

Immigrant and Refugee Elders Transportation Project Summary Report

July 2011

King County Mobility Coalition



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Executive Summary

Introduction

The King County Mobility Coalition is a partnership of more than 30 agencies working together to coordinate transportation services in King County to make it easier for all people to get around. The primary purpose of the Coalition is to guide planning activities that affect the mobility of King County residents, particularly those who do not drive their own cars.

The Coalition began the Immigrant and Refugee Elders Transportation Project (the Project) after identifying two urgent issues during its Easter Seals Accessible Transportation Coalition Workshop in June 2010: (1) lack of awareness and knowledge of transportation options for older adults; and (2) transportation challenges of refugees, immigrants and people with limited proficiency in English.

The Project was funded in March 2011 with a \$20,000 grant from the National Center on Senior Transportation. The National Center on Senior Transportation is administered by Easter Seals in partnership with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration and with guidance from the United States Administration on Aging. Its mission is to increase transportation options for older adults and enhance their ability to live more independently within their communities throughout the United States.

The purpose of the Immigrant and Refugee Elders Transportation Project is to increase the availability of culturally and ethnically appropriate transportation resource information for newly arrived immigrant and refugee elders in King County. The Project has five parts: Community Conversations and Surveys, Summary Report, Transportation Summit, Action Plan and Ethnic Senior Advisory Council. The Summary Report reviews what we learned through our community conversations and surveys and discusses common themes that emerged from the data collected.

Project Design and Methodology

The Project focuses on Bhutanese, Burmese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Russian, Somali and Ukrainian elders. We used community conversations and surveys to gather data and learn from immigrant and refugee elders. We collaborated with six community organizations to facilitate nine community conversations and administer surveys. Two surveys were used, one for elders and the second for providers working with refugee and immigrant populations. The sample sizes for the study are: N=120 focus group participants, N=121 client surveys, and N=11 provider surveys.

Community Conversation Findings

Participating elders identified three main challenges to riding public transportation: (1) lack of knowledge about existing services, (2) language barriers, and (3) finances. The elders also shared recommendations for overcoming these barriers, including a variety of oral and written marketing, media and outreach materials in their native languages. Elders noted that they receive most of their information from community organizations and trusted community leaders, and would prefer to learn about transportation options from them as well.

Client Survey Findings

Through our elder surveys, we learned that all of the surveyed elders identified transit bus as their preferred method of travel. Walking was the second most chosen option. The two top barriers that limited elders from using public transportation were their inability to speak, read, or understand English and their lack of knowledge about available services. All of the elders

preferred to learn about transportation services through community organizations and information in their native language, both oral and written.

Common Themes

Our analysis of the community conversations and surveys suggests four common themes:

Lack of travel knowledge and awareness of existing services limits use of public transportation by refugee and immigrant elders. This includes buses, light rail, King County Metro Access, and human service transportation providers. Elders shared that they have limited knowledge and awareness of existing transportation resources. In addition, they do not know where to go or how to access information on available transportation resources.

Language barriers dissuade elders from using transit services. Many participants have limited proficiency in English which directly affects their ability to travel independently. The elders reflected on their fear of getting lost and not being able to ask for directions or use printed material because it is not in their native language. In addition, many elders reported a low literacy rate, which prevents them from reading material even when translated into their native language.

Financial difficulty limits how often and what kind of transportation services elders use. Most respondents shared that their income is limited, while bus and King County Metro Access fares continue to increase.

Community organizations play an important role in sharing information with refugee and immigrant elders and should be used to distribute transportation resource information as well. Participants noted that some organizations have community newspapers, radios stations and television channels to publicize information; meeting areas for transit training; and staff to translate available information—all of which should be used more often.

Conclusion

Lack of knowledge, language barriers and financial difficulties prevent many refugee and immigrant elders in King County from using public transportation. Community organizations play an important role in getting information to these elders. Our analysis indicates that elders want to learn more about transportation services available to them, but they do not know where to go for information and do not have access to printed materials, trainings, videos and workshops in their native language. In order to better serve these immigrant and refugee elders and increase their use of public transportation, an action plan is needed to guide the development of culturally and ethnically appropriate marketing, media and outreach transportation resource materials in King County.

Introduction

Who We Are

The King County Mobility Coalition is a partnership of more than 30 agencies working together to coordinate transportation services in King County to make it easier for all people to get around. Our primary purpose is to guide planning activities that affect the mobility of King County residents, particularly those who do not drive their own cars. Members identify service gaps, barriers and new opportunities to improve mobility; strategize on solutions most appropriate to meet these needs based on local circumstances; and prioritize these needs for follow-up and project planning. This is a challenging task due to the diverse population that resides in our region.

Immigrant and Refugee Elders Transportation Project

The King County Mobility Coalition began the Immigrant and Refugee Elders Transportation Project (the Project) after identifying two urgent issues during its Easter Seals Accessible Transportation Coalition Workshop in June 2010:

1. Lack of awareness and knowledge of transportation options for older adults; and
2. Transportation challenges of refugees, immigrants and people with limited proficiency in English.

FUNDING. The Project was funded in March 2011 with a \$20,000 grant from the National Center on Senior Transportation. The National Center on Senior Transportation is administered by Easter Seals in partnership with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration and with guidance from the United States Administration on Aging. Its mission is to increase transportation options for older adults and enhance their ability to live more independently within their communities throughout the United States. This grant program specifically addresses the needs of culturally and ethnically diverse seniors.

PURPOSE & SCOPE. The purpose of the Immigrant and Refugee Elders Transportation Project is to increase the availability of culturally and ethnically appropriate transportation information for newly arrived immigrant and refugee elders in King County through the following activities:

- **Community conversations.** We hosted nine focus groups with immigrant and refugee elders to learn about their knowledge and use of existing transportation options in King County, and hear their ideas for increasing and improving their access to transportation. Participants also completed a short survey to share their transportation views and habits. Community agencies completed a survey about the travel patterns of their clients as well.
- **Summary report.** We drafted this summary of the key findings from the community conversations and surveys to be shared with stakeholders and to inform a summit.
- **Transportation summit.** We are hosting a summit on July 27, 2011 to gather agencies serving refugee and immigrants, peer elders and transportation providers, planners and funders to improve dialogue and propose new and improved strategies for outreach to culturally and ethnically diverse communities about existing transportation options.
- **Action plan.** Using feedback from the summit and community conversations, we will create an action plan that outlines priorities, strategies, an implementation timeline, and performance measures. This action plan will be implemented in part with funds from the National Center for Senior Transportation and support from community partners

- **Ethnic Senior Advisory Council.** In partnership with Senior Services of King County and Seattle-King County Aging & Disability Services, we will establish an advisory council to broaden the perspective of regional transportation providers and planners and to generate more inclusive strategies for the improvement and development of culturally and ethnically appropriate transportation services in King County.

