

Travel Needs and Coordination Strategies in the Mid-Columbia Region



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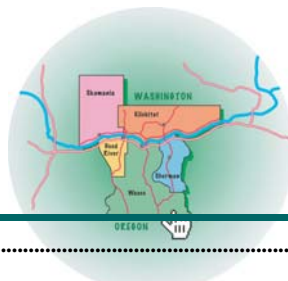


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Executive Summary



The Columbia Gorge region in South Central Washington and North Central Oregon includes Klickitat, Skamania, Hood River, Sherman, and Wasco counties. The region is undergoing a slow transformation from a network of rural economies primarily reliant upon the timber and agricultural trade, to a more diverse tourism and service-oriented model of economic development. The region is experiencing population growth that is both increasing and aging at the same time. These transitional changes present the need for a more integrated approach to addressing the region's expanding public transportation needs.

This report, produced for the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD), is part of a larger project responding to an identified need to improve public awareness of mobility options, and plan and coordinate current and future transportation services within the five-county region. A consultant team was hired to research, study and make recommendations about how the region might develop and implement a more coordinated regional transportation system.

During the spring of 2003, the consultant team researched the current public transportation infrastructure operating within the five-county region and assessed the level of existing regional coordination. In addition, the team interviewed approximately forty individual stakeholders (see Appendix A) from various social service agencies, transit providers, and business groups to capture a snapshot of perceptions, experiences and personal observations of the region's transit needs.

The objective of this report is to identify the unmet transportation needs and challenges within the region, and produce recommendations, both for the near and long-term, that can help to achieve overall regional transportation coordination goals.

Major Unmet Needs and Challenges to Coordination Efforts

Existing and future challenges to implementing a coordinated regional transportation system stem primarily from the individual characteristics of each transit system, the counties they operate in, and the needs of the populations they serve. The summarized unmet services needs and infrastructure challenges are as follows:

Unmet service needs

- All areas indicate a need for greater transit opportunities to and from the Portland/Vancouver area, in addition to the commercial hubs of The Dalles and Hood River.
- Employment transportation is the most often cited unmet need the current transportation systems do not adequately serve.
- Many rural residents would like greater access to transportation options for shopping in the urban commercial sectors.
- Community members expressed a need for transportation options in the evenings and on weekends.
- Transportation to and from after-school activities or evening programs/classes is currently difficult to obtain.
- A growing Hispanic population raises new challenges for local providers, as many speak little English and are unfamiliar with local services.
- Individuals residing in the areas outside of the commercial centers frequently fall through the cracks of the system and suffer a resulting sense of isolation.

Transportation Infrastructure Challenges

- Currently none of the public transit systems provide transfer privileges between each another, though occasionally, customers may transfer between a public operator and Greyhound or Amtrak. Because the public systems feature dial-a-ride operations, each system typically transports customers from point of origin to an ultimate destination.
- Travel across the Columbia River runs overwhelmingly from North to South, with few Oregon customers seeking major destinations to the North in Washington.
- The systems do not share a common fare structure. In addition, fare structures make no provision for individuals who transfer from one system to another.
- Many people perceive the public transit providers as an exclusive benefit for the elderly and disabled, rather than all members of the community.
- The jurisdictional (2 state and 5 counties) and geographical (river with toll bridges) make inter-state and inter-county travel difficult.
- The level and stability of funding for public transportation in both Oregon and Washington is uncertain.

Coordination Strategies

The following transportation coordination strategies are suggested for the Mid-Columbia region. The coordination strategies are categorized as a long-term vision for improvements to existing services, short-term low-cost strategies, and alternatives needing further study.

Long-term Vision: Over time, the public transportation providers in the Mid-Columbia region intend to develop a closely coordinated network of services retaining the individual identity of each service provider, while offering a unified service and fare structure. This network will realize the benefits of a common marketing identity. The system will serve the general public, and function as a safety net for those who are unable to transport themselves, such as seniors, people with disabilities, children, and people without dependable vehicles.

- **Maintain provider autonomy:** Service providers in each county will retain responsibility for providing travel that is limited to that jurisdiction.
- **Extended Services:** Operations will be daily, with limited service on weekends and evenings.
- **Regional Information Line:** A regional information line will be available to explain all the transit options in the region.
- **Maintain Local Dial-A-Ride Service:** Local services will still operate as dial-a-ride, though some fixed, or deviated fixed routes may be appropriate.
- **Regional Fixed/Deviated Routes:** Fixed route and deviated fixed route services will link the region's major communities.
- **Common Fares:** A common fare structure will provide for inter-system transferability.
- **Regional Marketing:** Consolidated marketing materials will publicize inter-system fare and service coordination.
- **Regional Organizational Framework:** The Mid-Columbia region will have an organizational framework that will support ongoing regional transportation coordination and funding strategies.

Short-Term Strategies: Given funding constraints, service expansion in the near-term is not anticipated. However, several low-cost strategies currently exist that build upon existing services, and can potentially lead towards the greater overall long-term vision of a regional transportation system.

- **Share the Vision:** Provide opportunities for community members to further shape shared vision for regional transportation services.
- **Link Websites:** Provide links between transportation provider websites.
- **Publish Fares:** Local transit operators should provide information about fares in their printed materials and on their websites.
- **Fill Capacity:** Encourage reverse direction travel and fill seat capacity by providing information about departure times, fares and reservation procedures for regularly scheduled services for transit and Medicaid trips.
- **Grant Coordination:** Jointly pursue state and federal grants as a region.
- **Greyhound and Amtrak:** Discuss opportunities to leverage existing services offered by Greyhound and Amtrak, such as offering discounted tickets for frequent travelers.
- **Van/Car Pooling:** Market ridesharing services, such as the nationally supported “RideMatch” website.
- **Reduced Tolls:** The transportation providers should jointly work to negotiate free or reduced bridge tolls across the river.

Alternative Strategies

- **Bike Racks:** Consider adding bike racks to buses.
- **Employer/Business Transportation:** Request businesses to provide transportation for employees (e.g. Skamania Lodge) or for shopping (Walmart).
- **Community Jobs/Van Pool Program:** Consider duplicating the Community Jobs Van Pool program, providing driver training opportunities to Community Jobs participants and transportation options to people with low-incomes.
- **Environmental and Other Partnerships:** Research federal and non-profit funding opportunities for reducing congestion.
- **511:** Research opportunities to tap into nationwide “511” transportation hotline system to supply customers with information and referrals.
- **School Coordination:** Discuss possible transportation service coordination opportunities with cash strapped Oregon school districts.
- **Utilize the Toll-Free Medicaid Line:** Consider leveraging the toll-free number of the Washington and Oregon Medicaid brokerages as an access point for general transportation information and referral.

- **Oregon and Washington Medicaid Brokers:** Begin discussing the feasibility of sharing Medicaid trip information and coordinating intercity and interstate trips within and between Oregon and Washington.
- **Consolidation:** Consider merging transit and Medicaid reservation services as a cost reduction measure.

Next Steps

Local transportation partners in the Mid-Columbia region – including the transit agencies, private transportation providers, social service providers, health care agencies, and senior services – have formed strong cooperative relationships that will pay dividends in the future. They have made progress in the face of restricted funding and geographic limitations.

To further the overall coordination of regional services, the consultant team recommends five next steps for the Mid-Columbia transportation partners to pursue over the next 10 months.

- Formalize the Mid-Regional Transportation Group
- Select a grant committee
- Implement agreed upon coordination strategies
- Develop a regional transit guide and website (English and Spanish)
- Analyze additional strategies for coordination

Accomplishment of these five tasks will strategically position the Mid-Columbia transportation partners to accomplish their collective vision of a strong local and regional transportation system.



Introduction

This report, produced for the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEEDD), is part of a larger project responding to an identified need to improve public awareness of mobility options, and to plan and coordinate current and future transportation services within the Mid-Columbia region, including Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Skamania, and Klickitat counties,

A consultant team was hired to research, study and make recommendations about how the region might develop and implement a more coordinated regional transportation system. Coordination of the transportation services in the area is necessary to improve mobility options more effectively and efficiently.

Purpose of Report

This report provides an overview of the region, including the geographical and demographic characteristics, as well as an assessment of the various transportation systems utilized by the five counties and unmet transportation needs. The report provides an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the existing transportation systems, with an emphasis on identifying the major challenges to regional transportation coordination. These challenges are analyzed, and strategic recommendations provided as possible solutions to achieving the overall goals envisioned by Mid-Columbia transportation partners.

