



TO: Transportation & Infrastructure Services Committee

FROM: Nora Gierloff, AICP, DCD Director

**BY: Alison Turner, Sustainable Transportation Program Manager
Chris Andree, Sustainable Transportation Outreach Coordinator**

CC: Mayor Ekberg

DATE: November 7, 2022

SUBJECT: Via to Transit & Free Youth Transit

ISSUE

Via to Transit provides on-demand first/last-mile transportation to and from the Tukwila Community Center and the Tukwila International Boulevard Light Rail Station. As of September 1, 2022, transit is free for youth, so youth can get free rides to the Tukwila Community Center on Via to Transit.

BACKGROUND

During discussion at the 10/3 T&I meeting, the Committee stated an interest in having staff provide more information about Via to Transit to better understand how the service works. The Committee highlighted the need for bus service to Allentown and transit to the mall.

DISCUSSION

In 2018/2019, Metro conducted a Tukwila Community Connections outreach process with the goal to provide mobility options that better serve the residents and residential areas of Tukwila. Three concept solutions were identified:

1. Expand Via to Transit (the pilot service at that time only served the light rail station as a hub, and only during peak commute hours),
2. Community Van, and
3. Bike/Scooter Share to Transit.

The stakeholder group recommended moving forward with the Via to Transit and Community Van concept solutions.

Transit Service & Allentown

Staff asked KC Metro about the lack of bus service to the Allentown neighborhood in Tukwila. Many of the streets in Allentown are narrow and may not be able to easily support transit operations. Any new bus stops created must abide by Americans with Disabilities Act regulations, including ensuring a safe walking path to a crossing point, which can be expensive or impossible due to the steep slopes and limited right of way available. Insufficient density can also be a limiting factor. The constrained nature of the neighborhood between the Duwamish River and the railroad can make it difficult to generate enough demand as the pedestrian facilities in this area are incomplete. All of these challenges support the decision to deploy Via service in Allentown. The smaller vehicles can easily navigate the neighborhood streets and are able to use more informal stops that do not have the same infrastructure

requirements, and the flexible nature of the service is perfect for areas with diffuse demand like those in Allentown.

Via to Transit

Via to Transit is a pilot on-demand service developed to make it easier to connect to transit, offer more ways to get around in communities that need it most, and connect riders to jobs and community services. The service is not designed to duplicate existing transit service but rather to complement it.

How does Via to Transit work? Riders can request a ride from within the service area using the Via app or by calling (206) 258-7739. One end of the trip must be a hub in the service area, either Tukwila International Boulevard Link Light Rail Station or Tukwila Community Center. Riders may need to walk up to 5 minutes to a pick-up spot. A Via van will pick up the rider within 10 to 20 minutes. Rides are the same cost as bus fare: \$2.75 for adults, free for youth; \$1 for low income (ORCA LIFT), and Regional Reduced Fare Permit (RRFP is for seniors, riders with disabilities and Medicare card holders). Riders can pay with ORCA card, Transit Go app, or debit/credit card in the Via app or call center. Riders paying with ORCA can transfer to bus or light rail, making their ride on Via to Transit free.

Via to Transit launched as a pilot in April 2019 with a focus on connecting to transit. In Tukwila, it connected riders to the light rail station and only ran during peak commute hours. Service was suspended due to COVID in March 2020 and resumed in July 2020. In September 2020, Via Point-to-Point launched for Access-eligible disabled customers who are unable to ride standard buses. This service provides on-demand rides rather than having to schedule ahead with King County's Access transportation service. In August 2021, Via to Transit expanded to all-day service and the Tukwila Community Center was added as a hub. While still a pilot, Metro's proposed budget includes continuing Via to Transit and Metro will continue to evaluate and improve service. Ridership on Via to Transit is high and recovered relatively quickly compared to overall transit ridership.