Ethnically and Culturally Diverse Elders in King County

According to the 2009 American Community Survey, foreign-born individuals made up 19 percent of the population of King County compared to the national average of 14 percent, making Washington the sixth most popular state for refugees and immigrants to reside. With this high proportion of immigrant and refugee populations in King County, transportation providers face the challenge of communicating their services to these groups; and almost 16 percent of the population speaking a language other than English, see [Figure 1](#).¹

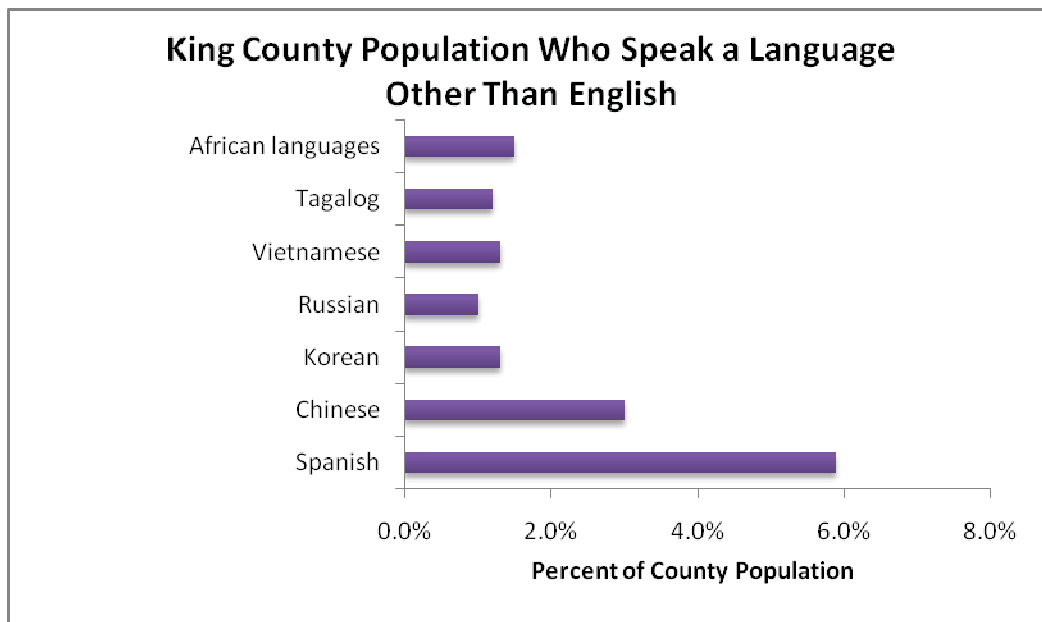


Figure 1: Languages other than English spoken in King County

PROJECT FOCUS. For the Project, the King County Mobility Coalition used information from the King County Health Department’s 1996-2009 Refugee Health Screening Data Report to identify the top newly arrived refugee and immigrant groups. The Project focuses on seven immigrant and refugee communities in King County: Bhutanese, Burmese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Russian, Somali and Ukrainian, which represent 82 percent of new refugees in King County in 2009.

¹ Source King County Census Webpages: <http://www5.metrokc.gov/KCCensus/>

Project Design and Methodology

Methodology

We used two approaches to gather data about and learn from these immigrant and refugee elders: (1) community conversations and (2) surveys. As part of the project, we partnered with six community-based organizations in King County that work with our selected immigrant and refugee groups, see [Table 1](#).

Partner Agencies	Immigrant & Refugee Populations Served
Bhutanese Community Resource Center	Bhutanese
Coalition for Refugees from Burma	Burmese
Jewish Family Service	Russian, Ukrainian
Salaam Urban Village Association	Eritrean, Ethiopian
Somali Community Services of Seattle	Somali
St. James Cathedral ESL Program	Russian, Ukrainian

Table 1: Partner Agencies for the Project

Community Conversations

With support from our partners, we conducted nine community conversations in eight languages over a five-week period in May and June 2011. Partner organizations received a *Facilitator's Guide* that outlined eligibility criteria for focus group participants and included the facilitators' role and responsibilities, focus group questions and a sample agenda. The community conversations were held at facilities chosen by partner organizations and were facilitated by their staff and volunteers. We provided a \$400 stipend per community conversation to each partner agency as compensation for their time, facility use, interpretation services, and any transportation costs for participants. See [Table 2](#) for a breakdown of participants by nationality and language.

Focus Groups by Nationality	Focus Groups by Language	# Participants
Bhutan	Nepali	11
Burma	Burmese & Karen	8
Eritrea & Ethiopia	Amharic	15
	Tigrigna	16
Somalia	Somali	19
	Oromo	18
Russia & Ukraine	Russian	8
	Russian & Ukrainian	11
	Ukrainian	14
TOTAL		120

Table 2: Participants in Community Conversations by Nationality and Language

Elders participating in the community conversations were asked about the following topics:

1. Traveling in the community
2. Barriers to service
3. Communication within their community
4. Ideas and recommendations
5. Interest in the proposed Ethnic Senior Advisory Council

See [Appendix A](#) for the community conversation questions.

There are many advantages to using focus groups. They are an efficient way to collect data and provide a relatively consistent, shared view of the issues. In short amounts of time, we collected data from as many as 22 participants instead of only one person.

Client & Provider Surveys

We developed and distributed two surveys: (1) a Client Survey for immigrant and refugee elders and (2) a Provider Survey for staff of community agencies who work with immigrants and refugees. The Client Survey included questions about languages spoken in the home, demographics, transportation use and challenges, and recommendations for increasing access to transportation information. Client Surveys were translated into six languages: Amharic, Burmese, Nepali, Russian, Somali and Tigrigna. The Provider Survey asked questions about their clients' use of transportation services. See [Appendix B](#) for the survey questions.

We distributed 223 surveys. A total of 121 client surveys and 11 provider surveys were completed, yielding a response rate of 60 percent. Respondents were not asked for their name in answering the survey. Results remain confidential. We used Microsoft Excel to analyze the data.

Sample Population

The sample for the study was drawn from refugee and immigrant elders associated with and recruited by our partner organizations. Partner agencies were responsible for recruiting elders, age 55 or older, who have a difficult time using public transportation. The sample size for this study is N=120 focus groups participants; N=121 client surveys and N=11 provider surveys.

Data Limitations

Focus groups were conducted in eight languages. Partner agencies provided a facilitator and a translator but validation of translated notes cannot be completed. This study may not be applicable or representative of all organizations working with immigrant and refugees in King County. Participants were invited through personal relationships with the partner organizations and the selected participants may not represent the views of all ethnic seniors in King County.

Community Conversation Findings

Bhutanese Community Resource Center

Language: Nepali

Venue: 4040 S 188th Street, SeaTac (Lutheran Community Services)

Date: May 29, 2011

Facilitators: Chuda Dahl, Board Member; Madhav Subedi, Community Volunteer

Participants: 11

TRAVELING IN THE COMMUNITY. The Bhutanese elders shared that upon first arriving in King County they received information on getting around their community from a variety of sources: caseworkers from resettlement agencies, Hopelink, King County Metro, their children and friends. Some ride the bus and have ORCA cards. Families and friends also drive them. However, their primary mode of transportation is walking.

