

Wasco County

Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan



Prepared by:

Mid-Columbia Economic
Development District

Adopted XXXXX 2020

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Wasco County Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan

Executive Summary

The Wasco County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan was prepared by the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) to meet state and federal requirements for Special Transportation Fund (STF) agencies and the State of Oregon's requirements for Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Qualified Entities. MCEDD has operated the LINK Public Transit for Wasco County since 2018, providing operational, management, and administrative services.

The Wasco County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan will be referred to as the Coordinated Plan in this document.

Target Populations

The Coordinated Plan focuses on addressing the transportation needs of four target populations residing in Wasco County:

1. Older Adults and Elders
2. Low income individuals
3. Individuals with disabilities
4. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals

Older Adult and Elder Population

Wasco County residents are older and more likely to have a disability than the statewide average. Nearly one-fifth of the population of the County is over the age of 65, according to the 2018 American Community Survey, which represents a higher proportion when compared to the State. And although the percent of Wasco County's aging population is forecasted to remain relatively stable, Wasco County's total population is increasing. There will be a growing number of older adults needing to access the transportation programs in the County.

Individuals with Low Incomes

The federal poverty threshold for a four-person household is \$25,701.¹ This means that in the United States an individual who has an income of less than \$34 per day or a family of four with a total income

¹ <http://federalsafetynet.com>

less than \$69 per day meet the definition of living in poverty. In 2019, 13.4% of people (or more than 1 in 10) living in Wasco County lived below the federal poverty level, higher than the State's proportion of 12.6%.²

The Wasco County STIF Plan defines all of Wasco County as an area with a high percentage of low income households: 1) "Low Income Household" is a household the total income of which does not exceed 200% of the poverty guidelines. 2) "High Percentage of Low-Income Households" is defined as higher than the Oregon state average. Data from the 2016 American Community Survey was used to calculate the percentage of low income households in Wasco County at 37% (3900 households) by using the dataset for individuals and converting it to households using the average household size of 2.42 for Wasco County. The Advisory Committee reviewed but rejected census tract-level data, feeling that the low-income Latino population of the County was underrepresented at that geography. As Oregon's state average is 35% of low income households and Wasco County is 37%, all of Wasco County is designated as an area with a high percentage of low-income households in this STIF Plan. Wasco County's Public Transportation Advisory Committee recommended and the Wasco County Board of Commissioners approved defining all of Wasco County as an area with a high percentage of low-income households because the dataset for families and the dataset for individuals are both higher than Oregon state average.

More than 1 in 3 residents of Wasco County (35%) live with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty threshold, or \$25,520. For a family of four, the threshold is a total income of \$49,200.³

Residents with low incomes struggle to afford the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, housing, and transportation. Public transportation can be a lifeline to these families and individuals, giving them access to critical resources and services and also allowing upward mobility by providing affordable transportation to jobs and higher education.

Individuals with Disabilities

The American Community Survey defines an individual with disabilities as a person who has serious difficulty with four basic areas of functioning – hearing, vision, cognition, and ambulation. At 18.2%, the percentage of people with a disability living in Wasco County is higher than the State's average.⁴ Both fixed route and demand-response public transportation services can provide these residents with the ability to live with more independence and to participate more fully in community life.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Individuals

This fourth focal point targets the needs of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals and was added at the recommendation of the 2016 Association of Oregon Counties/ODOT Pilot Project that focused on better coordinating the transportation needs of LEP individuals in Hood River, Wasco and Sherman

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates. 2014-2018

³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates. 2014-2018

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates. 2014-2018

Counties. This work was first incorporated into the 2016-2020 Coordinated Plan. This Coordinated Plan includes project updates and recommendations for future projects.

Individuals with limited English language skills face many barriers when accessing public services like transportation. With thoughtful planning and outreach efforts and policies, a transportation provider can help to mitigate these difficulties and can create a more accessible system for all residents.

What is a Coordinated Plan?

A Coordinated Plan is developed as a tool to help local transportation providers and communities improve transportation services, increase efficiency of service delivery, and expand outreach to meet growing needs. It provides a framework to guide the investment of transportation resources.

As such a resource, this plan will:

1. Evaluate community resources.
2. Assess and document transportation needs of the four target populations.
3. Identify strategies to address gaps in transportation services as well as in efficiencies of service delivery.
4. Establish relative priorities of the strategies.