Background

With the exception of several small but growing urban centers, the participating counties are largely rural with population sizes ranging from 2,000 to 25,000 people. The landscape varies from farmland, to forest, to open wheat fields, covering close to 7,500 square miles. While each of the participating counties holds unique characteristics, they share a common asset – the scenic beauty of the Columbia River Gorge.

The Gorge, as well as neighboring Mount Hood, provides recreational activities to thousands of visitors as a major travel destination. West of the region is the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan area, providing significant employment, recreational, shopping, and cultural opportunities for the Mid-Columbia region.

The five Mid-Columbia regional counties and their primary transit providers are:

In Oregon:

Hood River County – Served by Columbia Area Transit (CAT), Greyhound, and Columbia Gorge Express.

Wasco County–Served through The Link (overseen by the Mid-Columbia Council of Governments – MCCOG) and Greyhound.

Sherman –Served by Sherman County Bus, Inc.

In Washington:

Skamania –Served through Skamania County Senior Services and Amtrak services to Bingen/White Salmon.

Klickitat –Served through Mount Adams Transportation Service (MATS) and Amtrak services to Bingen/White Salmon.

Approach

As with any system-wide transportation analysis, a needs-assessment is a necessary first step before planning and implementing change. This assessment helps to identify what currently exists and where the gaps in service and infrastructure are. The following is a summary of the project team’s initial assessment approach:

■ **Inventory existing plans and current operations**

The project team compiled an inventory of existing transportation services operating in the Mid-Columbia area. This includes services provided by public transit, Amtrak, social service agencies, public and private sector organizations and community groups.

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■ **Conduct stakeholder interviews**

The project team interviewed approximately forty individuals (see Appendix A), from local transit systems, social service agencies, and the medical and business community. The interviews provided information about perceptions of existing public transportation services, the community's transit needs, the potential for increased usage among specific constituencies, and communications channels for reaching these target groups.

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■ **Review Greyhound market and impacts of elimination**

The project team reviewed the existing Greyhound services and assessed the possible impacts of eliminating services on the Washington side of the river.

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■ **Identify inter-regional travel needs**

The project team compared and contrasted the travel activities of residents in the study area with current public transportation usage, in order to identify underserved markets. This empirical data supplements information provided by stakeholders about the needs of their constituents, clients and customers.

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- **Identify strategies to improve the coordination of existing services**
Based upon their review of existing plans and services, as well as the stakeholder interviews, the project team identified possible modifications and enhancements to existing services that may improve inter-system coordination.

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- **Work with Mid-Columbia Transportation Partners**
Members of the consultant team worked closely with the transportation partners to shape the recommendations of this report.

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Hood River County, OR

Hood River County lies in the northern section of the State of Oregon in the Columbia Gorge Region, approximately 60 miles east of Portland. The Columbia River Gorge forms the northern border of the county and is regarded as one of the most popular windsurfing locations in the world. Towering out of the south central section of the county is Mount Hood, a magnet for year-round recreation. The gentle foothills of Mount Hood and the weaving river valleys are the natural location for over 14,000 acres of orchards. Hood River County’s population is decidedly rural. *Source: Hood River County Transportation District*

Demographics

Total Population (2001)	20,439
Percentage of population 65 or older	12.9%
Percentage of persons with disability over age 5	15.3%
Mean travel time to work (in minutes)	19.1
Percentage of persons living below poverty level (1999)	14.2%
Percentage unemployed	6.6%
Land area (square miles)	522
Persons per square mile	39.1

Source: US Census Bureau

General Transportation Information

Major destination points for Hood River County residents are within Hood River, Cascade Locks, Parkdale, and Odell. Regional travel markets include The Dalles, Portland, and Stevenson.

Columbia Area Transit (CAT), Greyhound, and Columbia Gorge Express are the major transportation providers for the county. Other limited transportation is provided by the Hood River Hospital for non-emergent transportation in the evenings and weekends, and also by the Veteran Services for veteran medical trips.

Columbia Area Transit: The Hood River County Transportation District was formed by a vote of Hood River County residents in 1993. In addition to the dedicated local property tax, CAT's funding includes:

- Grants from the Federal Transit Administration;
- Oregon Special Transportation Funds;
- Oregon Supplemental Transportation Funds (These funds will probably not be available during the coming fiscal year); and
- User fees.

CAT provides services for Hood River County and the communities of Hood River, Odell, Parkdale, and Cascade Locks. During the school year, parents of a private school pay CAT to carry students to and from the school in The Dalles on weekdays. In the winter, CAT makes weekend trips to Mt. Hood for winter sports activities on the mountain.

CAT hours of operation are Monday-Friday: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Destination points are typically for shopping, work, medical appointments, or recreational activities. Fares and destinations are available under Appendix B.

Greyhound: Greyhound provides general intercity transit along the Columbia River Gorge on Highway 84. Columbia Area Transit is the Greyhound passenger and freight agent for the area. CAT is authorized to sell Greyhound tickets to any location served by Greyhound. CAT can ship and receive freight to and from anywhere Greyhound serves as well. Agent hours for Greyhound are 8:30 am to 11:30 am and 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday excluding major holidays. Fares and destinations are available under Appendix C.

Columbia Gorge Express: Columbia Gorge Express provides Medicaid transportation in Oregon, primarily between Hood River and The Dalles. Columbia Gorge Express also operates small group charters in Washington and Oregon for:

- Social and Sporting Events
- Airports
- School Events
- Church Outings
- Ski Trips
- Sightseeing
- Corporate Travel
- Senior Citizen Groups

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Columbia Gorge Express operates 7 days a week. Fares and destinations are available under Appendix D.

Unmet Transportation Needs

According to the stakeholder interviews, the primary unmet transportation needs in Hood River County are:

1. **Commuter trips** – Stakeholders mentioned the greater Portland area and Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, WA.
2. **Shopping trips** – K-Mart and other destinations in The Dalles
3. **Evenings and Weekends** – In particular, the Hood River Hospital have non-emergent transportation needs for patients that are delivered by ambulance but have no way home. Also, transportation to evening classes for substance abuse are needed since many of the attendees have suspended driver's licenses.

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Employment trips were most often mentioned as an unmet need. Several respondents noted that property values have been increasing faster than wages in the town of Hood River. While many residents have outside income sources, many 'old timers' find it difficult to earn a living wage within the local economy.

Hood River's growing Hispanic population is raising new challenges for local providers. Many speak little English and are unfamiliar with local services. They have been reluctant to take full advantage of available resources and sometimes resort to informal networks rather than braving local public transportation providers.

Significantly, no human services agency mentioned the need to transport clients to destinations in Washington, with the exception of the Skamania Lodge in Stevenson.

For non-Medicaid customers, travel outside Hood River County is generally restricted to group travel. Presently, the only regional transportation services that are offered on a regular basis are:

- School transportation to The Dalles, and
- Periodic group trips to Portland.

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Otherwise, the cost of providing inter-county trips has been prohibitive.

Wasco County, OR



The county seat in Wasco is The Dalles, which is now the trading hub of north-central Oregon. The county's economy is based upon agriculture (orchards, wheat farming, livestock ranching), lumber, manufacturing, electric power, transportation, aluminum, and tourism. There are a number scenic areas in the county such as the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area, Beaver Creek Wilderness, close proximity to Mt. Hood National Recreation Area and Deschutes River Recreation Area. Outdoor activities available in Wasco County include windsurfing, hiking, biking, fishing, boating, and flying.

Source: *The Oregon Blue Book*

Demographics

Total Population (2001)	23,895
Percentage of population 65 or older	16.7%
Percentage of persons with disability over age 5	18%
Mean travel time to work (in minutes)	18.6
Percentage of persons living below poverty level (1999)	12.9%
Percentage unemployed	7.9%
Land area (square miles)	2,381
Persons per square mile	10

Source: *US Census Bureau*

General Transportation Information

Major destination points for Wasco County residents are The Dalles, Antelope, Dufur, Maupin, Mosier, and Shaniko. Regional travel markets include Hood River (medical & Wal-Mart), and Portland (medical & shopping).

The Link (overseen by the Mid-Columbia Council of Governments – MCCOG) and Greyhound are the major transportation providers in the county. MCCOG is a local ticket agent for Greyhound. Greyhound services are discussed in the Hood River County section.

