



STATE OF WASHINGTON

GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ISSUES AND EMPLOYMENT

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Anacortes, Washington Outreach Summary

Introduction

The Community Outreach Subcommittee of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) held two meetings in Anacortes, Washington on December 6th at the Senior Activity Center and December 7th, 2017 in the City Council Chambers. We want to recognize Mayor Laurie Gere and all the City Council Members for inviting us to come to Anacortes.

We also want to acknowledge and thank Council Member Eric Johnson, Sally Hill and Lea DeVere with the Anacortes Senior Activity Center and Cherri Kahns with the City of Anacortes for their guidance and assistance to secure our meeting locations, and to identify leaders in the disability community and other stakeholders important to our outreach efforts.



Anacortes Senior Activity Center

The following report represents a summary of the issues discussed. Suggested actions and program resources are provided. A list of meeting attendees who provided their contact information is also included.

Outreach

To encourage community attendance and leadership participation, an advance team visited Anacortes and met with Councilman Eric Johnson and Mary Snyder with the Anacortes Parks and Recreation Department, who assisted us in finding an accessible meeting location. We also met with Lea DeVere and Sally Hill with the Anacortes Senior Activity Center. A large mailing inviting stakeholders to attend the Town Hall meeting was sent. We also worked with local radio stations and print media to publish/air the meeting announcement.

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Skagit County and Anacortes Demographics

Skagit County is approximately 60 miles north of Seattle. The County Seat and largest city is Mount Vernon, followed by Anacortes. Anacortes is 18 miles west of Mount Vernon.

In 2015, Anacortes' population was estimated to be 16,310. The racial makeup of the city was 91.5% White, 0.7% African American, 1.0% Native American, 1.9% Asian, 0.1% Pacific Islander, 1.6% from other races, and 3.3% from two or more races and Hispanic or Latino of any race were 5.0% of the population.

Anacortes is a popular tourist destination with its close proximity to the world-famous tulip fields, whale watching and ferry access to the San Juan Islands and Victoria, British Columbia.

Local Success Stories

- The **Anacortes Police Department** was acknowledged for their acts of kindness and caring. They partner with local churches and service organizations to fund a food and restaurant voucher program for those in the community who are in need. They also are known for their ability to use de-escalation methods effectively.
- **Anacortes Aktion Club** is a community service group for adult citizens living with disabilities. Their mission is 1) to provide members with the opportunity to develop leadership skills, 2) to serve the community and 3) to demonstrate the dignity and value of citizens living with disabilities. Anacortes was the first city in Washington State to have an Aktion Club. Kiwanis chapters in Tacoma and Spokane have also started an Aktion Club.

Club meetings are held at the Anacortes Christian Church, 1211 M. Avenue, on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month at 5:30 PM. For more information call 360.840.5415 or email AnacortesAktion@gmail.com.

- **Dogs on Call (DOC)** is an all-volunteer, not-for-profit organization of registered therapy animal teams serving Skagit County. DOC educates people on the benefits of animal-assisted activities and therapies in schools, hospitals and senior care facilities. For more information visit the [Dogs on Call website: \(full URL: https://dogsoncall.wixsite.com/therapyanimals\)](https://dogsoncall.wixsite.com/therapyanimals) or email them at DogsOnCall@gmail.com.
- **Anacortes Senior Activity Center** is the only National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) accredited in Washington State. It is a connection hub for people of all ages in this community. We witnessed their supportive environment when we held our Town Hall meeting there. Sally Hill, Center Administrator, as well as Center staff went out

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of their way to ensure our meeting was successful. For more information call 360.293.7473 or visit the [Anacortes Senior Center website: \(full URL: https://www.anacorteswa.gov/556/Senior-Activity-Center\)](https://www.anacorteswa.gov/556/Senior-Activity-Center).

- **Mayor Gere, City Council Members and Anacortes Port Commissioner John Pope** demonstrated their community involvement by attending our outreach meetings and sharing information about local resources. They shared that multiple city entities such as the Anacortes City Hall, Anacortes Senior Activities Center and the Anacortes Library are equipped with an induction loop system to accommodate individuals with hearing loss. The City has a long history of hiring individuals with disabilities and is known for their creative solutions to increase employment opportunities. Another demonstration of the City's commitment for inclusion is their on-line ADA Self-Assessment reports and updates. The ADA information is found on the Public Works section located in the Department's drop-down button on the [City of Anacortes website: \(full URL: https://www.anacorteswa.gov\)](https://www.anacorteswa.gov).
- **Historic Town Murals** are a product of local resident Bill Mitchell, a wheelchair user. Bill has designed approximately 150 historic murals. He creates the art work and uses a crew to do the painting.
- **Anacortes Public Library** is the first library in the western United States to receive the Family Place Library Program. They offer great programs for early childhood learning, parenting programs and programs for young children. Staff have a wealth of knowledge on community resources and they offer free space public meetings.

