

# KING COUNTY LOW-INCOME FARE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN TASK FORCE

## Meeting Notes: July 16, 2014

### TASK FORCE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

The task force members present included:

- Rob Beem, North Urban Services Alliance
- Alex Clark, Bellevue College
- Allison Eisinger, Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness
- Lynn Moody, Eastside Human Services Forum
- Alex Stoller, Transit Advisory Commission
- Dan Wise, Catholic Community Services

### WELCOME

Allegra Calder from BERK welcomed all Task Force members and other attendees. Allegra reminded the members that the fourth and last meeting of the task force would be on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014 which would be followed by the task force's report.

### REQUEST FOR INFORMATION DISCUSSION

Carol reviewed the Request for Information (RFI) process, and also the timing of the Implementation Plan. King County Metro realized that it was important to hear not just from this Task Force, but also from other agencies. Therefore, on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Metro held a RFI meeting in order to determine how to implement this program on an accelerated timeline. King County Metro sent requests to many organizations throughout the region, and had 23 people come to the meeting. 16 of the 23 participants came from different agencies. Some of them include: Harborview Social Work, King County Housing Authority, Solid Ground, Hopelink, King County Mobility Coalition, G2C, the Ukraine Community Center, and Public Health – Seattle & King County, as well as other organizations.

King County Metro asked participants what questions they had around logistics, finance, audit, and expectations. There was also discussion about methods to verify income. The notes from this RFI meeting will be available sent out to all task force members.

Carol asked the Task Force members if there were additional questions regarding the RFI process.

- Q: What were the major points made?
  - There were a lot of clarification questions – What does that mean? It was very informative, and people got answers to all of their questions. However, we are not yet clear as to which agencies will respond.
  - There were a lot of questions about Sound Transit, and if they will be participating. Their board has agreed it is up for discussion, and they will look at some options.
  - There were some concerns expressed about working with Metro at the RFI meeting due to the planned cuts. Some expressed that it sends a mixed message.

- Q: Would the low-income fare option only be available on King County Metro?
  - At this point, only King County is looking to do this. Pierce County and Snohomish County Community Transit are not looking to adopt a low-income fare.
  - We may ask agencies if they have affiliations or offices in other Counties as it could help Sound Transit as it does its public comment on whether to do and low income program and on which service types.
- A Task Force member pointed out that a bus rider transferring from Sound Transit to King County Metro could pay \$10 each way to go from Mill Creek to Bellevue. The Low Income Fare could help greatly if other agencies adopted it.
- The Kitsap Low-Income Fare will be reciprocal. The Kitsap card will work in King County, and the King County card will work in Kitsap County.

## PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Task Force members discussed other issues related to the implementation of the low income fare. **Much of this discussion is reflected in the Preliminary Draft Comments document emailed to members on July 18.** What follows are additional points raised during the discussion.

### Facility in Downtown Seattle

- Q: Will there be a place to apply in this building?
  - We have established space in this building for an income verification process to be run by another agency. As part of the RFP, Metro plans to ask agencies to staff an office and what it would cost them to staff an office.

### Income Verification Process

- Q: What would be an acceptable income verification process?
  - There are multiple ways to do this, but in reality there are probably only a few that will be used. Is it limited to existing databases? How do I get this person into the database? Are there 2-3 documents that could catch the majority of people? Is that a logical approach?
    - There was discussion around not requiring government issued photo identification to verify that the person applying is that person.
    - The problem is that many low income people do not always have photo identification. I think it would be great to see more specific language that would have alternate ways to show identification – Shelter ID, Student ID, and King County Voter Registration among others.
    - Is there going to be an open door policy for undocumented applicants? Bellevue College has been working on how to make language open and accessible on its applications for certain services.
- There are traditional ways of verifying income and non-traditional ways of verifying income. We want to include as many people as possible, but we do not want it to be so loose that Metro loses its credibility.
  - We need to think through how to establish a standard and will provide guidelines of acceptable County standards.