The Link: The Link offers general public demand response service within The Dalles. All services are curb-to-curb, although drivers sometimes provide service to the door if time permits. Funding for The Link includes:

- Greyhound contract
- State contracts (non-medical)
- State contracts (medical)
- Fares
- Federal-general public funds
- City of The Dalles
- Wasco County
- Special Transportation Funds (STF) from cigarette taxes
- Federal-vehicles

Medicaid transportation service is distributed through the region’s Medicaid Brokerage Service, the Mid-Columbia Council of Governments. The Link provides much of the Medicaid service within Wasco County. Other transportation providers generally provide the inter-county Medicaid service.

The Link transports about 2,500 people per month. Seniors and people with disabilities are the biggest users of The Link. Many clients use the public transit services for medical visits. While some assisted living facilities provide some transportation, The Link supplements these services. Clients who receive “community-based” care may be authorized for non-medical transportation (family visits, hair appointments, hydrotherapy) if it is deemed good “for keeping them out of nursing homes.”

The Links provides about 225 Medicaid trips per month to eligible residents in Wasco County. Of non- Medicaid trips, about 50% are work-related (primarily sheltered workshop), 34% to medical facilities, with the remainder are for nutrition programs and other travel.

The Link operates Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm. Reservations must be made 24 hours in advance.

Unmet Transportation Needs

Wasco County social service providers complemented The Link for its ability to meet numerous travel needs on a limited budget. However, they identified a number of limitations of the services.

- Many medical appointments are outside of the immediate area. An obstacle to getting service is when medical appointments are scheduled on

short notice and rides are not available. The Medicaid brokerage has a transportation contractor in Portland, but they have to be scheduled ahead.

- Another obstacle is hours when service is available. It does not allow for work trips, social trips or Church travel.
- The labor market for TANF clients is limited by transportation availability. Service industry jobs require work outside current transit hours.
- Issues of traveling within The Dalles included the fact that “everything is uphill.” The College is located on a high hill overlooking the city making walking or biking to it nearly impossible. Most low-income residents live on the west end of town, while most commercial businesses and services are on the east end (about 4 miles apart).
- Hispanic populations need to access inter-county medical services.

Current transportation services more effectively meet the needs of seniors. Local staff believes that The Link currently meets about 60% of this group’s travel needs. Unmet needs include after hours, weekends, last minute appointments. There are very few service denials.

Transportation providers and social service agencies uniformly state that Wasco County’s job market is tight and finding jobs is difficult, especially for individuals with few marketable skills. Many want to look in larger communities outside the county such as Cascade Locks, Troutdale, Gresham and Vancouver. It is a 65-mile commute to Troutdale. Improved weekend evening service, greater work access, and connections to labor markets are the primary transportation needs of this group. Current public transportation services do not address these needs.



Sherman County, OR

Sherman County, Oregon, established February 25, 1889, lies between the deep canyons of the John Day River on the east and the Deschutes River on the west in north central Oregon. The mighty Columbia River forms the boundary on the north. Much of the boundary on the south is defined by the rugged canyons of Buck Hollow, a tributary of the Deschutes. The county seat is Moro, elevation 1,807'. The County's economy is based on wheat, barley, cattle and tourism.

Source: Sherman County website - www.shermancounty.com

Demographics

Total Population (2001)	1,827
Percentage of population 65 or older	18.3%
Percentage of persons with disability over age 5	17%
Mean travel time to work (in minutes)	20.6
Percentage of persons living below poverty level (1999)	14.6%
Percentage unemployed	7.3%
Land area (square miles)	823
Persons per square mile	2.3

Source: US Census Bureau

General Transportation Information

Major destination points Sherman County residents are Grass Valley, Moro, Rufus, and Wasco. Regional travel markets include Bend, The Dalles and Portland.

A non-profit provider of low-cost public transportation, Sherman County Bus, Inc. contracts with Sherman County to meet transportation needs of Sherman County elderly, disabled and the general public. Like most of the area's transportation providers, Sherman County Bus uses a combination of volunteer and paid operators. Sherman County Bus is primarily funded by the Oregon State Special Transportation Funds. No fare is charged but the system does accept donations.

Dial-a-ride service is provided on an advance reservation basis to all of Sherman County. Service is dispatched in order to meet customer demands. Overall, the system records about 9,600 boardings per year, or roughly 38 per day.

No restrictions are placed on trip purposes. Most customers are elderly or disabled and use the service for medical or shopping trips. The service usually is not used for work commutes. Unlike other area service providers, the vast majority of Sherman County trips are outside the county. Bend, The Dalles and Portland are major destinations.

Generally, service is provided between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Sherman County Bus will provide service at other times, on an as-needed basis.

Unmet Transportation Needs

Local staff generally expresses satisfaction with the level of transportation service provided. Sherman County is a rural area, with a relatively small population. Public transportation is viewed as the community taking care of its own, with a heavy emphasis on local operation and control. Although funding is a continuing concern, they believe they have been able to satisfy the basic transportation needs of their clientele. Potential unmet transportation needs may be for people with daily travel needs, such as employment; or for people returning home from the hospital in The Dalles.



Skamania County, WA

Skamania County spans a distance of 1,656 square miles on the north shore of the Columbia River in the southwestern part of Washington State. The county contains portions of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, and the Mount Saint Helens National Volcanic Monument, and is bisected north and south by the Cascade mountains. The major driving route is State Highway 14, which leads west to the metropolitan areas of Vancouver, WA and Portland, OR. Both cities can be reached in under an hour's drive, allowing county residents access to the best of both rural and urban lifestyles.

The population of Skamania County is concentrated in the southern quarter of the county near the Columbia River and in the Wind River Valley. The county has diverse environments, ranging from the gently sloping lands near the Columbia River to rugged and steep mountainous evergreen forest. The Cascade Mountains traverse Skamania County from north to south. Most of the County is heavily forested, with over 92 percent in public ownership. Much of the private ownership is within the National Scenic Area.

Sources: *Skamania County Chamber of Commerce website—www.skamania.org and The Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council website—www.rtc.wa.gov*

Demographics

Total Population (2001)	10,027
Percentage of population 65 or older	11%
Percentage of persons with disability over age 5	16%
Mean travel time to work (in minutes)	29.2
Percentage of persons living below poverty level (1999)	13.1%
Percentage unemployed	11.1%
Number persons with developmental disabilities (DSHS clients)	58
Number of WorkFirst participants	220
DSHS vocational rehabilitation caseload	49
Land area (square miles)	1,656
Persons per square mile	6

Source: *US Census Bureau; DSHS*

General Transportation Information

Within Skamania County, residents typically travel to North Bonneville, Carson, and Stevenson. Inter-county destinations include Clark County (which is a major employment destination), White Salmon, Bingen, Hood River, The Dalles, Cascade Locks and Portland. About 52% of employed county residents commute to jobs outside of Skamania County.

Skamania County Senior Services is the primary transportation provider in the county. It provides dial-a-ride service that is open to all area residents for medical and social services appointments, as well as other essential services. About 40% of the passengers are members of the general public. The funding sources for the agency include:

- Aging and Long-Term Care - \$16,000 per year
- Medicaid - \$100,000 per year
- 5311 Program Funds - \$140,000 per year
- Federal Rural Transit Assistance Program
- Skyline Hospital (evening pickups)
- Alternative School
- Employment Security
- Donations from general public trips

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Skamania Senior Services provides transportation to about 500 individuals. Together they take about 20,000 trips per year. Trip purposes include:

- Medical appointments (this is the most common trip purpose)
- Grocery shopping, errands and essential services
- Social service appointments
- Limited job training
- Alternative school

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No fares are collected, however donations are accepted. Average cost for Senior Services to provide the trips are:

- Local trips = \$20/trip
- Within region trips = \$40/trip
- Portland/Vancouver/Dalles = \$65/trip

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Hours of operation are Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. Customers are required to make trip reservations at least one day in advance.

Greyhound service along the north shore of the Columbia River will be eliminated on July 1, 2003. In its place, Skamania County Senior Services recently secured grant funding from the Washington State Department of Transportation for a deviated fixed route service that links Skamania County with Clark County. Service will be directed toward the needs of commuters traveling into Clark County. Two morning and two afternoon trips will operate on weekdays. It will travel along Highway 14, linking Stevenson/Carson with C-Tran's Fisher's Landing Park-and-Ride Lot. Service is expected to start during the fall of 2003 .

