

Eastside Easy Rider
COLLABORATIVE

Meeting Notes

Date: 1.27.2026

Zoom Link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83249846276?pwd=WXB1TUlzVUd5cEpBWUpTci82WkQvZz09#success>

Participants:

Tommie Lorene, Susan Prows, Roz Novikova, Ramu Ayyaluru (Mini City Hall), Nicole Ross, Laura Milstead (City of Bellevue), Kurt Ahrensfeld (Kirkland Senior Council), Kelly Mutch, Karen Hartman, Joanna Muir, Jeff Canin, Gazel Tan, Doris F, Angie Kitheka, Hannah Kimball, Griffin Cole Volunteer Services, Lyn McCarthy, Heather Clark, Grace Georgitsis, Parvathi, Maritza Lauriano, MJJohnson, Angel Reed, Elizabeth Maupin, alaric bien.

Staff Support:

Erin Funk, facilitator. Nicole Ross, notetaker. Heather Clark. Grace Georgitsis. Lyn McCarthy

Welcome, Introductions, and Announcements

- Erin Funk

Volunteer Services: Overview

Griffin introduced himself as the program manager for Volunteer Services, which provides transportation and household assistance to low-income seniors and disabled individuals in King County. He explained the eligibility criteria and services offered, emphasizing that transportation is the top request and medical appointments are the highest priority. Griffin clarified that volunteers cannot accompany clients under anesthesia or provide in-home medical supervision, and he addressed questions about pet policies and advance notice for rides. The team discussed the process for scheduling transportation and the limitations of their services, including the need for clients to have independent mobility.

Speaker: Griffin Cole, Program Manager (Volunteer Services Program) Catholic Community Services – Volunteer Services (Transportation)

Key Contacts

- Angie Kitheka – Transportation Coordinator (primary contact)

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- **Candise Hutchko** – Eastside Coordinator (recruits volunteer drivers)
- **Intake Line:** 206-328-5787
 - Intake Specialist: **Gloria Rodriguez**
 - Leave a voicemail; callbacks usually within 24 hours
- **Email:** vc@ccsww.org

Program Overview

- Network of volunteers supporting **low-income seniors living independently**
- Services focus primarily on **transportation**, with additional help for:
 - Light housework (changing sheets, laundry)
 - Yardwork
- Volunteer Services operates **statewide**
 - King County referrals from other counties are redirected to local agencies

Eligibility & Intake

- **Eligibility:** Low-income per HUD guidelines (no proof required)
- **Intake process:**
 - 4 questions
 - Can take as little as **15 minutes**
- **Service area:** King County

Transportation Services

- **Top priority:** Medical appointments
- Other services include:
 - Grocery shopping (including volunteer pick-up and drop-off)
 - Social outings
 - Most other transportation needs
- **Always free of charge**
- **No wait-time limits** (volunteers can wait and return clients after appointments)
- **Advance notice:**
 - 7–10 days for most rides
 - 4–6 weeks minimum for moving assistance

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Client Requirements & Limitations

- Clients must:
 - Get in/out of vehicles independently
 - Manage their own wheelchair (if applicable)
 - Wheelchair users are eligible if fully independent with transfers
- Volunteers may provide **light stability support only**
- **Not allowed:**
 - Rides to medical procedures involving anesthesia
- **Pets:** Allowed in carriers if the volunteer agrees

Special Situations

- **Moving assistance:**
 - Dependent on volunteer availability
 - Client must already be packed
 - Difficult to staff; varies by region
- **Temporary disabilities** (e.g., broken leg):
 - Assistance may be available, depending on volunteer availability
 - Best to plan as far in advance as possible
- **Ongoing rides** (e.g., weekly PT):
 - No cap on services, but recurring rides can be difficult to fill
- **Cross-county trips:** Possible if a volunteer is available

Volunteers

- All volunteers:
 - Complete a background check and orientation
 - Must be **21+**
 - Driving record reviewed annually
 - Sign a physical ability-to-drive form
- **Mileage reimbursement** provided
- Volunteers choose rides via an **online ride scheduler**, or may be contacted directly by Angie
- Volunteers work directly with the clients they're matched with
- Program prioritizes volunteer comfort and preferred types of service

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- **Insurance:** Volunteer drivers are insured

Current Challenges

- Demand for rides exceeds the number of available volunteers
- Increase in volunteer drivers, but gaps remain
- Ongoing difficulty meeting needs for rides tied to medical procedures requiring anesthesia

Outreach

- Angie will provide a **newsletter blurb** to help recruit volunteer drivers

Presentation Topic

Lake Washington United Methodist Church: Safe Parking Program Overview

Kelly shared details about the Safe Parking Program at Lake Washington United Methodist Church in Kirkland, which provides parking and support services for homeless individuals, particularly single women and families. The program offers overnight parking, access to a celebration space during the day, a pantry, and evening meals. Kelly explained the program's capacity, rules, and support systems, emphasizing its focus on personal responsibility and community engagement. Hopelink expressed interest in learning more about the program to potentially implement similar initiatives elsewhere. The conversation ended with a discussion about developing a 2027 work plan for transportation issues across the Eastside, with plans to gather input from coalition partners and hold an in-person meeting in May.

