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Adjustments to Dial-a-Lift Boundaries City of Yelm

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The purpose of this memo is to suggest that Intercity Transit authority work with the city of Yelm to reduce the Dial-a-Lift boundary to federal paratransit standards and increase fixed route services in the city. Doing so would create a more equitable transit system, while increasing fiscal responsibility and aiding in the meeting of Thurston county sustainability goals.

Federal standards mandate that paratransit be provided within three-quarters of a mile of all fixed route service. In order to keep Yelm within the transit benefits area, Intercity Transit increased the boundary to one and a half miles for potential paratransit riders in the Yelm area. No other jurisdictions were provided this accommodation. Yelm is provided only lifeline transit service having a single bus running once per hour. While this route moves people into the business district of Yelm; it does little to address the needs of residents who do not live in the vicinity. The increased buffer size dissuades Intercity transit from adding additional routes as on average Dial-a-Lift services cost twenty times per passenger per ride than fixed route services. Paratransit is also solely available to those who qualify, barring access to transit for the majority of Yelms residents.

By adjusting the Dial-a-Lift boundary to the federal standard of three-quarters of a mile and adding additional fixed route service, Yelm residents will have improved access to high quality transit. Increased routing will also ensure that Yelm residents who need paratransit services still have access to them. Additionally; increased transit ridership will alleviate frequent congestion issues on arterial roads, as well as contribute to Thurston county sustainability and climate ambitions. The maintenance of this antiquated policy makes little economic sense and does more to stifle the city as well as its residents than it does to benefit them.

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