BARRIERS TO SERVICE. Language barriers, limited income and literacy are the main problems preventing Bhutanese elders from using public transportation. Several of the participants said they would like to use the bus system more often but cannot read information in English or cannot recognize the numbers on the buses. Language barriers cause many elders to be afraid to travel using public transportation. Money was also identified as a main problem, as one elder said, *“I cannot afford gas.”* Financial problems are compounded when family and friends need to accompany them. One elder shared:

“Sometimes I ask other people to accompany me to help me use the bus, but then I have to pay their transportation fees, which I cannot afford.”

Disabilities play a role in Bhutanese elders not taking the bus, yet the group was unaware of Metro’s Access service for people whose disabilities prohibit them from using the bus. Also, many of the Bhutanese elders are illiterate; they cannot read or write the Nepali language.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE BHUTANESE COMMUNITY. This group receives the bulk of their information from family, the Bhutanese Community Resource Center, community leaders, caseworkers and word of mouth from other Bhutanese community members who arrived in the United States previously. One participant related how he learned to ride the bus from a driver who taught him to count the bus stops since he could not read the signs posted in English.

IDEAS & RECOMMENDATIONS. The Bhutanese Community Resource Center started publishing a monthly newspaper in April 2011 and the participants said it would be a good way to spread information within their community. They also suggested making more use of pictures, maps, brochures and signs translated into Nepali; bilingual group learning and training activities; and providing interpreters at service providers like hospitals. Many elders wanted English language classes to learn basic transportation vocabulary. They would also like to have jobs so they could be financially sound and afford to pay for transportation. Everyone in the group said they were ready to help their neighbors and friends learn about transportation resources in King County.

Coalition for Refugees from Burma

Languages: Burmese & Karen

Venue: 515 W Harrison Street, Kent (Alliance Center)

Date: June 4, 2011

Facilitators: Simon Khim, Board President; Lazarus Hai, Community Volunteer

Participants: 8

TRAVELING IN THE COMMUNITY. When asked how they learned to travel in their community most of the Burmese elders declared that they didn't go anywhere because they did not know how and did not know where to go for information. Some did not know how to take the bus and were afraid to attempt riding alone. They only rode the bus when the distance was close and the route was familiar. Many reported that they mostly walk, or depend upon children, friends and community helpers to drive them.

BARRIERS TO SERVICE. Most of the participating elders said they want to learn more about transportation services and that the main barrier was language—the difficulty of learning English. They expressed fear of using public transportation because they cannot read English. Many said they would like to learn how to use the bus so they could attend ESL classes. Many Burmese elders also stated that they either did not have ORCA cards or did not know how to use them. Some were confused by the different bus passes available. Money was an issue as well; some cannot afford to pay bus and/or Access fares. The group mentioned Burma's great diversity in language, religion and tribes as an additional challenge; there are 40 official and 200+ unofficial languages known to exist in Burma.



COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE BURMESE COMMUNITY. Burmese elders receive information primarily through word of mouth, from neighbors, family, friends, and church and community leaders. The group relied heavily on broadcasts at church and their community contacts at the Coalition for Refugees from Burma and Jewish Family Service. Elders suggested that since their children speak English, they could assist them with accessing information and show them how to use the ORCA card.

IDEAS & RECOMMENDATIONS. The group recommended training one member of their community, preferably from their church or the Coalition for Refugees from Burma, about all transportation resources available in King County. That person could in turn teach the rest of them. Other suggestions from Burmese elders included personalized travel training and a training video in their native language(s) on how to use public transportation, as well as brochures in Burmese, Karen and Karenni. Staff from the Coalition for Refugees from Burma also thought it would be helpful to consolidate transportation resource information in one place as there are many services available, which creates confusion.

Jewish Family Service

Languages: Russian & Ukrainian

Venue: 15821 NE 8th Street, Bellevue

Dates: May 1 through May 26, 2011

Facilitators: Irina Vorona, Information & Assistance Specialist

Participants: 11

TRAVELING IN THE COMMUNITY. Russian and Ukrainian elders said that their children, friends and neighbors were the first ones to teach them how to travel around the community. They mainly travel by bus, car, King County Metro Access, Hopelink-brokered transportation and train. However, several said it was easier to walk than to try to figure out how to use a bus. One elder who has been in the country for many years said bus fares used to be more affordable:

“We would get on a bus and ride its entire route from the very first stop to the last one, and this way we would learn its stops.”

He made a point to clarify that this was before bus fares increased. He said bus drivers are very helpful as well.

BARRIERS TO SERVICE. Participating elders cited many barriers to using public transportation, including language, health issues, fear and cost. The group also identified a lack of benches at bus stops as a barrier to using public transportation. One elder noted:

“We cannot stand waiting for a bus and the schedule is not always available at the bus stops.”

They said that transfers were normally valid for one hour, but their wait was longer, so the transfer expired by the time their bus arrived and they had to buy another ticket. Participants noted that if bus service was cheaper, they would use it more often. They also reported buses not being on time, poor weekend service and schedules not always displayed at bus stops as additional challenges.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN RUSSIAN & UKRAINIAN COMMUNITIES. The elders receive most of their information from personal mail correspondence and added that they purchased ORCA cards because of a mailing that targeted their community. They suggested that transportation resource information could be distributed at community centers, Crossroads Mall, and libraries; via newspapers; and by social workers at community meetings.

IDEAS & RECOMMENDATIONS. The Russian and Ukrainian elders agreed that written materials in their native language would be most helpful, including brochures, picture cards created depicting transit information, and home mailings with timely information about new services or service changes. Jewish Family Service staff suggested “how to use local transportation” workshops would also be helpful.

(Note: Irina Vorona met one-on-one with eleven Russian and Ukrainian elders over a four-week period in May rather than holding a single focus group.)

Salaam Urban Village Association

Languages: Amharic & Tigrigna

Venue: 917 East Yesler Way, Seattle (Yesler Community Center)

Dates: May 18, 2011 and June 9, 2011

Facilitators: Amanuel Yohannes, Executive Director; Michael Neguse, East African Community Outreach Coordinator; Mimi Demisse, Community Volunteer

Participants: 13 and 18, respectively

TRAVELING IN THE COMMUNITY. Most of the Ethiopian and Eritrean elders said that they were taught to use the bus by other people in their community who came to Seattle before them. Participants stated that they walked, rode the bus, or depended upon family and friends to get around. Many said they were unaware of existing transportation services and did not know where to get information.

BARRIERS TO SERVICE. The group agreed that language was the largest barrier to transit use:

“If we want to go places, we don’t know how to read the information to get us there.”

Lack of information in their native languages, fear of getting lost, as well as a low literacy rate among most East African elders also posed significant barriers to their travel needs. Financial issues were a common theme as well; many elders cannot afford to pay for bus fares and they were very concerned about recent fare increases.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN ETHIOPIAN & ERITREAN COMMUNITIES. Members of the East African community rely heavily on each other for help, and they receive most information through word of mouth from their community peers. They said that the most effective way to reach elders is at community gatherings, such as senior nutrition programs or through focus groups like the ones conducted for this Project. They also rely upon and trust community leaders from the Salaam Urban Village Association.

IDEAS & RECOMMENDATIONS. Oral communication is the best way to spread transportation resource information to the Ethiopian and Eritrean community. In fact, the group preferred that the focus group facilitator provide information to them as:

“He is always there for us.”