Unmet Transportation Needs

Social service providers give high regards to the transportation services of Senior Services. Skamania County has experienced an increase in the number of elderly and disabled residents. Many depend on others for their transportation needs. Skamania Senior Services serves this group more effectively than any other part of the population. Still, many fall through the cracks of the system and suffer isolation as a result.

With the exception of employment-related transportation, and evening and weekend services, Senior Services meets much of the transportation demand. Some stakeholders reported that more residents would travel to Hood River for shopping, employment, medical purposes, and recreation if the transportation were available. Currently, the general public is able to travel to Hood River for medical and social service appointments. Whenever possible, shopping trips are combined with medical trips. The primary unmet transportation needs in the county are:

- Daily access into greater Portland, Vancouver (may be alleviated by new service), and Hood River for employment, school, and job training programs.
- Daily access to community colleges (Clark Community College in Vancouver and Mt. Hood in Gresham).
- Travel to Hood River for all segments of the population and for a variety of purposes.
- Transportation to and from outlying areas in the County (Underwood and Carson), especially the far-eastern and far-western portions of the county.
- Weekend transportation services for church, shopping, community events, etc.
- Evening transportation services for substance abuse meetings, High School events, council meetings, etc.
- Transportation to after-school activities.

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Klickitat County

Located in south central Washington state, Klickitat County lies at the junction where the Columbia River Gorge cuts through the eastern slopes of the Cascade Mountains. It encompasses 1,908 square miles (about the same size as the state of Delaware), has miles of whitewater streams, numerous lakes, the Columbia River, the Gifford-Pinchot National Forest and is home to the Klickitat Wildlife Management Area and Conboy Lake National Wildlife Refuge. The county is 84 miles wide and averages 23 miles north to south. Its 18,000 residents reside in cultural and historic communities, which provide various cultural and business accommodations and world-class attractions. *Source: Klickitat County website - www.klickitatcounty.org*

Demographics

Total Population (2001)	19,339
Percentage of population 65 or older	13.8%
Percentage of persons with disability over age 5	19.7%
Mean travel time to work (in minutes)	21.9
Percentage of persons living below poverty level (1999)	17%
Percentage unemployed	10.4%
Number persons with developmental disabilities (DSHS clients)	135
Number of WorkFirst participants	602
DSHS vocational rehabilitation caseload	70
Land area (square miles)	1,872
Persons per square mile	10.2

Source: US Census Bureau; DSHS

General Transportation Information

Within Klickitat County, residents tend to travel between Bingen, White Salmon, and Goldendale. Because Klickitat County does not have a large or well-established retail base, residents travel to a variety of surrounding communities including The Dalles, Hood River, Yakima, Tri-Cities, Portland and Vancouver for many of their basic purchases.

Klickitat County operates public transportation via Mount Adams Transportation Service (MATS). MATS receives funding from the following sources:

- A \$546,026 grant from WSDOT to provide Klickitat County Senior Services with operating assistance for two years to preserve existing transportation services in Goldendale, White Salmon/Bingen.
- A \$96,000 grant from WSDOT to help Klickitat County Senior Services to Purchase two replacement vehicles for transportation services in White Salmon and Goldendale.
- A \$72,804 grant to Klickitat County Senior Services from matching state funds for a Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) project for access to jobs transportation services in Klickitat County

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MATS is a general transportation provider, open to the general public, and operates on a dial-a-ride basis. Typical trip purposes include:

- Medical Appointments
- Social Service Appointments
- Educational Opportunities
- Grocery Shopping

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Employment transportation is generally limited by the system's hours of operation.

Unique to the Mid-Columbia area, MATS operates two job access bus routes. They operate Monday—Friday and provide service to Wishram, Dallesport, and The Dalles. Each route operates two runs per day, one in the early morning, and one in the early afternoon.

MATS experiences about 3,000 boardings per month. These are evenly split between White Salmon and Goldendale. About 60% of MATS riders stay within the local community.

Users are asked to reserve a trip by 11:00 am on the business day before they intend to travel. MATS may not have sufficient resources to accommodate all trip requests. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

Unmet Transportation Needs

Medical and social service providers generally express satisfaction with Mount Adams Transportation Services. They have established close working relationships, which facilitate accommodations on both sides in order to meet transportation service requests. They do note that MATS is sometimes unable to meet last-minute transportation requests or client transportation on nights and weekends. These appear to be relatively infrequent occurrences, but occasionally necessitate the use of an ambulance for routine medical transportation.

Work needs are less well accommodated. Overall, the job market in Klickitat County is extremely tight, and many residents are being forced to move away in order to find work. Local staff members are less optimistic about the prospects for transporting local citizens to work in other counties, citing the long distances to major employment centers.

Transit officials report that they have ongoing demands for service to Portland, which they are unable to accommodate. Many of these requests are for shopping or medical purposes.

Local employers hope that a new concert venue, located next to Maryhill Winery, will boost tourist activity in Klickitat County. A spokesperson for the local Chamber of Commerce believes there will be parking shortages at the amphitheater, and suggested there may be some need to transport concert goers to and from area motels and campgrounds.



Regional Transportation Services

Six providers combine to provide the vast majority of non-Medicaid transportation within the Mid-Columbia area. This section focuses on the inter-county public transportation services they provide. They are supplemented by a number of other smaller providers, but none of the area's providers has more than ten vehicles in its service fleet. Together, they creatively utilize their resources in order to accommodate a large array of transportation needs.

However, most do not provide significant amounts of inter-county transportation. All but Greyhound primarily focus on intra-county transit services within a single county. The result is that regional travel options are limited for most area residents.

Transit Services Summary

The following table summarizes and compares the public transportation services offered by the region's major providers. While the local agencies focus on dial-a-ride services, they each have different hours of operation, fare structures and operating policies. These may prove to be significant obstacles as they attempt to present a coordinated image to the public.

**Mid-Columbia Area
Summary of Public Transportation Service Providers***

	Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	THE LINK	Mount Adams Transit (MATS)
Area Served	Hood River County	Wasco County	Klickitat County
Service Area Population	20,439	23,895	19,339
Fleet Size	8	10	8 – 4 in Goldendale 4 in White Salmon
Average Vehicle Requirement	3	10	6
Annual Service Hours	FY 01-02 = 6,923 total hrs.	3,800 per year	
Annual Boardings	FY 01-02 = 24,739 (Total incl. Elderly/Disabled) 4.38 pph	About 30,000 per year About 450 Medicaid trips/month. The LINK provides half of these.	About 36,000 per year

	Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	THE LINK	Mount Adams Transit (MATS)
Service Span Days of Operation Hours of Operation	Monday – Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm	Monday – Friday 8:15 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.	Monday – Friday 6 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Fares	\$1.50 - \$5.00 depending upon destination. See Report	\$1.50 within The Dalles Zone fares to other locations	\$1.50 local \$3.00 intercounty
Populations Served	42% Elderly 28% Disabled 30% General	50% work (primarily sheltered workshop) 34% medical Remainder nutrition and other	Shopping Medical Senior Meals
Types of Service Operated	Dial-a-Ride	Dial-a-Ride	Dial-a-Ride Scheduled deviated fixed route
Percent of Trips Outside One County	20% outside Hood River. Most stay within the county.	THE LINK does not operate outside Wasco County Medicaid brokerage bids out inter-county trips to other operators.	About 40%
Types of Inter-county Service	Demand responsive – do attempt to group trips	None provided	Scheduled deviated fixed route supplemented by additional Dial-a-Ride trips, as needed Scheduled trips dept. Goldendale at 7:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. (2:30 from The Dalles)
Inter-county Destinations	Cascade Locks (Actually Intra-county) The Dalles – Operates one school trip during school year. Otherwise, no regular service.	None	Goldendale – The Dalles White Salmon – Hood River
Existing Connections to Other Systems	Greyhound (Hood River)	Greyhound (The Dalles)	Greyhound (Goldendale-Biggs) Does not work for a one day round trip.
Service and Funding Issues	Special Transportation Fund and Supplemental Special Transportation Fund monies being reduced or eliminate. Without doubt, service will be reduced.	Funding issues forcing reduced service hours effective July 1, 2003.	Greyhound service on north side of river will be eliminated July 1. Funding for the coming fiscal year appears secure.
Other Comments	New multimodal center is being planned just east of Walmart.	-	Mt. Adams operated 4 daily trips to The Dalles. Service was reduced, eliminating its viability as a commute alternative.