Community Van

Community Van, a concept solution recommended to move forward by Tukwila Community Connections stakeholders, is coming to Tukwila in 2023. Metro provides a van, and community members schedule trips as a volunteer driver or passenger. The service is tailored to local community needs.

Free Youth Transit

As of September 1, transit is free for youth. Thus, Via to Transit is free for youth, too. For example, students can get free rides from Foster High to the Tukwila Community Center. To ride free, youth age 13 and older are encouraged to tap their Youth ORCA Card or show their student ID to the driver. Youth who do not have one of these can still ride free. Youth can extend the expiration date on their card to their 19th birthday by completing the form at FreeYouthTransitPass.com.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

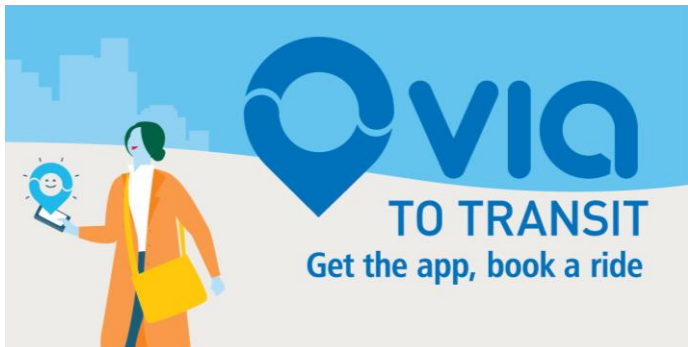
None

RECOMMENDATION

Discussion Only

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Via to Transit Tukwila Flyer



Via to Transit & Free Youth Transit



Transportation & Infrastructure Services Committee
November 7, 2022

How does Metro plan services?

Policies:

- [Strategic Plan for Public Transportation](#)
outlines Metro's goals, strategies and the objectives necessary to achieve them, as well as measures for success
- [Metro's Service Guidelines](#)
provides the framework for evaluation and reporting on existing services, and guidance for planning and designing service
- [Metro Connects](#)
long-range vision for service based on the priorities in the Strategic Plan and prioritization factors in the Service Guidelines
- [Policy Update Overview](#) (1.27.21)
Metro is in the process of updating several key policy documents to reflect the principles and recommendations co-created with community and reported in Metro's [Mobility Framework](#)



Tukwila Community Connections

Goal: Provide mobility options that better serve the residents and residential areas of Tukwila

Outreach process:

- Phase 1: Needs Assessment – Fall 2018/Winter 2019
- Phase 2: Concept Solutions – Summer/Fall 2019
- Phase 3: Report Back and Discussion – Fall 2019

My community needs transportation options which...

are available when I need it, for example, during evening, weekend, and off-peak hours

... consider all users (English language learners, those unable to read, no/low income, people with disabilities, etc.)

...connect to community destinations

... are easy to understand and use

... provide a safe environment

Concept solutions:

- Expand Via to Transit – prioritized investments as follows:
 1. Expand weekday span
 2. Add a second “hub” location
 3. Expand the service area
- Community Van Network
- Bike/Scooter Share to Transit

The stakeholder group recommended moving forward with the Expand Via to Transit and Community Van concept solutions.



