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April 24, 2020

### **Island Transit Launches New Essential Delivery Service for Island County**

Coupeville, WA -- Today Island Transit launched a new service to assist Island County social service agencies and food banks with the delivery of essential items during the COVID-19 pandemic. Called Island Transit Cares, the essential delivery service made its maiden trip today by picking up 50 boxes of food from the North Whidbey Help House in Oak Harbor and delivering them to several Island County locations.

“As a public transit agency, offering free delivery service for essential items is just another way to fulfill our mission,” says Island Transit Executive Director Todd Morrow, who points out that transit is still running bus and paratransit service for essential transportation, but on a reduced Emergency Service Plan to comply with the State of Washington’s Stay Healthy, Stay Home orders. “While many people are staying home and not riding the bus, we’re adapting our service to meet today’s needs and bring essential items to them through established programs and service organizations.”

Island Transit Cares will deliver groceries, medicine, meals, and any essential items that are not considered dangerous. “We will deliver whenever and to whomever the social service agency or food bank needs us to go,” says Morrow. “Deliveries will be done safely, with social distancing and no-contact practices.”

Five operators at Island Transit voluntarily stepped forward to drive the two paratransit vans used for today’s deliveries. Morrow says driving for Island Transit Cares is totally voluntary and that the work is authorized as a legitimate service by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) during the pandemic.

“We live in a rural community and people take care of each other really well here,” says Morrow. “Island Transit Cares is not meant to replace neighborly love and support, but to fill a gap where there is a need.” Morrow acknowledges that many businesses and private delivery services are available to the public. Island Transit Cares is not meant to replace those services, nor will it take delivery requests from individuals.



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Oak Harbor City Councilwoman Beth Munns, who also serves on the Board of Directors for both Island Transit and the North Whidbey Help House, was instrumental in helping connect Island Transit Cares with a need in the community. “We’re just delighted these agencies could come together, get creative and make something special happen to fill a need for our community,” says Munns, adding that while she expects initial deliveries will happen on Whidbey Island, the transit agency is working to extend services to Camano Island as well. The service is limited to Island County boundaries.

The FTA is encouraging transit agencies across the United States to support their local communities with similar delivery services. Funds to run these services are a federally reimbursable expenses so local tax dollars are not being used. Morrow says he expects Island Transit Cares Essential Delivery Service to run for several months. “It’s hard to say what the future holds, but as long as we have available drivers and there is a need, we’ll keep it going.”

Social service agencies and food banks that need delivery service for essential items during the COVID-19 pandemic, should contact Shawn Harris, Island Transit Operations Manager, at [harris@islandtransit.org](mailto:harris@islandtransit.org) or 360-678-7771.

Media Contact:

Todd Morrow, Executive Director, (360) 678-9500 (direct) or (360) 929-6838 (cell)

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Island Transit Cares, an essential delivery service supporting non-profits and food banks during the COVID-19 pandemic, launched today. Volunteer drivers picked up 50 boxes of food from the North Whidbey Help House Food Bank and provided no-contact delivery to residents at Golden Oaks and Oak Manor in Oak Harbor, WA.