Kelly Mutch, Safe Parking Program LWUMC in Kirkland

- About **10–12 years ago**, the church decided to host a **tent city**, which was very successful and opened the door to additional housing-related ministries. Around the same time, Seattle implemented a law allowing vehicles to be **booted for unpaid parking tickets**, which helped spur the idea for a **safe parking program**.

Who the Program Serves

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- **Single women**
- **Families**, including:
 - Two-parent households
 - Single parents with children

Program Evolution

- Initially allowed **overnight parking only** (7:00 PM–9:00 AM)
- As needs grew, the program expanded to include:
 - **Porta potties**
 - Indoor access and support services
- The program has since become the church's **primary ministry**

On-Site Services & Amenities

- **Weekday access** to a warm indoor celebration space
- Access to:
 - Pantry
 - Microwave and toaster oven
- Guests may prepare their own food or eat food donated to the church
- **Evening meal program**
 - 85–90% participation
 - Community members often bring hot meals
- Seasonal supplies provided, including:
 - Blankets
 - Hand warmers
 - Toothbrushes, toothpaste
 - Deodorant, hair ties
- **Showers and laundry facilities** available

Safety, Expectations & Rules

- **Background check required**
 - Non-violent misdemeanors are generally overlooked
- Guests are encouraged to actively seek **long-term housing solutions**
 - Goal is to transition out of the program within about **one year**

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- Clear expectations around behavior
 - Rules in place to prevent theft and conflicts
 - Example: guests must stay with their phone while charging
- **Noise guidelines** are enforced
- Guests are encouraged to report issues directly to staff
- Police involvement is rare and usually related to **loud verbal disputes**

Capacity & Operations

- Can comfortably accommodate about **60 vehicles**
 - Difficult to turn people away
 - At peak, nearly **100 people** were enrolled last summer
- Typically fewer participants during the winter months
- Serves as:
 - **24-hour warming center** during potentially deadly cold weather
 - **Cooling center** during extreme summer heat
- Officially listed as a warming shelter with **King County** and the **City of Kirkland**
 - Pets are allowed
 - Dogs must be under control at all times
 - Dogs must be leashed and held when entering indoor spaces (e.g., dinner)

Community Relations & Leadership

- **Karina O'Malley** founded the program
 - Personally contacted all neighboring residents
 - Shared her phone number to address concerns directly
 - This approach helped reduce calls to the Kirkland Police
- Karina now consults with communities **nationwide** on starting similar programs

EERC FY2027 Workplan planning: Overview

The group discussed transportation challenges faced by communities, particularly focusing on issues like language barriers, lack of immediate transportation options, and gaps in service for non-English speakers. They highlighted the need for better awareness of existing resources such as the subsidized annual pass and community van programs. The conversation also touched on the upcoming I-90 Sound Transit connection, with Tommy noting that people need to understand the new transfer process between lines. The group agreed to continue discussing potential deliverables for their work plan, including creating city resource guides and training materials.

Coalition Discussion Questions & Responses

- 1. What transportation issue comes up most often in conversations with your clients right now?**
 - a. Barriers to accessing the free ORCA card
 - b. Requires calling in
 - c. Language barriers can make the process difficult
(Ramu Ayyaluru, Mini City Hall)
- 2. What transportation challenges feel invisible in data but very obvious in lived experience?**
 - a. No responses shared
- 3. Which transportation issues feel shared across all Eastside cities, regardless of size? What challenges feel unique to smaller or lower-density cities like Issaquah, Sammamish, or Mercer Island?**
 - a. Bellevue generally has **more transportation options**
 - b. In smaller or lower-density areas, physical access is a major challenge.
Example: At **Rosecrest**, residents with disabilities face:
 - Long walking distances
 - Uneven and non-flat terrain*(Elizabeth)*
- 4. What tools, programs, or resources already exist that clients still struggle to understand or use?**
 - a. Clients often struggle to navigate existing programs, including:
 - i. **Kirkland Community Van** (*Angel Reed*)
 - ii. **Vanpool & Community Van programs** (*Maritza Lauriano*)

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5. **5. What kind of deliverable would actually be useful to your organization six months from now? (Guide, training, map, checklist, referral process, etc.)**

- Clear, user-friendly tools to help clients understand how transit systems connect
- Visual or experiential learning tools were suggested

6. **What issues do you anticipate with the I-90 Sound Transit Connection?**

- Confusion around transfers, especially when traveling to the airport
 - Riders may need to get off and cross to the opposite side to transfer
(Tommie) Opportunity to focus on how to transfer from **Line 2 to Line 1**
(Erin)
- Suggested solutions:
 - Short instructional video showing the transfer
(Heather Clark)
 - Guided ride-along to help riders understand how the lines connect

Next Steps

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 31st 1:00pm-2:30pm

COALITION NAME CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information on The Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative (EERC), visit our website [Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative \(EERC\)](http://EastsideEasyRiderCollaborative(EERC).org) or contact Erin Funk, Eastside Mobility Coordinator at efunk@hopelink.org or call (425) 495-3191