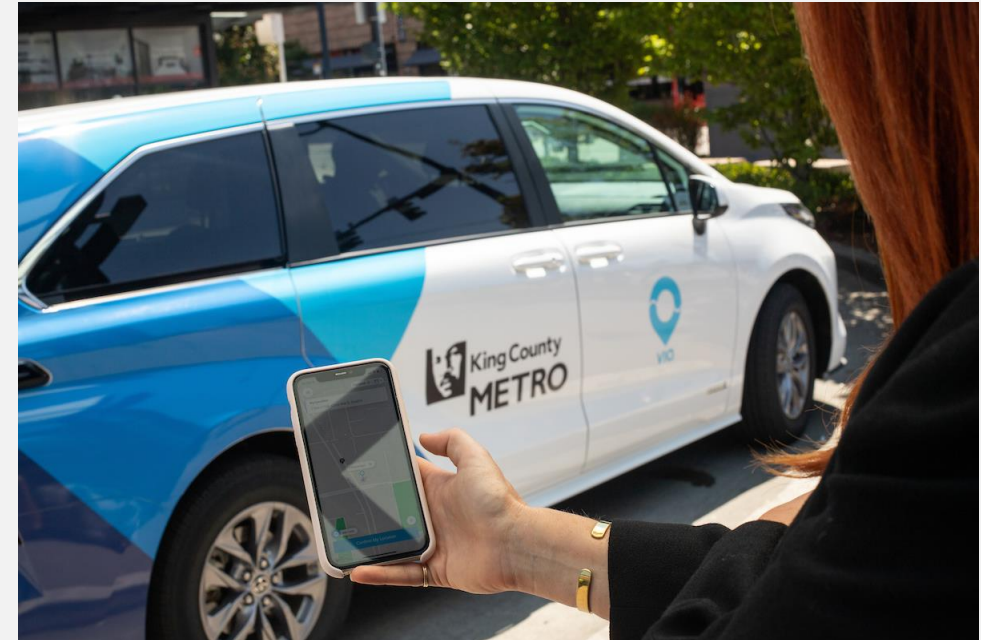
Transit Service & Allentown

- The roads must be able to support transit service operations. Many of the streets in Allentown are narrow and may not be able to easily support transit operations.
- Along S 115th St and 42nd Ave S, there is intermittent sidewalk infrastructure. Any new bus stops created must abide by ADA regulations, including ensuring a safe walking path to a crossing point, which can be expensive or impossible due to the steep slopes and limited right of way available.
- Insufficient density can also be a limiting factor. The constrained nature of the neighborhood between the Duwamish River and the railroad can make it difficult to generate enough demand.
- All of these challenges support the decision to deploy Via service in Allentown. The smaller vehicles can easily navigate the neighborhood streets and are able to use more informal stops, and the flexible nature of the service is perfect for areas with diffuse demand like those in Allentown.



How Via to Transit works


- **Download Via app**
- **Request ride** from within service area using app or call (206) 258-7739
- **One end of trip must be a hub** (to/from Tukwila International Boulevard Link Light Rail Station or Tukwila Community Center)
- **Walk** up to 5 minutes (unless disabled)
- **Get picked up** within ~10-20 minutes
- **Payment** – same cost as riding a bus: \$2.75 for adults, \$1.00 ORCA LIFT and Regional Reduced Fare Permit (RRFP), and free for youth 18 and under

