

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on June 5, 2018

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

May 8, 2018
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Mercer, Commissioners Kline, Ma, McEachran, Oxrieder, Perelman, Piper

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: Don Okazaki, Anne Bruskland, King County Metro; Hannah Kimball, Gazel Tan, Dan Lassiter, Judy Dowling, Bellevue Network on Aging

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair Mercer who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Piper, who arrived at 6:02 p.m., and Commissioner Perelman, who arrived at 6:12 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. April 17, 2018

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McEachran and the motion carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner McEachran reported that he attended a meeting earlier in the day with the executive director and community development person of Sophia Way. The focus of the meeting was their upcoming capital campaign aimed at generated \$8 million-plus.

Commissioner McEachran said his faith community hosted the Bridge ministries monthly dinner and spent part of his Sunday stumping for faith-based affordable housing.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly explained that there is a protocol in place to allow for the Chair or any Commissioner to participate in a meeting via telephone or Skype. She noted that Chair Mercer would not be able to attend the May 15 Commission meeting because she will be out of town. By a vote of the Commission, Chair Mercer can participate remotely in the meeting and be counted as present. Any city board member or commission can participate up to three times annually by remote connection.

A motion to allow Chair Mercer to participate remotely in the May 15 Commission meeting was made by Commissioner Kline. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McEachran and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. O'Reilly stressed that the Vice Chair would preside at the May 15 meeting.

Chair Mercer noted that she would need to leave the meeting early and to facilitate that she handed the gavel to Vice Chair Kline who presided.

6. DISCUSSION

A. King County Metro – Transportation

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland said King County Metro staff had been working to put together some solution concepts to address the priority focus areas previously identified by the group.

Anne Bruskland with King County Metro said the top needs identified by the group were connecting specific populations with key destinations; shared reliable options that are flexible; timely service during off-peak hours; and first/last mile solutions that are affordable and accessible to the extent possible.

Ms. Bruskland said one suggestion made by the group was the need to understand where the key populations need to go. She provided the group with a table summarizing the top five destinations by the 55+, low-income and homelessness population groups. The destination items that were universal across all three populations were highlighted as being the mall, medical facilities and libraries. The

low-income population added to those three grocery stores and pharmacies, while the populations experiencing homelessness added community centers and shelters.

Turning to the solution concepts, Ms. Bruskland zeroed in on four identified concepts. She stressed that no one solution can meet all of the needs and criteria. The solution concept, agency vehicle, centered on making vehicles available to non-profit agencies that are serving seniors, youth, people with disabilities and people on low or fixed incomes. The vehicles would be retired passenger vans. King County Metro operates a vanpool program and retires vans annually that have good useful lives left in them. The retired vehicles are usually sold in the aftermarket. The thinking is that such vans could be made available to agencies that make a commitment to transport eligible people. The vehicles would not be made available to become fleet vehicles transporting equipment or staff. The vehicles would be managed and scheduled by the non-profit agencies, with the agency also providing a volunteer or paid driver for each vehicle. Depending on the available resources of the receiving agency, and depending on funding King County Metro is able to secure, operating costs for fuel, insurance and vehicle maintenance may be made available provided the vehicles provide a minimum number of rides per year.

Ms. Bruskland suggested the solution would meet the identified needs of connecting specific populations to key destinations; shared reliable options that are flexible; timely service during off-peak hours; address first/last mile connections; and be affordable.

Commissioner Perelman asked if King County Metro could offer a van to a shelter. Ms. Bruskland said it would provided the transfer is to a valid non-profit agency. Commissioner Perelman asked about multiple agencies potentially sharing a van and Ms. Bruskland said that could probably be accommodated.

Commissioner Kline asked if there would be any geographical limits on where the vans could operate. Ms. Bruskland explained that the larger the geographic area in which a van operates, the fewer total trips it can make. She noted that the group previously identified as a priority providing for circulation in and around Bellevue. If, however, there is a priority need to take a group of people to a destination outside of Bellevue, that could potentially be accommodated. King County Metro is not looking to provide vans that will ultimately be used to duplicate available transit services, rather the focus should be on providing options for those who may not be able to afford transit services and on augmenting existing transit services.

Ms. O'Reilly asked if the proposed concept is the same one Hero House is using. Don Okazaki with King County Metro said it is similar but not the same. The Hero House service is focused on job access reverse commute. It is funded through a grant. He said there are some 30 agencies who partner with King County Metro on various programs; some get vans, some get money, some get both.