	Skamania Senior Services	Sherman County Transit	Greyhound
Area Served	Skamania County	Sherman County	Nationwide
Service Area Population	10,027	1,827	N/a
Fleet Size	1-26 passenger ADA accessible bus 1-15 passenger mini-bus 3-ADA accessible mini-vans 1-automobiles 2- county vehicles for car pools Volunteer vehicles	4 vehicles	N/a
Average Vehicle Requirement	-	4 vehicles	N/a
Annual Service Hours	11,600 hours per year	3,200	N/a
Annual Boardings	Serves 500 people/year 22,000 trips/per year	9,600	Tickets Sold Hood River – 2,019 The Dalles – 1,740
Service Span Days of Operation Hours of Operation	Monday-Friday 8am – 5pm (call center) 6 am – 7 pm (vehicle hours)	Monday-Friday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Extended hours on an as needed basis	Seven days per week Varies depending on community
Fares	Free/Donation	Donations only	Discounts for children & seniors
Populations Served	General public to medical appointments, social service appointments, and essential services	Seniors in need of basic transportation. All county residents	Cross-section of ages and economic groups. Nationwide, most people ride to visit friends and family.
Types of Service Operated	Dial-a-Ride	Dial-a-Ride	Scheduled fixed route service
Percent of Trips Outside One County	50%	85%	100%
Types of Inter-county Service	Medicaid, general public, and seniors dial-a-ride	Dial-a-Ride	Scheduled fixed route service
Inter-county Destinations	Vancouver, Portland, Hood River, The Dalles	Service operates where needed. Bend, The Dalles Portland (including airport)	Goldendale – Biggs The Dalles – Hood River – Cascade Locks - Portland
Existing Connections to Other Systems	None	None	CAT LINK Mt. Adams Transit
Service and Funding Issues	Funding Sources: Medicaid (30%), 5311 (45%), 5310, Aging and Long Term Care, Employment Security, Skyline Hospital, Alternative School, donations	Always an issue. Funding for the coming year is uncertain but agency should be able to continue operation.	Effective July 1, service linking Goldendale with Skamania and Clark counties will be eliminated.
Other Comments	Just received WSDOT grant to service a 1-year		One trip will be adjusted by about 60

	<p>demonstration project for a deviated fix route. Will travel 3-4 times per day along SR 14 to/from Stevenson/Carson to 164th Park & Ride in Vancouver. Starts July 1st. Results of Feasibility Study to be presented at the end of June. Recommendations likely will include the SR14 route, and a recommendation to pursue a vote for a PTBA.</p>		minutes in the future.
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Amtrak	
Area Served	Nationwide
Service Area Population	N/a
Fleet Size	N/a
Average Vehicle Requirement	N/a
Annual Service Hours	N/a
Annual Boardings	1,171 on/off at Bingen/White Salmon in 2002
Service Span	7 days/week
Days of Operation	to Portland – 8:04 a.m.
Hours of Operation	from Portland – 6:21 p.m.
Fares	\$9.00 adult Discounts available
Populations Served	General Populatjio
Types of Service Operated	Passenger Rail
Percent of Trips Outside One County	100%
Types of Inter-county Service	General public
Inter-county Destinations	Portland Destinations east to Chicago
Existing Connections to Other Systems	Mt. Adams Transit

* Services provided by public transportation provider, regardless of whether they are funded through public transit or other funds.

Greyhound currently provides the most visible inter-county transportation within the Mid-Columbia region. Four to six trips per day travel in each direction along Interstate 84 through the Columbia River Gorge. In addition, one trip in each direction serves Goldendale and Moro.

Amtrak offers one daily train in each direction, providing a fast link to Downtown Portland. Service operates along the north side of the river, stopping at a station in Bingen.

Public transportation providers operate three daily inter-county services:

- Mount Adams Transportation Services provides morning and afternoon trips from both Goldendale and White Salmon;
- Columbia Area Transit provides school service to The Dalles; and,
- Skamania County Senior Services began an employment-oriented service featuring two deviated fixed route trips in each direction into Clark County.

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Other providers, such as Columbia Gorge Express, are providing inter-county trips for Medicaid-eligible clients. None of the systems provide transfer privileges. Occasionally, customers may transfer between a public operator and Greyhound but transfers between two public operators is virtually non-existent. This is understandable. Because they feature dial-a-ride operations, each system typically transports customers from their point of origin to their ultimate destination. There is little benefit gained for customers or operators by transferring passengers. This is not likely to change until local operators initiate scheduled inter-county services operating along a fixed route.

Regional Travel Markets

Transportation providers report very different amounts of regional travel, according to their own unique circumstances. The following table summarizes some of the major travel markets identified by stakeholders.

Regional Travel Markets

		To								
From		Cascade Locks	The Dalles	Goldendale	Hood River	Moro	Stevenson	White Salmon	Clark County	Portland
	Cascade Locks	-					Work			
	The Dalles		-		Medical Shopping					Work Medical Shopping
	Goldendale		Work Shopping Medical	-						Medical Shopping
	Hood River	Work	Work Medical Shopping		-		Work			Work Medical Shopping
	Moro		Medical Shopping			-				Medical Shopping
	Stevenson	Work			Work Medical Shopping		-		Work Medical Shopping	Work Shopping
	White Salmon	Work	Work Medical Shopping		Work Medical Shopping		Work	-	Work Medical Shopping	Work Medical

Most significantly, no stakeholder on the Oregon side of the river identified a major travel destination within Washington. Travel across the river was overwhelmingly directed from origins in Washington to destinations in Oregon. The sole exception was a slight interest expressed by some social service agencies in transporting clients to potential worksites at Skamania Lodge and in Clark County. Given the concentration of retail and medical facilities in Hood River and The Dalles, this is not surprising.

Figure 1 illustrates the major travel demand patterns from Mid-Columbia area communities, as expressed by stakeholders. It suggests that there are five significant inter-county travel markets that may hold potential for public transportation providers, shown below in their order of apparent market potential:

- Bi-directional travel between Hood River and The Dalles;
- Travel from The Dalles/Hood River to Portland;
- Travel from White Salmon/Skamania to Clark County;
- Travel from Skamania/White Salmon to Hood River/The Dalles; and
- Travel from Goldendale to The Dalles.

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Figure 1
Existing Regional Travel Patterns

