



# **DRAFT** Menu of Community-Based Accessibility Solutions

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS IN NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON

*A report by the NCW Mobility Council | Wenatchee, WA*



The North Central Washington Mobility Council was formed in 2017 following a Mobility Summit hosted by Link Transit. The Mobility Council is made up of a diverse group of stakeholders, including representation from healthcare, public health, social services, local government, transportation and non-profits.

#### **Mission**

To increase access to services to improve the wellness of our communities and vulnerable populations in Chelan, Douglas, Grant and Okanogan counties.

#### **Vision**

The Mobility Council is a long-term effort aimed at creating partnerships and identifying resources to expand and increase accessibility to existing services and advising the community on services needed to fill in the gaps.

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# Section 1: Introduction & Methods

Rural and small urban areas, such as those found in North Central Washington (NCW), face a myriad of mobility challenges that create disparities in access to education, employment, healthcare, social services, basic needs and recreational opportunities. Ultimately, these disparities can have economic and social consequences that affect residents' overall quality of life. In 2016, the NCW Mobility Council was developed to improve the wellbeing of communities and vulnerable populations in Chelan, Douglas, Grant and Okanogan counties by increasing access to mobility services. The Council, which is made up of representatives from transit organizations, social service agencies, healthcare and regional government, is committed to identifying and implementing effective, sustainable mobility solutions that will move NCW towards transportation equity.

In 2018, the Mobility Council's Community-Based Accessibility Solutions Subcommittee (C-BASS) embarked on a process that explored low-barrier community-based transportation solutions. Initially, the objective was to identify and promote successful local models of volunteer driving programs, such as those exemplified by Entiat Valley Community Service's TRIPS program and Catholic Charities, but soon the mission morphed to include consideration of alternative community-based solutions that have been successfully utilized in other communities around the nation.

The following report summarizes the subcommittee's findings. It includes an overview of the grassroots services currently operating throughout the region, programs that are actively being developed and models of community-based transportation programs that could be implemented in our region to further address the transportation gaps. The goal of the report is to provide the Mobility Council, local government officials, transportation agencies and other regional groups with a comprehensive picture of the community-based transportation landscape and to identify a series of high-value, low-barrier programs that could be adopted to meet the mobility needs of our community. The Council will promote this tool to community stakeholders to ensure these community-based transportation alternatives are included in regional planning efforts.



## Section 2: Implemented and Functioning

**Aging and Adult Care**—A government agency that provides transportation assistance to seniors to and from all places an older adult needs to go. These include, but aren't limited to: medical appointments, shopping and recreation. Eligible applicants have no other mode of transport.

**Catholic Charities Volunteer Services**—Provides free transportation administered by volunteers to anywhere a client needs help traveling. Drivers are limited, with no availability to transport outside the Wenatchee/East Wenatchee Urban Growth area. Volunteers can earn .40 per mile driven.

**Chelan Valley Hope**— Provides transportation assistance for individuals and families in crisis as part of its mission to address and prevent homelessness. They describe themselves as the only social service agency around Chelan that provides emergency assistance in all its forms.

**Department of Veterans Affairs**—Two days per week, a VA van departs from East Wenatchee and ends at Spokane's VA, stopping in Quincy and Moses Lake as needed. Potential drivers must complete a physical and have a clean driving record. Volunteers are not reimbursed or paid.

**Disabled American Veterans DAV**—Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Transportation Network is a national volunteer driver program to get injured or ill vets to their VA appointments. The local DAV van transports veterans from East Wenatchee's VFW to the Spokane VA medical facility twice a week.

**Entiat Valley Community Services TRIPS Program**—Provides transportation for seniors and people with impinged mobility to medical appointments. EVCS was recently awarded a grant to expand their services. Transportation is provided by volunteers to residents of outlying areas in Chelan/Douglas Counties.





**Methow at Home**—A non-profit membership organization focused on providing all services necessary to help seniors remain in their homes as they age. They utilize a pool of volunteers to provide services, including coordinating and providing transportation.

