

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**  
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

<b>AGENDA TITLE:</b>	Community Group Presentation: North King County Mobility Coalition
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	Community Services Division
<b>PRESENTED BY:</b>	Rob Beem, Community Services Manager
<b>ACTION:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing

**PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:**

Council Rule of Procedure 5.4 provides the opportunity for Councilmembers to sponsor a Community Group presentation at one meeting a month. The purpose of the Community Group presentation is to provide a means for non-profit organizations to inform the Council, staff and public about their initiatives or efforts in the community to address a specific problem or need.

Deputy Mayor Eggen and Councilmember Roberts have sponsored this Community Group presentation from the North King County Mobility Coalition (NKCMC). Robin McClelland, a Shoreline resident, and Cameron Duncan, Mobility Coordinator, will represent the NKCMC. They will present the results of the Coalition's recent "Mobility Listening Sessions." These sessions identified a number of challenges and opportunities facing our transit dependent neighbors. This information is intended to inform and shape decisions King County METRO makes about its services. A copy of the report is included as Attachment A.

This report describes the Coalition:

*"The North King County Mobility Coalition (NKCMC) was formed in the fall of 2010. Members include transportation service providers, human service agencies, and residents of Shoreline, Lake Forest Park, Kenmore, Bothell, and Woodinville. The Coalition brings together individuals and organizations with a common interest in human service transportation to increase awareness of and expand services for North King County residents focusing on special needs populations (older adults, youth, low-income individuals and families, and people with disabilities). The NKCMC works to identify transportation service gaps and untapped opportunities in and around the community, leveraging existing resources and catalyzing local projects to improve mobility in North King County."*

More information about the NKCMC can also be found at their website:

<http://www.nuhsa.org/nkcmc>.

**RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no resource or financial impact anticipated from this presentation.

**RECOMMENDATION**

No Action is required. Staff recommends that the Council hear from the North King County Mobility Coalition and asks questions of the presenters.

Approved By: City Manager *DT* City Attorney *MK*

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: 2013-2014 North King County Mobility Coalition Listening Sessions Summaries and Findings

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**2013 MOBILITY**  
• **LISTENING**  
**2014 SESSIONS**

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Summaries and Findings

North King County  
**MOBILITY COALITION**

Visit our website for additional information and resources:

[www.nuhsa.org/nkcmc](http://www.nuhsa.org/nkcmc)

or

Call the Hopelink  
Mobility Coordinator:

Phone: 425.943.6712

Fax: 425.644.9956

Email: [mobility@hope-link.org](mailto:mobility@hope-link.org)

2014-2015 North King County Mobility Coalition

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The opposite of mobility is isolation. It's not just about getting a bus or taking Access to an appointment; people are cut off from socializing due to limited transportation choices. At any time of the day or evening people are denied the opportunity to engage with others as they desire - an at-will option open to people with cars.

-Robin McClelland

North King County Mobility Coalition Member  
& Former Planning Commissioner, City of Shoreline

## **ABOUT THE NORTH KING COUNTY MOBILITY COALITION**

The North King County Mobility Coalition (NKCMC) was formed in fall of 2010. Members include transportation service providers, human service agencies, and residents of Shoreline, Lake Forest Park, Kenmore, Bothell, and Woodinville. The Coalition brings together individuals and organizations with a common interest in human service transportation to increase awareness of and expand services for North King County residents focusing on special needs populations (older adults, youth, low-income individuals and families, and people with disabilities). The NKCMC works to identify transportation service gaps and untapped opportunities in and around the community, leveraging existing resources and catalyzing local projects to improve mobility in North King County.

## 2013 • 2014 MOBILITY LISTENING SESSIONS



# INTRODUCTION

The North King County Mobility Coalition (NKCMC) held a series of listening around the North King County region sessions during their 2013 and 2014 work years. The purpose of these sessions was to interact firsthand with mobility-challenged populations, learning about the specific obstacles and challenges they encounter while traveling or attempting to travel around the region. In 2013 the NKCMC conducted sessions at Paramount House and at Westminster Manor, both King County Housing Authority properties located in Shoreline, WA. The 2014 listening sessions were held at the Sequoias Senior Apartments, a senior living facility managed by Senior Housing Assistance Group (SHAG) in Kenmore, WA and at the Northshore Senior Center, a day-use activity center for seniors in Bothell, WA.

The format of years' listening sessions was conversational and based on three to five questions intended to stimulate discussion. Although the 2014 Sessions did use a set script as a starting-off point. The sessions maintained a loose structure where NKCMC members asked seniors questions about how they traveled around the region in order to spur organic conversation.

The goal of the sessions was twofold. First to learn about specific impediments, barriers, and opportunities related to participants' transportation needs relevant to their location. Second, the sessions were organized to hopefully begin teasing out and identify trends affecting participants, regardless of their individual circumstances or background. In the process, we heard participants identify recurring trends.