This document is an update to the 2016-2020 Wasco County Coordinated Transportation Plan. It was updated using information collected from the previous coordinated transportation plan, demographic sources, new surveys and outreach efforts, and current service resources. The Coordinated Plan also includes relevant information from other local and regional planning efforts:

- 2016 Transit Feasibility Analysis (The Dalles Transportation System Plan)
- 2016 North Central Oregon Coordinated Human Services Transportation Pilot Project (MCEDD)
- 2019 Transportation Innovations Through Collective Impact (MCEDD)
- 2019 Community Health Assessment (Columbia Gorge Health Council)

Coordinated Public Transportation Plan Priorities

A Coordinated Plan is intended to define and prioritize general strategies that the transit service providers can use to address gaps and barriers. High priority strategies to address gaps and barriers, as prioritized by the Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee, fell under six categories. Performance measures linked to the below strategies were created to help the public transportation provider assess how it is meeting these strategies over time.

Sustain Existing Transportation Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain dial-a-ride transportation operations.• Maintain shopping bus programs.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with Columbia Area Transit to continue intercity service to Hood River and Portland.
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for replacement of vehicles that have exceeded their useful life. • Provide funding for vehicle repair and preventative maintenance for safe and reliable transport. • Explore fleet electrification or other Lo/No emission options. • Maintain affordable fares. • Address staff language and cultural training skills to meet the needs of those with Limited English Proficiency. • Adopt strategies to diversify transit staff and hire Spanish speaking drivers and dispatchers. • Adopt appropriate technologies to enhance rider facing tools • Adopt technology that will enhance coordination with other transportation providers.
Service Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address employment transportation needs: identify funding and establish cooperative partnerships with employers. • Identify resources to provide access to affordable transportation service in the early morning hours, evenings and weekends. • Continue to expand fixed route services. • Seek funding and partnerships for a Gorge to Portland medical facilities service.
Stable funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to leverage all match against state and federal grants. • Identify and utilize potential additional sources/partners to support local operational funding or local match.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Coordinated Care Organization and Transportation Brokerage to increase share of Non Emergency Medical Transportation rides.
Marketing/Education/Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve bilingual marketing and public awareness of the County’s transportation services and how to access them. • Address safety and security concerns and needs of a diverse population • Address the ease of using the system for target populations with better connections to natural community points, such as the Next Door, Inc, and Community Health Workers. • Market and promote the system to ensure target populations are aware of the services available. • Develop targeted needs assessment, outreach, and travel training programs for specific populations including Veterans, Native Americans, and people with disabilities.
Planning and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support coordination between the Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Department of Transportation (Public Transportation Division), and the current Coordinated Care Organization to ensure alignment of state agency goals. • Attend the regular meetings of organizations representative of the target populations. • Continue participation in the Gorge TransLink Alliance. • Leverage stronger partnerships with human service agencies. • Leverage partnerships with the Community College, large employers and businesses, local government leaders and staff.



Introduction

Federal and State Requirements

This Coordinated Plan meets both federal and state requirements for preparation and adoption of a Coordinated Plan. Projects submitted for FTA and State funding must be included in the Coordinated Plan or similarly acceptable adopted plan.

Federal

With the passage of Federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) transportation authorization in 2005, Congress required a “locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan” intended to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, individuals who are elderly, and individuals with lower incomes.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires recipients of FTA Section 5310 program funds to engage in a coordinated planning process to broaden the dialogue and support coordination between public transportation and human services transportation supporting key target populations. These funds are administered by the states.

State

The Special Transportation Fund was created in 1985 by the Oregon Legislature. This is allocated by the Oregon Legislature every two years to 42 jurisdictions around the state including Wasco County. It is funded by cigarette tax revenue, excess revenue earned from sales of photo ID Cards, and other funds from the Oregon Department of Transportation. The STF Program provides a flexible, coordinated, reliable and continuing source of revenue in support of transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities of any age. The Oregon Legislature intended that STF funds be used to provide transportation services needed to access health, education, work, and social/recreational opportunities so that seniors and people with disabilities may live as independently and productively as possible. The funds may be used for any purpose directly related to transportation services, including transit operations, capital equipment, planning, travel training and other transit-related purposes.

In 2017, Section 122 of [Keep Oregon Moving](#) (Oregon House Bill 2017) established a new dedicated source of funding for expanding public transportation service in Oregon. The Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) was created through a new state payroll tax of one-tenth of 1 percent that is dedicated to funding transportation improvements in Oregon.

Wasco County is the STF agency and the STIF Qualified Entity that receives these state transportation funds. The Wasco County STIF Advisory Committee was established by the Wasco County Board of

County Commissioners on August 1, 2018 in accordance with the state rules for receiving the STIF dollars for Wasco County. In June, 2020, the Wasco County STF and STIF Advisory Committees were merged into one committee called the Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC). As operator of the LINK Public Transit, MCEDD serves as staff to this committee and helps the PTAC to develop a STIF Plan that includes a list of projects required to address the transportation needs of people residing in or traveling into and out of the Qualified Entity's area of responsibility.