Chair Mercer commented that one use cases for such a van would be shelters located in areas where buses are going at the time when residents need to get to their jobs. That could involve multiple agencies working together. Ms. Brusklund said that would certainly be an acceptable use. She said the agencies would be encouraged to have a pool of drivers to assure reliability.

Dan Lassiter with the Bellevue Network on Aging asked if it would matter who the non-profit is, and if there would be a minimum or maximum number of riders required. Ms. Brusklund said those are details that would need to be worked out. Mr. Lassiter asked if a small agency, such as a faith community, could get a unit and set up a system to serve qualified riders. Ms. Brusklund said that could potentially fit the model.

Chair Mercer asked who would make the decisions about which agency or groups qualify for a van. Ms. Brusklund said that is another issue that would need to be worked out. She allowed that the solution may not work for everyone and much will depend on the capacity of an agency to take on the additional responsibilities. The agency vehicle concept, however, could be a tool in the toolbox to help address critical trips. King County Metro believes the approach would have a moderate impact for a relatively low cost.

Chair Mercer asked why King County Metro retires vanpool vehicles. Ms. Brusklund said there are 1600 vans in operation for the commuter program. Each van has a life cycle of seven years at the end of which the vehicle is retired and replaced. King County Metro works to keep the mileage on the vehicles low enough to support a decent after-market resale. Even after seven years, the vehicles are still in excellent condition in part because they have been well maintained. King County Metro also has a van donation program that provides four vans per council district which in turn are given to non-profit agencies through an application process.

Ms. Brusklund said the community van solution concept is an approach that is already in place in a couple of jurisdictions. The program provides vans for local, prescheduled group trips that meet community identified transportation needs. The trips are open to the general public, not only to the populations of specific agencies. The trips would be arranged by community transportation coordinators that would be resourced as part of the solution for each jurisdiction or service area. King County Metro has a part-time community transportation coordinator who facilitates the recruitment of drivers, the scheduling of trips, and the marketing the availability of vans in the community. The model includes a King County Metro fare for each trip, capped at one zone Metro fare for the round trip. The vans are operated by volunteer drivers, all of whom are vetted by King County Metro. King County Metro covers the operating costs of the vans, including insurance. The vans would be Metro branded. The priority of the type of trips each van would take would be managed locally at the jurisdictional level in consultation with Metro. There would be some constraints put in place around replacing any fixed-route service and not using the vans as fleet vehicles to move equipment or agency staff.

Commissioner Piper asked what a local, prescheduled trip might look like. Ms. Bruskland said it could be a trip to the food bank. The riders could either be picked up at their homes, at an intersection near their homes, or at some area prearranged location. Generally the deployments include at least one accessible van with a ramp.

Commissioner Perelman asked if the vans become associated with a particular trip route, such as vans that serve a community center in the morning and the food bank in the afternoon, with set stops for pickups. Ms. Bruskland said it could absolutely look like that. Community vans can be used for any use and can accommodate as many trips per day as can be fit in. A community transportation coordinator oversees and coordinates the trips. King County Metro usually looks to the local jurisdiction for a physical location for the community coordinator to be located.

Commissioner Ma asked how the routes are marketed to the community. Ms. Bruskland said King County Metro's ride match program involves a widget that can be put on any website within a jurisdiction to promote community van trips. Riders would not necessarily have to go to the ride match software to find the available trips. Metro also helps to develop a community van webpage that communicates and markets the service, and through access to local distribution lists communicates out the services being offered. Each trip must include two or more riders, and the riders do not have to have the same ultimate destination but must at least be going to destinations along a common route.

Commissioner Kline asked if a van could be used to provide a regular daily service from an isolated neighborhood to a park and ride. Ms. Bruskland said the vans have not historically been used in that way. King County Metro tries to let the local jurisdictions prioritize what the trips should be for, but stresses that the vans cannot be used to replace a regularly scheduled fixed route.

Gazel Tan with the Bellevue Network on Aging asked if a community center could post a sign-up sheet indicating that on Monday a van will travel from there to a specific destination, such as a grocery store, and that on Tuesday it will go to the library. Ms. Bruskland said the community center could work with the community transportation coordinator to schedule regular recurring trips. No trip, however, can have fewer than two riders. She added that under the current model, the community transportation coordinator is paid by King County Metro.

Commissioner Piper asked if the fares charged are comparable to fixed route fares. Ms. Bruskland said they are the same for the round trip.

