

Gorge TransLink Alliance

June Meeting Notes

June 22, 2016
3:00 pm - 4:30 pm
Columbia River Gorge Commission
Conference Room
1 Town & Country Square | 57 NE Wauna Avenue
White Salmon, WA 98672

Attending: Deanna Bisbee, Columbia Area Transit; Rich Eberle, MCCOG; Bob Francis, MCCOG; Sophie Miller, Skamania County Community Transit; Ron Nails, Columbia Area Transit; Norma Pickett, Mt. Adams Transportation Service; Michele Spatz, staff

Notes for April 2016 Meeting

The notes from the April meeting were accepted as presented.

Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plans Update

The survey results for all three counties: Hood River, Wasco and Sherman, were presented and discussed with Human Services' Agency and Transportation Provider Stakeholders at a meeting held on June 3rd. The next steps are to write each of the draft plan updates. The Hood River draft is in process and will be followed by Wasco, then Sherman county. The draft plans will be presented to the counties' STF committees in August.

Columbia Gorge Express

The Mobility Manager reported for Karyn Criswell that the Columbia Gorge Express is going gang-busters. It provides round-trip service between Portland's Gateway Transit Center and Multnomah Falls with 12 departures/day, operating Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and federal Monday holidays. Service began May 27 (Memorial Day week-end) with 4600 trips! The cost is \$5 roundtrip and the service is bike-friendly. Riders must buy their tickets online. The pilot project also includes a park and ride Columbia Gorge Express shuttle option from Rooster Rock State Park to Multnomah Falls. This is year one of an expected two year pilot project to address congestion and safety issues at the I-84 Multnomah Falls exit and parking lot.

Connect Mid-Columbia Update

Connect Mid-Columbia is a series of meetings of regional city and county officials designed to enhance the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that MCEDD submits to the Economic Development Administration with a more robust conversation around our regional transportation priorities and needs. MCEDD's Mobility Manager is representing the Gorge TransLink Alliance. The group met on May 19th in White Salmon. Highlights from the meeting include a review of the progress of the region's partner's grant requests:

- The City of Mosier's streetscape project is progressing forward through the STIP Enhance review process and is likely to be successful. It is ranked 4 of 6 projects on the 100% list recommended for funding by the Lower John Day Area Commission on Transportation (LJD ACT).

- The City of Hood River's May Street elevated overpass STIP Enhance project was moving forward through the same review process for Region 1ACT.
- The Dalles Bridge re-decking project went through the scoping effort in partnership with WSDOT. It looks like ODOT will provide additional STIP Fix-It funding for this project in the 2015-2018 cycle. It is a high enough priority project that the state is likely to inject some preliminary funds to begin planning as early as next year with work to begin 2019/2020. It was originally thought that the bridge might be closed completely during the re-decking but Brad Dehart, of ODOT has now indicated that it would not be possible to do a complete closure. It's likely that a lot of the work will be done with night closures and there will need to be a plan to accommodate emergency service vehicles at all times. More information will be forthcoming as the project gets more solidly underway.

Recently submitted grants were also reviewed:

- ODOT submitted a TIGER grant in the amount of \$11.5 million to request funding for Segment E of the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail. The funding request is to construct the last 5 miles of the state trail, which is the most expensive portion to build. The request accounts for the expense of needing to blast a section of rock along the Columbia River Gorge that would make construction possible. The TIGER grant is one of three grant requests to complete the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail.

Lastly, likely Western Federal Lands Access Program grants were discussed. There is a unique funding opportunity in Oregon this year due to a recalculation of its allocation after the BLM had underreported its Oregon roadways upon which the funding amounts are based. The recalculation grants an additional \$37 million per year to Oregon for the next 3 years. This is a great opportunity for the state of Oregon and Alliance members in Oregon are working to take full advantage by being proactive. The submission deadline is July 1st and include:

- **Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail** – A multi-modal proposal with a request for a phased approach. This request is for an additional \$30 + million over six years to complete the trail which includes Mitchell Point.
- **Columbia Gorge Express** –This grant seeks to fund the second year of the pilot project, including daily bus service from Portland to Hood River making stops in Cascade Locks and Bonneville Dam along with key USFS destinations (Falls). The express will be in coordination with Columbia Area Transit (CAT) to expand its intercity Portland service. CAT also already provides 5 day/week service to The Dalles, so this connection may essentially link The Dalles to Portland via public transit.
- **Multnomah Falls Visitor Enhancement Study** – This request is for a grant to identify ways to enhance the visitor experience when entering the Falls, e.g. there is a lack of native flora as one approaches, there are many sand bags used to manage water flow and the underdeveloped parking lot off the Historic Highway needs improved structure.