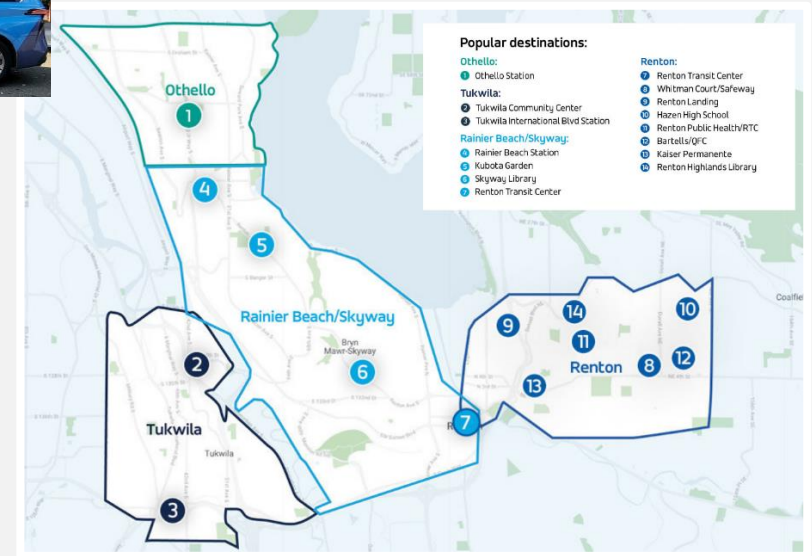
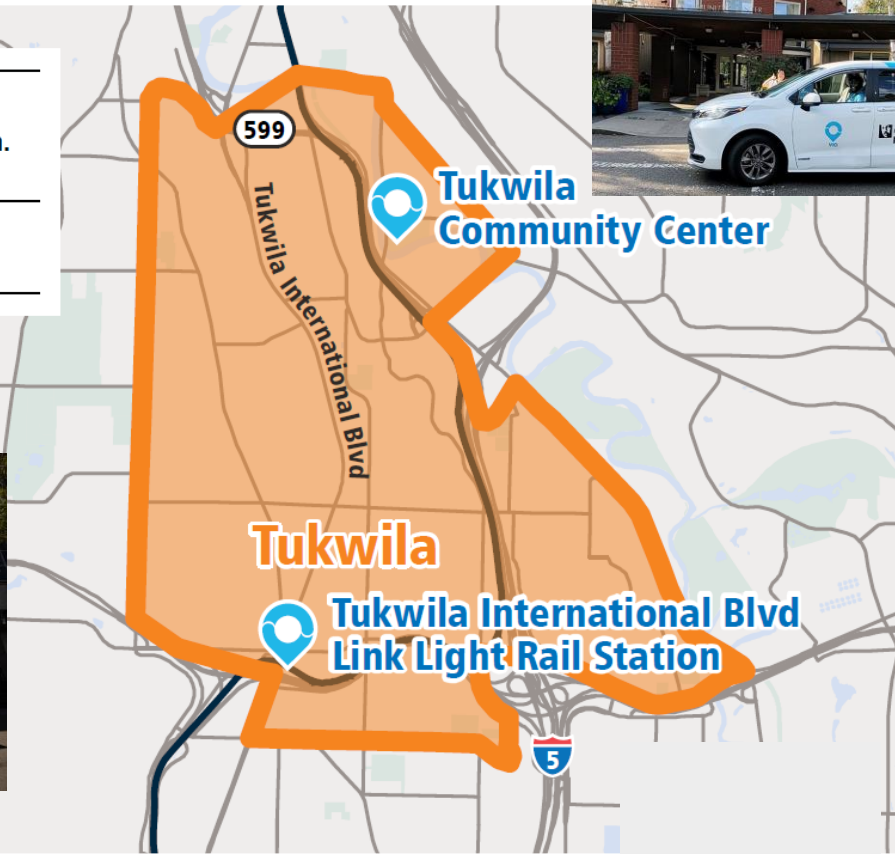


Via to Transit in Tukwila



Service Hours
 Monday–Saturday: 5 a.m.–1 a.m.
 Sunday: 6 a.m.–12 a.m.

 **Community Hub**



Via to Transit history

April 2019

Launched as 12-month pilot using FTA Mobility On Demand Sandbox Grant – focus on connecting to transit; peak commute hours only

March – June 2020

Service suspended temporarily due to COVID.