In June of 2020, the Oregon legislature passed SB 1601, which provided immediate flexibility to use Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Formula funds to maintain existing services and will also consolidate the Special Transportation Fund (STF) with the STIF Formula funds, effective on July 1, 2023.

The State of Oregon requires Special Transportation Fund (STF) agencies to prepare a coordinated human services transportation plan to guide the investment of STF monies and Section 5310 funds to improve transportation programs and services for seniors and people with disabilities. The State of Oregon also requires Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Qualified Entities to have a current approved Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan in order to receive STIF funds.

Plan Purpose and Intent

The purpose of the plan is to meet federal and state requirements and to provide a framework for transportation providers and Wasco County to maximize transportation investments to assist four target populations: seniors, individuals with low incomes, individuals with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency individuals. It covers a four-year timeframe (2020-2024) and is intended to be reviewed at least every three years or as conditions change.

The Wasco County Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan addresses the existing transportation services and needs of residents in Wasco County, Oregon, and identifies available resources and strategies to create efficiencies, reduce redundancy, and continue to enable high-quality public transportation services. The Coordinated Plan seeks to improve the mobility of all Wasco County residents, focusing on the target populations and ensuring that those who rely on public transportation have access to medical care, jobs, higher education, social connectivity, recreation, and other basic services to maintain quality of life.

Foundation for the Wasco County Transit Development Plan

In 2019 Wasco County received a Transportation and Growth Management Grant to develop a Transit Development Plan for the Link Public Transit. The planning process will launch in the fall of 2020 with the anticipated date of completion in 2021. The information and priorities identified in the Coordinated Plan will be used as part of the Wasco County Transit Development Plan planning process.

Planning Area

The planning area covered under this coordinated transportation plan is Wasco County, Oregon, established in 1854. Wasco County is located on the northern border of Oregon between Hood River and Sherman counties. The County covers 2,381 square miles with an average of approximately 10 people per square mile.⁵ It is bordered by the Columbia River to the north, Deschutes River to the east, Warm Springs Reservation to the south, and Mt. Hood National Forest to the west. Incorporated cities include The Dalles, Dufur, Maupin, Mosier, Antelope, and Shaniko. Antelope (46 people) and Shaniko (36 people)⁶ however, are smaller than many CDP's and unincorporated areas. The nearest metropolitan area is Portland, Oregon, 80 miles to the west.

The most northern section of Wasco County is within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area which encompasses six counties across two states, Oregon and Washington, along the Columbia River. This federal designation ties the region together. Residents, including those in the four special populations of this Coordinated Plan, cross jurisdictional borders daily to meet multiple needs.

⁵ US Census Bureau 2010 Census

⁶ <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/wasco-county-or#economy>

Planning Process

Public Involvement and Outreach

The Coordinated Plan was updated based on outreach and input from local transit providers, the Public Transportation Advisory Committee, stakeholders, and interested members of the public. Stakeholders include the target populations, agencies with significant contact with the four special needs populations, and entities providing transportation services, human service agencies, community organizations, medical facilities, and the public. Stakeholders were involved in identifying transportation needs of the target populations, the transportation resources available, and strategies to address the needs. Information was gathered through stakeholder interviews, stakeholder meetings, public meetings, and surveys.

One-on-one interviews were held with the Link Public Transit administrators, dispatch staff, and drivers. The Public Transportation Advisory Committee guided the planning and outreach process by identifying stakeholders, giving input on survey findings and strategy and project priorities, and commenting on the draft plan.

Public Transportation Advisory Committee

The Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) is appointed by the Wasco County Board of County Commissioners to provide recommendations on funding priorities consistent with the state or federal program guidance for each public transportation fund source and in the best interest of the citizens of Wasco County. PTAC specifically advises and assists Wasco County in carrying out the requirements of three funding programs: the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF), the Special Transportation Fund (STF) program, and the Federal Transit Administration's Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program (Section 5310). As such, PTAC serves as the STF Advisory Committee and the STIF Advisory Committee for Wasco County and the Wasco County Board of County Commissioners.

The Public Transportation Advisory Committee members reflect the county's diverse interests, perspectives, geography, and the demographics. The committee includes at least one member each who is a member of or represents the following three groups:

- (a) Low income individuals
- (b) Seniors or people with disabilities
- (c) Public Transportation Service Providers or non-profit entities which provide public transportation service.

