

Yakima-Ellensburg Commuter Celebrates 10,000th Rider and the Official Launch of Service

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On its 80th day of service, the Yakima-Ellensburg Commuter, a service of HopeSource and Yakima Transit, recognized the benchmark of its 10,000th rider. Yakima resident Kevin McCarthy rides the commuter daily. McCarthy is employed at Central Washington University, and has utilized the service since its installation in late November, 2011. Coincidentally, he was also the first person to board the service. In recognition, McCarthy will be presented with a voucher for a complimentary bus pass for the month of April. The Commuter is a partnership transit system in cooperation with HopeSource, Yakima Transit, Washington Department of Transportation and Central Washington University.

Among the average 200 passengers aboard the bus each day, at least one specific rider is thankful that he has given himself a \$300 raise in fuel savings each month by using the service. For the last 20 years he has commuted in a personal vehicle alone five days a week. Another rider, 83 years old, physically and financially unable to make her daily dialysis appointments in Yakima now not only receives the medical treatment she needs but also catches up on her favorite reads as she rides along. "I don't know what I would have done or would do without this service," she says.

Multiple students diligently immerse themselves in their studies as they make their way to Yakima Valley Community College, Central Washington University and Perry Technical College. Many had been without means of transportation and could not access these educational facilities before the Commuter made this possible. One student, enrolled at CWU in the College of Sciences considers himself a "super commuter," passionate about the service for not only the cost savings, but also the ecological benefits. By commuting even just two of his regular five days per week, his research reflects he alone will reduce his carbon footprint by 40% in a single year. Employees and professors of these facilities, like McCarthy, also ride. Many review lesson plans, while their neighbors on board, uniformed soldiers of the United States Army are en route to training at the Lewis-McChord Base at the Yakima Training Center.

While the reasons, purpose and motivation varies greatly from rider to rider, all agreed that the service provided by HopeSource through the Yakima-Ellensburg Commuter has positively impacted their lives, opening their options and expanding their possibilities. HopeSource Commuter Survey results also indicate that of those using the service, 56%

use the service primarily for education purposes, while 32% principally utilize the service for employment purposes.

For only \$3 per person each way, or \$100 for a monthly pass, riders can choose from seven locations in and between Yakima and Ellensburg. Riders surveyed believe that the service saves them \$300 to \$500 every month. Since its launch on November 28, 2011, the Commuter now averages 200 rides on a single day, and cumulative weekly totals of nearly 1,000. According to a HopeSource client survey, prior to the implementation of the Yakima-Ellensburg Commuter, 84% of the commuters utilized a private automobile for their commute, in which they traveled alone.

HopeSource Transportation Manager Bob Richey beamed, stating "I can't even begin to tell you all the wonderful things our riders say about this service and how it has improved their lives. We'd be here all day." He continued to say "There exists a significant need for public transit and ride share programs. Environmentally speaking, commuters are reducing their carbon footprint, and the money commuters conserve allows them to access medical appointments, educational and employment opportunities returning the money back into the local economy rather than being exported from the community to major petroleum giants with no local benefit. Thus transit systems are both ecologically and economically conscious and beneficial."

HopeSource will be hosting the Grand Opening for the Yakima-Ellensburg Commuter Service on Wednesday, April 18, 2012 from 12:00-12:30 pm at the Student Union & Recreation Center bus stop at Central Washington University. The event features guest speakers CWU President James L. Gaudino and Ellensburg Mayor Bruce Tabb. The public is invited and encouraged to attend to help celebrate and learn more about the service. Refreshments will be provided.