September 2020

Via Point-to-Point launched for Access-eligible customers

August 2021

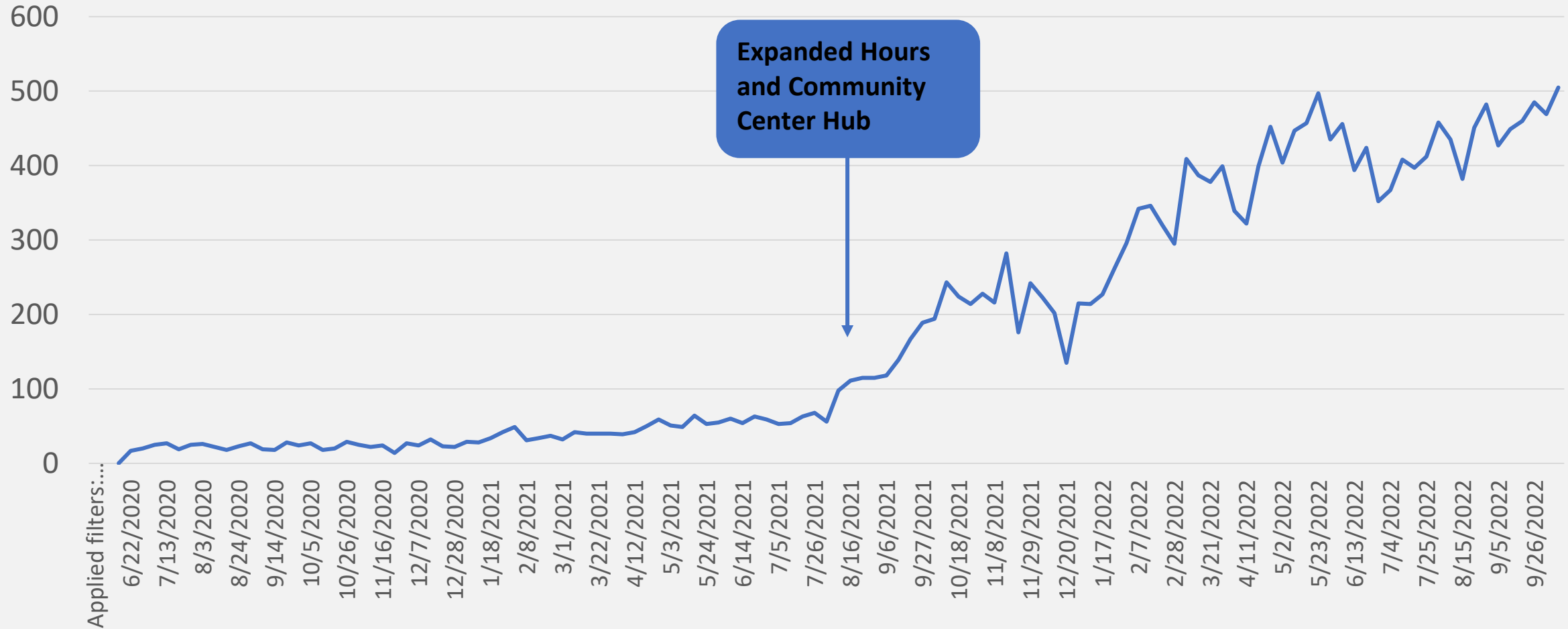
Expanded to all-day service, inclusion of Tukwila Community Center as a hub

2023-24

Metro's proposed budget includes continuing flexible service in Tukwila. Metro will continue to evaluate and improve service in partnership with Tukwila and the community.



Via to Transit Weekly Ridership in Tukwila



Community Van – coming in 2023

- Local, shared community-based trips
- Community Transportation Coordinator
 - Recruits volunteer drivers
 - Manages trips and vehicles
 - Promotes, maintains info hub
- Metro provides vehicles, fuel, maintenance, insurance, staff funding, monitoring
- Available 24 / 7, flexible to meet community need



Free Youth Transit

- As of September 1, 2022, riders 18 and younger can take transit for free thanks to Move Ahead Washington.
- Via to Transit is free for youth, too! For example, students can ride Via from Foster High to the Tukwila Community Center.
- To ride free, youth riders are encouraged to tap their Youth ORCA Card or show their student ID to the driver. Youth who do not have one of these can still ride free.
- Youth can extend the expiration date on their card to their 19th birthday by completing the form at [FreeYouthTransitPass.com](https://www.orca.wa.gov/free-youth-transit-pass).