Throughout the sessions, three general, overarching trends NKCMC members encountered were:

- The built environment in North King County is generally composed of inadequate pedestrian infrastructure and amenities, at a scale not built for pedestrian traffic.
- There is a general lack of destinations accessible via non-motorized means of travel. destinations accessible via non-motorized means of travel. Using alternative transportation services like Dial-a-Ride or Access as a substitute for a personal vehicle is insufficient, being both inconvenient and confusing.
- There is a general perception that local governments do not give the proper amount of attention to senior mobility issues. Seniors tend to have negative experiences when attempting to reach out to their political representation.

There are a the wide range of mobility-limiting circumstances elderly residents from all walks of life face on a daily basis, and the variety of means available to address such limitations vary from one senior's particular circumstance to the next. Because of this, it was important to NKCMC members to try to connect with as broad a range of people as possible while maintaining a focus on identifying issues that not only affect the majority of seniors, but also issues that may disproportionately affect certain seniors more than others.

Participants spanned a wide age range with various levels of mobility limitations from vision impairment to wheelchair dependency to a multitude of other reasons and circumstances preventing them from being fully mobile.

### **OVERALL THEMES AND TAKEAWAYS**

In addition to the three general trends listed above, from one session to another several recurring themes (which supported the trends) also surfaced:

- The distance between where a participant lives and where they want or need to go is too long and fraught with obstacles to travel as a pedestrian safely.
- The state and scale of pedestrian infrastructure in North King County cities is generally not conducive for pedestrian travel. Destinations tend to be too far away and the infrastructure by which a pedestrian might access them in an efficient, repeatable manner, regardless of the state of their mobility challenges.
- The facilities in which the residents live/regularly use are not well located for pedestrian and non-motorized traffic to come and go with ease.
- When the distance to a significant destination (for example, a grocery store) is close enough that non-motorized transportation does become an option, the infrastructure is oftentimes insufficient for efficient travel if users are mobility challenged.
- There is a strong fear of giving up their ability to drive because of the very real limitations that occur as a result, an eventual prospect faced by almost all seniors. Residents feel isolated, helpless, and stranded without access to a personal vehicle. Many of those who did still drive expressed strong discomfort with the idea of driving in certain situations such as using the freeway, driving at night, driving through busy city streets (Eg: downtown Seattle), and driving in rainy conditions or during otherwise severe weather, observing that that they usually avoid driving altogether under those circumstances.
- Participants utilize creative mobility solutions including paying friends, neighbors, or other residents to drive them either case-by-case, or by organizing (informal) rideshare networks, to maintain some level of mobility.

## 2013 • 2014 MOBILITY LISTENING SESSIONS

- Gaining access to available transportation services is confusing and difficult. The amount of pre-planning required to utilize the transportation services currently available including alternative systems such as Metro Access, Hopelink Transportation, Hyde Shuttle, the existing bus/high-capacity transit system, and others is overly burdensome for use in daily activities. Infrequent service, inaccessible stops, as well as alternative service shuttle schedules requiring residents to dedicate exponentially more time to planning and traveling than is reasonable or efficient and ultimately hampers mobility.
- Participants tended to share a lack of knowledge about many of the existing transportation services and did not have or know how to access additional educational resources with which to learn and empower themselves.
- Participants' are regularly frustrated with their perceived lack of communication channels with elected officials and city staff with which to express their concerns. There is a general feeling that participants' mobility needs and limitations are consistently dismissed, ignored, or insufficiently addressed by local governments and service providers.
- Private transportation services such as cabs and shuttles are too costly an alternative and were thusly regarded as being generally out of the question as an option for the residents living within the financial constraints of a fixed income.
- Newer, alternative transportation services that utilize smartphone technology such as Uber or Lyft were also not considered an option for these populations who, in addition to the aforementioned cost barrier, also tend to not have access to nor experience with the kind of technology necessary to use those services.

The remainder of this report describes each session in detail.

# 2013 LISTENING SESSIONS

## PARAMOUNT HOUSE LISTENING SESSION REPORT

### Background

The North King County Mobility Coalition held a listening session with residents of King County Housing Authority's Paramount House apartments (1750 N.E. 145th St. in Shoreline) on May 9, 2013.

The purpose of the listening session was to receive information and feedback from residents on their use of the 145th St/ SR523 transportation corridor. Candace Ives, King County Housing Authority's Resident Services Coordinator, hosted the meeting, which was attended by 10 Paramount House residents. Robin McClelland, North King County Mobility Coalition member, facilitated the discussion.

Following the session, representatives from Hopelink and Senior Services described general travel information and identified specific programs and services of use to the residents. The residents also were informed about an upcoming event at POPY's Café at the nearby Prince of Peace Lutheran Church intended for people of limited means to join the conversation about Sound Transit's light rail station area planning and land use changes in Shoreline.