Additionally, the PTAC includes up to four (4) additional members may be representatives from any of the following groups:

1. local governments, including land use planners
2. non-profit public transportation service providers,
3. neighboring public transportation service providers,
4. employers,
5. social and human service providers,
6. transit dependent users,
7. social equity advocates,
8. environmental advocates,
9. bicycle and pedestrian advocates,
10. people with limited-English proficiency,
11. educational institutions,
12. major destination

Current Public Transportation Advisory Committee members:

- Committee Chair Lee Bryant, representing individuals age 65 or older
- Jim Holycross, representing residents of South Wasco County and people with disabilities
- Kris Boler, Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc., representing individuals age 65 or older
- Rita Rathkey, Opportunity Connections, representing people with disabilities
- Maria Pena, North Central Public Health District, representing low-income individuals and people with Limited English Proficiency
- Charlotte Sallee, LINK Public Transportation, representing public transportation service providers
- Louise Sargent, representing individuals age 65 or older

Public Meetings

Public meetings were held on the following dates for the 2020-2023 plan update

- Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee, The Link Transit Center Conference Room, The Dalles: October 2019, January 2020, May 2020, October 2020.
- Public Open House, Columbia Gorge Community College, The Dalles: August 29, 2019
- Wasco County Board of Commissioners, County Building, The Dalles: December 16, 2019; December X, 2020

Surveys

Public, Agency, and On-Board surveys were developed using the templates from the previous Coordinated Plan survey effort, but modified to reflect the new deviated fixed route service and to include demographic questions. All surveys were available in both paper and online using the

SurveyMonkey platform. Surveys were translated into Spanish using a local, professional translating service.

Paper surveys were distributed to the Department of Human Services, the Mid-Columbia Senior Center, Area Agency on Aging, Community Health Workers, Mid-Columbia Health Equity Advocates, the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority, the Veterans Service Office in The Dalles, and the Oregon Food Bank in The Dalles. Paper surveys were also distributed at the Public Transportation Open House in August 2019 and the Gorge Connect event on January 30, 2020, that brings together 20+ human service organizations to connect with houseless residents in The Dalles. An onboard paper survey was developed and printed for riders of the Link, but distribution was halted when the Governor's Stay at Home order was implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Online survey information and links to access the online surveys were shared with the Community Advisory Council of the Columbia Gorge Health Council, Department of Human Services, Area Agency on Aging, Community Health Workers, North Central Public Health District, Next Door Inc, the Oregon Food Bank in Wasco County, and the Mid-Columbia Senior Center. Survey information and links were posted on the Gorge TransLink and the Link's Facebook pages, the Gorge TransLink website, MCEEDD's newsletter, City of Maupin newsletter, and City of Mosier newsletter and website.

The following organizations distributed paper copies and electronic links to a SurveyMonkey survey. Of the total 92 surveys returned, 72 were responses via SurveyMonkey and 20 were paper copies. Of the total, 8 Agency Staff surveys were returned. Highlights from the results can be found in Appendix F.

DHS—Aging and People with Disabilities

DHS—Vocational Rehab

DHS—Self-Sufficiency

Mid-Columbia Center for Living—The Dalles

Mid-Columbia Housing Authority

Opportunity Connections

The Dalles Senior Center

The Dalles Senior Center—Meals on Wheels

Wasco County Veterans Service Office

North Central Public Health

The Next Door, Inc:

- Mid-Columbia Health Equity Advocates
- Abogadores
- Natives on the Big River

Columbia River Community Health Workers Collaborative

Bridges to Health Pathways Huddle

Organizing Latin Advocates

City of Mosier

City of Maupin

Gorge TransLink—website and social media

The Link—social media

Group Meetings

Where Group Meetings are indicated, the Mobility Manager attended the regular meeting(s) of the individual agency or organization to present information about the development of the Coordinated Plan update and to solicit feedback from the attendees.

Interviews

Where interviews are indicated, the Mobility Manager conducted a one-on-one interview with an organization representative.

List of Stakeholders

The following stakeholders participated in meetings, interviews, and/or the survey and gave input on transportation needs, services, gaps and solutions, and feedback on the draft plan.