Commissioner McEachran asked if translation services are offered for volunteer drivers, something that would be useful, particularly in very diverse communities. Ms. Bruskland said in such instances the community transportation coordinators would be encouraged to look for drivers who speak a specific language by recruiting drivers from the neighborhoods to be served.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Ma, Ms. Bruskland explained that even though the community van program was only recently started, it is doing well in the communities in which it is operating, namely Vashon Island, Shoreline and Duvall. The standard senior round-trip fare that applies is \$2.75. The drivers do not take cash for fares so riders must have an ORCA card or be able to use a mobile app; a third option would be to use a purchased paper ticket. There are child rider policies in place. If a child is going to ride the trip will need to be prearranged and the parent will need to sign their approval. Children under the age of six cannot ride alone.

Commissioner Oxrieder asked if six riders from six different communities all wanting to go to Overlake Hospital would need a driver from each individual community. Ms. Bruskland said Metro would defer to the community transportation coordinator to determine the best approach. Where there are community vans in each zone, it might make more sense to travel by zone. However, the trips to the hospital could possibly be combined with trips to other destinations.

Mr. Okazaki said the third solution concept involved subsidized taxicabs and transportation network companies, such as Uber and Lyft. He explained that people would register for the program and King County Metro would subsidize each trip either for a set dollar amount or percentage. The service could include trip limits to control costs, such as setting a maximum trip cost of \$15 beyond which the customer must pay the balance, or establishing a maximum subsidy per month per customer. Customers who qualify for the pilot would probably have to choose a single provider in the beginning. Riders could schedule rides directly using an account code. The program would meet all of the needs except possibly for being affordable. The value of the impact would be moderate and the cost would be between moderate and high depending on how the system is set up and utilization.

Mr. Okazaki said many transit agencies have a similar program, often targeted to their Access customers. A trip limit of between \$12 and \$15 is typical, with the customer paying the balance. One benefit of the approach is that it encourages shorter trips. Uber and Lyft have programs that allow customers to share their rides, which reduces the cost.

Chair Mercer asked what types of scenarios tend to favor the subsidized cab and transportation network companies approach. Mr. Okazaki said the method is perfect for medical appointments because it is open ended. The customer schedules rides themselves. Areas that have a lot of taxis and Uber and Lyft vehicles can easily obtain services within a short period of time. Customers must have access to an app unless they choose the cap option, which can be arranged by phone. There could be a pilot option that would include creating a call center.

Ms. Tan asked how the program would be different from the Taxi Scrip program. Mr. Okazaki said the program is similar but much simpler in that there would be no need to pre-purchase paper tickets, and because it is also open to Uber and Lyft. While

Uber and Lyft are generally 30 to 40 percent less expensive than taxis, they do not have accessible options.

Commissioner Ma asked if there is room to talk to Uber and Lyft about customized services per region, such as having dedicated subsidized drivers that would get more guaranteed rides per day. Mr. Okazaki said in meetings with Uber and Lyft he has discovered that there are a number of groups asking them to offer various customized services. They are a bit overwhelmed with all of those requests. A taxi, Uber or Lyft driver could theoretically be paid to stay in a certain area and take rides, but they would have to be paid something even if they got no riders, and that ultimately could prove to be more expensive.

Chair Mercer asked who would dole out rides or codes and who would determine who qualifies for the program and monitors it. Ms. Bruskland said that would be the community transportation coordinator specific to the community. Mr. Okazaki added that King County Metro is trying to make Taxi Scrip a paperless system. Although funding has not been identified, Metro could serve the role of registering Taxi Scrip customers and the subsidized pilot. The process of signing up would be fairly simple, as would the process of ordering a ride.

Chair Mercer commented that while the other solutions lend themselves to coordination by an agency based on need, hitting the target audiences might be more difficult with the subsidized option. Mr. Okazaki said the good thing about a pilot is that it can start small and be expanded as the need is made evident. He agreed there are issues when it comes to accommodating people with disabilities, those who have no bank account, and those without access to a smart phone. Ms. Bruskland added that what the subsidized program offers that the other solutions do not is the individual trip option.

Commissioner Perelman said she would like to see the pilot program given to a specific agency to manage.

Mr. Lassiter asked if the subsidized pilot is an idea that is new or if other transit agencies offer something similar. Mr. Okazaki said a lot of cities have the Taxi Scrip program. Many agencies have found that their ADA paratransit services often do not do medical trips well for a variety of reasons, including the doctor running late, and some of them have launched a same-day service pilot using taxis, Uber and Lyft. Ms. Bruskland said in most cases the agency is the paratransit agency and the clients all meet the eligibility criteria. For the agency, the method is likely far less expensive than providing trips on an Access vehicle. Mr. Okazaki said there are same day service models in Boston, San Francisco and Phoenix. Their rules are fairly complicated.