Town Hall Meeting Summary

Meeting participants represented a diverse cross section of the community including people with disabilities, family members, service providers and elected officials. We had 41 attendees at the Town Hall Forum and 30 attendees at the Leadership Breakfast. The discussion topics were broad with an emphasis on transportation, affordable housing, and connecting people to existing programs and services.

During the course of our meetings participants were open to possibilities and excited about making new connections. Action items were identified, and commitments were made to continue the discussion to improve programs and services for individuals with disabilities.

Whether addressing housing options, employment opportunities, mental health services or access to transportation, two common threads emerged: 1) services are available but there is insufficient funding to assist everyone who is in need and 2) many people are unaware of the services currently available in the community.

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Affordable Housing

Participant Comments

One participant shared that housing is one of Anacortes more significant barriers besides finding places to work. Skagit County is working with Catholic Family Services and hopes they will be the contractor for a new low-income housing complex. A similar project was just completed in Bellingham and the expected costs per bed are very high. While he appreciates the additional opportunities for housing, we need to find a more cost-effective way to provide protection and dignity for these people.

Adult family homes can barely make it due to the low cost reimbursement from the State. In 2017 Washington State paid on average \$95.00 per day per person. Generally Adult Family Homes pay minimum wage to their support staff to work with the most vulnerable populations. You can't get highly skilled staff with those kinds of wages.

A participant added that many people with mental illness are homeless, not treated well and can't find jobs; it is a tragedy.

Erica added that Compass Health is opening a new housing program for mental health consumers and can house up to 7 single individuals. Many people who are served in temporary housing end the program being homeless once again because of the lack of affordable housing. Community Action of Skagit County just got additional funding for 2 or 3 families for permanent supportive housing. Residents receive wraparound services to support them with their housing and employment needs. It is a subsidized, long-term program and residents are responsible for paying 30% of their income to participate.

Also identified was the difficulty to place homeless people with mental health issues that are ineligible for HUD housing due to a criminal record. These people are really in need of wraparound services. They put added pressure and increased costs on emergency services, hospitals and jails.

A participant asked the City Council Members what is the homeless count in Anacortes.

Council Member Eric Johnson explained that Anacortes has conducted an annual homeless count for the past 10 years. Last year, 25-30 individuals were identified. Typically, information is gathered at the 3 food banks in town and participants are asked if they are homeless. Ten years ago, 86 kids were identified as homeless; now there is only a handful because the definition of homeless has changed. If you are living in a hotel or couch surfing with a friend, you are not considered homeless. It is hard to say what the real numbers are.

Sara has worked with clients living in unstable housing. Not having your fundamental needs met affects your ability to stay employed. Some of the Adult Family Homes are located in very rural or remote locations, with no access to bus service. The homes are also very limited

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in the amount of support they can provide to individuals. These homes are in the business of providing physical care and meals but do not provide transportation to work or social activities to enrich the lives of their residents. In comparison, group homes provide more support to their residents encouraging more independence and self-sufficiency.

A comment was made that the Anacortes Housing Authority is doing a great job to serve the people in their program. They do have a wait list for their program and it is long. If you are in need of housing and are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), let the Anacortes Housing Authority know as it will bump you up on their waiting list.

Eric explained that six years ago, 5 or 6 individuals living in the only Anacortes group home had to move because the facility closed its doors. The main reason for closing was the lack of funds. Several moved to Mount Vernon and some moved back in with their parents.

*Note: According to the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) 2017 Caseload and Cost Report, Skagit County has 78 individuals in supported living; 1 person in a group home, 15 individuals in an adult family home and 1 person in a children's licensed staffed residential facility. The majority of DDA's clients live with and receive care and support from a parent or relative.

Another participant commented that she supports pay increases to the Medicare reimbursement for adult family homes and for their staff but would also like to see an increase in the base payment for Social Security Income.

*Note: In 2018, the monthly payment for an eligible individual receiving Supplemental Security Income is \$750, which reflects a 2.0% increase from last year.