Paramount House (1750 NE 145th St, Shoreline, WA 98155)

### Resident Feedback

During the lively conversation, the residents offered a long list of ways they travel the corridor. They painted a vivid picture of how they get around using several forms of aid including walkers, wheelchairs, and scooters. Several walk up or down the corridor to shops or bus stops. Most are dependent on Metro or Access paratransit to traverse the area – one resident startled the group with her description of the all day trip she makes three times a week to visit her mother in Puyallup using public transportation.

Some residents combine transit modes – van, shuttle, use of a walker, or “rolling” to make a single trip. Whether walking, “rolling”, or using public transportation, the residents portrayed difficult movement along 145th due to obstructions on the sidewalk, narrow passage, and unsafe crossings.

At least one resident drives his own vehicle. However, due to a stroke and subsequent brain injury, he has great difficulty speaking. His ability to contribute was limited, but his frustration with the corridor came through clearly as he nodded in agreement with comments made by others.

Ways participants traverse 145th include:

- Walking
- “Rolling” in a wheelchair or scooter
- Walker
- Driving a personal vehicle
- Access paratransit
- Van or shuttle

The obstacles encountered by the residents make up a long list worth noting in detail. They are of particular relevance to those who travel by non-motorized modes and who confront these conditions daily. They speak to safety, traffic flow, and transit service:

- Sidewalks are narrow or non-existent, raising safety concerns.
- Tree roots have pushed up the sidewalk in several places, making it dangerous or impassable, especially for those using wheelchairs, walkers, and other mobility devices. Uneven pavement has resulted in trips and falls.
- The South side of the roadway lacks a good pedestrian path, but people cross to that side to avoid certain intersections. Others use the North side to avoid safety issues.
- The high volume of traffic slows vans, shuttles, and buses.
- The overgrowth of bushes, shrubs, and wild plants along the sidewalk is a safety hazard.
- Despite the proximity of the QFC and other retail shops, due to the condition of the corridor, residents said it is very difficult to transport groceries home.
- Bus connections are poor. For example, despite the proximity of Lake City to Paramount House (just down the hill) , it is difficult to travel there via a Metro bus.
- Specific conditions the residents raised could be targets for spot improvements in the corridor:

## 2013 • 2014 MOBILITY LISTENING SESSIONS

- The corner at 17th Ave NE and 145th (near the Arco gas station) is dangerous, due to lack of sightlines and visibility. Residents suggested a stop light or crosswalk to improve safety. They stated that despite the high speeds and bad sightlines at this corner, people often jaywalk or use the unmarked intersection. The bus shelter at Paramount House was removed, making it more difficult to wait for the bus here. Residents would like the shelter to be replaced. (It has since been replaced.)

When asked what they would change to improve the corridor, residents shared the following ideas:

- Safety improvements for pedestrians, including wider sidewalks and more crosswalks, or perhaps a pedestrian overpass.
- Better signage. Possibly signage indicating “senior crossing” zones.
- Lower speed limits.
- A more convenient bus route to the Library (in Lake City) and to the Shoreline Senior Center.
- Safety improvements at the intersection of 145th and 20th Ave NE. Both this “blind” corner and the top of the hill need more and better signage.
- The crossing time at NE 145th and 15th NE needs to be extended to provide more time for pedestrians to cross 145th St.
- Metro route 73 should go to Lake City. There is no direct route from Paramount House to Fred Meyer, despite its relative proximity.



## Key Takeaways

Residents of Paramount House in Shoreline described their trips along the 145th St/SR523 corridor using a variety of transportation modes. Noting a number of obstacles to safe and comfortable travel, they suggested several ways that mobility could be improved in the corridor.

As an initial catalyst project and the best way to improve mobility in the corridor in the short term, residents selected replacing the bus shelter (which had previously been removed) and adding a bench at 145th St and 19th Ave NE near Paramount House.

Residents had noted during the conversation that the bus shelter and bench at 145th St and 19th Ave NE near Paramount House had been previously removed, leaving them to wait for transit in the open. As a result of advocacy efforts by the NKCMC and at the urging of King County Councilmember Rod Dembowski, in late July of 2013 a new bus shelter and bench were installed in late July, months ahead of schedule.

## WESTMINSTER MANOR LISTENING SESSION REPORT

### Summary

Residents of Westminster Manor (14701 Dayton Ave N, Shoreline) say that they travel in Shoreline and Seattle using a variety of transportation modes. They noted several obstacles to safe and comfortable travel in the area around them and suggested ideas for improving the corridor, emphasizing pedestrian improvements to the intersection of 145th and Greenwood. The top suggested improvements were lengthening the crossing time at the intersection, raising driver awareness of pedestrians via signage, and extending the sidewalk in front of Westminster Manor on Dayton Avenue all the way down to 145th.

