information whenever that happened, framed it as a safety issue and used safety reporting system to keep track
- Dean: Used to be offsite transportation coordinator for Hopelink, had a desk at Harborview, some perspective I would share in terms of traveling to Harborview (Pre- G Line and pre-2-line), coming from Snoqualmie East-West connections was a

problem I noticed. Most reliable and quick way to get to work was to walk up the hill over the Yesler Bridge, I could do that because I am young and ambulatory but in adverse conditions it would be hard. I wasn't convinced local routes were reliable enough and so would take streetcar. 2-line connection will let people out by 3 and 4 buses so wondering if partnering with metro to help people use those routes could be helpful.

- James: Probably one of our biggest gaps is that there's a massive transit resource a few blocks and some elevation away, 3 and 4 might not have the capacity to carry the people we are hoping to bring in from one and two lines
- James: Building a new tower opens an opportunity to work with city to expedite new bus service
- James: There is a route that currently terminates downtown, there is an institutional wish to bring the route to First Hill, but there is a block of pavement that doesn't meet SDOT standards, there is talk about bringing that up to standard so they can bring the route to Harborview.
- James: Timing has become an issue now that employees have to clock in or clock out to the minute, staff might often miss their buses or transfers
- Staci: Call to action around incentives for patients – with reduced fare options that currently exist including SAP, LIFT, RRF, are you looking to connect patients to these pre-existing resources or are you looking for funds to pay for a new fare product
- James: probably a little of both in my mind, should be incentivizing patients using transit as much as we incentivize parking. Maybe we can play a part in getting people registered.
- Staci: Neighborhood pop-up could be a resource
- Lyn: James, you have a big job and I'm grateful you came to share
- Mandy: Was at a recent transportation meeting and mini city hall at crossroads shared they will be doing an event where they will be giving out ORCA cards, can look up information about when that is happening

- Mostly care for clients on a fixed income
- WA Nonprofit established in 2022, recently created department addressing gaps in mobility access, also do workforce development and cross-sector development
- I have been in transportation for about 30 years
- Want to talk about Wheelchair Accessible Taxis (WAVs)
 - Typically regulated by city and county
 - People with disabilities using WAV should be charged the same as regular taxi fare
- 800 taxis on the road in King County and 2,000 licenses available, but only 80 WAVs
 - Higher costs for the vans and insurance premiums
 - Market is not sustainable without help from city or county
 - People often have to wait 2-4 hours for a WAV
- Coordination and connection barriers between companies that make the few WAVs out there less accessible
- Center of Success looking into how to make the system more efficient and then increase supply and demand gradually
 - Accessible transportation is not a side issue, it is an essential infrastructure
 - The barriers are real and the opportunity for partnership is here
 - King County has a population of 2 million people and less than 50 accessible vehicles
 - Uber or Lyft does not have an accessible fleet, refers people back to taxis instead
 - King County Metro, Hospitals, schools, all depend on the taxis
 - Government and companies need to work together to make the existing system better
 - A lot of drivers are willing to become WAV drivers if they get assistance for initial costs
 - Drivers can generate up to 3x above the poverty line, but need the initial push

Discussion:

- Dean in Chat: Worked a lot with WAVs at NEMT, saw there were more drivers connecting with me for transportation when they knew I had rides coming their way
 - If you can generate more rides for them it's easier for them to operate
 - Starting in the middle of this year people will be able to access WACares fund; they can use that for transportation. Don't see WAVs or Taxi/Cab services listed on WACares list, link between WAVs and the fund could create greater sustainability for operators
- Abdul: Need to address getting the vehicles and the fleet. Right now, of the 50 cars operating, they have more than enough business to run, now business is not the highest issue, but having more cars join could create the opportunity for daytime and night businesses. I am willing to collaborate with any and every organization that can help. Basic issue dealing with is to educate people about the current crisis.
- Staci: Want to call out everything you're saying is important, a group attended a summit in Chicago and this was one of the biggest issues to address, there is an effort on accessible central dispatch right now led by KC records and licensing services to have a one call for accessible vehicles. Not live yet but hopefully it will be soon.
- Matthew: This is a huge unseen issue, essentially a market failure, did some rough numbers, can quantify when you look at TNCs or medallion taxis, broken down by population of king county, 1 TNC for every 100 people in KC, for wheelchair accessible vehicles and wheelchair users its 1 WAV for every 900 wheelchair users, huge chasm of opportunity people are left out on. Some efforts underway to look at the edges of this but need to raise the issue to electeds to really tell the story of how this is impairing ability of people to live their lives
 - KCM is less able to scale up services for those with mobility issues because of these issues
- Staci: There is a funding opportunity through state called consolidated grant. If someone was interested in getting a grant to solve this, they do have local funds this might be eligible for. We can talk offline if you want to help get you ready to apply. Frankly disappointed FIFA world cup opportunity didn't solve this issue sooner
- Abdul: RFP that came out did not satisfy universal dispatch; county did not like the possibility of a national company winning the contract