**Lake Chelan Community Hospital Transportation Services**—Provides patients with a current diagnosis of chemical dependency transportation support to and from the hospitals. The only other eligibility criterion is that the patient must have a transportation plan.

**Okanogan County Transportation and Nutrition**—Two fixed routes (north Okanogan/South Okanogan). Provides paratransit and dial-a-ride services including: door-to-door services, meals to seniors, travel up to 10 miles from fixed route for those in super-rural areas of the County, 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month OCTN shuttles to Wenatchee Valley Hospital.

**People for People**—Medicaid-brokering service with transportation services across Washington. Current routes that serve NCW: 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107 (mostly Grant County, specifically Moses Lake). PFP operates the Health Express Shuttle, a no-cost, Monday through Friday, open eligibility service to medical appointments from Moses Lake to Wenatchee.

**TLC**—Starting in 2018, TLC, provides transportation for clients to medical and other necessary appointment for whole-person health. TLC provides a host of services for active and frail seniors to accompany their transportation services. These include: companionship, coordination of care, caregiver support and other services. Currently, TLC manages roughly 30-volunteers willing to drive their clients as needed. It is worth noting that Chelan Valley Hope is their fiscal sponsor.

**TranCare** – TranCare is a volunteer driver program contracted through People for People to provide transportation to individuals of all ages who are covered under Washington State Apple Health (Medicaid and CHIP) and have a current ProviderOne services card.

**Wellness Place**—Provides transportation support for cancer patients and survivors in the Wenatchee Valley, such as gas cards and bus tokens. Wellness Place is located in Colonial Vista, a local independent living facility.



# Section 3: Upcoming and Expected

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**Bus Buddy Program** --The Bus Buddy program is a collaboration between LINK transit and Catholic Charities Volunteer Services. The program matches qualifying seniors and adults with disabilities who would like to utilize public transit but need an escort to help them navigate their route. In exchange for volunteering to be a Bus Buddy, the volunteer receives a free bus pass. This program is in the concept phase and is not currently available in Chelan/Douglas Counties, however, there is a thriving Bus Buddy program in the Greater Seattle to use as a successful model.

**Chelan-Douglas Oxford House Travel Reimbursement Pilot Project** – A new project with the Wenatchee Valley Oxford House Chapter that will (1) support Oxford House residents to provide volunteer transportation for their peers and receive mileage reimbursement; (2) provide support for house-identified, community-building activities that build relationships and focus on improving whole-person health; and (3) provide an effective and cost-efficient scheduling system for rides such as dedicated days for a certain grocery store, Safeway Saturdays.

**March for Mobility Event**—An opportunity to hold a 5K run/walk to fundraise money for community members in Chelan and Douglas Counties. The money raised would help those seeking to purchase bus tokens from Link Transit but are unable to because of the burden of cost. This fundraiser/project will improve individual's Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), such as transportation. This fundraiser will be hosted by Chelan-Douglas CHI and numerous partners in Chelan and Douglas Counties.





# Section 4: Challenges and Opportunities

This section identifies the region's identified transportation challenges and needs, Link Transit's Vision 2020 program ideas and explores opportunities for new services.

Transportation surveys and plans completed across the region in recent years have identified unmet transportation needs and desires for new and expanded transportation programs and services. The passing of Link Transit's 2019 sales tax ballot initiative means that some new programs identified in Link Transit's Vision 2020 strategic plan may be forthcoming in 2020 and 2021.

Most ideas identified in this section do not have an implementation partner or a funding source identified at this time. While working on this project we discussed additional challenges that had not yet been identified in a survey or planning study.