### Background

The North King County Mobility Coalition held a listening session with residents of King County Housing Authority's Westminster Manor apartments on November 18, 2013. The purpose of the listening session was to receive information and feedback on residents' use of the 145th St/ SR523 transportation

corridor and surrounding streets. Fifteen residents attended the session and hosted by Candace Ives, Westminster Manor's Resident Services Coordinator. Robin McClelland, a member of the North King County Mobility Coalition, served as the meeting facilitator.



Westminster Manor (14701 Dayton Avenue North, Shoreline, WA 98133)

## Resident Feedback

Residents listed several ways they get around along the 145th corridor. These included:

- Walking
- Rolling in a wheelchair or scooter
- Walkers
- Driving a personal vehicle
- King County Metro bus
- Access paratransit
- Hyde Shuttle
- Carpooling with caretakers, family, or friends

The intersection of 145th and Greenwood is not friendly to pedestrians, especially those using mobility devices. There are many potholes at that intersection, which make maneuvering devices difficult and necessitate a greater amount of time to cross than what is given. Residents shared their experiences encountering obstacles along 145th St:

- Sidewalks are scarce within the neighborhood. The streets, although low-traffic, tend to have rough surfaces, which raise safety concerns, especially for people who use mobility devices.

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*“I’m a pretty imposing guy. I’m six foot, walking out there with my sticks. But even I have to be careful at 145th and Greenwood. I try to make eye contact, but it doesn’t always work because drivers pay more attention to other parts of traffic.”*

**–Richard**  
Westminster Manor resident

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*“Sometimes, I take the bus to the Hopelink food bank. I walk to 145th and Greenwood, get on the 345, get off at Aurora and 130th, get on the 358, and get off at 163rd and Aurora. I walk over, stand in line, do my shopping, and reverse the trip back. The whole trip usually takes me two, two and a half hours. If it’s nice, like in the summer, I’ll walk down and bus back.”*

**-Eddie Bea**  
Westminster Manor Resident

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- Bus connections, especially to the east and north, are poor. This makes accessing even nearby human services, such as Hopelink’s Shoreline food bank and the Shoreline Senior Center nearly impossible.

- Residents described travel to parks and shopping in Shoreline as difficult and time-consuming. Public places are essentially out of reach to many.

- Many residents shop in the Greenwood neighborhood in Seattle, rather than in Shoreline due to more direct and frequent transit connections to the south.

- Several residents described concern with driver behavior at 145th and Greenwood. Drivers often seem unaware of pedestrians.

- The south side of the intersection at 145th and Greenwood lacks wheelchair cutouts, forcing residents to dogleg, crossing on the north side of the busy thoroughfare and back in order to get to their only bus stop to the Greenwood area of Seattle.



Abrupt sidewalk end at the north edge of Westminster Manor property.

- Residents described booking the Hyde shuttle outside scheduled times as inconvenient and time consuming.

When asked what they would change to improve the area, residents shared the following ideas:



- Several residents requested a “no right turn on red” sign for the intersection of 145th and Greenwood.
- The crossing at 145th and Greenwood needs to be retimed to allow more time for pedestrians to cross the street.
- Some residents suggested distributing pedestrian visibility clothing, such as armbands and vests.
- Construct a sidewalk on Dayton all the way to 145th from Westminster Manor.
- Schedule the Hyde shuttle for every Tuesday.
- Have more transportation resources on hand at Westminster Manor, including education on how to use King County Metro’s online trip planner.



Abrupt sidewalk end at the south edge of Westminster Manor property.



Westminster Manor residents’ typical route towards 145th St.

## Key Takeaways

The residents of Westminster Manor are transit-savvy and care deeply about the state of their walking environment. The intersection of 145th St and Greenwood Ave N is a critical place for residents to access transportation, including Metro buses. While they engaged enthusiastically in conversation about that intersection, they had less to say about points eastward on 145th St because they used that part of the corridor less frequently. Many residents go to Seattle for shopping and recreation

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*“Getting to 145th is difficult because of rough terrain. I need to be careful with my walker to make sure that my wheels don’t get stuck. Going north on the bus is harder because the sidewalk stops so suddenly in that direction. Because of that, I usually end up going south to Greenwood to shop.”*

**-Palma**  
Westminster Manor Resident

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needs rather than Shoreline because of better transit connections to the south. The top suggested improvements were lengthening the crossing time at the intersection, raising driver awareness of pedestrians via signage, and extending the sidewalk in front of Westminster Manor on Dayton Avenue all the way down to 145th. This session gleaned insights into the condition of the western edge of the 145th St/SR 523

corridor, particularly the needs of senior and disabled users in this area.

