



City of Ferndale

POVERTY TASK FORCE REPORT

MEETING DATE: August 7th, 2019

SUBJECT: Transportation in North Whatcom County

DATE: 8/2/19

FROM: Riley Sweeney, Communications Officer

PRESENTATION BY: Riley Sweeney

SYNOPSIS: Here is an overview of the issues and resources relating to transportation in north Whatcom County.

STAFF NOTES: It is easy to view transportation as it applies to poverty through a single lens, public transportation, but that does a disservice to both public transit and those experiencing poverty. For those struggling to get by, a car is a lifeline to employment, services and as we've discussed before, a place to sleep. Public transit can be a replacement but if it is to be successful, needs to be rapid, frequent and used by more than just the working poor.

Furthermore, transportation involves more than commuting. It involves walkways to public areas that accessible, ADA compatibility for buildings and businesses and the ability for people to get to work, housing and leisure without major barriers.

Below are some of the issues involving our community, poverty and transportation as starters for our discussion.

BACKGROUND:

There was a cross-county route that connected Lynden, Ferndale and Everson that was funded for a year as a pilot program but it did not have the ridership to justify continued use and was discontinued at the start of the summer this year.

Paratransit:

If you qualify based on the American Disabilities Act for paratransit service, they will help transport you where you need to go. It is a van design to assist those with disabilities that cannot make it to the fixed routes, either because it is too far to the bus stop or the bus stop is too far from your final destination. More details are available here:

<http://www.ridewta.com/types-of-service/paratransit/who-can-ride>

American Disabilities Act Challenges:

Whenever the City or a developer updates a piece of infrastructure, it needs to be updated to be compatible with the American Disabilities Act (ADA). This means accessible sidewalks, crosswalks, bathrooms, doors, ramps and more. There are some exemptions, for instance when the City installed ADA ramps to the cabins in Pioneer Park, they did not need to adapt the entrances to the cabins themselves, since they are historic structures, but did need to match the pathway to the existing structure.

This is a legal requirement but requires constant vigilance and can be impacted by other city decisions. For instance, in 2016, the City passed rules allowing for sidewalk dining for restaurants downtown. As those businesses added outdoor seating, it began to add obstacles to those navigating our sidewalks and requires constant monitoring by city staff to ensure those walkways are clear for those who need it.

Other Considerations: When making plans for services that assist the most vulnerable, it is always worth considering the following questions:

- 1) Can the person physically access this service? What is required to get the person to this service?
- 2) Can they reach this service on the weekend? Are the same resources available?
- 3) Can they travel home afterward? Do they need to transport materials/groceries/etc?