

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on October 16, 2018

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 18, 2018
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Ma, McEachran

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: Dan Lassiter, Hannah Kimball, Phyllis Smilen, Judy Dowling, Bellevue Network on Aging; Don Okazaki, King County Metro; Franscois Larrivee, Hopelink; Karina Wiggins, Friends of Youth; Mark Smutny, Sound Generations

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 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 Perelman, who arrived at 6:13 p.m., and Commissioners Ma and McEachran, both of whom were excused.

3. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Fire Chief Jay Hagen took a moment to introduce himself to the Commission. He said he previously met Commissioner McEachran given that the All Medic meetings and the Serve Life program meetings are held at his church. He said he would provide the Commission with a full update of his department's programs in October. All fire stations will host open house events on October 13 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. during Fire Prevention Week.

Ms. Karina Wiggins, director of Homeless Youth Services for Friends of Youth, introduced herself. She said she was present to listen in on the presentation by King

County Metro.

Mr. Mark Smutny, operations manager for the Hyde Shuttle Program operated by Sound Generations, said the program provides over 60 shuttle vans and drivers for seniors and persons with disabilities throughout King County. The program, however, has only a limited presence in Bellevue.

Mr. Francois Larrivee, vice president of transportation for Hopelink, said he was present to hear the presentation by King County Metro.

4. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Oxrieder said she recently picked up a flyer at the library produced by Eastside Pathways. The flyer urged parents to get their kids to school and included steps to take to avoid absences.

5. DISCUSSION

A. King County Metro Staff Solutions Update

Ms. O'Reilly introduced Dan Lassiter, Hannah Kimball, Phyllis Smilen and Judy Dowling with the Bellevue Network on Aging.

Don Okazaki with King County Metro said the next step relative to the solution concepts will be to schedule a community summit to review the recommendations with stakeholders and the public. He said after the presentation at the summit, the floor will be opened to allow the attendees to talk with the various subject matter experts to gain a better understanding of the solution concepts and products. Funding for the products will of course be key. The model is similar to what Metro does with its community connections program in which following the removal of service from an existing area some of the resources are put back into the community right-sized to a service that makes sense. Metro is certainly willing to contribute where stakeholders or communities step up.

Mr. Okazaki said the agreed-to service needs include services that connect specific populations with key destinations, such as the homeless shelter and medical appointments for seniors. Reliable and flexible options are needed, as is timely service during off-peak hours, first-mile/last-mile solutions, and solutions that are both accessible and affordable. The most requested sites that came up as part of the survey were community centers, food banks, groceries, pharmacies, libraries, malls, medical facilities and shelters.

The first solution concept identified involved use of Community Access transportation agency vehicles. Mr. Okazaki said King County Metro currently has a lot of agency partners who provide services for customers using van provided by Metro. Community Access is an agency that provides rides for their clients directly. In most

cases, Metro provides vans to non-profit agencies, but it also works with community agencies that serve youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, or persons on a lower fixed income. Metro provides retired passenger vans, some of which are lift-equipped vehicles. The vans must be used to transport eligible customers and cannot be used to transport equipment or just agency staff. The vehicles are managed and scheduled by the agency, and the volunteer and/or paid drivers are also provided by the agency. Agencies may qualify for some operating funds such as fuel, insurance and vehicle maintenance by providing at least 150 one-way rides per month. The agencies are required to sign an agreement with Metro, provide \$5 million in liability insurance, and submit monthly trip reports to verify the vehicles provided are being used on a regular basis for the intended purposes.

Mr. Okazaki said customers on average pay a suggested donation of one dollar per ride. The annual cost to Metro is around \$12,500, including \$2500 for maintenance and \$10,000 given to the agency to cover insurance, fuel and other expenses, not including labor. At 150 rides per month, the annual number of trips is close to 1800, making the cost per trip to Metro about \$6.95, which is very cost effective. Use of an agency van would work very well in most instances. Faith-based organizations would need to restrict use of the vans to secular functions.

Commissioner Kline asked what defines a ride. Mr. Okazaki said a trip is one person going from one place to another. A van with ten persons going to a food bank and back would constitute 20 trips.

Ms. O'Reilly suggested that Congregations for the Homeless is an agency that might appropriately be considered to have an agency van. They address different needs, including assisting people in getting to work and getting people to their shelter facility. Mr. Okazaki said that would be an appropriate program. He added that so long as an agency provides the minimum number of appropriate rides, Metro does not manage their programs. Agencies wanting to coordinate services with other agencies are certainly allowed to do so, but there must be a single organizing agency. The agency van program works well on both small and large scales operations.

Mr. Okazaki said the community van is a Metro-branded product. A perfect place for them is senior centers, provided there is enough ridership. Community vans are provided for local, pre-scheduled group trips involving two or more riders going to different locations along a common route. Trips are arranged by a coordinator, they are open to the public, and the vans are driven by volunteers who must be approved by King County. Accessible vehicles are available on request. Riders are picked up at prearranged stops on the way to the destinations. The riders pay the current Metro fare of \$2.75. The annual cost to Metro for providing the service is \$45,000 per van. With an annual ridership of 5000, the average cost per trip works out to about nine dollars. The agency coordinators must submit monthly reports and manage and schedule the vans in addition to recruiting drivers. Currently Metro pays Hopelink to manage some of the agency coordinators.