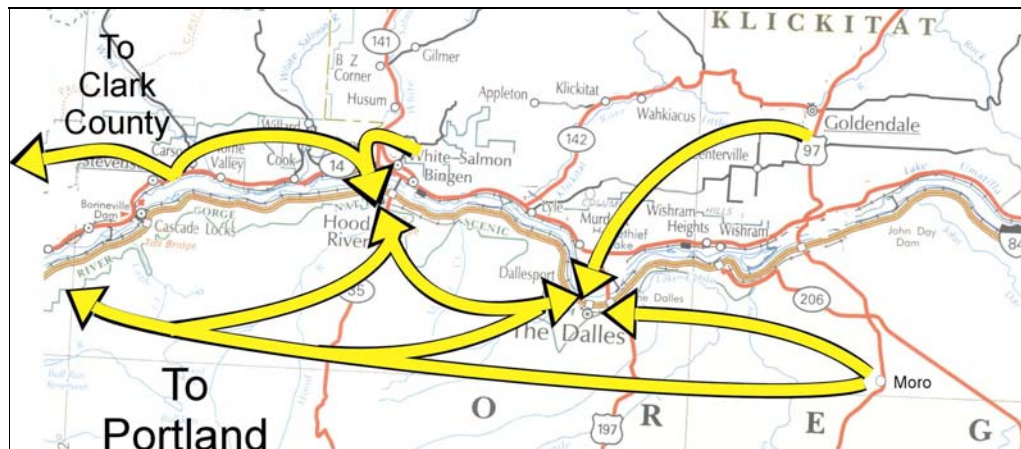
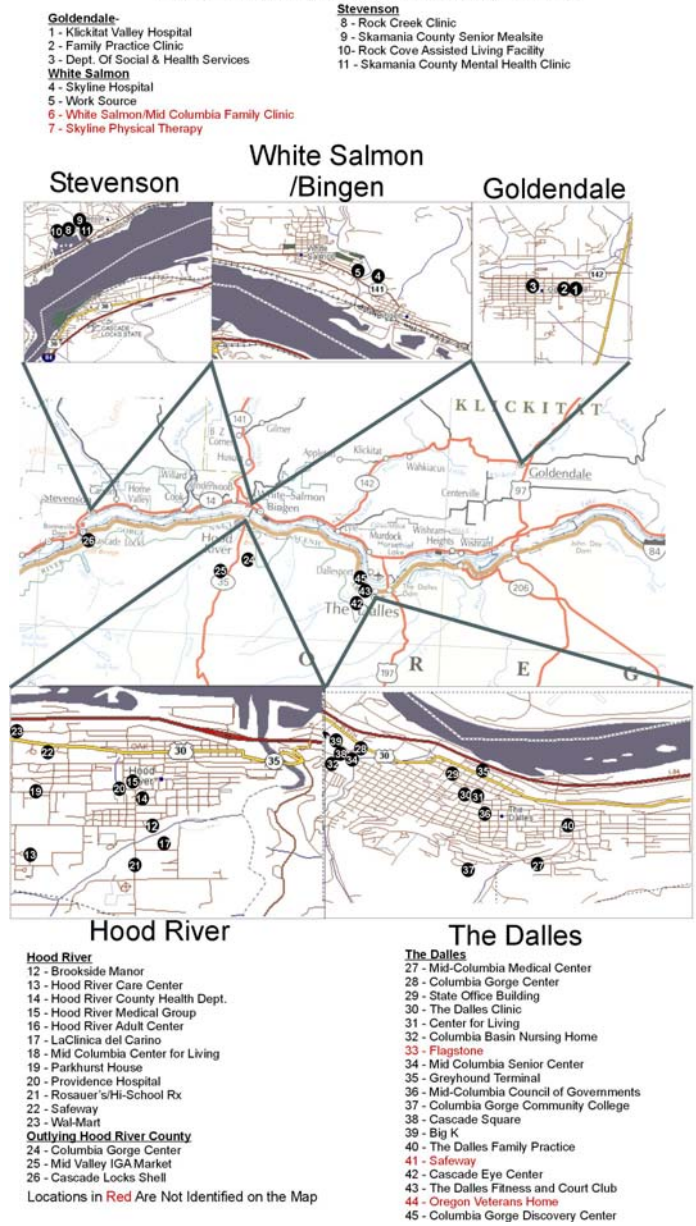


Figure 2 illustrates the location of major transit generators within each of the Mid-Columbia communities. These include medical facilities, housing, employment sites and retail outlets. Most are focused on the region's larger communities.

Figure 2
Travel Generators
Major Traffic Generators in the Mid-Columbia Area
Locations Reporting More than Five Weekly Boardings





Challenges & Options

A number of issues arose during initial discussions with local transit agency staff and initial stakeholder interviews.

Challenges

1. Lack of current inter-system transfer activity

Local operators uniformly report that little inter-system transfer activity currently occurs. Occasionally, riders will transfer from CAT or LINK to the Greyhound services but virtually no other transfer activity takes place. This is partly due to the fact that only Mt. Adams Transit operates regular year-round service into another system's service area and partly because all the operators are dial-a-ride services with a variety of pick up and drop off locations. Point-to-point dial-a-ride service is appropriate for inter-county travel between communities like Hood River, The Dalles and Goldendale. Forcing transfers would likely be time-consuming and unpopular with riders. They only make sense when significant cost savings can be realized by asking riders to change buses.

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2. Obstacles to inter-system coordination

- CAT and LINK rely on Greyhound to link the two systems. While Greyhound's on-time performance is good on eastbound trips, westbound services originate several states away and schedule reliability can suffer, especially during winter months.
- The systems do not share a common fare structure. In addition, fare structures make no provision for individuals who transfer from one system to another.
- To some degree, each of the public operators in other communities is viewed as being for the exclusive benefit of elderly and disabled members of the community, rather than the general public.
- Additionally, transit operators do not have a marketing presence outside of their home county.
- Each system maintains its own identity and markets services separately from the region's other providers. The exception is CAT, which does include reference to Greyhound service on its website.
- Potential temporary closure of the Hood River toll bridge.

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3. Greyhound and Amtrak Service Limitations

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Greyhound considers the services operating between The Dalles and Hood River to be productive services. Three to five people per day purchase tickets in Hood River while ridership out of The Dalles appears to be a bit higher. The vast majority of riders on Greyhound ride through the Columbia Gorge without getting on or off the bus, thus providing acceptable overall patronage levels. Very few people travel between Hood River and The Dalles on Greyhound. Greyhound fares are somewhat higher than those typically charged by public operators.

Like Greyhound, Amtrak services through the Columbia basin are just one part of longer-distance routes. While it is possible for local residents to utilize Amtrak trains for travel into Portland, the schedule – a single daily train in each direction – and the relatively high cost - \$9.00 each way – tends to limit the value of these services for many residents. Still, 1,171 people were recorded getting on or off Amtrak at the Bingen/White Salmon station during 2002.

4. Funding Issues

- The bridges at Hood River and Cascade Locks both charge tolls to public transit, which increases the cost of cross-river transportation.
- Stability and level of funding for all of the public transit operators is uncertain.

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5. Unclear demand

- Both Hood River and The Dalles host a hospital and department store, which reduces the need for travel between the two communities.
- Mt. Adams Transit currently operates two trips each day linking the two towns. Occasionally, additional trips supplement this basic service. When the service operated four daily trips, four to six people typically rode the route.
- Significant demand does not appear to exist for travel from Oregon into Washington.

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6. Sherman County

Some stakeholders in Sherman County are uncertain if viable opportunities exist for coordination with the region's other transportation operators.

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Options

Service coordination has benefits, but it also raises issues that must be addressed before these benefits can be realized. Each system in the Mid-Columbia area has adopted individual operating practices and fare policies that are suited to the communities they serve. At the same time, these individual practices increase service complexities for people attempting to take advantage of a coordinated service.

Three general models are available to the Mid-Columbia operators. They differ in the extent of the uniform operating policies and marketing presence the systems adopt.

Level 1 – Marketing Coordination: This is the most basic level of service coordination, and likely the level where the Mid-Columbia operators will want to begin their coordination effort. Each agency would maintain its own operating policies and market presence, but provide common information outlets that describe and promote services throughout the region. These efforts may include common marketing materials, a regional information number and web site.

Level 2 – Service Coordination: In addition to the marketing efforts undertaken in level 1, local agencies would coordinate their service offerings. This includes providing inter-county services that are designed to benefit residents of both jurisdictions, coordinating transfers and providing multi-system fare instruments. For example, CAT and The Link might jointly fund and operate services that link The Dalles and Hood River, providing passengers continuing to Goldendale transfer opportunities to MATS. By combining separate markets, separate uneconomical market might be combined to fashion an effective service. It also increases administrative complexity.

Level 3 – Service Integration: Taking a step beyond coordinated services, the systems would combine to present a common market image to customers. While they might retain their local funding and administration, they would combine their fare policies, vehicle paint designs and local marketing efforts.

There appears to be little benefit served by pursuing the level of service integration envisioned in Level 3. However, as the transit providers are able to expand their inter-county service offerings, they may benefit from the type of service

coordination envisioned in Level 2. The following section illustrates how such a coordinated system could be realized over time.

In the near term, most coordination efforts should focus on customer information and market development, where limited resources can be effectively combined to improve community recognition of available public transportation services. Still, there do appear to be some opportunities to coordinate services. The following sections discuss long-term service alternatives and short-range actions that will move towards accomplishing longer-term goals.



Coordination Strategies

Based upon an analysis of the current transportation services and the results of the stakeholder interviews, the following coordination strategies are suggested to coordinate transportation services within and between Hood River County, Wasco County, and Sherman County in Oregon state; and Skamania County and Klickitat County in Washington state. The strategies are listed in terms of a long-term vision for improvements to existing services, short-term strategies that are low-cost options, and alternative options that may need additional analysis.