- **HCRH Congestion Study** - Funding is requested to complete this study with a piece to include identifying sustainable funding for the Columbia Gorge Express, as this is seen as a key congestion mitigation strategy.
- **Highway 35 Service.** Columbia Gorge Express, Mt. Hood Express and Columbia Area Transit are coordinating their individual WFLAP grant requests to fund public transit access to key recreational areas on Mt. Hood from both U.S. Rt. 26 and Hwy 35 as well as to expand the Columbia Gorge Express's service from Portland all the way to Hood River. The project is regional in scope and addresses areas where there can be increased connections to improve public transit. This increases the importance of daily service between The Dalles and Hood River should daily Portland to Hood River service be funded and also the importance of Columbia Area Transit filling in the transit gap from Hood River to Mt. Hood via Hwy 35. The goal of this coordinated project is to provide seamless public transit all the way around Mt. Hood.

The next Connect Mid-Columbia meeting will be held in August – details forthcoming. The primary topic will be a *Focus on transit/Gorge TransLink: new services, proposals*. Preparing for the August Connect Mid-Columbia meeting will be an agenda item for our next Gorge TransLink Alliance meeting on August 10th.

Note: Connect Mid-Columbia materials can be found on the MCEDD website: www.mcedd.org

Connect Oregon VI Final Review Committee

The Mobility Manager represented the Lower John Day ACT at the Connect Oregon VI Statewide Final Review Committee meeting in Portland on June 14. The Final Review Committee prioritized *all 75* Connect Oregon VI projects submitted to meet the \$44.5 M funding allocation for this cycle. Thirty-seven projects are on the priority funding list with 7 projects from Region 4, which is comprised of 3 ACTS. No Lower John Day ACT projects are ranked for funding in this submission cycle – they are all below the cut line. Region 1 has 9 projects ranked for funding. Locally, the Port of Hood River's proposed Aviation Technology & Emergency Response Center at the Ken Jernstedt Airfield was ranked #15 of the 37 priority projects. The next steps are a public comment session at the July 21 Oregon Transportation Committee (OTC) meeting in Salem. Review and adoption by the OTC is scheduled for the August 18-19 OTC meeting in Klamath Falls.

Tri-Met E-Fare Card Program & HRCTD

Ron Nails reported that Tri-Met finalized its initial testing phase of its E-fare card under development and gave it two thumbs up. E-fare cards will be sold through kiosks and then may be reloaded at primary retailers such as Safeway and Fred Meyer. The goal is to have one card that tracks transit fares for all transit systems. Salem's Cherriots, Sandy's Mt. Hood Express and SAM (Sandy Area Metro) will participate in an expanded trial of the E-fare card. The E-fare card tracks which transit system a rider used and what type of rider is using the card, e.g. adult, youth, senior etc. Transit systems can determine the frequency of their payout with most choosing monthly. The system may be used both with fixed route and dial-a-ride transit service. It's hoped that Tri-Met will ultimately expand the service into Clark county, then Skamania and Klickitat counties, thus providing a seamless payment and fare collection option for Gorge TransLink Alliance members.

Washington Transportation Policy Committee Updates

The Mobility Manager gave a brief update noting:

- Klickitat County Transportation Policy Committee Meeting - The Port of Hood River had prepared a FASTLANE grant application for final Environmental Impact Statement along with planning and design for the Hood River Bridge replacement. The night before the grant submission deadline, the Port Commissioners voted to hold off on its submission at this time. There is more work to be done on garnering the required match and also some right-of-way questions. There will be other FASTLANE funding cycles coming up for which the Port may decide to submit a proposal. It was noted that the Hood River Bridge was successfully named to the National Highway System, a significant step that will open up funding opportunities.
- Skamania County Transportation Policy Committee Meeting - WSDOT is working with partner agencies to designate highways as Critical Urban and Rural Freight Corridors. This designation opens up federal grant opportunities. At the request of the Committee, the Regional Transportation Council recommended *all* of the bridges in the Columbia River Gorge be listed as Critical Urban and Rural Freight Corridors.

