

## Stanwood-Camano Community Center Focus Group Meeting, 9/16/14

Total number in group: **7**, including Shirley Johnson-Murray of Washington Vocational Services and members of Camano/Stanwood Aktion Club

### Comments & Notes:

- Shirley gave overview of Aktion Club, which services adults with disabilities and also supports a kid's Aktion Club which functions as a service group. Both are supported by the local Kiwanis group.
- The public transit overlap between Skagit, Island, and Snohomish counties is significant. Many of Shirley's Developmentally Disabled (DD) clients take the bus to the doctors, to social security office, Coupeville (Island County seat), and shopping. Camano/Stanwood is a difficult area to place DD persons in jobs; there's a large pool of workers but limited jobs. People are forced to go north or south to find jobs. The bus that runs from Camano Island to Oak Harbor is often pretty full. The Park & Ride at I-5 is always packed; Camano Transit needs to go to that Park & Ride.
- Washington Vocational Services works hard to get DD people jobs, and then they can't get there.
- Island Transit is a huge part of our lives (in Stanwood/Camano). It gives an opportunity for people to get out of the area and into other regions.
- So many individuals need the transit system for dialysis.
- People will often continue to drive, even without their driver's license or car insurance because they have to get to medical appointments. They might be racking up \$5,000, \$8,000 in fines, but they have no other options.
- When Shirley is getting jobs for DD clients, they have to have some means of transportation—it has to be reliable and consistent. Some days we're beating our heads against the wall. Transportation is key—it has to be the #1 priority. We are constantly looking for solutions.
- The Stillaguamish Tribe provides some transportation service on Camano Island—it's free for anybody.
- Both senior centers (Camano and Stanwood) are major hubs for our community.
- One participant has a disabled and her life revolves around him. She gets him to work, to his volunteer job—and everywhere he needs to go. The DD community is seeking independence, but transportation is key. Transporting disabled family members around is extremely time-consuming for family members/care givers.
- One participant is blind and lives on Camano Island, uses Paratransit for many things including a volunteer position with the local elementary school. He's working on developing a self-employed business as a motivational speaker, but he will need transportation to reach speaking engagements and the bus service ends too early.
- One participant is a physically and developmentally disabled senior. He uses Paratransit to reach art classes and social events at the Camano Center as well as his doctor's appointments.
- Paratransit is fantastic; the Island County dispatches on Camano Island are amazing human beings. They go above and beyond to give exemplary service.
- Island Transit "cuts off" the southern tip of Camano Island. Do those people need services? They might need a survey of that area. The cheaper homes are on the south end, and there's also an elementary school there.
- The hub at Terry's Corner is very efficient and located near the new library.
- Many seniors are using the bus to get to events and luncheons.

- Timely connections are important; someone could spend an entire day getting where they need to be. It's especially difficult for medical appointments. People have ended up at the hospital on an emergency room trip, stuck with no way to get home.
- Staff/supervisors of regional service organizations sometimes take it upon themselves to provide transportation with their personal vehicle or deviate from scheduled routes when seniors are in emergency situations and stranded. Examples included staff at the table and Paratransit on Camano.
- The Island Transit constituents on Camano are incredible people—we need more service and more connections.
- Island Transit is becoming a political football. The local paper is one-sided. They don't take the bus or live in the community, so they should just "butt out."

-Notes by Liz Theaker, SCOG intern