Housing - Resources

- **Anacortes Housing Authority** has public and family housing. It also operates Harbor House which has 49 one-bedroom units and is designated for disabled and/or elderly tenants (age 62 or older). Rent is based on 30% of adjusted gross income and the applicant's income must not exceed 80% of the area median income. Contact:

Anacortes Housing Authority
719 Q Avenue
Anacortes, WA 98221
Phone: 360.293.7831
Email: aha@fidalgo.net
[Anacortes Housing Authority website:\(full URL:
http://www.anacorteshousing.com/publichousing.html\)](http://www.anacorteshousing.com/publichousing.html)

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- **Community Action of Skagit County's** Housing Resource Center serves as the primary point-of-entry for the Coordinated Entry System in Skagit County. Anyone experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness is encouraged to apply. They also provide a list of "Housing to Try in Skagit County" for those who are struggling with locating affordable housing. You can apply for services at the Anacortes Family Center or at the Community Action office in Mount Vernon.

The Housing Resource Center
Community Action
330 Pacific Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
Phone: 360.416.7585

[Housing Resource Center website: \(full URL: https://communityactionskagit2016.iescentral.com/menus/housing-resource-center.html\)](https://communityactionskagit2016.iescentral.com/menus/housing-resource-center.html)

- **Anacortes Family Center's** mission is to serve homeless women, children and families in crisis to achieve self-sufficiency and success through providing shelter and intensive transformative services. Contact:

Anacortes Family Center
2702 Commercial Avenue
Anacortes, WA 98221
Attn: Dustin Johnson, Executive Director
Phone: 360.293.2993 ext. 102

Email: dustin@anacortesfamily.org

[Anacortes Family Center website: \(full URL: http://www.anacortesfamily.org\)](http://www.anacortesfamily.org)

- **The Emergency Motel Voucher Program (EMVP)** is available in Skagit County and provides short-term assistance to individuals and families in an effort to reduce the number of households who return to emergency shelters. The goal of the EMVP is to break the cycle of homelessness and to provide intervention in time of crisis. The vouchers are good for up to seven days and can be renewed to provide up to 14 days of emergency housing. To qualify for the EMVP each individual/family is required to meet the criteria of being homeless, having an income at or below 80% of area median income (AMI), and being unable to obtain a safe and stable place to live. Eligibility for the motel voucher program is determined through an application process. For more information contact Compass Health. Contact:

Compass Health
1100 South 2nd Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
Phone: 360.419.3500

[Compass Health website: \(full URL: http://www.compasshealth.org/locations\)](http://www.compasshealth.org/locations)

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- **Housing and Recovery through Peer Services (HARPS) program** is only available for current Compass Health clients residing in Skagit County. If you are a Compass Health client and would like to learn more about the HARPS program, talk to your Compass Health clinician.

The HARPS program provides clients with a combination of services aimed at securing permanent supportive housing, primarily for individuals discharging from inpatient psychiatric and chemical dependency facilities.

Peer Counselors provide the supportive services. They work with clients to obtain housing and assist them with related applications. They assist clients with identifying personal strategies to maintain their housing. They also provide referrals for other needed services. Housing subsidies for housing deposits and initial rent are also available to program clients based on need. Contact:

Compass Health
1100 South 2nd Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
Phone: 360.419.3500

[Compass Health website: \(Full URL: http://www.compasshealth.org/locations\)](http://www.compasshealth.org/locations)

Housing - Best Practices

- **Catholic Charities and Volunteers of America** offer Housing First programs for the chronically homeless in Spokane. Using federal and state tax credits the project supports housing for chronically homeless people. Catholic Charities of Spokane and Volunteers of America of the Inland Northwest are collaborating to build two neighboring 50-unit permanent supportive housing facilities on the 200 block of East Second Avenue in Spokane.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) now knows it saves money to house chronically homeless people before they are sober, drug free, or mentally stable.

Housing First may cost **\$12,000 a year per person**. In contrast, when chronically homeless people interact with local police and fire fighters, emergency services, the legal system and various social service agencies, it may cost the city/county \$300,000 a year per person.

Here is a link to an article describing the program and funding mechanisms in more detail: [Housing First Article \(full URL:](http://www.thefigtree.org/may15/050115housinghomeless.html)

[http://www.thefigtree.org/may15/050115housinghomeless.html\)](http://www.thefigtree.org/may15/050115housinghomeless.html).