Vision

Long-term recommendations

Over time, the public transportation providers in the Mid-Columbia region intend to develop a closely coordinated network of services that retains the individual identity of each service provider while offering a unified service and fare structure that exploits a common marketing identity. The system will serve the general public, but primarily function as a safety net for those that are unable to transport themselves, such as seniors, people with disabilities, children, and people without dependable vehicles. This system will include the following features:

1. **Autonomous:** Service providers in each county will retain responsibility for providing travel that is limited to that jurisdiction.
2. **Extended Services:** The system will provide transportation within and between service areas. Operations will be daily, with limited service on weekends and evenings.
3. **Regional Information Line:** A regional information line will be established where callers can learn about the local and regional services offered by each of the Mid-Columbia partners. This regional phone center will have the ability to transfer callers to local systems when they desire to book a trip. Local operators will retain their individual trip reservation and dispatch functions.
4. **Local Dial-A-Ride:** Recognizing the nature of communities within the Mid-Columbia region, most local services will operate as dial-a-ride. However, some fixed route or deviated fixed route services may be appropriate as demand along individual corridors increases.

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5. **Regional Fixed/Deviated Routes:** Fixed route and deviated fixed route services will link the region's major communities – The Dalles, Moro, Hood River, Cascade Locks, Stevenson, White Salmon, Bingen, and Goldendale. Building off the existing network of services provided by Greyhound, Amtrak and the local providers, new services will be added as justified by demand. To minimize costs, and reduce agency's exposure to risk, these improvements will be incremental. As funding and demand allows, hours of operation will be expanded to facilitate commute trips.
 - As resources permit, and demand justifies, local transit agencies may establish new intercity services that supplement Greyhound and Amtrak. Initially, new routes will operate on an advance reservation-only basis. To encourage grouping, scheduled trip times will be established. People will need to call in advance to schedule a ride. If no rides are scheduled the trip will not operate. Services linking The Dalles and Hood River may be a good place to start this effort.
 - Once enough demand has been created that trips operate every day, bus stop locations will be established where customers are able to board the bus without making an advance reservation.
 - Ultimately, the dial-a-ride features of intercity trips may be entirely eliminated. Service will operate between fixed stops where passengers are able to transfer to local transit services in order to complete their trip. This will only be done when ridership has grown to a point where in-bus times for some riders would otherwise be excessive.
6. **Coordinated Transit and Medicaid Transportation:** Transportation services will be more fully coordinated between the public transit systems and the Medicaid transportation services in and between Oregon and Washington.
7. **Common Fares:** A common fare structure, which provides for intersystem transferability, will be adopted. While paying a single fare, customers will be able to transfer from a local operator to Greyhound, or between local operators.
8. **Regional Marketing:** Consolidated marketing materials will publicize inter-system fare and service coordination.
9. **Regional Organizational Framework:** The Mid-Columbia regional transportation area will have an organizational framework that will support ongoing regional coordination.

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Short-Term Strategies

Low-cost recommendations for the near-term

Given funding constraints, service expansion in the near-term is not expected. However, several low-cost strategies currently exist that will build upon existing services, and towards the long-term vision.

1. **Share the Vision:** Begin marketing the shared vision for transportation services in the region. Hold regional public meetings 2-3 per year for input on the regional transportation system and ways to improve regional services. Possibly “piggyback” regional public meetings of other organizations such as the RTPO/MPO).
2. **Link Websites:** Currently none of the transit providers include links to the other provider’s websites. This small step will be way of recognizing the increasing coordination planned for the future.
3. **Publish Fares:** Local transit operators should provide information about fares in their printed materials and on their websites. Cost is an important determinant when individuals make travel decisions and it should be readily available.
4. **Fill Capacity:** As a means of encouraging reverse direction travel and filling seating capacity, work to combine trip purposes on a single vehicle. Examples include:
 - Make seats available to residents who live outside the home service area.
 - Make inter-city connections between Skamania County Senior Services with the Mt. Adams Transit services across the river and along SR-14.
 - Publicize information about departure times, fares and reservation procedures for such regularly scheduled services available for inter-regional use.

Agencies will need to balance the predictability provided by fixed departure times for inter-regional connections with the continuing need to minimize operating costs by avoiding empty vehicles, as well as the need for flexible departure times, especially when providing medical transportation.

5. **Grant Coordination:** Whenever possible, local operators should cooperate in order to secure outside funding assistance, such as Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC) grants, Washington State Vanpool Assistance and Special Needs funding, Scenic Byway and Federal Land funds, to pursue the regional vision.

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6. **Amtrak and Greyhound-Related Strategies:** Recognizing that funding limitations may limit any new services along some corridors, Greyhound and Amtrak may need to continue as the major intercity service providers along some corridors. Opportunities to make this a more effective service:
 - Greyhound and Amtrak may be able to foster a new market if they offer discounted ticket books for people who regularly travel between The Dalles and Hood River, or to Portland. As market visibility increases, people may find this a convenient way to shop or travel to routine medical appointments.
 - Recognizing that bus service along the north shore of the Columbia will be eliminated on July 1, 2003, Greyhound should consider adding a stop in Cascade Locks on its bus that leaves Portland at 10:30 p.m.. This has been requested by Skamania County residents and would provide improved travel opportunities for Skamania County residents.
 - CAT and LINK should provide Greyhound schedule and fare information in their printed materials and websites.
7. **Van/Car Pooling:** Local operators should increase their efforts to market ridesharing services, such as RideMatch. They could use these same efforts to develop and coordinate a pool of volunteer drivers, who would provide employment transportation alternatives into Portland and Vancouver.
8. **Reduced Tolls:** The transportation providers should jointly work to negotiate free or reduced bridge tolls across the river. If successful, this will lower future operating costs for coordinated services.

Additional Strategies for Consideration

Options in need of more analysis

1. **Bike Racks:** Depending on feasibility of cost and usage, consider adding bike racks to buses. This will offer a bike riders and outdoor enthusiasts an opportunity to bike to places not serviced by local providers. Several models are available on the open market. Most mount of the front of the vehicle and cost about \$1,200-\$1,500. Grant funding is often available for this type of purchase.

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2. **Employer/Business Transportation:** Businesses could provide transportation for employees (e.g. Skamania Lodge) or for shopping (Wal-Mart) for residents who are shut out because they lack transportation options.

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3. **Community Jobs/Van Pool Program:** Duplicate Community Jobs Van Pool program operating in several Washington counties that provides driver training opportunities to Community Jobs participants. The trained Community Jobs drivers provide employment-related transportation to WorkFirst participants. Potentially could be funded through a JARC grant.

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4. **Environmental Partnerships/Federal Funding:** Possible funding and marketing relationships could be developed with environmental groups in some parts of the Mid-Columbia region. Also, various federal funding may be available including:

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- National Scenic Byways Grant: The Federal Highways Administration solicits eligible projects each federal fiscal year. This year applications are due September 26, 2003. Categories for eligible activities are
 1. State Programs
 2. Corridor Management Plan
 3. Safety Improvements
 4. Byway Facilities
 5. Access to Recreation
 6. Resource Protection
 7. Interpretive Information
 8. Marketing

Applicants must work with their State scenic byway coordinator to submit the federal application. The State may have an earlier deadline for the application. Washington Coordinator is Paula Connelley, 360-705-7895; and the Oregon Coordinator is Pat Moran, 503-986-4261. For more information, go to www.byways.org.

- **Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, Economic Development Program:** The Oregon and Washington Investment Boards manage this grant to ensure grants and loans are consistent with the National Scenic Act, the management plan, and land use ordinances. The guidelines for the program are very targeted on economic development, with an emphasis on job creation. Transportation is a key element of both economic development and job creation. The Oregon contact is the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, 541-296-2266; and the Washington contact is Peggy Bryan of the Skamania Economic Development Council, email pbryan@skamania-edc.org or the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, 360-753-2221.

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- **Federal Land Highways Program:** The Federal Lands Highways Program (FLHP) provides funding for a coordinated program of public roads and transit facilities serving Federal and Indian lands. Contact the regional FHWA coordinators for more information: Dave Brown (360) 619-7602 or Robert Lale (360) 619-7717.

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5. **511 Transportation Line:** Monitor the development of the nationwide "511" transportation telephone line. Research the opportunities to utilize this service as a local information and referral hotline.

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6. **School Coordination:** Recognizing that Oregon school districts and transit agencies are experiencing severe financial constraints, begin discussing possible service coordination and consolidation opportunities that may reduce costs for both.

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7. **Utilize the Toll-Free Medicaid Line:** The Mid-Columbia transportation partners could leverage the toll-free number of the Washington and Oregon Medicaid brokerages as an access point for general transportation information and referral. The local providers could train the Medicaid broker operators

about their available services, and provide the ability for operators to forward calls to the appropriate agency.

