

Transit-Community Center ready to open doors

Governor expected at opening ceremony April 1

By GORDON WEEKS
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An eight-year, \$10 million project comes to fruition with the opening of Mason Transit Authority's Transit-Community Center at 3 p.m. on April 1 at 601 W. Franklin St., downtown Shelton.

Gov. Jay Inslee is scheduled to be one of the speakers at the event. The center will be a transportation hub for bus riders, cyclists and pedestrians, and will accommodate public gatherings, classes, social agencies and technology training, and will serve as a disaster-relief shelter.

The structure that arose from the site of the former Shelton National Guard Armory is beautiful, but "the beauty is we are putting all these different programs that serve the community into one building served by transit," said MTA General Manager Brad Patterson.

The Transit-Community Center project began in 2006 with the surplus purchase of the 57-year-old building from the National Guard. Two years later, the state awarded a \$235,000 community project grant for an engineering/design study that determined the building is a good candidate for renovation and preservation.

In 2011, MTA received a \$3.28 million Federal Transit Administration grant. Last year, it received a federal grant for almost \$1.5 million



Journal photo by Gordon Weeks

Kathy Geist, the manager of Mason Transit Authority's Transit-Community Center, and MTA General Manager Brad Patterson on Monday stand inside the Transit-Community Center, which celebrates its opening at 3 p.m. April 1 at 601 W. Franklin St. in downtown Shelton.

from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

"The last three years have been a whirlwind of activity and growth. ... It's like getting to the mountain top," Patterson said.

Patterson said the center's many windows gives it "physical transparency."

"I love the lights and the glass and the stainless steel," said Kathy Geist, the manager of the center. She added, "The restrooms are indestructible."

The open center space with the arch-

ing ceiling sits on the site of a former railroad roundhouse, Geist said. Community members can purchase stone paver spaces with engraved names, with the proceeds going to local programs.

The center space will be open from 7:30 a.m. to about 9 p.m., when the events in the gym end. With the gates closed, the interior doors can be opened up to make it a large public space for festivities.

A computer lab will offer 21 stations, and will be used extensively by Olympic College students, Geist said. So will

IF YOU GO

WHO: Mason Transit Authority

WHAT: Opening of Transit-Community Center

WHEN: 3 p.m. on April 1

WHERE: 601 W. Franklin St., downtown Shelton

INFORMATION: 432-5754

the commercial kitchen, bringing the area's college students into downtown Shelton, she said.

"That's the biggest impact that it will have," Geist said.

An office with windows looking into the main area will be used on and off by Shelton Police officers. Most of the MTA employees will remain at the headquarters on Johns Prairie Road, with only two full-time and three part-time MTA employees working at the center, Geist said.

The gymnasium features the refurbished original floor, and is lined for basketball, volleyball and pickleball. The City of Shelton's parks and recreation department will offer activities, and students from CHOICE Alternative School will use it for physical education classes.

In the public plaza behind the center, plans call for raised plant beds that HOPE Garden students can tend.

"It's not a senior center, it's not a youth center, it's a community center," Patterson said.