

# Livable and Sustainable Communities

Rural and Small-Town Case Studies

Fall 2010

## Transportation Choices in Mason County, Washington



(Source for all three photos: Mason Transit)

**Location:** Mason County and surrounding area, Washington (*Rural*)

**Project Type:** Ongoing transit services since 1992; operated by Mason County Transportation Authority (Mason Transit)

### Transit Funding Sources:

- FTA Rural Funds
- Federal Highway Administration Flex Funds
- Grants – WA State DOT, WA Dept. of Ecology
- State and Local Sales Tax Revenue

### Federal Partners:

Federal Transit Administration (FTA)  
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

### Livability Goals:

- ✓ Provide more transportation choices
- ✓ Support existing communities
- ✓ Coordinate policies and leverage investment
- ✓ Value communities and neighborhoods

### Project Description:

Mason Transit serves a population of over 50,000, some of whom have no other transportation options. Fixed and deviated route bus, dial-a-ride, volunteer driver, and park and ride services link passengers to work, medical care, and recreational sites. Through intercity worker/driver options and vanpools, commuters have access to regional employment centers. Approximately half of riders make regional trips via intercity routes and transfers to neighboring transit systems, ferries, AMTRAK, and bus service. Travel within Mason County is free; fares apply to regional routes. Annual ridership has grown from 60,000 to over 500,000.

Mason Transit develops important partnerships to expand service. One example is working with two school districts, combining school buses with fixed route public transit. Another is regular coordination with human service providers to also meet the transportation needs of low-income and homeless residents and veterans.

Mason Transit is a leader in local pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure development and supporting multimodal connections. The agency has redeveloped an old warehouse into a Community Transit Center and is promoting adjacent downtown pedestrian access. They are also expanding bicycle infrastructure to support increased demand; they have equipped buses with bike racks and established a youth-staffed bike repair shop.



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## Community Outreach:

Mason Transit's services depend on an engaged community. Staff meet monthly with social service agencies in Mason County and hold public meetings to solicit input from local stakeholders on proposed route changes and other developments. Staff also work to more formally organize the volunteer drivers who bring residents to medical visits. Mason Transit's Citizens Advisory Board has recently developed a Rider's Guide to educate the community, as most residents have little or no experience with transit. The guide includes a Rider's Bill of Rights, establishing roles and responsibilities for riders and operators.

## Key Community Partners:

- Mason County Transportation Cooperative
- Community Center Association
- Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs
- Disabled American Veterans Transportation Network
- Shelton and North Mason School Districts
- Lewis-Mason-Thurston County Area Agency on Aging
- Squaxin Island Tribe and Skokomish Tribe



(Source: Mason Transit)

## Livability Highlights:

*Provide more transportation choices:* Riders have access to flexible local and regional services, bicycle racks on buses, and improved pedestrian access in the downtown area.

*Support existing communities:* Dial-a-ride and route deviation services allow seniors to age in place. They can access local resources and continue to be active members of the community.

*Coordinate policies and leverage investment:* Mason Transit works with partners to expand service, leveraging existing transportation infrastructure such as school bus service and adjacent transit systems.

*Value communities and neighborhoods:* Volunteer drivers support their neighbors and the system as a whole.

*Promotes Affordable Housing:* The organization provides fare-free service within the county, and coordinates services to support riders traveling to low-income housing and homeless shelters.

*Enhances economic competitiveness:* Residents have access to employment in Olympia, the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, and Seattle, via links to ferries, which expands options for employees and employers.

## Insights:

Mason Transit has become an integral part of the community, through partnerships and strategic use of resources. Public support generated through outreach enables them to provide service to all, to vital destinations throughout the service area and beyond.

## For More Information About this Project Contact:

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This case study, and others related to Livable  
and Sustainable Communities, is available at:  
[http://fta.dot.gov/publications/publications\\_10991.html](http://fta.dot.gov/publications/publications_10991.html)