The obstacles that limit mobility appear to have logical and simple fixes if the residents had access to and influence with local officials and decision makers. Their concerns about the timing of the stoplight at 145th was reported to Shoreline city staff, resulting in a subsequent adjustment of signal time to better accommodate pedestrian travel.

# 2014 LISTENING SESSIONS

## SEQUOIAS SENIOR APARTMENTS LISTENING SESSION REPORT

### Background

On August 21, 2014, the North King County Mobility Coalition (NKCMC) held a listening Session at the Sequoias Senior Apartments, a senior living facility managed by Senior Housing Assistance Group (SHAG) in Kenmore, WA (7111 NE 181st St, Kenmore, WA 98028).

The purpose of the listening session was to receive information and feedback from residents about how they travel, what issues related to mobility are important or of concern to them, and their interest or current efforts at engagement towards addressing their concerns. Residents were asked a series of six questions to stimulate the conversation. These questions were:

- Where do you travel regularly in your community and how do you get there?
- Do you have any special needs you depend on when traveling and how are they provided?
- What obstacles exist that interfere with your traveling and how do you get around or address those?



The Sequoias Sr Apts (7111 Northeast 181st Street, Kenmore, WA 98028)

- What kind of improvements would you like to see along your travel routes?
- Have you tried to engage your local government or community with your concerns? and
- Would you use public transportation if training was provided to you?

Robin McClelland, NKCMC member, facilitated the discussion. Cameron Duncan, staff, took notes and recorded audio during the meeting.

### Key Takeaways & Resident Feedback

The residents noted that the property has well-designed walking areas, there was significant concern over the significant lack of pedestrian infrastructure surrounding the facility – primarily in the form of sidewalks and crosswalks. For instance, there is a large swath of sidewalk missing along the walking route from the Sequoias Senior Apartments to the local Safeway grocery store - located barely one quarter of a mile away, which residents of the Sequoias frequent for their regular grocery needs on foot.

Although many residents use Access to travel to their various appointments in the region, they observed that the service remains a challenging service to utilize because of both scheduling and timing difficulties as well as logistical confusion having to do with determining if residents qualify for Access and the subsequent confusion often stemming from managing the necessary paperwork involved in signing up.

As in the the previous listening sessions, we learned that residents are uneasy about becoming dependent on public transportation. They are confused by how it works, concern about safety and reliability, and fearful of the difficulties they may experience with getting



to bus stations, traveling long distances, and having to make transfers between buses mid-trip. Additionally, some residents were even fearful about the idea of using public transportation due to perceived safety concerns, as well as anxiety about the potential of getting lost easily.

Residents presented a varied list of ways they traverse the region, including:

- driving themselves, being driven by a friend, family member, or helper;
- traveling as a pedestrian with the aid of a walker, wheelchair, or other mobility device;
- using specialized transportation services like Access or the Northshore Senior Center vanpool; and
- using the existing public transit modes like Metro bus or Sound Transit light rail (when traveling to the airport).

## Mini-Case Study: Safety Getting To Safeway

Traveling as a pedestrian in and around their community was a central point of discussion. The residents almost unanimously agreed that walking or moving via other non-motorized transportation between their apartments and local destinations – most notably the Safeway grocery store in the area – is regularly a dangerous experience for them.

Although the Safeway store used by residents is only approximately one quarter of a mile away from the apartments, there is no safe and complete pedestrian route connecting the two. The sidewalk in front of the Sequoias stops abruptly at the edge of the property line and does not resume at any point along the route, which runs past the next-door trailer park. The lack of sidewalk forces the seniors trying to walk to the grocery store onto either the road or the adjacent uneven, overgrown, and gravelly surfaces along their route, which provides them with minimal protection from the fast moving traffic along NE 181st Street. When a resident arrives at Safeway, which they approach from the store’s rear, they must walk along a long driveway



Seniors have trouble navigating what is in reality a very short distance between their home and the local grocery store.

- used primarily by delivery trucks - which connects the store's parking lot and frontage (facing NE Bothell Way) to 181st Street at its rear. No pedestrian infrastructure is provided along the driveway, which spans the entire length of the building's east side.

Residents are forced to occupy the same space as cars and trucks entering and exiting the parking lot, which residents noted often traveled at unsafe speeds, particularly on the rear driveway where there is no pedestrian infrastructure, or other indicators to let drivers know to slow down. Residents were very concerned about their safety along this route as almost all of them are frequent customers, walking to and from Safeway regularly.

Robin explain the processes by which the city addresses capital improvements and infrastructure planning for such things as sidewalks. She also suggested approaching Safeway directly to address the poor pedestrian accommodations along the route and the risks posed to vulnerable populations like the elderly. She also discussed different methods by which residents could approach store management about making improvements to their property's rear driveway to accommodate pedestrians. After some conversation, the residents expressed interest in working together to contact the manager of the Safeway to communicate their concerns.