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Contact:

Catholic Housing Communities
P.O. Box 2253
Spokane, WA 99210-2253
Phone: 509.358.4250 ext. 6183
Email: chc@ccspokane.org
[Catholic Housing Communities website: \(full URL: https://www.catholiccharitiesspokane.org/housing\)](https://www.catholiccharitiesspokane.org/housing)

- **The Arc of Spokane's Home Ownership Opportunities Program** helps families having members with an intellectual or developmental disability to navigate the complex process of buying a home. Since 2004, they have helped more than 200 individuals and families purchase safe and affordable housing. For more information contact the Arc of Spokane:

Home Ownership Opportunities
ARC of Spokane
320 E. 2nd Avenue
Spokane, WA 99202
Attn: Theresa Griffith
Phone: 509.328.6326 ext. 8326
Email: tgriffith@arc-spokane.org.
[ARC of Spokane Home Ownership Program website: \(full URL: http://www.arc-spokane.org/home_ownership_opportunities\)](http://www.arc-spokane.org/home_ownership_opportunities)
[ARC of Spokane website: \(full URL: http://www.arc-spokane.org\)](http://www.arc-spokane.org)

- **Parkview Services Homeownership Program** is a non-profit organization that supports people with developmental disabilities and their families. The Program has assisted 116 individuals and families to become first-time homeowners in Skagit, King, and Snohomish Counties through the Pre-Purchase Homeownership Program. Parkview's Homeownership Program offers home buying assistance to individuals with developmental disabilities and family members who will live with them.

Contact:

Attn: Marnie Claywell, Pre-Purchase Program Manager
Parkview Services
17544 Midvale Avenue N. Ste LL
Shoreline, WA 98133
Phone: 206.745.1034
[Parkview Services website: \(full URL: https://www.parkviewservices.org/pre-purchase-homeownership/contact-pre-purchase-program\)](https://www.parkviewservices.org/pre-purchase-homeownership/contact-pre-purchase-program)

- **HomeChoice Downpayment Assistance Loan Program** is offered through the Washington State Housing Finance Commission. It is a down payment assistance,

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second mortgage loan program for qualified borrowers who have a disability or who have a family member with a disability living with them. It funds up to \$15,000. HomeChoice combines with House Key and Home Advantage first mortgage loan programs. One-on-one counseling is required. Contact:

Downpayment Assistance Loan Programs
Attn: Dietrich Schmitz
1000 2nd Avenue #2700
Seattle, WA 98104
Phone: 206.287.4459
Email: dietrich.schmitz@wshfc.org.
[WA State Housing Finance Commission website: \(full URL: http://www.wshfc.org/buyers/downpayment.htm\)](http://www.wshfc.org/buyers/downpayment.htm)

Connecting Services to People in Need

Participant Comments

Liz is concerned about how people find information about social services available in the community. The service providers need to develop a system that is easy to use and meets the people where they are. She suggested having resource information at local bus stops and in public restrooms as a possible solution.

Eric shared that the Anacortes Community Health Council has information and links for services. The City Council web page has a good listing of services available in Skagit County and includes transportation, drug and alcohol abuse - almost everything is on the web page.

Anacortes Community Health Council is a non-profit organization that brings together churches, government agencies, area non-profits and local social service providers in an effort to connect people and services in Anacortes and the Skagit Valley. You can find out more information on their website which is found at [Anacortes CHC webpage: \(full URL: http://www.AnacortesCHC.org\)](http://www.AnacortesCHC.org)

Sally shared that the Anacortes Senior Activity Center has a large collection of informational pamphlets. The Center publishes an extensive monthly newsletter highlighting available services including public service announcements they have received from others.

Community Action of Skagit County has several links to services offered throughout the county on their website. They also produce a resource book that is available to the public. If you have any questions, please call Robert McCracken at 360.416.7585 or email at robertm@communityactionskagit.org.

Andy asked if the resource book was available online. Shawn with the Northwest Regional Council was not sure if an electronic copy is available. He stated that if the resource guide is

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not accessible for people who are blind, they would be welcome to come into the office and we would read the documents to them.

Shawn added that the Northwest Regional Council in Burlington has a large resource data base on their website. The links include local, regional and national outlets for information and services. Visit the [NW Regional Council website: \(full URL: http://www.nwrcwa.org/links\)](http://www.nwrcwa.org/links).

The Skagit County office is located in Burlington. Contact:

SKAGIT COUNTY (Aging & Disability Resources Program)
Northwest Regional Council
1650 Port Drive
Burlington, WA 98233
Phone: 360.428.1301
Email: ADRCskagit@dshs.wa.gov

Community Action of Skagit County is a community-based, private-nonprofit organization unaffiliated with any government agency. They serve in Skagit County and partner with a nationwide network of Community Action agencies established under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to move local families and communities from poverty to prosperity. Contact:

Community Action of Skagit County
330 Pacific Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
Phone: 360.416-7585
Email: robertm@communityactionskagit.org.
[Community Action website: \(full URL: https://www.CommunityActionSkagit.org/\)](https://www.CommunityActionSkagit.org/)

Employment

Participant Comments

Phillip asked if the City of Anacortes had an active recruiting program to hire workers with disabilities.