Mr. Okazaki said the community van product is fairly new and as such ridership is on the low side. The oldest operation has only been under way for a year or two. He said the program works well, however, and the most obvious place to try it out would be at the most popular community center. If housed at a community center, any group could use a community van.

Mr. Okazaki said the subsidized taxi/TNC and the neighborhood shuttle programs are the most ambitious and the most expensive, but they are also the most available and flexible. While it is often possible to apply for grants to get programs up and running, it is also necessary to identify sustained funding to keep programs operational. The creation of programs that prove to be very popular can increase demand over time and thus the overall costs. Subsidized taxi/TNC projects have proven to be very popular in some cities where they have been launched, and in many cases the result has been early closure of the programs due to running out of money. The key to controlling the programs is who makes the rides available, what the rides are available for, and the number of daily and monthly caps put on the programs to manage growth. The programs generally require users to register for the program. The clients are then able to schedule a taxi or a TNC and receive a subsidy of a fixed amount. The service can also include trip limits to control costs, and customers who qualify for the program would likely have to choose a single provider. The service is ideal for medical trips. It is the most convenient but it is also the most expensive. King County Metro will be doing a same-day service pilot in which the first 400 customers who are already registered for the Access program will be given subsidies of \$15 for Uber rides and \$20 for cab rides. A cap of \$250 for Uber and \$325 for cabs will be established. The rider will pay two dollars for an Uber ride along with anything over a total fare of \$17. The average Access cost is \$60 for Metro, so under the program Metro would pay \$15 instead of \$60. If 50 percent of the Access rides can be diverted to the program, and if 50 percent new rides get created, Metro will still break even and people will get better service.

Commissioner Piper asked if the customers would need a mobile app to access services. Mr. Okazaki said they would for the Uber rides but not for the cab rides. Commissioner Piper pointed out that the Commission had previously discussed the fact that the need to use an app will serve as a major barrier for many. Mr. Okazaki said that is why both Uber and cabs are folded into the program. He allowed that another drawback is that currently Uber does not have any accessible vehicles, so for many they are better off using a cab.

Commissioner Oxrieder raised concerns about the willingness of Uber and cab drivers to serve disabled clientele. Mr. Okazaki said that is one thing that will be highlighted in the pilot program. Everyone participating in the pilot will be asked to participate in a quarterly survey about how they were treated, how well they were served and how the process worked. The pilot will highlight how to do things better once it is opened to all Access customers.

Mr. Lassiter asked when the pilot will launch and Mr. Okazaki told him it will be during the first quarter of 2019. The details with Uber and Lyft are being worked out and hopefully one of the companies will end up with a signed contract. As the program grows it will require funding. One option would be for the hospitals to pitch in to support the program given that they will benefit from many of the trips.

Mr. Smutny offered that every social worker at every hospital has stories to tell about the need for transportation for people who are otherwise isolated. Their opportunity costs can get very high if there are no alternative transportation services offered in the community.

Mr. Okazaki said the neighborhood shuttle program is similar to the old Eastside Easy Rider program that Hopelink operated. The program proved to be very popular but was pulled when Metro ran out of grant funding. The service may follow a loop or it can be operated via reservations. Mr. Larrivee said the demand response Easy Rider program served major transit destinations and popular bus routes.

Mr. Okazaki said the vehicles usually have eight to ten seats and are operated by a paid driver. A service provider dispatches vehicles for pickup and drop-off. Reservations must be made at least one day in advance and up to 30 days in advance. The special needs shuttle usually operates weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Most such programs do not charge the riders though some have a suggested donation of a dollar. The annual cost for six accessible vehicles would be \$410,000. With an annual ridership of 16,200, the cost per trip would work out to about \$25.31. The model is the perfect type to submit for state or federal grant funding, but the fact is there are no funds available for urbanized areas like Bellevue. As state revenues increase, it is possible funding will once again become available. The neighborhood shuttle is expensive but where they have operated they have proven to be very popular. Operation of a neighborhood shuttle in Bellevue would require a partnership, and the most logical candidate is Hopelink, though an RFP process would be required.

Ms. Kimball asked if the program would be limited to income qualified riders if Hopelink chose to partner in a neighborhood shuttle program. She pointed out that there are many seniors who are not necessarily income qualified but who are on fixed incomes and tight budgets. Mr. Okazaki said the program could be put together to serve identified needs of seniors and those with disabilities, and it would not necessarily have to be tied to a certain income.

Ms. Wiggins asked if the agency van program would have to operate only in the city of Bellevue. Mr. Okazaki said it could operate anywhere in King County. Ms. Wiggins said she works with youth whose last known address was Bellevue and some who have spent time on the streets in Bellevue. The shelter, however, is in Redmond, and transitional living space is provided in various locations around north and east King County.