Working with the city to address the lack of pedestrian infrastructure along their travel route still seemed somewhat daunting and confusing to a number of residents. The suggestion of using the internet to access city government resources to address concerns appeared to remain a barrier for many of the residents.



Abrupt sidewalk ending at the edge of the Sequoias property.

## 2013 • 2014 MOBILITY LISTENING SESSIONS

Residents recounted stories of how their travel plans had gone when using public transportation, awry due to mainly to either poor accessibility of bus stops or difficult situations created by transferring from one bus to another on a trip (due mainly to timing and distance between stops). One resident recounted how she often gets off of the first of two buses on her trip to her daughter's house but regularly does not have ample time to cross the street to the bus stop where the bus she has to transfer to is waiting. She is unable to cross the street quickly, being dependent on the poorly timed stoplight and walk signal. This results in her often getting off of the first bus only in time to see the second pull away, which forces her to wait for some time on the street until another bus comes along, allowing her to finish her trip. Stories such as this one are a serious factor in keeping other residents from using public transit. This story resonated with Coalition members, being a complaint frequently heard by mobility-challenged populations in the region.



Back driveway to Safeway on 181st St  
used by Sequoias residents.

Residents generally expressed an interest in utilizing travel-training programs such as those offered by Metro. Some hesitation was present, primarily from those who had not considered using Metro before. Travel training programs appeared to be something residents were interested in and were not aware of previously.

The residents appeared eager to mobilize an effort to talk to Safeway management about what can be done to help address their concerns as regular customers of the

grocery store. Residents were encouraged by the thought that they could affect change in an easier manner than going to the city first. Reaching out to city leadership remained a somewhat intimidating or confusing avenue for residents, some of whom said that they were previously unaware of how to go about getting in contact with local leadership.

The set list of questions posed to participants were useful for generating conversation, allowing Coalition members and to glean valuable insights from participants as a result of the conversation prompted by the questions.

## NORTHSHORE SENIOR CENTER LISTENING SESSION REPORT

### Background

On October 7, 2014, the North King County Mobility Coalition (NKCMC) held a listening Session at the Northshore Senior Center, a day-use senior citizen activity center located in Bothell, WA (10201 E Riverside Drive, Bothell, WA 98011). Like the earlier session at the Sequoias Senior Apartments, the purpose of the listening session was to receive information and feedback from residents about how they travel, what issues related to mobility are important or of concern to them, and their interest or current efforts at engagement towards addressing their concerns. The Coalition

prepared a list of six questions related to mobility needs of senior populations determined by members to be relevant to the purpose of the listening session and the interests of the Coalition. The same questions as those used during the Listening Session held at the Sequoias Senior Apartments were also used for the Northshore Senior Center session.

- Where do you travel to regularly in your community and how do you get there?



Northshore Senior Center (10201 East Riverside Drive, Bothell, WA 98011)

- Do you have any special needs you depend on when traveling and how are they provided?
- What obstacles exist that interfere with your traveling and how do you get around or address those?



- What kind of improvements would you like to see along your travel routes?
- Have you tried to engage your local government or community with your concerns? and
- Would you be interest in using public transit to get around if someone were to provide training to you?

Unlike the residential communities where the other sessions had been held, the Northshore Senior Center is a day-use facility exclusively, meaning that no users of the facility are residents. Four users of the Northshore facility participated in the discussion. The Northshore Senior Center, being a day-use facility, the participants of this session provided a different perspective than those of the other facilities. Jim Seek, Director of Transportation at Northshore opened the session. He introduced himself and his Coalition colleagues who would facilitate the meeting. Robin McClelland, NKCMC member, facilitated the discussion. Cameron Duncan, staff, took notes and recorded audio during the meeting.

## Key Takeaways & Participant Feedback

Although some users of the Northshore Senior Center continue drive independently, some use the shuttle and bus services provided by the Senior Center's transportation department. Others use King County Metro's Access and/or DART shuttles.

Once again, we learned from participants that - among those who drive - many expressed discomfort at the prospect of doing so at night, on busy roads and freeways, and in congested and/or confusing areas. Many noted that their spouses and/or family members have expressed a similar unease about the prospect of them driving, particularly in adverse conditions.

Participants conveyed extreme concern about the possibility of losing their ability to drive. Even those who had expressed an interest in not having to use their cars as their primary mode of transportation said that the physical infrastructure of the area they lived in prevents them from effectively using any other mode to get around with anywhere close to the same level of reliability and convenience. To many, the only other options for affordable transportation in the area are the DART or Access shuttle services. But participants all noted that those services were inconvenient to use, requiring them to orient their schedules around the timing and availability of the shuttle services to the point at which their entire day would be disrupted beyond ability to realistically be able to make any other plans on the day of their trip.

