

## Warming Up After the Snow



In appreciation of all the hard work everyone put in during the recent snow storms, the Unity Team is having an espresso cart and treats in the MCOB Great Hallway until 4 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1. From the left, Trevor Vaden, Fred Worthen and Greg Gadbois take a moment to discuss how things went. In addition, snow stories and kudos have been collected and are posted for you to read. Thanks for all your help during the challenging weather! For more about our performance in the snow, see Page 3.

## Service Change Info Available

The online Trip Planner went live today with the new service change information, so people can now plan their trips for after Feb. 20 on our site, [www.communitytransit.org](http://www.communitytransit.org). This trip planner integration also allows our Customer Information staff to help people plan their trips if they call (425) 353-7433 (RIDE).

The new Bus Plus books arrived this week and were sent to both bases to be placed on buses. They will be a hot commodity with all the changes to service. Schedules have been online since early January, but riders have been eagerly waiting for the books. Remember to check buses to make sure there are copies and pick up more if needed.

Meanwhile, Planning and Outreach staff continue to reach out to customers at park & rides and on board buses. Rider forums are taking place through Feb. 21.



### Calendar

**Feb. 2** – Board of Directors Meeting, 3 p.m., Board Room

**Feb. 20** – First Day of Service Change

**Feb. 20** – Presidents' Day

## Input on Benefits Cost Share Sought

The Administrative Benefits Cost Containment Team has produced five options for cost-sharing for administrative employees' medical benefits. These were unveiled at a series of meetings around the agency recently.

The cost-sharing program affects only administrative employees that are not represented by unions. Any cost-sharing

for represented employees would need to be negotiated into a labor agreement.

At the meetings, the following options were explained:

- No contribution to a base plan, with the option to “buy up” into a higher tier plan.
- Extension of the 2012 approach,

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# Edmonds' Earling Rejoins Agency Board

A friend of Community Transit is returning to the Board of Directors, joining the eight members who were re-elected to their positions.

Edmonds Mayor Dave Earling was elected to represent large cities, but this isn't his first time on the board. Earling previously served on the board for 12 years as an Edmonds City Council member.

Members who were re-elected at Community Transit's Board selection meeting include Marysville Mayor Jon Nehring, Mill Creek Mayor Mike Todd, Mountlake Terrace Mayor Jerry Smith, Mukilteo Mayor Joe Marine, Stanwood Mayor Dianne White and Sultan Council member Steven Slawson.

Earlier, the Snohomish County Council reappointed Council members Dave Gossett and Dave Somers as county representatives. Lance Norton serves as the board's labor representative.



**Dave Earling**

The new board will elect officers at its first meeting, on Thursday, Feb. 2.

Three new board alternates were chosen as well. Arlington Council member Debora Nelson, Lake Stevens Council member Kim Daughtry and Lynnwood Council member Sid Roberts will serve in those positions, along with Snohomish Council member Tom Hamilton. Snohomish County Council member Stephanie Wright was named the county's alternate.

Every two years, elected officials from the cities that make up Community Transit meet to elect board members from among their ranks. The delegates divide up by city size and choose from among their peers.

Edmonds, Lynnwood and Marysville are the large cities, with more than 30,000 residents. Arlington, Bothell, Lake Stevens, Mill Creek, Monroe, Mountlake Terrace and Mukilteo are the medium cities, with between 10,000 and 30,000 residents. Brier, Darrington, Gold Bar, Granite Falls, Index, Snohomish, Stanwood, Sultan and Woodway are the small cities, with fewer than 10,000 residents.

Large cities choose two board members and an alternate, medium cities three members and two alternates and small cities two members and an alternate. The two county members and labor representative complete the board.

# Assets Policy Gets Update

Community Transit has developed a new policy regarding non-capitalized assets.

The new policy takes effect Feb. 1. It applies to anyone who purchases, stores, uses, accounts for or is in any way responsible for a non-capitalized asset.