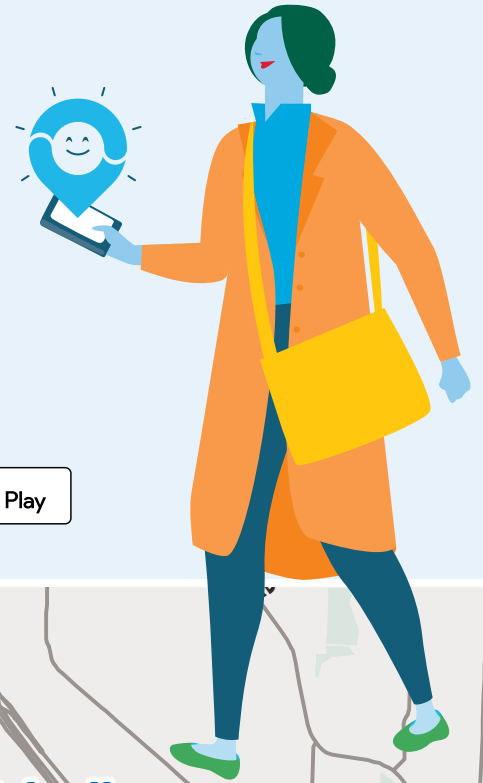


Fast, easy, affordable rides throughout Tukwila.

Via to Transit is public transportation that comes to you. Book rides straight from your phone and travel to/from community hubs without needing a car.

Download the Via app or call (206) 258-7739 to get started.

kingcounty.gov/metro/via



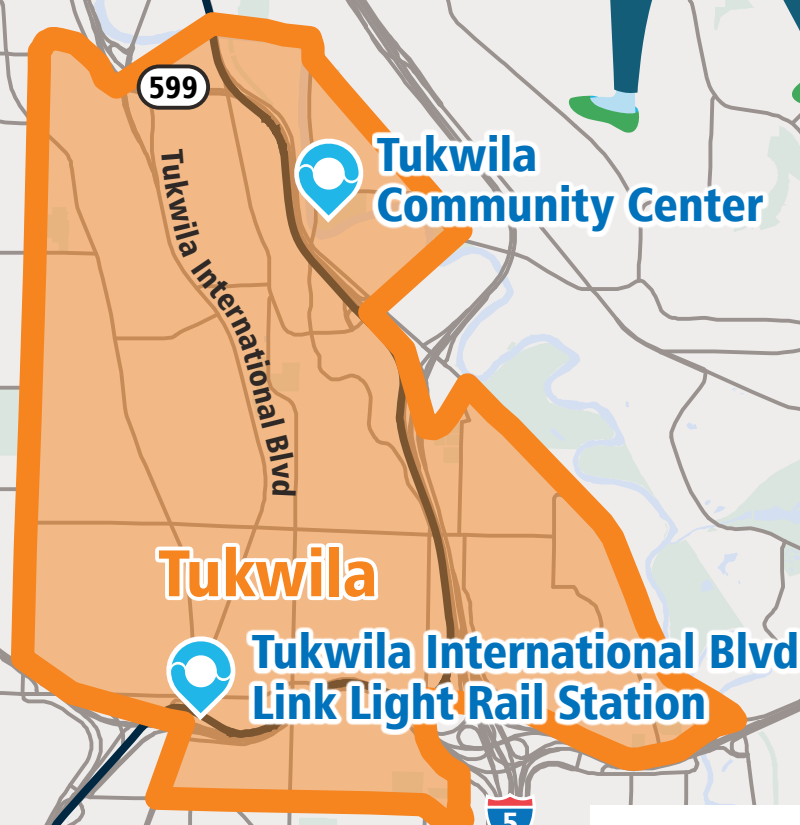
Service Hours

Monday–Saturday: 5 a.m.–1 a.m.

Sunday: 6 a.m.–12 a.m.



Community Hub



Interpreter - 206-553-3000
Interprete 口譯員 переводчик
مترجم 통역관
Перекладач Soomaali አስተርጓፊ



King County
METRO

Moving forward together