## **Local challenges discussed during this report period include:**

- Sustaining program funding for new and existing transportation services
- Finding programs, services and funding for people who are not disabled or seniors. There are many others in need of transportation, but are ineligible for existing community-based services.
- There is a lot of information and resources available, but they are not always easy to find. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness among the community about the services and how to access them, even among the medical and social service provider communities that often play an important role in connecting people with transportation services.
- Volunteer recruitment and retention challenges:
  - How do we incentivize volunteers in a meaningful way?
  - How are they reimbursed?
  - How do we find volunteers that can pass background checks and meet physical requirements?
  - Do members of our community have the availability to help with programs?

## Transportation Needs and Strategies Identified in 2018 CPT-HSTP

The Community-Based Accessibility Solutions Subcommittee (C-BASS), formally known as the Volunteer Driver Program Subcommittee, was developed in response to the publication of the 2018 Chelan-Douglas Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP). The HSTP used local data and community input to systematically identify and prioritize transportation needs for Chelan and Douglas counties. Among other things, it identified the need to:

- Provide greater access to employment, medical services, social services, commerce and recreation for residents,
- Increase transportation access to rural areas not served by traditional fixed route services,
- Improve non-emergent medical transportation options,
- Increase transportation service options for rural special needs populations, and
- Expand new same day transportation service options for rural residents.

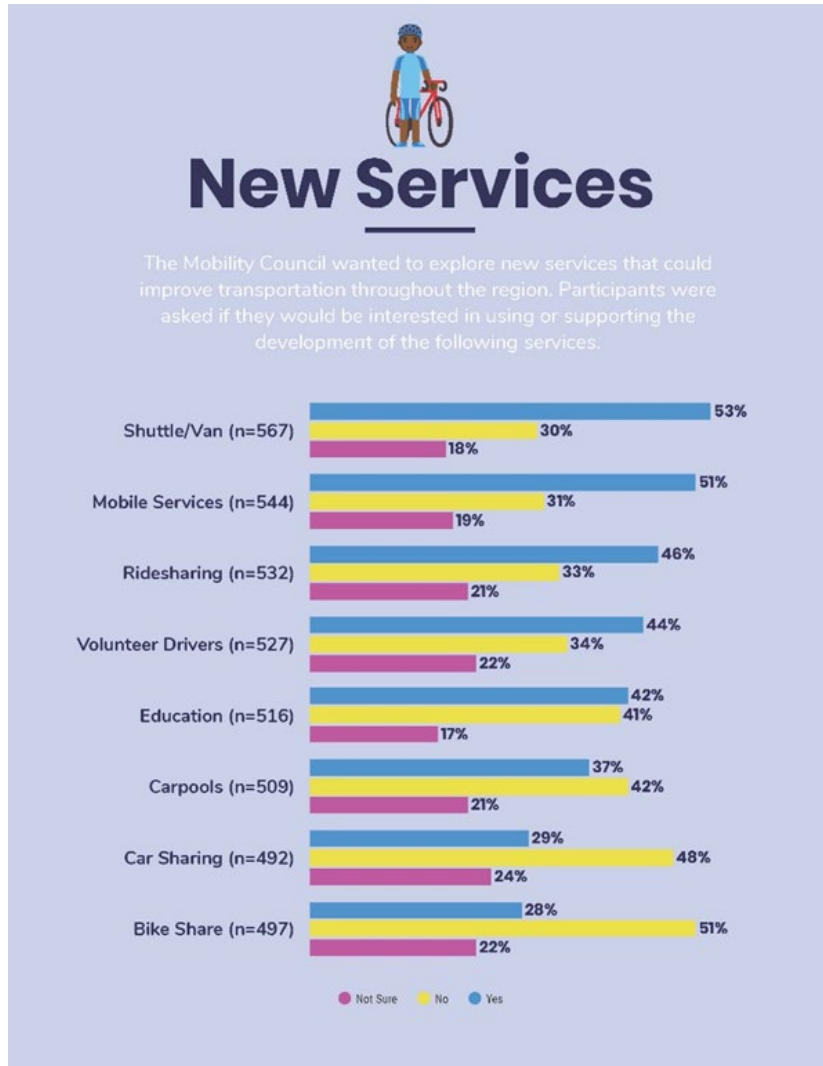
In 2018, the Mobility Council assisted the Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council in identifying transportation needs and strategies for the region's **Coordinated Public Transportation – Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP)**. Only the needs that support the work of C-BASS are included here. See the entire CPT-HSTP document at [www.chelan-douglas.org](http://www.chelan-douglas.org) for more information.

