

Transit-community center opens

By ARLA SHEPHARD
MASON COUNTY LIFE

More than 400 people, including community leaders, state elected officials and youth choirs from around the county, welcomed the transformation of Shelton's historic National Armory building into the country's first transit-community center earlier this month.

Gov. Jay Inslee, U.S. Reps. Derek Kilmer and Denny Heck, former Congressman Norm Dicks and state Rep. Drew MacEwan were among the guest speakers at Mason Transit Authority's rededication ceremony and transit-community center's grand opening on April 1.

The transit center at 601 West Franklin St. serves as not only a hub for transportation services, but also includes a community center with a computer lab, commercial teaching kitchen, recreational gym and room for other community services, offices or retail spaces.

"Today is the dawning of a new day for our community," said Mason Transit general manager Brad Patterson in his welcome address. "This project is the first of its kind in the nation. We are happy at Mason Transit Authority to open the doors to your community center."

Originally built in 1955, Mason Transit purchased the surplus building in 2006. In 2008, the transit agency conducted a feasibility study, did outreach and sought community input on what to do with the building. In 2012, construction began.

Mason Transit remodeled the armory and added a second building, which achieved LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver Certification.

When the armory was built in 1955, former Washington Gov. Arthur Langlie dedicated the building



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Olympic College Shelton is leasing the commercial kitchen at the transit-community center for cooking classes and will also utilize the facility's computer lab. Lease space and event rentals are still available.



Gov. Jay Inslee discusses the importance of transportation projects like Mason Transit Authority's new transit-community center at a ceremony April 1 in Shelton.

to the local citizens.

Following in his footsteps, Inslee rededicated the center to the community.

"This effort is just a beginning when it comes to transportation," he said. "It's very exciting to think I get to stand where Governor Langlie stood to honor this as ... an effort to guard our neighborhoods, our communities and our families, to provide them a full basket of services and ways they can connect." The event included

speeches of support from political leaders and community members, as well as patriotic and bus-themed songs sung by Mason County youth and community choirs, and flag ceremonies led by the Shelton High School ROTC and members of the National Guard.

"This project happened because people thought outside the box, it happened because people took an acceptable level of risk to do something different, to combine transit service and human

ON THE COVER

Mason Transit Authority's new transit-community center boasts a computer lab, commercial kitchen, remodeled gym and space for offices, community services and retail. The total cost of the project was \$9.9 million.

Photo by Arla Shephard, Mason County Life

service into this great community," Kilmer said.

The total cost of the project was \$9.9 million, with federal grants providing 48 percent of the funding, state grants providing 10 percent and Mason Transit local funds providing 42 percent.

Revenue from tenant leases and event rentals will be used to cover operating and maintenance expenses.

Space is still available for tenant leases or event rentals. Contact Kathy Geist, Transit-Community Center manager, with inquiries about renting or to set-up tours at 432-5754 or kgeist@masontransit.org. ■