- Original 50 WAVs, the vehicles were given to drivers by king county
- WAV is regulated system, not a private paratransit company
- The biggest thing Center for Success is doing right now is collecting data and looking at how to make things better. I appreciate the help being offered and will connect, will need as much help as possible with data and expertise, I will be more than happy to follow up with Staci and Matthew.

Storymap Project Updates

- This group originated idea of creating a storymap for those facing transportation barriers to activities that affect their health and wellbeing
 - Medical appointments, cultural connections, community connections
- Currently in outreach phase, have shared information and reached out to partners, plan to reach 20 story-sharers from different categories and different reasons, then pause and see what else we would like to represent and potentially cap at 25
- Participants can submit a story under a certain category (Cross-county travel, post sedation, etc), often someone submits a story under one category and during the sharing session it becomes clear their story relates to many categories
- Going well, still have a month left of outreach but are already close to our goal
 - At the next internal project meeting will have a conversation about whether to continue after 25 stories
- Mandy: How to schedule an initial meeting?
- Lyn: Asking people to reach out by interest form, a lot of people don't have internet access, so we've done a lot over phone calls or in-person
- [Share your story. Help us create transit systems that include everyone.](#)
- Staci: Can you share the map? Huge shout out to Lyn, you all have been amazing in sharing this but it's amazing what Lyn has been able to accomplish in such a short amount of time
- Lyn: I have really enjoyed this process, and these are essentially the people we are working for so working with them directly has been awesome
- Alex asked in chat, when will it be completed?

- Lyn: Aiming for August but have seen such a fantastic reception, if we stick with our goal of 20-25 stories we can definitely finish by August, we may potentially make it a bigger project than we initially set out to do. It will be a page on KCMobility.org so it will live there permanently, and anyone can go visit it
- Staci: Can we still take submissions
- Lyn: Yes, soon we might start telling people we are at capacity but will keep submissions in case we continue into phase 2. I will also share the form so people can share it.

Roundtable Discussion

- Nadine: Have been updating at resource meetings that Carina has added new languages to the website and have also had all fliers translated into these languages, will pop a link to the folder of fliers into the chat
- Carina is a free website for independent care providers to be connected with clients or for clients to be connected with care agencies we partner with. Will put my information in the chat so if anyone wants to learn more reach out to me out to me
- Dean: Northwest Healthcare Response Network, agency that focuses on preparing for regional emergencies, looking at making sure regional partners are prepares for possible mass casualty events related to the World Cup, make sure relevant partners are at the tabletop to prep for such an event
- Looking for hospital systems, ems, first responders
- If your service operates at or near event or fan zones, seeing what might happen if a major event occurred could be beneficial
- Will also be looking for efficient hospital discharges
- Lyn: RTAP workshop on March 14th was postponed for snow, rescheduled to Thursday May 21st from 5-8pm and networking 8-8:30pm. It will be a working dinner catered by Carnation Cafe. There will be a panel of experts going through a Q&A session. Will share details once they are finalized
- Staci: Launching Phase II of Find a Ride, helping people get signed up for the right services quickly and easily. Putting a PDF that explains a little more in the chat.
- Mandy: From a rider experience perspective, Redmond just opened up on-demand services (RedLink) and also light rail. I started taking RedLink to and from

work. It's great but is not as accessible as there are a couple of stairs you have to climb up, so I'm not sure why they created the vehicle that way. Also wanted to say I am very grateful for MetroFlex

- Lyn: have a few touchpoints coming up with RedLink so we can bring up those points
- In a recent meeting with Circuit, I brought up that the feature to call or text driver has had some difficulties
- Heather: RedLink is coming to talk to our team tomorrow so we can ask them about it, thanks for bringing that up, Mandy
- Lyn: Just realized we haven't created the shareable link with information about the rural advocacy event, said I would put that in the chat but then realized I don't have a link
- Lyn: Next AtHW will be June 4th, I will provide reminders, next KCMC meeting will be June 19th in-person, location is not confirmed but we are looking at using Bellevue city hall

KCMC Quarterly Meeting – May 19th 9:30-11:30 location TBD

Access to Health and Well Being Workgroup – June 3rd 9:30-11am Zoom