POL-FN-3001 updates the existing policy by providing:

- Clarification to departments about what their responsibilities are for safeguarding such assets.
- Specific guidance about what types of items should be included.
- Procedures for each required task.
- Standardized forms for recording the required information.

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to Lori Fox, Bob Hintz or Ana Shorb in the Finance Division.

## BENEFITS

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although the percentage of the employee contribution may increase based on cost and revenue.

- Employee pays 5 percent for employee coverage and 5 percent or more for dependent coverage, with the dependent percentage based on cost and revenue.
- A salary-based system, where employees with higher salaries pay higher amounts.
- A flat rate, where everyone pays the same dollar amount regardless of coverage.

Employees who attended the meetings are asked to participate in a survey about these options. The survey is not a vote, but it will provide valuable information to the

ABCC Task Force as it prepares its analysis and recommendations to the Executive Team, which will forward a recommendation to the Board of Directors. The Board will have the final decision on which plan will be used.

Administrative employees who did not attend one of the meetings have received an email to review the proposals at K:/Public Affairs/ABCC Presentation - FINAL.pptx and complete the survey. The deadline to finish the survey is Feb. 3.

Anyone with questions can contact one of the ABCC Team members: Chris Beck, Roland Behee, Des Chandler, Donna Clausen, Stacey Gunnerson, Diane Holyoke, Mary Lowery, Larry Olson, Juanita Shuler or Mike Warren.

## About *communitytimes*

*communitytimes* is produced every two weeks by the Public Affairs Department to inform and entertain Community Transit staff. Printed editions are produced in black and white as a cost containment measure.

Submit ideas by calling Tom Pearce at ext. 2381 or send an email to [tom.pearce@commtrans.org](mailto:tom.pearce@commtrans.org).



# Pre-Planning Helps Agency Operations During Snow

Keeping buses in service is a primary goal for Community Transit when snow begins to fall. Every department gears up to deal with the challenges, from chaining coaches to communicating with coach operators and the public. But how does it all come together? Through a lot of planning, with the efforts of hundreds of individuals pulling together.

You could say it started years ago when the first snow plans were developed. Those are refined every year, usually starting in the heat of summer when a cool blast would be welcome. The planning process provides guideposts, which help make decisions easier when cold weather comes and the snow starts to pile up on local roads and it gets harder to maintain regular service.

Community Transit has an inclement weather team, with representatives from several departments who work together to make and communicate decisions around the agency and to the public. All that runs through the Transportation Operations Command Center, which during inclement weather typically is staffed from before most buses leave the yard until after the end of the evening commute period. This was the hub of activity throughout the most recent snow week.

Each day of the storm, the command center hosted meetings/conference calls where all departments could provide updates and ask



**After shoveling and spreading de-icer, a Facilities Maintenance crew member prepares to move on the next building. Continuing snowfall kept Facilities on the move. By the time one area was clear, another needed to be reshoveled.**

## Dispatch Keeps Communication Flowing

When the snow begins to fall, communication is critical. There are always questions about road conditions and whether routes are operating.

Dispatch plays a critical role in all of that. It runs the Radio Room and the Sign-in Window for drivers. Dispatch is staffed with a radio dispatcher, a *Swift* dispatcher and a radio supervisor, as well as a Sign-in Window dispatcher for each shift.

Dispatchers also prepare “priority work” at the beginning of each shake-up. This

provides a template for service during inclement weather and other emergencies. They prepare the coach assignment sheet based on available equipment and prepare consolidated route books for quick reference. These were needed all week when it snowed.

All Dispatch positions were staffed 22 hours a day, just like normal, for the wintry weather. During the snow, a coach operator was usually available throughout the

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questions. Each day the morning meeting was preceded by a briefing from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), outlining the expected weather for the coming hours and days. This information was valuable in planning service for the

remainder of the day, as well as the following day.