Commissioner Perelman said she wanted to make sure the senior community will be well served. In that instance the community van program stands out. Some assisted living communities have their own vans already, but there are many seniors who are

living largely independently that could benefit. Mr. Lassiter said the North Bellevue Community Center has two vans and for planned trips the vans will travel to pick up Bellevue residents. The general senior community does not have access to a van service beyond Access. Commissioner Perelman stressed that she was referring to a program serving seniors that includes some income requirement.

Commissioner Kline asked Mr. Lassiter to comment on the Hyde shuttle operations. Mr. Lassiter said it operates in Bellevue only in connection with the lunch program. Mr. Okazaki added that the Hyde shuttle is funded through Aging and Disabilities Services of King County. It serves about a dozen ethnic meal programs. King County Metro serves as a partner in providing the vehicles and paying for the fuel to operate them. The program was set up even before there was an Access program and before ADA paratransit.

Mr. Okazaki said the fourth solution concept involved special needs transportation shuttles. He said that is the program he runs for King County Metro. The shuttles are operated similarly to the Hyde shuttle. Such operations are often reservation based transportation services that travel within a defined service area. The service can be designed to travel along a specified route creating a loop with a reservation base service at the end of each route; that model is called a deviated fixed route. The service can also be designed to run in a loop but without any deviation on the ends. Riders are able to request rides during established hours of service either over the phone or online. The vehicles typically have eight to ten seats and are operated by paid drivers, and they almost always have lifts. The service provider also dispatches the vehicles' pick-up and drop-off times. Reservations are usually made between one and 30 days in advance and are generally issued on a first-come-first-served basis. Special needs transportation shuttles usually operate on weekdays from about 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The service addresses each of the six identified needs. Its value impact is considered low at around two customers per service hour on a demand response, or moderate-high where the service operates mostly on a loop route. The cost is high, however, in that it includes the driver, the dispatcher and all vehicle operating costs.

Commissioner Ma commented that the special needs transportation shuttle option appears to be more reliable and more customized. Mr. Okazaki concurred. He said Access is just a reasonable accommodation for the bus and tries to match a bus service. A trip on a regular bus that takes an hour and a half would probably also take an hour and a half on Access. The special needs transportation shuttles are neighborhood shuttles operating in much more defined service areas. The trips are shorter and it is easier to group rides. It is also easier to deny rides. Hyde shuttle operates at an ongoing ten percent denial rate. Access on the other hand is guaranteed.

Chair Mercer asked if a shuttle operating like Hyde on effectively fixed routes that shows a high demand informs the fixed-route bus schedules. Mr. Okazaki said that is not usually the case given that the shuttle client bases are different. Persons able to

ride a bus are unlikely to use Hyde or Access. Ms. Bruskland said the data related to the DART program is used to advise bus operations. DART services are open to the general public, and if a DART route were to be highly successful it likely it would be converted into a fixed route. DART routes are fixed except that they allow for deviations to pick up people in a customized zone. The Hyde shuttle model is not a King County Metro service, it is a grant service with which Metro helps non-profits set up their own transportation services tailored to their customer base.

Commissioner Perelman asked who would pay for a special needs transportation shuttle. Ms. Bruskland said it would be through a partnership with an agency and King County. She stressed that there is not currently any funding stream to pay for it. Mr. Okazaki said the agency would cover the most expensive part, which is labor, by having the staff driving the vans. Agencies also typically actively seek grant dollars to help offset the costs. Some shuttles currently in operation are only paying \$2 per trip.

Ms. Bruskland asked the Commissioners if they saw any of the four solution concepts as not worth pursuing.

Chair Mercer said she would be hard pressed to make that determination. Some scenarios have been identified, but in some ways more information is needed. There are elements of each solution that would meet needs in the community.

Commissioner Piper said he had some concerns and reservations with the concepts as presented. He allowed that some tweaks could address those concerns. He said he would not rule out any of the solutions.

Commissioner Kline said she could see the community van concept addressing the first/last mile issue. The shuttle appears to be the only example that truly addresses disabled riders, but other than that it does not appear to be particularly useful.

Commissioner Perelman commented that there are quite a few people who do not qualify for the Access program, and those people could benefit from having the special needs transportation shuttle. She said she would like to see the shuttle managed by Hopelink and serving as one more option for those who do not qualify for Access.