Emily with the City of Anacortes explained that they work hard to recruit for all their positions and to create an open and welcoming environment for everybody. Applicants are always asked if they need an accommodation or if they need assistance during the selection process. All job descriptions are posted on the City's website.

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Sara often finds barriers in the hiring process for supported employment workers. It can be difficult to find the right contact person to talk to about the possibility of carving out a portion of the job. She asked if there is a person she should be working with at the City.

Emily stated that she and her co-worker Barbara would be the initial contacts. They answer a lot of phone calls from job developers and help find good job matches.

A participant shared that they are so proud of the City of Anacortes for hiring people with disabilities. This is a unique city – it really is. The day the outreach was held, was the 20th anniversary for an employee with disabilities. This is not an unusual circumstance. There are many employees with disabilities at the City, the hospital and at the Port.

Mayor Gere gave a shout out to Skagit Transit. Over the 20 years this employee has been working with us, transit has waited for him to get on the bus when he was running a little late.

Sara agreed that Skagit Transit was part of the success story for this employee. She also described how the city has been flexible and tried several solutions to make a win-win situation for the city and the employee.

Carla shared that she has worked for the city for over 35 years. She was hired when she used crutches and the gentleman that hired her looked at her education and skills and not her disability. One day Emily was watching her as she was trying to open the Parks Department door. Shortly after that, the city put in automatic doors. It's not just Carla that has benefited but the community. Carla thanked Emily for taking the initiative to make this accommodation for her.

Employment - Resources

- **The Red Book** serves as a general reference source about the employment-related provisions of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs for individuals with disabilities, family members, and for educators, advocates, rehabilitation professionals and counselors who serve people with disabilities.

[2017 The Red Book website: \(full URL: https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/index.html\)](https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/index.html)

- **Work Opportunities Tax Credit (WOTC)** is a federal tax credit incentive that Congress provides to private-sector businesses for hiring individuals from any of ten target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. Two of the target groups are:

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1) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Referred Individual

A new hire is a member of this target group if the individual with a disability has completed, or is completing, rehabilitative services provided by one of the following:

- A state-certified agency,
- An Employment Network under the Ticket to Work program,
- The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs.

2) Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Recipient

A new hire meets the criteria for this target group if the individual is a recipient of SSI benefits for any month during the 60 days before date of hire. Please note that Supplemental Security Disability Income (SSDI) is not the same as SSI.

The objective of this program is to enable the targeted employees to gradually move from economic dependency into self-sufficiency as they earn a steady income and become contributing taxpayers, while the participating employers are able to reduce their federal income tax liability. There is no limit on the number of individuals an employer can hire to qualify to claim the tax credit, and there are a few simple steps to follow to apply for WOTC. Click on the following information for more details:

1. [WOTC Program Brochure \(full URL: https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/WOTC_Program_Brochure.pdf\)](https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/WOTC_Program_Brochure.pdf)
2. [Employer's Guide to the WOTC \(full URL: https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/WOTC_Employer_Guide.pdf\)](https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/WOTC_Employer_Guide.pdf)

If you have questions or want additional information, contact the Washington State WOTC Coordinator Clancy Mullins. His contact information is:

Washington State Employment Security Department
WOTC Administrative Unit
P.O. Box 9046, Olympia, WA 98507-9046
Phone: 360.902.9691
800.339.3981 (toll free)
Email: CMullins@esd.wa.gov

- **Tax Incentives for Improving Accessibility** - Two tax incentives are available to businesses to help cover the cost of making access improvements. The first is a tax credit that can be used for architectural adaptations, equipment acquisitions, and services such as sign language interpreters. The second is a tax deduction that can be used for architectural or transportation adaptations. Click on this link: [ADA Tax Incentives website: \(full URL: https://www.ada.gov/archive/taxpack.pdf\)](https://www.ada.gov/archive/taxpack.pdf) for a fact sheet with additional information.