They also stated that transportation providers rarely reach out to their community, and invited transportation providers to come to meetings like the focus groups and share information. They also would like funding to help Salaam Urban Village Association acquire a van to help elders with all their transportation needs.

(Note: Salaam Urban Village Association facilitated the two language groups, Amharic and Tigrigna, concurrently; responses were consistent between both groups. The women generally did not participate in the conversations and did not provide information on their transportation concerns due to cultural norms which regulate and can limit gender interaction.)

Somali Community Services of Seattle

Languages: Somali & Oromo

Venues: 4600 38th Avenue South, Seattle and
3320 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle

Dates: May 25, 2011 and May 28, 2011

Facilitators: Sahra Farah, Executive Director;
Mohamed Ibrahim, Community Volunteer

Participants: 19 and 18, respectively



TRAVELING IN THE COMMUNITY. Somali and Oromo speaking elders traveled primarily by bus, light rail, Senior Services' Hyde Shuttle and friends. The Somali speaking participants noted that they were introduced to the transportation system with help from caseworkers from resettlement agencies as well as the Refugee Women's Alliance. This is in contrast to the Oromo speakers who said, "*they were always lost*" and didn't know what bus to take or how to pay fares. They accompanied friends on a regular basis when they were learning how to use public transportation.

BARRIERS TO SERVICE. Both groups identified money and the high cost of transportation as the main barriers to using public transportation. A Somali elder gave the example that the senior bus pass price has increased and that Access is even more expensive; the cost of both made him less likely to use the services. Language is a barrier as well; one man indicated he could not read bus numbers. Low literacy also poses an issue. In addition, many elders are still thinking of what is happening in their country, which impacts their ability to adapt to a new country, a new lifestyle and daily activities, including the ability to meet their mobility needs.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE SOMALI COMMUNITY. Focus group participants receive information primarily from others in their community and through their community centers, word of mouth (especially from other Somali and Oromo people who have been in the country longer), Somali businesses, Somali television and mosques. The Oromo speaking elders depend upon community centers to help them find someone to assist them with shopping, transportation and other daily activities. Radios, especially BBC news, were also mentioned as helpful tools.

IDEAS & RECOMMENDATIONS. Both focus groups recommended Somali television (Channels 77 and 23 with Saturday programming from 6:00pm to 7:00pm), as well as community centers and mosques, as good ways to spread transportation information and noted that they should be used more often. While both Somali and Oromo elders preferred the use of oral communication to receive transportation resource information, including individualized travel training in their native languages and DVDs, they also recommended two-sided brochures with their native language on one side and English on the other. They also specifically requested training for riding ferries.

"Come, train and orient us."

Elders and community leaders also requested funding for drivers and gas for the two vans owned by Somali Community Services of Seattle and expressed a need for bi-lingual volunteer drivers.

(Note: The Somali group met on the 25 May and the Oromo group met on the 28 May. While Somali Community Services of Seattle facilitated the two language groups separately, responses were consistent between both groups and are reported together for the purpose of this summary.)

St. James Cathedral ESL Program

Language: Ukrainian

Venue: 4040 S 188th Street, SeaTac (Lutheran Community Services)

Date: May 6, 2011

Facilitators: Tania Rzhondkovska, Lead Student Liaison; Oleg Muratov, Community Volunteer

Participants: 14

TRAVELING IN THE COMMUNITY. Ukrainian participants learned how to use public transportation through trial and error, using maps and information from relatives, friends and others from the Russian and Ukrainian communities who came to the United States before them. Group field trips on light rail and buses made them more comfortable using these services. They currently travel using the bus and light rail, plus a small number drive. They mentioned that the Ukrainian Community Center helped them secure reduced fare permits. Participants had not heard of King County Metro Access service.

BARRIERS TO SERVICE. Three of the main barriers to using public transportation for Ukrainian elders are language, physical disabilities and money. Elders said that the fear of being left alone, becoming disoriented and having difficulty communicating with bus drivers prevented them from riding buses on a regular basis. Some participants noted that it was difficult to keep track of the fare change between county and city trips. Some said they did not know how to use a phone.



COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE UKRAINIAN COMMUNITY. Most Ukrainian elders receive information from friends, the church, Russian radio programs and Russian-language newspapers. They noted that there were “many Russian brochures” available at Senior Centers, Hopelink and different training workshops. The elders said they throw away all mail that they cannot understand or that is not in their native language, assuming that it is junk mail.

IDEAS & RECOMMENDATIONS. The groups’ suggestions for improving information access were to send announcements to Russian language radio programs and Russian churches because:

“Most of our information comes from the church.”

Ukrainian elders also recommended translating printed materials into their native languages, including maps and brochures, and the facilitators noted that bi-lingual travel trainings and field trips are also helpful. Participants requested that bus drivers announce the bus stops as only those who can read English know when to get off, and if they miss their stop they get lost.

St. James Cathedral ESL Program

Language: Russian

Venue: 2208 Second Avenue, Seattle (Lillian Rice Center)

Date: May 23, 2011

Facilitators: Tania Rzhondkovska, Lead Student Liaison; Oleg Muratov and Nina Chrnyka, Community Volunteers

Participants: 8

TRAVELING IN THE COMMUNITY. Russian elders knew about buses, light rail, ORCA cards, Hopelink, King County Metro Access, taxis, ferries and even the monorail. This group said:

“Taxis are great for emergency situations.”

They learned about these services primarily from friends, who acquainted them with maps and bus schedules, and via training seminars by staff of community organizations such as Senior Services. The elders in turn share the information with more friends.

BARRIERS TO SERVICE. Language barriers and lack of travel information in their native language are the main barriers. Russian elders reported that there is no transportation information for people with limited proficiency in English, and also reported that many got lost because they could not read or ask for directions.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE RUSSIAN COMMUNITY. In response to the question about best ways to receive information, focus group participants listed a variety of sources: friends, Russian radio stations and newspapers, churches, senior centers, Hopelink and ESL programs at community colleges and St. James Cathedral.

IDEAS & RECOMMENDATIONS. Participating Russian elders recommended that free transportation newsletters, flyers and brochures be distributed in shops, markets, medical offices (such as dentist, doctors, and pharmacies), housing complexes where many ethnic elders live, social service providers such as DSHS, churches and religious organizations. They also noted Russian radio stations would also be a good venue to share transportation resource information. The group noted that Russian newsletters are private and do not offer free public service announcements.

Client Survey Findings

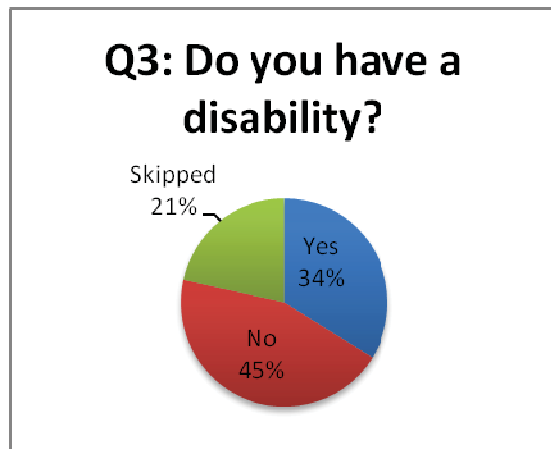
At the end of each community conversation, participants were asked to complete the Client Survey so we could learn about individual habits and opinions about transportation services that may not have been evident in the larger group discussion. Participants completed 121 surveys. Eleven staff of community agencies who work with refugee and immigrant populations also completed Provider Surveys; their responses were consistent with those from the Client Surveys.