Needs	Strategies
<b>Provide better connectivity between Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan &amp; Grant counties for access to social events, employment, medical services, social services and regional shopping destinations.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete a planning/coordination study to explore strategies with a goal to expand services between counties and regional public transit providers.</li> <li>2. Transport services to people (identified as top solution at the Mobility Summit)</li> </ol>
<b>Increase education and outreach to public transit users and the general public on existing programs and transportation options, especially for special needs transportation users</b>	Centralized hub/dispatch center
<b>Serve individuals outside of the Public Transit Benefit Areas (PTBA's)</b>	Volunteer driver programs
<b>Research and support funding opportunities for new and existing programs and services</b>	Complete a plan that identifies funding sources and strategies for the region
<b>Provide active transportation facilities (bike, walk, ADA accessible) across the region to increase safety and access to bus stops and essential services in our communities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete a bike share feasibility study to determine if bike sharing is appropriate for the region and whether it would complement existing transit services</li> <li>2. Access to transit non-motorized study to look for areas to improve bike/walk access at bus stops, park and rides and transit stations</li> </ol>



## Mobility Council 2018 Survey Data

The following question was asked of everyone who completed the 2018 transportation survey, regardless of whether they use active transportation or public transit. There was no definition given for any of the potential services listed in the survey.



### Program ideas identified in Link Transit Vision 2020

From 2016-2018, Link Transit engaged citizens to learn more about their priorities for the transit system. Vision 2020 identifies the improvements identified by the community that will be considered now that Link Transit has increased revenue from their sales tax ballot initiative.

#### Proposed Improvements:

- Improve fixed route bus service by operating longer hours, adding weekend and holiday service, and increasing frequency
- Expand transit service to new areas, with new ways of delivering service
- Invest in infrastructure and technology to speed up transit travel.

#### Specific Projects include:

- More direct neighborhood services with smaller vehicles
- Service options to serve 2nd and 3rd shift workers
- Development of ridesharing options (van and bus pools, working with transportation network companies and vehicle sharing organizations)

# Section 5: Ideas to Borrow

Throughout this process the report team reviewed best practices and examples from other regions. The following list is a sampling of existing programs that meet needs we have in this region.

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**King County Metro Community Connections Solutions Toolkit** -- King County Metro has a program aimed at creating innovative and affordable transportation solutions for areas in King County that are not suited for fixed-route transit. The solutions include: Community Ride, Community Shuttle, Community Van, Community Transportation Hubs, Real-Time Rideshare and TripPool.

Community Van is an idea that has arisen in multiple conversations in our region. Community Vans are vans that can be used for local group trips. They use volunteer drivers and Metro Vans scheduled by a local coordinator to help residents make group outings to social events, shopping, and more.

**Independent Living Partnership – TRIP Program** -- The TRIP program provides vouchers for riders to pay their friends and neighbors for rides. The TRIP has operated in Riverside County California since 1993 and provides more than 10,000 rides per year. It takes away many of the administrative barriers faced by other volunteer driving and transportation programs by reimbursing riders for their trip mileage so they can pay their friends and neighbors for rides to services, medical appointments and other needs.

**Healthcare-Administered Patient Transportation Solutions** -- Programs like the Kootenai Health patient transportation program in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho and Care-a-Van provided by East Adams Rural Healthcare in Adams County, Washington, provide courtesy services to patients that are too ill to drive or unable to find transportation. Trained paid or volunteer drivers provide door-to-door services to and from appointments and can even stop at the pharmacy.





NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON  
**MOBILITY**COUNCIL