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Employment - Best Practices

- **The Governor's Employer Awards Program** is an annual event honoring public, non-profit, and private employers statewide for their exemplary work to recruit, hire, retain, and advance workers with disabilities. Two individual awards are also presented; the Direct Support Professional and the Governor's Trophy *in Memory of Carolyn Blair Brown*. The Direct Support Professional award recognizes a job developer/coach who has shown extraordinary ingenuity and drive to create and sustain supported employment opportunities that create jobs. The Governor's Trophy is the highest honor given to an individual with a disability who has developed or influenced programs, services, legislation etc. resulting in positive outcomes dramatically enhancing the empowerment of individuals with disabilities. **Nominations will be accepted until August 31, 2018.** For more information on the Awards Program, visit the [GCDE Website: \(full URL: http://esd.wa.gov/gcde\)](http://esd.wa.gov/gcde), call Emily Heike at 360.902.9440 or email her at eheike@esd.wa.gov.

- **The Business Leadership Advisory Committee (BLAC)** is a business-to-business network promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities in the community and in the workforce. The purpose of BLAC is to reach out to business leaders to have them assist in developing strategies, supports, and marketing approaches that are more business friendly. Members are also expected to act as marketers and mentors to other businesses. The goals for the BLAC are:
 1. Increase the business community's and the general public's awareness of how individuals with developmental disabilities can function in the community and workplace.
 2. Educate community businesses on how to increase profits by hiring individuals with developmental disabilities through Federal tax credits and job carving.
 3. Increase employment for individuals with developmental disabilities; especially in sectors that have not employed individuals with developmental disabilities.
 4. Build partnerships between business, community organizations, and schools interested in promoting the employment of students or new graduates with developmental disabilities
 5. Develop a network of business champions of supported employment, which fosters other businesses to hire, retain, and improve employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities.

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Business Leadership Advisory Committee (BLAC)

Clallam County Health & Human Services

Developmental Disabilities

Attn: Tim Bruce, Planner

Email: tbruce@clallam.wa.us

111 E. 3rd Street, Port Angeles, WA 98362

Phone: 360.417.2407

[Clallam BLAC Website \(full URL\):](http://www.clallam.net/HHS/HumanServices/blac.html)

<http://www.clallam.net/HHS/HumanServices/blac.html>

Transportation

Participant Comments

Sara commented that access to transportation is one of the largest barriers that her customers face. If you don't live right in town, you do not have access to the bus. Many of her customers walk or ride their bikes to work. Transit needs more funding, increased hours of operation and expanded routes.

Andy said he gave up riding the bus because many of the bus drivers would drive past him. He is blind and can't easily wave a bus down. Andy started to walk everywhere but recently went back to riding the bus. At some bus stops it is difficult for the driver to see the riders waiting.

Sally shared that transportation is the one issue that comes up most often with her constituents. It is a conversation that has continued for over 25 years without seeing many solutions. Seniors are driving longer and maybe too long because of the lack of transportation options. They are putting others at risk. By giving up driving you increase your isolation. People are concerned about not being able to be engaged in the community or to be able to get to the doctor or buy groceries.

Kate supported Sally's comments and added that people can live more independently and with dignity in their homes if they have access to available public transportation. For many elderly adults with disabilities who don't have supportive family members close by, access to public transportation is vital to their independence.

Another participant stated bus ridership is low. Skagit Transit has a fairly large bus system that runs frequently but only a small portion of the community uses it. Skagit Transit has tried to expand the routes but found it too costly to keep rural routes operating if people don't use them.

Another audience member shared that using the bus can be difficult and frightening to navigate for first time users. Often people don't understand the eligibility requirements to qualify for paratransit services.

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Brad Windler, Service Development Planner with Skagit Transit, explained that if anyone is interested in learning about how to ride a bus, Skagit Transit offers a travel training program. Sue Libby is a travel trainer, and she will go to someone's home and teach them how to ride the bus. As an example, she will walk with the person to the nearest bus stop and go on several rides with them, to the store, bank, doctor's office or the senior center. This is a free service and it is available to anyone in the community. Sue's contact information is 360.757.4433 ext. 214 and her email is slibby@skagittransit.org.

Sara has worked with Sue for many years and thinks she is wonderful. Sara has concerns about the long wait time for training. Sue is only one person and many of Sara's clients have to wait months to be able to receive bus training. Brad shared that he is Sue's back-up and there are others who can help train as well.

Andy asked Brad about the Community Advisory Committee for Skagit Transit which meets in Mount Vernon. How would a blind person like himself be able to participate in their meetings?

Brad explained he is the staff liaison for the Advisory Committee. They meet on the second Tuesday of every month from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM at the Skagit Station in downtown Mount Vernon, located at 105 E. Kincaid St. The meetings are open to the public. Currently they have 11 members and the by-laws call for up to 16 members. Call Brad if you are interested in applying. His phone number is 360.757.5179. Bus service from Anacortes is available to attend this meeting; paratransit and main line service operates until 7:00 pm.