After a day or two, the snow event was widespread, which actually made it easier to deal with when it came to providing service. If, for example, there had been heavy snow only in the north and east, but not

much in the south of our service area, passengers in Lynnwood might have expected regular service. They do not realize how our buses are interlined, causing delays to ripple through the system. But when the snow was everywhere, it was easier for the

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# Bad Weather Doesn't Stop Blood Drive

Despite tough weather conditions, the Jan. 17 blood drive was a big success. With nine people pre-registered and six walk-ins, our staff donated 15 pints to the Puget Sound Blood

Center. This is an awesome achievement in light of the snow and the fact the drive shut down a little early.

Gail McNutt won the Regal Cinemas prize pack, provided by our Employee

Association.

The next blood drive is scheduled for Tuesday, March 20 in the Corporate Board Room. For more information Contact Sharon Gray at ext. 2342.

## Help Desk Can Help

Please route all of your computer requests through the Help Desk. Call the Help Desk at ext. 6100 or e-mail at Help-Desk@commtrans.org.

## DISPATCH

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day to help the window dispatcher keep track of all the changes. The coach operator was available because that person's regular work was not running.

With a number of drivers unable to make it in, plus the weather issues coach operators faced on the road, it was a busy week. In all, dispatchers handled nearly 5,200 calls, not including *Swift*, which has its own dispatcher. Jan. 18 was the busiest day, with 1,635 calls. For comparison, Dispatch normally handles about 675 calls a day, or about 2,700 calls in a normal four-day period.

That's just a few of the numbers from our most recent snow event. All departments were very busy. Here's a sample of what some others faced:

### Customer Information Services/ RideStore

Jan. 17-20

- 7,599 calls answered – about 2,000 more calls than in a typical *month*.
- 95.6 percent of all incoming calls were answered – on par with a normal weather day.
- The average wait was about 25 seconds – twice the normal wait, but very respectable.
- The average conversation was 1 minute, 11 seconds, about 42 percent less than during regular weather conditions.

### Vanpool

- 70 percent of the vans remained in service.
- NO ACCIDENTS!

### Agency Communications

Agency Communications operates a subscription email alert and text mes-

sage system providing instant information about situations impacting service. The team also posts Rider Alerts on the website updating conditions and pre-viewing upcoming service.

During the snow week:

- 85 email alerts sent to subscribers, compared to two to four in a normal week.
- 218,465 total email alerts were delivered – a 99 percent delivery rate.
- 15.5 percent net increase in subscribers during the storms, up to 13,345.
- More than 100 alerts posted online.

### Administration

- Main reception desk opened on time and staffed during normal business hours throughout the event.
- Payroll staff came in to complete the payroll and make sure pay checks were delivered on time.

## PRE-PLANNING

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public to understand.

The widespread snowfall began to impact our entire service area midweek. As conditions seriously degraded we went to a priority trip local route schedule, which provided some degree of service on all routes, even if there were large gaps. For commuter service, providing service on the first and last morning and first and last evening trips gave bus riders to Seattle and the University District some predictability.

There were limits to the amount of service we could put on the road

because we had to stop using articulated buses, and some coach operators couldn't even get out of their driveways to get to work. At the height of the storm, on Wednesday and Thursday, administrative employees were encouraged to either get their supervisor's approval to work from home or to take PTO as a way to reduce the risk of non-essential personnel trying to get to the office. Meanwhile, dedicated coach operators kept as much service as possible on the road. Transportation eventually was able to expand beyond the priority runs into extra trips. It wasn't full service, but those buses were a welcome sight to

passengers waiting in the cold.

When the rains finally came on Friday it was a relief. Friday night, after a week punctuated by many reroutes throughout the system, all buses had returned to regular routes. By Saturday morning, it was business as usual aside from some slushy spots that had 40-foot buses running the *Swift* route.

As with all snow events, we continue to learn. Some of the approaches applied in the middle of the storm will be added to future snow plans. It seems there's always something new to be learned. Those lessons will allow us to continue to provide the best possible service in the worst conditions.