The following discussion summarizes responses to each survey question, first analyzed as a group then compared by language groups to illuminate differences in answers. Questions 1 and 2 ask about current city of residence and year of arrival in Washington State, and are not included in the analysis below.

Q3: Disability

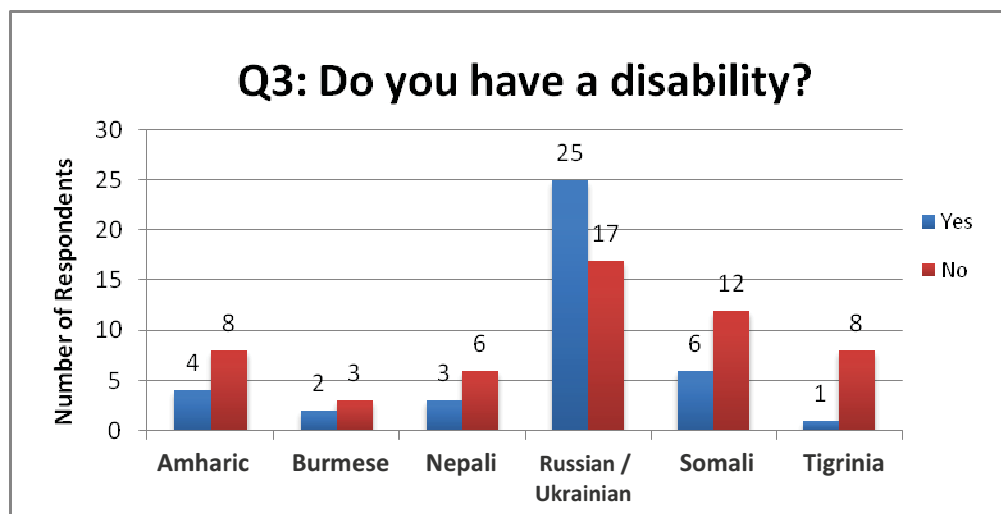
Question 3 asked: *do you have a disability?* Respondents were closely split between those who had disabilities and those who did not. See [Figure 2](#).

Figure 2:
Survey respondents
with a disability



The majority of Russian and Ukrainian elders had a disability. Furthermore, the elders associated with Jewish Family Service had a higher rate of disability than those associated with the St. James ESL program. [Figure 3](#) shows disability by language group.

Figure 3:
Survey respondents
with a disability by
language group



Q4: Languages Spoken

Question 4 asked: *what language do you speak at home?* There were eight possible answers and respondents were allowed to choose more than one language.

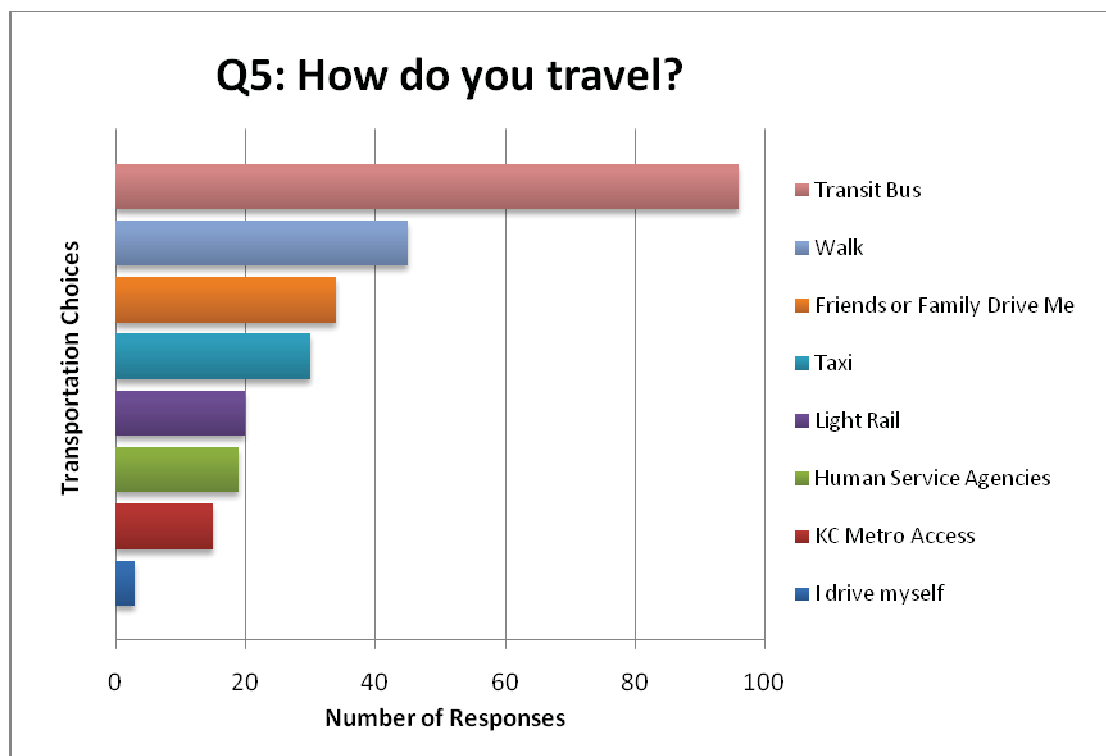
English was spoken in only 7% of the homes.

The group with the largest percentage of respondents speaking English in their homes was the Tigrigna group at 23 percent. 100 percent of Burmese elders only speak Karen in the home, no English. In the Somali group, 100 percent spoke Somali, with 5 percent of elders also speaking English and Oromo.

Q5: Transportation Choices

Question 5 asked: *how do you travel?* There were multiple possible answers and respondents could choose more than one response. *Figure 4* summarizes the responses from all participants.

Figure 4:
Transportation
options used by
survey respondents



When analyzed by language group, we find that 30 percent of the Russian and Ukrainian respondents answered, “*taxi*.” This is in contrast to the other groups who did not choose taxi as an option. All other language groups identified “*transit bus*.” The second most chosen option was “*walk*” followed closely by “*friends or family drive me*.” The least chosen options are driving myself, riding King County Metro Access and using human services transportation providers.

Q6: Barriers to Service

The top two responses for “What prevents you from using public transportation?” are:

- **My ability to speak, read or understand English limits my access to transportation information.** (92% of Nepali elders; 75% of Russian and Ukrainian elders)
- **I don’t know about available services.** (100% of Burmese elders; 95% of Somali elders)

The next most common responses, as seen in *Figure 5*, are: “I cannot afford these services” and “route schedules are difficult to understand.”