Update on Gorge Transit Projects

- Sophie Miller reported for Skamania County Community Transit on the Seasonal week-end WET Bus, which started on April 16th with a run into Vancouver and then a shuttle service from the Skamania County Fairgrounds to the Dog Mountain Trailhead. She noted that ridership was weather-dependent with more rides on better weather days. Overall there is an increase in ridership with about 1500 riders for the period April 16 – June 12th. The shuttle service ended June 12th. However, the seasonal week-end service between Stevenson/Carson and Vancouver continues through September 4th, meaning there is 7 day/week service through this time period. Sophie reported that having a Forest Service member staff the Dog Mountain parking lot has been a real positive and the Variable Message Sign directing eastbound drivers to the park and ride shuttle service has been successful. There were no accidents this season at the trail head. This was a one year pilot funded by the WFLAP grant and it is likely a year two grant request will be submitted. In response to a question about ridership, Sophie noted that children under 12 may ride alone if their parent calls ahead and makes arrangements.
- HCRH Collaborative - The Mobility Manager reported that this Oregon Solutions project has been completed with the signing of the Declaration of Cooperation at Multnomah Falls Lodge by the project partners on May 11th. The transit portion of this project has been realized through the Columbia Gorge Express project.

Member Updates

- Ron Nails reported for Columbia Area Transit that CAT is working with ODOT to create the near-term leg of the Columbia Gorge Express. This near-term leg would extend service from Gateway Transit Center to Hood River. ODOT is submitting this as a WFLAP grant. Capital to purchase 35-40 seat passenger buses is expected to be part of this grant as well as operational costs. CAT is also working on the Highway 35 service connecting with the Mt. Hood Express at Government Camp with a stop at

Mt. Hood Meadows as a WFLAP grant. This will likely be a seasonal service. Ron also said CAT received ODOT STF Discretionary Grant funding to expand service to the upper Hood River Valley. The Mobility Manager noted that CAT is working with a private provider to see if they can extend the reach of the expanded upper Hood River Valley service. It's proposed that the private provider run service in the morning and evening with CAT providing the afternoon service. There are several logistics to iron out, so time will tell if this partnership succeeds.

- Deanna Bisbee, CAT, noted the current bus barns at CAT cannot accommodate the larger buses being requested under the ODOT WFLAP grant to expand the Columbia Gorge Express service to Hood River. If the ODOT grant request is funded, CAT will likely seek a future grant to address its growing bus barn needs.
- Norma Pickett reported for Mt. Adams Transportation Service that MATS submitted a letter of intent for the WSDOT Regional Mobility Grants to fund intercity service to Hood River from White Salmon/Bingen 5 days/week and to offer service between Goldendale and The Dalles. A capital request for a vehicle to accommodate expanded service is also part of their letter of intent. She said MATS is serving out-of-towners from far away, e.g. England, on its current M-W-F service between White Salmon and Hood River.
- Sophie Miller reported SCCT had submitted a letter of intent for the WSDOT Regional Mobility Grants for an Intelligent Transportation System. They are the only transportation provider in the Gorge still doing manual scheduling.
- Rich Eberle, MCCOG, noted the new The Dalles Transit Center has opened. The staff are all moved in and their transportation services are operating out of the new building located at 802 Chenoweth Loop Road in The Dalles (behind the Home Depot store). He noted a ribbon cutting will be coming up. The Greyhound bus will begin stopping at the new Transit Center on July 5th. As per past practice, there will be no Greyhound ticket sales at the Transit Center. MCCOG and CAT will meet to discuss the CAT bus stops for its the Dalles/Hood River runs as it currently stops at the old Federal St. transportation center downtown, which now houses the Wasco County Veterans Services Office.
- Bob Francis, MCCOG, reported that MCCOG withdrew its ODOT grant request to fund a \$500K bus barn and maintenance facility to be built at the new Transit Center. As Bob researched the costs, he realized the amount requested far exceeded what it reasonably costs to build such a facility. They will be seeking grant funding in the future to complete this capital project.

Funding/Training Opportunities:

Mobility on Demand (MOD) Sandbox

The [Mobility on Demand \(MOD\) Sandbox program](#) at the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is seeking "partnership-driven" applications for the adoption of innovative business models to deliver high quality, seamless, and equitable mobility options for all travelers. The MOD Sandbox Demonstration Program is intended to provide a platform where integrated MOD concepts and solutions are supported and demonstrated through local partnerships in a real-world setting. The Federal Transit Administration intends to award multiple MOD Sandbox demonstration projects under this announcement.