### Timing of the Report

- This is a huge process that is going to lead to something really good, but we are working in a really short time frame. Our responsibility has been shifted multiple times with the date of the first Task Force meeting being moved. Now it seems that the Task Force report will go out after King County Metro releases the RFP. It is disrespectful to ask task force members to provide input to something when you are clearly not going to take all of our comments into account given the time frame.
  - King County Metro staff stated that they would look into changing the timing of the RFP. We are looking at the potential schedule implications and possible mitigation of delaying the RFP issuance until after the Task Force has completed its report so we have the benefit of those comments.

### Public Health's Efforts in Signing Residents for the Affordable Care Act

- Daphne Pie of Public Health - Seattle & King County provided information about how the County worked to sign up residents for the Affordable Care Act through the In-Person Assistors (IPA) process. She explained that there are 23 contract agencies around the county that work with King County. These agencies identify what areas in the County they will cover. Public health staff is sent to the areas that are not being covered by these agencies.
- Public health provided the planning, coordination, advocacy, and website updates. Public health had a budget of \$1.64 million and was responsible for the technical program, auditing, training, outreach sites, and the website.
- An important thing to keep in mind for the IPA program is that the funding is cut drastically for the second year. Some agencies got \$40,000 to do their work. Some got a lot more. Some organizations used University of Washington students or AmeriCorps to help with the work. It is important to be creative with the model.

### Verifying the "Hard to Verify"

- Q: How do you document people that have lost their jobs? They may have a tax statement that says they made a certain level of money for last year, but they may not have a steady income for the last three months. What about the homeless population? How will we verify those that can't provide the needed documentation?
  - It would be a good idea to convene a workgroup to determine how to deal with the population whose income cannot be documented. It would be good to work with Daphne and Janice from Public Health. After the Task Force meeting Janice Hougen and Daphne Pie were asked to identify both most frequently used verification information sources and potentially acceptable additional verification documents. That work will be shared with the Task Force for comment when it is completed.

### Program Name

- Since we are going to use the ORCA card, we are just looking for a name for the program, but this is really important. It needs to be something memorable and affirming.

### Timing of Sign up

- Signing people up in February and letting them know the program would work in March would be a good option. Signing people up in January (or earlier) and telling them to wait until March could be confusing.

### Mailing the Cards

- Q: If we mail the cards out, what percentage of your clients will receive them?
  - Some task force members expressed that it would not be a great fit for the people they generally work with. A member pointed out that if you do a sign up in January, there is a need to verify it before you put it in the mail. Low income people have a lot of housing instability, and move often and you wouldn't want something of value lost in the mail.
  - However, some task force members said it would be a good fit for college students or people living in a public housing authority property.

### Geographic Coverage

- Member are generally supportive of geographic coverage, however, there are a lot of questions around budget. Metro probably does not have \$1.4 million dollars and 8 FTEs. Is there a way to look at the Public Health model to see how much it would cost to do something similar for the low-income fare? We are looking closely at that model.
- Utilizing libraries would be a good way to get geographic coverage in urban areas. Most libraries are accessible by public transit.
- Public Health clinics are another option or booths at Park & Rides. There are large institutions that can serve a lot of people, such as housing Authorities or DSHS. Maybe we can embed staff in DSHS?
  - The Low Income Fare Plan budget did not have a lot of detail. The County Council created a committee to determine start-up costs.

### Time Coverage

- It is important to keep in mind that time coverage is also very important. We need distributors that are open more than Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm. Are there timeframes more likely to be used than others, e.g., yes for Saturday hours, but not Sunday?
- It's important that we educate all Metro employees. If someone goes into a Metro service center and asks about this card, employees need to be able to provide accurate information.
- Consistency is important. Maybe Park and Rides can be staffed with people to help with sign-up for the low income fare card the first week of every month.
- We should utilize opportunities like schools signing up students for free and reduced lunch or tax preparation. Income taxes are done in the first quarter, which can be helpful for this program.

## PRELIMINARY COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Allegra reviewed the preliminary comments and recommendations, and updates were made to the document during the discussion.

## SUMMARY OF NEXT STEPS, NEXT MEETING

King County Metro will see if they can extend the RFP process so that the Task Force can submit their report before the RFP is issued. Carol stated that it would be possible to see a draft RFP before it was sent out. The next meeting will be on **Wednesday July 30<sup>th</sup>, from 4:30-6:30pm** at the King Street Center.