Figure 5:
Barriers to riding public transportation for all respondents

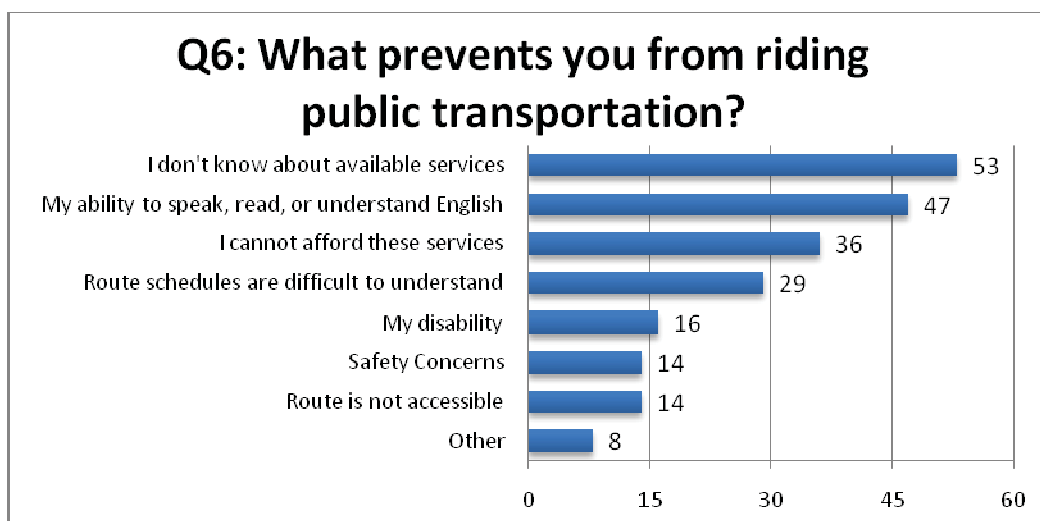


Table 3 lists the responses by language group.

Barrier	Russian	Amharic	Tigrigna	Somali Oromo	Nepali	Burmese	TOTAL Responses
I don't know about available services	10	3	4	21	7	8	53
My ability to speak, read or understand English	19	4	4	1	11	8	47
I cannot afford these services	15	3	5	-	6	7	36
Route schedules are difficult to understand	13	1	-	-	7	8	29
My disability	9	-	-	-	2	5	16
Route is not accessible	3	1	-	-	2	8	14
Safety Concerns	1	-	-	-	5	8	14
Other	2	1	-	-	5	-	8

Table 3: Barriers to using Public Transportation by Language Group

Q7: Learning about Transportation Options

Question 7 asked: “What would be the easiest way for you to learn about transportation services available in King County?” and respondents could choose more than one response. There were no significant differences between language group answers. The two most common answers were “community organizations” and “information in my language,” as seen in [Figure 6](#).

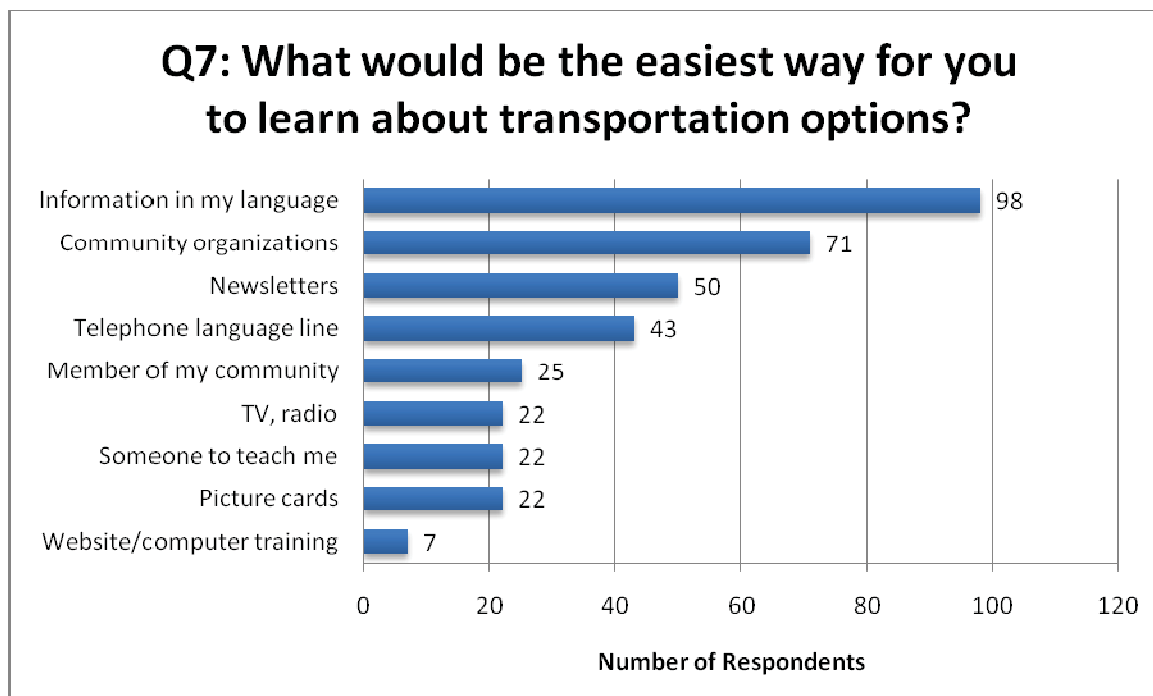


Figure 6: Strategies for learning about transportation services for all respondents

The top answers for each ethnic group are listed below:

- **Bhutanese:**
Information in my language
Newsletters, TV, radio
- **Burmese:**
Community organizations
Information in my language, picture cards
- **Ethiopian/Eritrean:**
Community organizations, members of my community
Picture cards, TV, radio
- **Somali/Oromo:**
Community organizations
TV, radio
- **Russian/Ukrainian:**
Community organizations
Information in my language
Telephone language line

Q8: Ethnic Senior Advisory Council

Eighty-one elders responded to question 8, which asked: “Are you interested in being a member of an Ethnic Senior Advisory Council?” Overall, elders were positive about participating in an advisory council, with almost 40 percent expressing an interest. Most groups expressed some concerns that their lack of English language skills would prevent them from contributing effectively and could disqualify them from eligibility. *Figure 7* shows that the Burmese and Karen elders were the only group that had no interest in being a member of the Council.