Andy shared that in the past, the Advisory Committee rotated their meetings to different locations throughout the county. The meetings were also held earlier in the day which might extend the options for people to attend. The question was asked if the Committee would consider making these changes to allow for more public participation.

Brad offered to bring these suggestions to the group for their consideration. Changing the locations of the meetings may impact one of the members who travels by bus from Sedro Woolley and they may not be able to travel to Anacortes for a meeting, but he will check.

Melinda asked Brad if their vanpool service could help people who work on the weekends or have shift work where regular bus service is not available.

Brad responded that their vanpool service is primarily used by commuters. There is no reason why they couldn't potentially expand the program. Until recently Skagit Transit operated a community van pool program where they let non-profit organizations borrow a van and use it for a day up to 75 miles within county lines. They are looking into the possibility of donating used vans to non-profit entities to help them provide their own transportation.

Sara stated that she used the community van pool regularly with the transition program with Washington Vocational Services. Students who lived outside of the bus routes were provided transportation to their work sites.

Anacortes, Washington Outreach Summary

Brad encouraged people to attend Skagit Transit's strategic planning process in 2018. There will be multiple meetings throughout the year in various locations around the county where you can attend and provide feedback on the proposed changes.

Skagit Transit is currently working on two initiatives. The first is to provide more shelters and seating amenities at bus stops. They are also improving the surface conditions of the bus stops. A lot of the bus stops have a grass strip and a curb. Passengers must step in mud before stepping on the bus. Skagit Transit will be installing connector pads, a 10-foot wide concrete pad between the sidewalk and the curb providing a smooth surface all the way to the bus. They will be working on the stops most in need. If you know of spot that needs this type of renovation, let Brad know.

A participant shared a concern about a bus stop at 7th and Q Avenue which is unacceptable for wheelchair users. Cars park there and the bus driver can't see you because there is no curb.

Brad stated this concern would be a transit issue and offered to talk with operations about it. They can make that site more visible or move it to a new location. They are required to make accommodations like pulling the bus forward to work around a water puddle, so it would be fair to ask the driver to pull forward, so passengers can board safely.

Sylvia shared that the city did a comprehensive inventory of all curbs and intersections with a fleet of volunteers. One of the intersections was 22nd and J Avenue because it is between the schools and the senior center. If you have a current issue with a curb cut or crossing an intersection, please contact a city council member or Sylvia Cooper. Her email address is sylviaac@cityofanacortes.org.

Another participant added that crossing South Commercial is dangerous. He recommended the city install a mid-block crossing similar to what was done on the Avenue.

Mayor Gere explained making a crossing on South Commercial will need go through the Washington State Department of Transportation because Commercial is a state highway. A plan was submitted to the state and they heard that the state will start the work when there is money available. She encouraged people to contact the state; they need to hear from more concerned citizens.

Eric asked if there are any transportation options to get in and out of Anacortes on a Sunday. There are many people in Anacortes trying to get jobs and they need to be able to work on Sunday. One example he provided was the need within the fast food industry; they hire 7-days a week with varying shifts and early morning hours.

Brad explained that there are no transportation options to and from Anacortes on Sunday. That is a topic for discussion in the strategic plan. It will be important for the community to be involved and share your concerns and ideas in the upcoming public forums.

Anacortes, Washington Outreach Summary

Transportation - Best Practice

- **Pay Your Pal** is a rural transportation program in Snohomish County that helps individuals with disabilities fund personal transportation. Qualified individuals find friends, neighbors, or others that can provide transportation with SNOTRAC reimbursing the driver for the cost of the ride. Riders must live in rural Snohomish County and not live near a bus stop.

Once a rider is determined eligible for services, the rider decides when and where they want to go, hires their own driver, and organizes and schedules their rides. Rides are not restricted to certain hours or days of the week. Each rider is responsible for ensuring driver(s) and vehicles are safe and have appropriate insurance. Because of the limited amount of funding, eligibility is reassessed annually, and funds are allocated on a first come, first served basis. Contact:

Pay Your Pal

Snohomish County Transportation Coalition (SNOTRAC)