Mr. Smutny commented that one of the opportunities for the summit might be the public school systems in the three cities. The poverty rates in the Bellevue, Redmond and Kirkland school systems affect between a fifth and a sixth of the households, which means there is a huge opportunity there and need for transportation resources. From a public sector perspective, it only makes sense to have shuttles. Mr. Okazaki pointed out that by law any vehicle larger than eight passengers taking kids to school must meet all school bus requirements, otherwise all parties are liable. That includes taking kids to after-school activities.

Ms. Smutny said what Hopelink and Sound Generations offer are drivers that establish relationships with their riders. Both agencies provide connections, including emotional connections, for people who have either lost the ability to drive or who because of changing circumstances are isolated and have lost their connections to the larger world.

Chair Mercer suggested ERIC should be asked to attend the summit and to bring along some from groups they work with. Mr. Okazaki agreed and said he would like to see included medical providers and homeless shelter representatives, along with representatives from Hopelink and Sound Generations given that those organizations both already work with the identified communities.

Ms. O'Reilly commented that while the city cannot provide funding, it can provide the workforce to write grants seeking funding.

Mr. Smutny said he would like to see a fixed-route shuttle serving homeless service providers and affiliated social services in collaboration with Redmond, Kirkland and Bellevue. That would create a network linking those providers. If something like that could be drawn up, the obvious choice for seeking funding would be Microsoft. The new CEO of Sound Generations spent his professional life as a senior vice president for Boeing in charge of facilities management worldwide, so the agency is crafting strategies relating to Boeing money. Additionally, given that Bellevue is no longer majority Caucasian, some work should be put into recruiting non-English language communities to attend and participate in the summit.

Commissioner Perelman suggested the cultural navigators should be part of the summit as well.

Ms. O'Reilly said Crossroads Community Center has been booked for a big event on November 3. The transportation summit in part stems from the recent approval of an inclusive transportation grant passed by the King County coalition through Hopelink. Mr. Smutny said in fact there were two summits scheduled, the first of which will be on October 23 in New Holly. He said he would be facilitating them. The focus will be on bringing together transportation stakeholders, including riders, drivers, board managers and public officials to discuss how to improve the riders' experience of finding and securing transportation options.

Mr. Larrivee said the opportunity for operating grants is one of the challenges being faced. Funding for operations is difficult to find; capital funds are much easier to come by. At the end of the day, it is necessary to have someone to drive the vehicles. With regard to the summit, he proposed paying attention to the potential beneficiaries and then looking to the private sector to extend the invitation. Service sector employers have a clear interest in seeing transportation programs launched.

Chair Mercer asked if CDBG funds could be used to fund transportation programs. Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano said it is possible some of the operating costs could be addressed with CDBG funds as a public service project.

Ms. Kimball proposed including in the list of those who should be invited to the summit the India Association of Western Washington and the Muslim Association of Puget Sound. Mr. Smutny added program managers for senior complexes. Ms. O'Reilly added Bellevue College to the list as well as IKRON and Healthpoint. Commissioner Kline proposed including Catholic Community Services.

6. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Catalano reported that the 2018 CDBG funds have been received. She said staff were in the process of tallying up all the invoices that can be used to draw down the funds. The account balance will be reviewed on November 1 and at that time it cannot contain more than 1.5 times the annual award amount. Currently things are looking positive, primarily because program income has been much lower than it was over the last couple of years. As of mid-September, \$133,000 in program income had been received, which compares to the \$438,000 for all of 2017.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Catalano informed the Commissioners that a new administrative assistant has been hired who previously worked for a large property management firm doing their accounting. Her name is Stephanie Keblish.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commissioners that the Land Use Code amendment needed to allow a permanent shelter was approved by the Council prior to the August break. Councilmember Robertson requested that staff review the potential for making the current men's shelter a temporary year-round shelter by keeping it open at some location for however long it takes for the new permanent shelter to come on line. Councilmember Robinson's request included a number of specifics which the multi-departmental staff team focused on the shelter is in the process of reviewing. How to adapt the Lincoln Center site to allow it to be temporarily used year round is on the list of items under review. A report from staff may be ready for submittal to the Council on November 5.

Ms. O'Reilly explained that the shelters are currently only funded for six months in the proposal to be taken to the Council, the first three months of 2019 and the last three

months of 2019. The six-month gap in between is not in the proposal. David Bowling has been asked to submit a budget for what it would take to fill in the gap and run the shelter for six more months. Ms. Catalano said including more case management, the number comes to an additional \$380,000 per year, part of which would need to come from other cities.

Ms. O'Reilly said staff have been talking with other funders on the Eastside on ways to find the additional funds, part of which could come from grants. Feelers have also been put out about bringing some of the \$11 million from the Pearl Jam concert to the Eastside.

Chair Mercer commented that CDBG dollars could appropriately be used to cover the capital costs of upgrading the Lincoln Center site to use it as a temporary year-round shelter. Ms. Catalano pointed out that the Lincoln Center building will in the not-too-distant future be demolished as part of the Grand Connection project. Putting CDBG dollars into something that is going to be demolished is not allowed.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that New Year's Day will occur the first Tuesday in January, which is the Commission's normal meeting night. She said the meeting will be moved to Wednesday, January 2, instead.

8. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Kline. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Oxrieder and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Mercer adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date