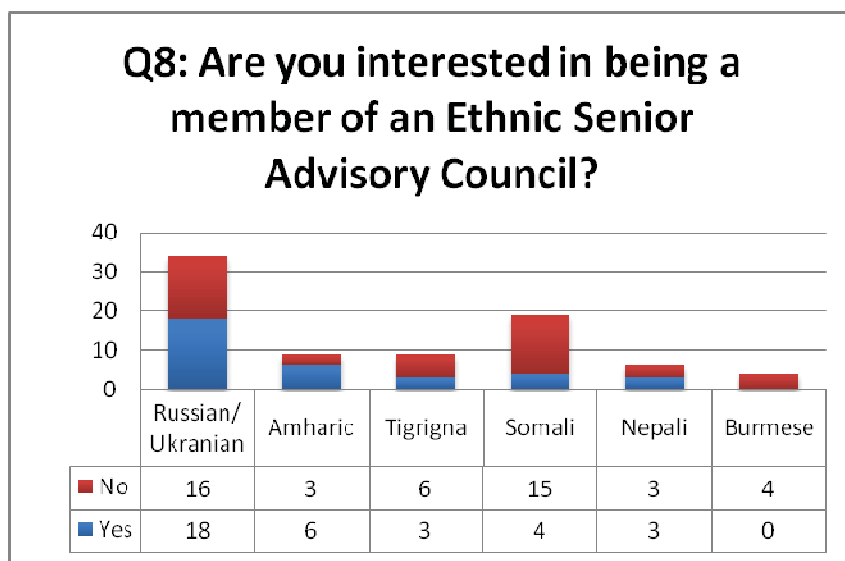


Figure 7: Interest in an Ethnic Senior Advisory Council by language group

Participants in the Community Conversations were also asked about their interest in serving on an Ethnic Senior Advisory Council. Below is a summary of those comments:

- **Bhutanese Elders** (Bhutanese Community Resource Center) - Elders are interested in Advisory Council, and said they were ready to help their neighbors and friends as well.
- **Burmese Elders** (Coalition of Refugees from Burma) - Due to their limited language skills, elders did not seem to be interested in serving on the Advisory Council. Two elders did indicate an interest in further involvement with the Advisory Council.
- **Eritrean and Ethiopian Elders** (Salaam Urban Village Association) - A few elders are interested in serving the Advisory Council from Amharic and Tigrigna language groups.
- **Russian Elders** (St. James ESL Program) - Elders did not indicate an interest to serve on the Ethnic Senior Advisory Council, mainly due to language barriers.
- **Russian & Ukrainian Elders** (Jewish Family Service) - If a transportation to meetings is provided, some elders are interested in serving on the Advisory Council.
- **Ukrainian Elders** (St. James ESL Program) - Due to limited English skills, elders are concerned about their ability to serve on the Ethnic Senior Advisory Council. Three elders indicated they would be interested if the language issue is resolved.
- **Somali Elders** (Somali Community Services of Seattle) - Elders are interested in being a part of the Ethnic Senior Advisory Council, and said they'll talk within themselves and let the Project team know who they choose.

Common Themes

Our study uncovered four common themes about newly arrived immigrant and refugee elders' barriers to using public transportation options: (1) lack of travel knowledge, (2) language barriers, (3) financial difficulty and, (4) the importance of community organizations. Below is a description of each theme and suggestions given by elders on how to overcome the barriers and use resources, such as community organizations.

Lack of Travel Knowledge

Lack of knowledge and awareness of existing transportation services limits their use by refugee and immigrant elders. Community conversation and surveys participants overwhelmingly shared that are unaware of available transportation services. In addition, elders do not know where to go for information or how to access information on available resources. This includes information about most major transportation options in King County, including buses, light rail, King County Metro Access and human service transportation providers.

"I don't know how to get where I want to go -- so I stay home."

During our community conversations, peer elders repeatedly shared that they do not know about transportation services available to them and so they do not go anywhere. In the 26 May focus group with Russian and Ukrainian elders, one participant commented that he had a “*phobia*” of riding the bus because he didn’t have information on using the transit system.

SUGGESTIONS. Many elders are eager to participate in training workshops with bilingual trainers on how to use the bus. As one elder put it,

“Come, train and orient us!”

Many of the elders who participated in our study shared that they currently receive information from community organizations and fellow community members, and they would prefer to receive transportation resource information from these two sources as well.

Language Barriers

Many of the elders in our study have limited proficiency in English, which affects their ability to use public transportation and travel independently in King County. Elders shared their fears of getting lost and not being able to ask for directions from public transit drivers who do not speak their language or use printed material because it is not in their native language. This fear can be heightened by disabilities and other health concerns that make public transportation a less viable option than relying on family, friends and other members of their community for rides.

“If I get lost, I can’t ask for directions because I don’t speak English”

In addition, elders in seven out of the eight language groups reported a low literacy rate among elders in their community. This prevents many refugee and immigrant elders from reading transportation resource information even when translated into their native language. Several elders from different focus groups reported that they cannot read bus names or numbers.

SUGGESTIONS. Elders offered many recommendations for addressing language barriers,

including access to both oral and written information in their native language. Bilingual trainers, language-specific workshops, videos in their language, and brochures translated into their native language were some of their ideas.

Financial Difficulty

Although we did not collect information on participating elders' socioeconomic circumstances, survey responses and focus group comments indicated that the cost of public transportation options limits their use by refugee and immigrant elders. Most respondents shared that their income is limited. This coupled with the lack of knowledge about discounted tickets, ORCA cards and other services available to seniors in King County led to elders' reluctance to rely on public transportation. One elder made the case that,

“If bus transit was cheaper, we would use it more!”

The recent increase in bus and Access fares was frequently mentioned by the focus group participants as one of their main challenges. Survey responses imply that the most used service is bus transit across all language groups.

SUGGESTIONS. Elders suggested that more information be available on reduced fares for seniors.

Community Organizations

Across all ethnicity and language groups, elders identified their cultural community organizations as a primary source for information. Some groups noted that their organizations have many programs that could help distribute transportation resource information to immigrant and refugee elders. For example, participants shared that some organizations have community newspapers, websites, radio stations and television channels to spread information in their native language. Elders also noted these community organizations have meeting areas available for bilingual transit training, plus staff and community members who are available and willing to translate information.

SUGGESTIONS. All but one language group identified community organizations as their main resource for information. All agreed that these community organizations and trusted community leaders should be used more often and on a regular basis as a way to communicate transportation resource information. Elders noted that they are ready and willing to learn more about transportation services from leaders in their communities because they are well-respected and their information is trusted.

Conclusion

The four common themes from the community conversations and surveys reflect the attitudes and opinions of immigrant and refugee elders who participated in the Project. Lack of travel knowledge, language barriers and financial difficulties prevent them from utilizing public transportation. Community organizations play an important role as a resource for the elders. Our analysis indicates that refugee and immigrant elders want to learn more about transportation services available to them, but do not know where to go for information and do not have access to printed materials, trainings, videos or workshops in their native languages. In order to better serve the immigrant and refugee elder communities in King County and increase use of public transportation in the Bhutanese, Burmese, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somali, Russian and Ukrainian

communities, an action plan is needed to guide the development of culturally and ethnically appropriate marketing, media and outreach transportation resource materials.

This Summary Report provides the context for the Transportation Summit on July 27, 2011. The Summit provides an opportunity for agencies serving refugee and immigrants; peer elders; and transportation providers, planners and funders to gather and discuss the findings in this report. The discussion will lead to development of new, or improved, outreach, marketing and media strategies to address transportation challenges identified by ethnic community elders through the community conversations and surveys. The outcome of the transportation summit will be an action plan with priorities, strategies, implementation timeline, and performance measures.

Appendix A: Focus Group Questions

A. Traveling in the Community

1. When you first came to this country, how did you learn to get places you needed to go in the community?
2. What transportation services are you familiar with or do you use now to travel around the community?