Commissioner McEachran expressed optimism about all of the solutions but said the question for him is who will do it and how much service will be available. He said he would want to see some assurance that the options can be reliably prototypes in multiple municipalities.

Commissioner Ma agreed with Commissioner Perelman in regard to the shuttle. A shuttle is sometimes the only option for some people, but it is expensive to operate and will not meet the needs of a wide variety of people. He expressed interest in the subsidized taxi/Uber-Lyft model and the agency van solution. The community van is an interesting concept but would need to be flushed out further.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she was least excited about the shuttle solution. She said she also would like to know how many agencies might be willing to take on any of the transportation solutions. She voiced support for the subsidized taxi/Uber-Lyft and community van solutions.

Judy Dowling with Bellevue Network on Aging said she also liked the idea of community vans and the subsidized taxi/Uber-Lyft solutions.

Mr. Lassiter said many people use Access very successfully. He said what he hears from those he works with, however, is that there is a lack of personalized options. He said for that reason he would lean toward the subsidized taxi/Uber-Lyft approach.

Ms. Kimball said she viewed the proposed solutions as a rough draft in need of some flushing out. She allowed that in her opinion the two best fits were the community van and the subsidized taxi/Uber-Lyft solutions.

Ms. Tan suggested that all four concepts have the potential to become good solutions. The challenge will be in making sure each complements the others in order to address all of the identified needs.

Ms. Bruskland brought the attention of the group back to the map. She noted that it was designed to focus on key destinations, including Access locations that are routinely used, and the bus network. She asked for comments on things such as where community van zones should be established and locations not identified on the map.

Commissioner McEachran said overlaying the location of Bellevue's 86 affordable housing units would help to yield a sense of where those populations are. Additionally, the places where human services are delivered based on agencies funded should also be highlighted on the map.

The group members used dots and sticky notes to indicate locations on the map, with an emphasis given to their top priorities.

Ms. Bruskland reiterated that when the work started the project was not funded by King County Metro. The work is intended to start a discussion. The next step will be for King County Metro staff to work with Bellevue staff in further refining the service models based on the feedback, to focus on the key populations identified, and to start looking at how the project might be funded. That work to a large extent help to advise the final design. Work will continue to refine the solution concepts and the group will be updated at a future meeting, probably in the fall.

Ms. Kimball took a moment to thank King County Metro, the Commission and the city of Bellevue. She said the intent of the Bellevue Network on Aging was to get the

senior voice onto the radar screen in recognition of the fact that there is going to be a need that will continue to emerge going forward.

Commissioner Perelman asked if anything was standing in the way of going out over the next two weeks to agencies to gauge the level of interest in having an agency van. Ms. Bruskland said King County Metro does not know who those agencies are and does not have the staff available to make those contacts. Ms. O'Reilly suggested that many agencies might be interested but they will need to know more details before making an informed decision. She said contacting agencies will be a good idea once the programs are more flushed out. She allowed that the summary of options could be shared with a couple of agencies just to elicit their initial questions and comments.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that during 2017 a group called Eastside Neighbors Network made a presentation regarding the virtual village model. The national model is based on volunteers helping older adults stay in their homes by providing all kinds of services. The group is continuing to develop a program and is ready to begin testing their model. She distributed flyers outlining the program.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Perelman asked if the community access transportation project could be eligible for funding during the current funding cycle. Ms. O'Reilly explained that it would not be. She said an agency would have had to apply for a transportation project. She allowed that there are always challenges allocating CDBG funds and said there might be components of some of the solutions that could be funded with those dollars.

Commissioner Perelman asked how the Council will be asked to fund the transportation project. Ms. O'Reilly said the main approach will likely be via grant writing support from the transportation department. King County Metro has not ruled out seeking funding for the program either.

Commissioner McEachran said he saw the project as being ripe for some mid-biennium funding. Commissioner Kline agreed but said the proposal will need to be far more concrete before seeking any level of funding from any source. Ms. Stangland pointed out that Principal Transportation Planner Franz Loewenherz has been tracking the project and is keeping an eye out for possible grant funding.

Commissioner Perelman suggested it would make the most sense to work with an agency that already is largely set up to take on the additional project. Ms. O'Reilly said it would not be out of the question to talk to Hopelink to gauge their level of interest and to see if they might be interested in helping seek grant dollars.

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

10. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Perelman. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Kline adjourned the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date