Attn: Sandy Schurman

11323 Commando RD, Ste. 215

Everett, WA 98204

Phone: 425.265.2226

Email: sschurman@sssc.org

- **Pierce Transit's Care-a-Van Program** grants retiring vehicles to qualifying not-for-profit or governmental organizations that provide rides and services for people with special needs. The vehicles can be used for a variety of purposes such as transporting individuals with special needs to jobs, providing transportation to meal sites, or taking low-income seniors to medical appointments or shopping. Vehicles are awarded quarterly in accordance with Board resolution 15-061. Applications are accepted on an on-going basis. If your organization has a not-for-profit designation and would like to apply for a retiring vehicle, please click on the links below to learn about the program and submit your application. Questions about eligibility or the program should be directed to: Cherry Thomas, Senior Planner for Paratransit at 253.983.3699. Click download for Eligibility, Rules, Requirements, and Application Packet ([download](#)) or access the packet from the following [Pierce County website: \(full URL: https://www.piercetransit.org/care-a-van/\)](https://www.piercetransit.org/care-a-van/)

Leadership Breakfast Exercise

The following morning 30 elected officials, service providers and leaders in the disability community attended a Leadership Breakfast to brainstorm solutions for the top 3 issues discussed at the Town Hall Meeting. Participants were led through a modified “Gallery

Anacortes, Washington Outreach Summary

Walk” which is a group exercise requiring participants to be actively engaged. It provides opportunities to share ideas, review comments from other participants, prioritize issues and work towards possible solutions.

Three groups were formed, with each group providing information on possible solutions by answering the following 3 questions.

Question 1 What would be the first steps to improve affordable housing options for persons with disabilities?

The groups reported out their discussions. The photo to the right shows Anacortes Council Member Eric Johnson reporting out his group’s discussion items for affordable housing.



After the brainstorm session which looked at several ideas such as improving zoning regulations, developing tax incentives and using shipping containers, the most popular discussion point was the availability of housing.

The following is a copy of the discussions points noted on the flip charts:

Implement Affordable Housing Strategic Plan

- Shared housing code changes
- Development incentives
- Complete homeless service
- Leverage “place in time” count
- Cold Shelter numbers
- Establish funding for Resource Center/Manager
- Explore ACAC funding opportunities
- Committee through city?
- Use “free and reduced lunch” paperwork to qualify for other programs (i.e.: utility reduction)
- Get creative around solutions
- Increase availability through innovation solutions
 - Multi-generational
 - Co-housing models
 - Land Trust models
 - Linking employment to housing
- Seek partnerships!! Advocate for policy changes
 - HUD reimbursement rates

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Question 2 Based on the transportation concerns, what possible solutions might be available to reduce the transportation gaps for persons with disabilities?

The photo on the right shows Port Commissioner Pope and Marilyn Crandall, GCDE member presenting their group's items. Anacortes Chief of Police John Small is also shown.



After the brainstorm session the group identified several possible solutions such as Uber, volunteer drivers, and bus stops to align with greenways. The team's final selection was to develop an action plan for crosswalk improvements for South of 12th and Commercial.

The following is a copy of the discussions points noted on the flip charts:

Action Plan

Work on South of 12th and Commercial

- Refuge islands needed
- Next time Commercial is repaved for 29th and Commercial – all cross with sensors
- “Mid-block” blinking – activated flasher like 12th and L
 - Need to apply to state but easier to get “blinking”
 - Can be used at regular intersection with 95% compliance
- Chirpers on new items
- Streetlights are pretty good now
 - Some persons with disabilities slower
- Timing – active beacon – refuge island to have button
 - Getting cheap!!! Can be solar powered
- Need lighting (LED) in wait zones.
 - Where to put
 - #1 – 29 and Commercial – right on corner
 - #2 – 24 and Commercial – right on corner
 - #3 – 14th and 15th and Commercial (Pickets Pocket Park) – mid-block - needs work – where are they going (may need lighting)

Anacortes, Washington Outreach Summary

Question 3 Given the need to centralize program and service information, what might this look like if you were to design a communication network?

The photo on the right shows one group reporting out their suggestions for designing a unified communication network.



After the brainstorm session the group decided to work on improving information and referral services for the Anacortes Community. The first place to start would be to partner with the 211 System. They need to have more relevant information for Skagit County. Service providers should be encouraged to contact 211 to verify that their contact and service information is included and accurate. In addition, to be more inclusive, the 211 staff needs additional training, so they can better assist their callers.

Until the 211 system is updated, service providers could partner with the Anacortes Community Health Council who already has a large resource database on their website to become the official county-wide resource center. The Community Health Council has been moving in that direction, so we want to support their efforts.

Other ideas that need to be explored are:

- Centralized website that is funded and updated on a regular basis
- Ensure all websites are accessible to the blind community
- Develop a printed copy of resources
- Schools need a designated staff person to help parents with children with disabilities to navigate through the social service arena