B. Barriers to Service

1. What prevents you personally from using public transportation?
2. What do you think prevents other seniors from learning about transportation services that can help them travel around the community?

C. Communicating within Your Community

1. How do seniors and their families in your community get news about different services available? (Prompt for websites, newsletters, community centers, churches, human service agency staff, social workers, friends, etc.)
2. What do you think are the best ways we can spread the word in your community about all the transportation services that are available?

D. Ideas and Recommendations

1. What would make it easier for you and other seniors to learn about transportation services that are available in King County? (Prompt for Videos, translated brochures, radio information, television, bi-lingual travel tutors, picture cards, written cue cards to show drivers, etc.)
2. How can we do a better job of telling seniors in your community about the transportation services that are available to them?

E. Conclusion

1. Would you like to be an advisor to help transportation planners develop new and better ways to tell seniors in your community about transportation resources available to them?
2. Are you interested in helping your neighbors, friends, and community members about new ways to travel in the community?
3. Do you know anyone else who might be interested in helping work on this project?
4. Would you or do you know anyone who might be interested in being part of an Ethnic Senior Advisory Council?

Appendix B: Client and Provider Surveys

Client Survey

Immigrant and Refugee Elders Transportation Project Survey On Behalf of the King County Mobility Coalition

Note: This survey is for refugee and immigrant elders who are 55 years old or older and are currently residing in the King County, WA. Thank you very much for your time in taking the survey!

Survey Questions

1. What city do you live in? _____
2. When did you arrive in Washington State? _____
3. Do you have a disability? Yes No
4. What languages do you speak at home?

<input type="checkbox"/> English	<input type="checkbox"/> Amharic	<input type="checkbox"/> Chin
<input type="checkbox"/> Russian	<input type="checkbox"/> Tigrigna	<input type="checkbox"/> Karen
<input type="checkbox"/> Ukrainian	<input type="checkbox"/> Somali	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>Specify</i>) _____
5. How do you travel? (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Transit bus	<input type="checkbox"/> Human Service Agencies (Volunteer drivers, community shuttles etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Light rail	<input type="checkbox"/> Friends or family drive me
<input type="checkbox"/> Taxi	<input type="checkbox"/> Drive myself
<input type="checkbox"/> KC Metro Access vans	<input type="checkbox"/> Walk
<input type="checkbox"/> Orca cards	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>Specify</i>) _____
6. What prevents you from using public transportation? (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> I don't know about available services	<input type="checkbox"/> Route schedules are difficult to understand
<input type="checkbox"/> My ability to speak, read, or understand English limits my access to transportation information	<input type="checkbox"/> Route is not accessible
<input type="checkbox"/> My disability	<input type="checkbox"/> I cannot afford these services
	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety concerns
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>Specify</i>) _____
7. What would be the easiest way for you to learn about transportation services available in King County? (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Community organizations (Senior and Community Centers, Meal Programs, Places of worship, Cultural agencies)	<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters
<input type="checkbox"/> Information in my language (e.g., Written brochures, Oral presentations, Videos)	<input type="checkbox"/> TV, radio
<input type="checkbox"/> Picture cards	<input type="checkbox"/> Website / Computer Training
<input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Language Line	<input type="checkbox"/> Someone to teach me (Bus travel training or travel tutor)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Members of my community
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>Specify</i>) _____
8. Are you interested in being a member of an Ethnic Senior Advisory Council? Yes No
9. Please add any additional comments/suggestions about your travel needs here:

Provider Survey

A Provider Survey for Immigrant and Refugee Elders Transportation Project

~ In partnership with Senior Services, King County Mobility Coalition, Hopelink, ADA Paratransit Evaluations at Harborview Medical Center, Washington State Refugee Elder Grant, City of Kent, City of Bellevue, King County Metro ~

Note: This survey is for refugee and immigrant elders who are 55 years old or older and are currently residing in the King County, WA. Thank you very much for your time in taking the survey!

Survey Questions

1. What organization do you work for? _____
2. What refugee and immigrant population(s) do you work with? _____
3. What languages do your clients speak at home? (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> English	<input type="checkbox"/> Amharic	<input type="checkbox"/> Chin
<input type="checkbox"/> Russian	<input type="checkbox"/> Tigrigna	<input type="checkbox"/> Karen
<input type="checkbox"/> Ukrainian	<input type="checkbox"/> Somali	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>Specify</i>) _____
4. How do your clients travel? (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Transit bus	<input type="checkbox"/> Driven by friend or family
<input type="checkbox"/> Light rail	<input type="checkbox"/> Drive yourself
<input type="checkbox"/> Taxi	<input type="checkbox"/> Walk
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation service (volunteer driver, ACCESS etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>Specify</i>) _____
5. What prevents your clients from using public transportation services?
 - They don't know about available services
 - Their ability to speak, read, or understand English limits the accessibility to transportation information
 - Their disability prevents them from using these services
 - Route schedule is inconvenient
 - Route is not accessible
 - They cannot afford these services
 - Other (*Specify*) _____
6. What would be the easiest way for your clients to learn about travel services available in King County?

<input type="checkbox"/> Community organizations (Senior Centers, Meal Programs, Places of worship)	<input type="checkbox"/> Call someone
<input type="checkbox"/> Information in my language (e.g., written, oral, video)	<input type="checkbox"/> TV and/or radio
	<input type="checkbox"/> Website
	<input type="checkbox"/> Ask a friend or family
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>Specify</i>) _____
7. Would you or your clients be interested in being a member of the Ethnic Senior Advisory Council?
 Yes No
8. Please add any additional comments/suggestions about your clients' travel needs here:

For more information about the survey, please contact Cindy Zwart at CindyZ@seniorservices.org

Acknowledgments

The King County Mobility Coalition wishes to acknowledge and thank the following agencies and individuals for their invaluable contributions to and support of the Immigrant and Refugee Elders Transportation Project:

Bhutanese Community Resource Center

Chuda Dahl, Board Member
Madhav Subedi, Community Volunteer

Coalition for Refugees from Burma

Simon Khim, Board Chair
Mona Han, Executive Director
Lazarus Hai, Community Volunteer

Jewish Family Service

Margaret Hinson, Resettlement Coordinator
Irina Vorona, Information and Assistance Specialist

King County Housing Authority

Linda Weedman, Director of Resident Services
Ruben Rivera Jackman, Senior Resident Services Manager
Tracie Friedman, Greenbridge Community Builder

Salaam Urban Village Association

Amanuel Yohannes, Executive Director
Michael Neguse, East African Community Outreach Coordinator
Mimi Demisse, Community Volunteer

Somali Community Services of Seattle

Sahra Farah, Executive Director
Mohamed Ibrahim, Community Volunteer

St. James Cathedral ESL Program

Tania Rzhondkovska, Lead Student Liaison
Oleg Muratov, Community Volunteer
Nina Chryka, Community Volunteer

We also want to acknowledge and extend a special thank you to the 120 peer elders from the Bhutanese, Burmese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Oromo, Russian, Somali and Ukrainian communities for their participation in our focus groups. The personal experiences they shared will help guide the development of culturally and ethnically appropriate marketing, media and outreach transportation resource materials for other refugee and immigrant elders in King County.