\$8M in funding to be awarded.

The guiding principles of the MOD Sandbox demonstrations are:

- System Integration – the MOD Sandbox Program seeks operational integration of MOD products and services with existing transit service. Examples of this include open data platforms, common user interfaces, and practices and technologies that encourage and ensure system interoperability.
- Partnership Driven –MOD Sandbox projects should demonstrate teaming efforts, from public and private sectors, with partners committed to supporting the proposed MOD project both technically and institutionally.
- Innovative Business Model – the MOD Sandbox is structured to encourage innovative business models where MOD solution providers and transit operators partner to collectively deliver better service to travelers, while mutually benefitting from the partnership.
- Equity of Service Delivery – MOD Sandbox projects will demonstrate and promote equitable mobility service for all travelers, including communities such as low income, the aging population, and persons with disabilities, including wheelchair users.

Application details are posted with the full announcement for [FTA-2016-006-TRI](#) on [Grants.gov](#).

Application deadline is July 5, 2016.

Oregon:

Federal Lands Access Program Grant

The purpose of the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) is to provide safe and adequate transportation access to and through Federal Lands for visitors, recreationists, and resource users. Funds are available for capital improvement, enhancement, surface preservation, transit, planning, and research proposal projects.

FLAP is viewed as an excellent opportunity to fund some of the solutions we have discussed to help manage congestion in the Gorge. FYI, the next Oregon FLAP call for projects probably won't be until 2019, so "waiting for next time" will be awhile out.

Total funds available: \$47 million.

Application Packet: <http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap/or/>

Applications are due July 1, 2016.

2016 - 2017 Travel Oregon Matching Grants Programs

- The program makes awards to eligible applicants for projects that contribute to the development and improvement of the tourism economy in local communities throughout the state in support of Travel Oregon's mission of "a better life for Oregonians through strong, sustainable local economies."

The *2016 – 2017 Travel Oregon Matching Grants Program* has \$500,000 available. Eligible projects may be awarded up to \$100,000. An additional \$60,000 of available funds will be administered through *the Oregon Wine County Plates Matching Grants Program* that awards up to \$20,000 for wine and culinary tourism initiatives. Both grant programs require applicants to match the awarded grant dollar-for-dollar. Up to 50% of the match may be in-kind.

Additional Grants Program details, including upcoming webinars to further explain the grants program and application criteria, are available at:

<http://industry.traveloregon.com/industry-resources/matching-grants-program/>

Applications for the Matching Grants Programs are due June 30, 2016.

Washington

WSDOT. Regional Mobility Grant 2017-2019

2017-2019 Biennium Prospective Proposals. Letters of Intent were due June 13, 2016.

Arlene and Sharon both submitted a letter of intent - Arlene - ITS

Sharon - capital and operations to fund shuttles and fixed route service between Goldendale and The Dalles and White Salmon and Hood River.

Announcements

Webinar on USDOT's Final Rule on Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning and Metropolitan Transportation Planning

FHWA and FTA will hold an additional webinar on July 13 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. PT to provide detailed and specific information on the Planning Final Rule. Click [here](#) to register for the webinar. For more information on the Final Planning Rule as well as other performance management rulemakings, click [here](#).

Recently, the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) published the [Final Rule on Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning and Metropolitan Transportation Planning](#) in the Federal Register. The rule implements changes to the planning process established by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. The release of the final rule comes two year after the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) was published.

Highlights of the Planning Final Rule include:

- A new mandate for states and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to take a performance based approach to planning and programming;

- A new emphasis on the nonmetropolitan planning process by requiring states to have a higher level of involvement with nonmetropolitan local officials and providing a process for the creation of regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs);
- A structural change to the membership of the larger MPOs to require representation of public transit agencies;
- A new framework for voluntary scenario planning; and
- New authority for the integration of the planning and environmental review processes.

Washington State 40th Annual Public Transportation Conference in Wenatchee, WA, September 18 – 21.

The conference's theme is: *Community Engagement – Local Solutions – Statewide Investments*. Registration is now open. Visit the Conference website at:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Transit/Conference/>

Next Meeting

August 10, 2016 (Wednesday) from 3:00pm to 4:30pm at The Dalles Transit Center, 802 Chenoweth Loop Road, The Dalles. This meeting will be the annual Gorge TransLink Alliance face-to-face meeting.