The prospect of using the existing bus system as a regular means of transportation was met with general unease among many facility users. Main concerns expressed by participants included:

- Basic convenience (residents were generally more concerned with this over basic safety);
- Bus routes and schedule were either too confusing or too inconsistent with the timing of their needs and lifestyles; and
- Pedestrian infrastructure necessary for a senior or otherwise mobility-challenged person to access the bus was largely nonexistent in the areas they need to travel frequently, including sidewalks, curb ramps and cuts, short blocks, frequent and properly-timed crosswalks, and more.

When asked if they had engaged their local government leadership to address the state of the transportation system and its ineffectiveness in serving individuals with limited mobility, residents said that, with few exceptions, they and their peers largely had not. The few who had attempted to reach out and discuss the issue with public leaders reported being told that that local



government had responded by informing them that programs like sidewalk installation were currently too expensive to carry out at the scope and scale necessary to address their concerns. And that the sidewalk improvements the city was planning on doing was already prioritized for routes on which children use walk to school before anything else. This feedback discouraged residents from pursuing the issue with local leadership further.

## The Cost of Mobility

We were reminded at the Northshore Senior Center that getting around - basic mobility - is not free. Often the expense of transportation exceeds the ability of people to move around due to the basic financial constraints many seniors encounter in their daily lives. We learned that there is a large proportion of seniors living on a reduced-income who regularly use the facility, and to whom the cost of mobility in their daily lives is oftentimes out of reach. They expressed a strong concern that, while owning a car is a large expense, the cost of using alternative transportation to get around instead would be even greater in terms of both money and of time.

Financial limitations also were observed as a significant factor when discussing the prospect of moving residences to a location better suited for pedestrian travel and other alternative transportation modes to driving one's self. Participants said that a fixed income is usually the largest barrier preventing them from being able to move residences to solve this problem. This insight highlighted the true value of living close to the services, people, and locations you value as you age. To the non-mobility challenged individual, this convenience is frequently taken for granted. However to those who can no longer drive or are limited in their ability to, this is a luxury they must oftentimes go without. Being unable to afford to move to a new home more conducive to their mobility needs, they are forced to remain in environments that not only make basic transportation difficult and an increasingly expensive

prospect, ultimately confining them in isolated, unhealthy lifestyles as they age and grow more dependent on others to go about their daily lives.

One resident described the poor conditions of the mobile home park in which she lived and was unable to move from due to her fixed income and lack of any additional financial resources. In addition to the park's lack of pedestrian infrastructure like sidewalks, benches and other basic tools for improving mobility, which she described in detail, she also noted that the park's suburban location meant that practically all services and destinations not served by alternative transportation services such as the Northshore Senior Center shuttle were extremely difficult to access. After describing these mobility challenges faced by her where she lived, she also talked about her experience engaging park management in a conversation about improving pedestrian safety. Similar to the experiences of participants in previous listening sessions, she found this attempt to be unpleasant and unproductive, her concerns being met with no significant action taken. And, because of her significant financial constraints, she remains unable to address the issue independently. To this day her mobility remains extremely limited.

# CONCLUSIONS

Residents and users of the facilities visited by the North King County Mobility Coalition's concerns and frustrations with the current state of local pedestrian infrastructure are significant. Many residents feel stranded, concerned that their own basic mobility needs have been put on hold while their community leadership focuses attention on other priorities. Being limited in terms of physical mobility, financial constraints, and access to educational resources, many residents and users expressed a sense of resignation that they may never have any amount of the mobility and freedom in terms of transportation they once had. Accepting the reality that using the existing transportation resources available to them means spending significant amounts of time planning out their trips days in advance, working with service providers to accommodate the demand placed on existing systems, and being prepared to dedicate hours and – sometimes – entire days to sitting on (or waiting for) shuttle services in order to go about their daily lives has become the norm.

A significant number of seniors in North King County live with a perpetual, ever-increasing risk of isolation due to challenges of limited mobility and lack the means with which to address the challenges steadily impacting their lives more and more each day. The Listening Sessions have demonstrated, however, that many of these challenges can be significantly mitigated by relatively simple fixes with the help of local leadership. Obviously the prospect of redesigning the entire urban fabric of a city or neighborhood to better accommodate the transportation needs of these populations is unrealistic for obvious reasons. But as the findings and resultant activity of Listening Sessions like that conducted at Paramount House have demonstrated, there are a number of simple fixes local leadership can employ to significantly, positively impact the lives of the populations discussed in this report. These include (but are not limited to):

- Adjusting stoplight timing;
- Filling in gaps, leveling, and/or completing sidewalks on routes frequented by mobility challenged pedestrians;
- Improving access to the current, existing public transportation system;
- Regularly communicating with mobility-challenged populations through channels they are comfortable with using (Ie: not electronically);
- Providing resources for people who have already or are anticipating giving up driving a car to ease the transition; and
- Utilizing advocacy and resource groups like the King County Mobility Coalition and its partners to maintain a regular flow of information between residents and local leadership.