8. **Oregon and Washington Medicaid Brokers:** The Oregon and Washington Medicaid transportation brokers serving the areas (Oregon-Mid-Columbia Council of Governments; Washington-Human Services Council) should begin discussing the feasibility of sharing trip information and coordinating intercity and interstate trips. Coordinating the regional information line may be a good first step.
9. **Consolidation:** If budgetary concerns force major service reductions at LINK and Columbia Area Transit, the two systems should consider merging their reservation services as a cost reduction measure.



Next Steps

The following five tasks and schedule are appropriate next steps for the Mid-Columbia transportation partners.

1. Formalize the Mid-Regional Transportation Group, which could include selecting a lead agency, agreeing on operational and decision-making procedures, and agreeing on a time and location for regular meetings. (August-September 2003)
2. Select a grant committee of the Mid-Regional Transportation Group to identify and pursue grants to further the long-term vision. (begin on-going process in August 2003)
3. Implement the first phase of agreed upon coordination strategies. (start in August, prior to Step 4)
4. Develop regional transit guide and website, including regional logo. The guide and website will need to eventually be available in Spanish. Market the guide and website. (after completion of Step 3 – complete by June 30, 2004)
5. Analyze the additional strategies for coordination for possible future implementation. (January – June 2004)

Local transportation partners in the Mid-Columbia region – including the transit agencies, private transportation providers, social service providers, health care agencies, and senior services – have formed strong cooperative relationships that will pay dividends in the future. They have made progress in the face of restricted funding and geographic limitations.

It is anticipated that the demand for public transportation services will grow in the area. To meet these future demands, more coordination of services will be required of the transportation partners. This document is intended to serve as a tool to assist them as they move towards their collective vision of regional transportation.

Appendix A: Stakeholder Interviews

Mid-Columbia Transportation Region
Stakeholder Interviews

Hood River County

Columbia Area Transit, Dan Schwanz
Chamber of Commerce, Craig Schmidt
La Clinica del Carino, Paul Moyer and Lindsay
Gorge Counseling & Treatment, Debbie Hanna
Ray Yasui Dialysis Center, Sandra Scott
Ray Yasui Dialysis Center, Liza Green
Hood River Hospital, Jean Sheppard
Hood River Adult Services, Judy

Wasco County

Mid-Columbia Council of Governments/Link, Gail Sackmaster
Veteran's Service, Linda Adams
Columbia Gorge Community College, Dennis Whitehouse
The Dalles Chamber of Commerce, Susan Huntington
Columbia Gorge Tours, Mark and Don Renner
Mid-Columbia Medical Center, Joyce Powell-Morin (attempted contact)

Sherman County

Moro Medical Clinic, Linda Thompson
Sherman County Bus, Lori Danielson
Sherman County Bus, Liz Kennedy
Sherman County Clerk, Linda Cornie
Sherman County Commissioner, Sherry Kaseberg (attempted contact)
Sherman County Judge, Mike McArthur (attempted contact)

Skamania County

Skamania County Senior Services, Darlene Dickson
DSHS, Stevenson CSO, Lisa Bleak
DSHS, Developmental Disabilities, Amy Price
Employment Security, Dee McGrath (Community Jobs) and Bernice (WorkFirst)

Klickitat County

Mount Adams Transit, Roger Gadway
Klickitat Valley Hospital, Ron Ingrahm
Klickitat County Health Department, Kevin Barry
Mt Adams Chamber of Commerce, Carl McNew
Mt Adams Chamber of Commerce, Debra Reed
Goldendale Chamber of Commerce, Gwen Mosbruecker
Skyline Hospital, Michael Madden (attempted contact)

Klickitat County CSO, Kathy Brokus (attempted contact)
WorkSource Columbia Gorge, Ann Goranson-Salas (attempted contact)

Other Oregon/Washington

Forest Service, Mike Ferris
Oregon Department of Human Services, Rene DuBois, Carol Mauser, Cary
Oregon Park and Recreation, Kevin Price (attempted contact)
Mid-Columbia Economic Development District: Lee Curtis, Andrea Klass, Bill Fashing
Nuestra Comunidad Sana, Lorena
Oregon Department of Transportation, Robin Phillips
Greyhound, Sean Sweeney
Columbia Gorge Express and Tours, Brian Cunningham and Patricia Byrnes
Human Services Council, Medicaid Broker: Gail Bauhs
SW Regional Transportation, Dale Robbins

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Appendix B: Columbia Area Transit Fares



Fares are charged for each one-way trip. Exact change or a ticket available upon boarding. Drivers do not carry or sell tickets. Children 6 years of age and under ride free when accompanied by a responsible adult. Contact the C.A.T. office for ticket purchasing information.

Hood River	Fares	All prices are one-way
	General Public	\$1.25
	Senior/Person with Disabilities	\$1.25
	General Public Ticket books - 20 tickets	\$25.00
	Senior/Person with Disabilities Ticket books - 20 tickets	\$22.50
Odell	General Public	\$1.50
	Senior/Person with Disabilities	\$1.50
	General Public Ticket books - 20 tickets	\$30.00
	Senior/Person with Disabilities Ticket books - 20 tickets	\$27.00
Parkdale	General Public	\$2.00
	Senior/Person with Disabilities	\$2.00
	General Public Ticket books - 20 tickets	\$40.00
	Senior/Person with Disabilities Ticket books - 20 tickets	\$36.00
Cascade Locks	General Public	\$2.25
	Senior/Person with Disabilities	\$2.25
	General Public Ticket books - 20 tickets	\$45.00
	Senior/Person with Disabilities Ticket books - 20 tickets	\$40.50
The Dalles	General Public	\$4.00
	Senior/Person with Disabilities	\$4.00
	Shopping Trip Fares (special days for shopping - the fare takes care of all stops for shopping)	
Hood River	Wednesdays	\$2.50
Odell	Fridays	\$3.00
Parkdale	Fridays	\$4.00
Cascade Locks	Tuesdays	\$4.50
Sno-Cat		\$5.00

Appendix C: Greyhound Schedule and Fares



Note: This section includes Greyhound schedule information for all services provided within the Mid-Columbia region.

Agent Location: The agent offices are at 600 E Marina Way in the same building as the State of Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). This building is located at the Port of Hood River's Marina site.

Bus Depot Location: The bus depot location is east of the agent's office. You can meet the bus in front of the Port of Hood River office building on Marina Way.

Scheduled Arrival/Departure Times

Services to The Dalles and Hood River

Eastbound Services

Portland	Cascade Locks	Hood River	The Dalles	Biggs	Continues to:
10:15 a.m.	flag	11:30	12:05	12:30	Spokane
1:00 p.m.		2:10	2:40/2:45	3:10	Salt Lake
3:35 p.m.		4:50	5:20/5:25	5:50	Salt Lake
10:30 p.m.		11:40	12:10	12:35	Salt Lake

Westbound Services

From	Biggs	The Dalles	Hood River	Cascade Locks	Portland
Salt Lake	2:30 a.m.	2:55/3:00	3:30		4:40
Spokane	8:00 a.m.	8:25/8:30	9:05	flag	10:20
Salt Lake	1:40 p.m.	2:05/2:10	2:40	flag	3:55
	3:30 p.m.	3:55/4:00	4:30		5:40
Spokane	5:15 p.m.	6:10/5:45	6:20		8:00
Salt Lake	10:50 p.m.	11:15/11:20	-		12:45

Services to Goldendale and Moro**Southbound Services**

From	Goldendale	Biggs	Moro	Continues to:
Seattle	4:50 p.m.	5:15/6:15	flag	Redding

Northbound Services

From	Moro	Biggs	Goldendale:	Continues to:
Redding	flag	12:25/1:15 p.m.	1:40	Seattle

Greyhound Fare Structure

Destination	One-Way Fare
Between Hood River & The Dalles	\$7.50
Hood River to Portland	\$11.00
The Dalles to Portland	\$16.00

Appendix D: Columbia Gorge Express Fares



Motor Coach Motor Coach: 47 passengers

- Trip Permit Fee: \$100.00 per day
- Drive rate: \$165.00 per hour
- Stand-by/Non-driving rate: \$35.00 per hour

Shuttle Bus: 12-16 passengers

- Trip Permit Fee: none
- Drive rate: \$115.00 per hour
- Stand-by/Non-driving rate: \$20.00 per hour

To experience Columbia Gorge Express– call for more information and a **price quote** at 1-888-386-6822. Hood River Office (541) 386-3594