The degree to which some residents and users adapt their lives to a system that does not adequately provide for their basic mobility needs, organizing piecemeal fixes to fill in the gaps, is impressive. Seniors can be creative, organizing informal networks of able drivers compensated by simple payment/bartering systems in exchange for rides. Those who participated in these networks noted that cash in exchange for a ride was the most convenient method by which to pay someone, as opposed to buying lunch, doing chores, or other alternative forms of payment. But participants emphasized that most of the solutions they and their peers arrange are piecemeal at best, requiring an exorbitant amount of effort to set up and maintain with little or no help. And those who are not lucky enough to find themselves surrounded by the proper resources, including simply knowing the right people, find themselves simply out of luck. This creates an extremely unequal landscape in terms of access and availability of help from one individual to the next. It's quite clear that these arrangements and networks at best serve as a stopgap, crudely

plugging a hole in a system that continues to serve them poorly and necessitating large amounts of effort, organization, and energy on the part of individuals already struggling to make ends meet. Participants' preferences for reliable, equitable, and affordable transportation service and options in lieu of their current piecemeal approach is strong and apparent.

Residents and users also felt frustrated by their perceived limited access to those who have the power to address their needs, including elected officials and city staff. They noted that public meetings where a resident would have a forum to express their concerns to the necessary audiences are usually poorly advertised in the publications available to them. Their frustration is compounded by the additional burden of simply arranging for transportation to public meetings, often held during hours and at locations not conducive to the schedule of a senior or otherwise mobility challenged individual. Addressing these barriers by having elected officials and/or city staff by meeting with mobility-challenged populations where they live would be a significant improvement. Participants did acknowledge that more effort could also be made on their part to reach out to local leadership on their end. Technological limitations continue to be a significant barrier in these types of communication efforts. Lack of experience with current information technology and a significant learning curve continues to limit seniors' ability to perform tasks like navigating city websites for relevant information, using email; or researching online in order to learn about available services such as travel trainings; transit schedules, routes, service updates; pending legislation with impacts to their mobility; and more.

Participants were under no illusion that a community's ability to swiftly implement large-scale, system-wide solutions addressing their mobility needs is an unrealistic prospect. But smaller improvements to the existing infrastructure like those cited in this report which address specific impediments and issues have the potential to make a large, positive impact on their lives. One need look no further for an example than the less-than-one-block of incomplete sidewalk at the Sequoias Senior Apartments

in Kenmore or the all too similar situation the residents of Westminster Manor both find themselves in. At both facilities, a distance smaller than one city block separates their facility from necessary services (a grocery store and a foodbank, respectively). The lack of a level, safe walking surface creates a disproportionately difficult and dangerous environment for someone with a walker, wheelchair, cane, or any other mobility limitation to navigate safely. The simple task of completing these kinds of vital pedestrian connections, linking populations with no alternative means of transportation, practically speaking, can mean the difference between access or isolation for many otherwise stranded individuals. However, these kinds of improvements are almost always extremely low on most city budgets in terms of dedicating limited funds and resources.

Outside of capital improvements like those mentioned above, providing educational services to seniors on subjects like available area transportation options and how to use them, tools with which to access local government leadership, and more was a very popular and relatively simple solution among listening session participants. Sharing the available tools and resources to help users navigate a large and confusing transportation network – as well as demonstrating how to use them – can be a critical step in addressing mobility challenges. Some area service providers, like Hopelink and King County Metro provide different travel training services. Participants felt that arranging for regular sessions and classes would go a long way in terms of empowering them to access and be knowledgeable about what is and may potentially be available to them.

Participants interviewed during the listening sessions provided the North King County Mobility Coalition with detailed, invaluable, firsthand accounts of their experience navigating their way through the community. Interviewees overwhelmingly agreed that the existing system does not adequately serve their needs and limits their ability to travel freely, hampering their quality of life in significant ways, limiting their access to basic services necessary to fulfill essential needs. Participants largely understood and acknowledged the

existing challenges faced by transportation service providers in adequately addressing the needs of transit-dependent populations such as themselves. But almost all of them felt strongly that their local leadership and service providers could and should make a stronger and ongoing effort to reach out to and address the needs of mobility challenged populations.

The members of the North King County Mobility Coalition hope that this report and the findings herein advance the message needs and message of mobility challenged populations in North King County. These findings should serve to increase understanding of the circumstances and needs of a significant segment of North King County's population, ultimately helping to prompt action on the part of local government and community leadership to address those needs in meaningful, significant, and lasting ways.