Primary Staff Contact	Agency	Contact Information	Interview/Group Meeting/Surveys
Staff: Director, Operations Director	The Link Public Transit	(541) 296-7595 deputy@mcedd.org transportationoperationsdirector@mcedd.org	Interviews, Group Meetings
Jody Warnock: Director Tammy Fuller and Dan Curtis: Case Managers Ilea Bouse: Info and Referral (ADRC/211)	CAPECO: Area Agency on Aging, Oregon Project Independence	541-506-3512 jwarnock@capeco-works.org	Interviews/Surveys
Scott McKay, Director	Mid-Columbia Senior Center	(541) 296-4788 mcseniorcenter@gmail.com	Interview/Group Meetings/Surveys
Scott McKay, Director	Meals On Wheels	(541) 296-4788 mcseniorcenter@gmail.com	Interview
Sharon Thornberry; Eva Kahn	Columbia Gorge Food Bank	(541) 370-2333 sthornberry@oregonfoodbank.org	Interview/Group meetings/Surveys
Jennifer Lopez, The Dalles Office	Eastern Oregon Center for Independent Living (EOCIL)	(541) 889-3119 (541) 370-2810	Interview

Laura Noppenberger, Executive Director	Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage	541-387-3600 lnopp@eossb.org	Interview/Group meetings/surveys
Dr. Mimi McDonnel	North Central Public Health District	mimim@ncphd.org	Interview
Lowel Linder Program Manager Intellectual & Developmental Services	Mid-Columbia Center for Living	541-296-5452 x7750	Interview
Erica Torres, Intake Amanda Ramey	Mid-Columbia Community Action Council/ Partnership	(541) 298-5131 (541) 386-4027	Interview
Joel Madsen, Executive Director	Mid-Columbia Housing Authority	541-296-5462	Interview
Lucas O’Laughlin, Executive Director Shannon O’Brien	One Community Health	sobrien@onecommunityhealth. org	Group meetings/Interview s
Colleena Tenold-Sauter Lisa Viles Supervisor Aging & People w/Disabilities Wasco, Sherman, Wheeler, Gilliam & Hood river counties	Oregon Department of Human Services: Seniors and People with Disabilities	Colleena.TENOLD- SAUTER@dhsoha.state.or.us, LISA.M.VILES@ dhsoha.state.or.us	Meetings, Interview
Nadja Mcconville Neil Friedrich	Oregon Department of Human Services: Self Sufficiency	541-340-0775 Nadja.mcconville @dhsoha.state.or.us	Interview/Group meetings/Surveys
Elke Towey, Executive	PacificSource, Coordinated Care Organization	elke.towey@pacificsource.com	Interview
Suzanne Cross Coco Yackley	Columbia Gorge Health Council (CGHC)	suzanne@ gorgehealthcouncil.org coco@gorgehealthcouncil.org	Group Meetings/ Interview/Surveys

Suzanne Cross Senior Project Manager	CGHC: Bridges to Health	suzanne@ gorgehealthcouncil.org	Interview/Surveys Meetings
Suzanne Cross Community Health Workers (see The Next Door Inc table)	CGHC: Community Health Workers	suzanne@ gorgehealthcouncil.org	Interview/Surveys/ Group meeting
Celeste Hill-Thomas	Mid-Columbia Medical Center	celesteht@mcmc.net	Group Meetings
Brittany Willson	Providence Memorial Hospital: Volunteers in Action	Brittany.Willson@providence.or g	Group meetings/Interview
Lisa Gambiee Kathleen Willis	South Wasco Alliance	<u>lisagambee03@gmail.com</u> kathleenwillis7@gmail.com	Interviews
Russell Jones, Service Officer Patrick Wilbern, Service Officer	Veterans Service Office	(541)506-2502	Interview/Surveys
Fritz Bachman	Wasco County Community Corrections	Fritz.J.Bachman@cc.doc.state.o r.us	Group Meetings
Jody Chastain	Tygh School Community Center Bus	(541) 483-2225 (541) 993-8013 tscdbus@yahoo.com	Interview
Virginia Sheer, Director	Canyon Rim Assisted Living Center	541-395-2515	Interview
Sue Knapp, Board member	White River Medical Clinic, Maupin	sue.marie.knapp@gmail.com	Interview/Surveys
Kate Willis, President	South Wasco County Alliance	kathleenwillis7@gmail.com	Interview
Collette Cox, Volunteer and Community Organizer	Waumic Grange, Senior Potlatch, Food Bank	541-544-2243	Interview
Colleen Coleman	City of Mosier	colleen.coleman@cityofmosier. com	Survey Distribution
Kathy Bostick	City of Dufur	dufurbcity@ortelco.net	Interview
Dale McCabe, City Engineer	City of The Dalles	dmccabe@ci.the-dalles.or.us	Interview/Group meetings

Sheridan McClellan, Emergency Manager	Wasco County Emergency Management	sheridanm@co.wasco.or.us	Interview
Dan Spatz; Gerardo Cifuentes; Tiffany Prince, ASG; ASG Student Representatives	Columbia Gorge Community College	(541) 506-6034 dspatz@cgcc.edu	Interview/Group meetings/Surveys/C GCC Survey
Jonathan Fost	Migrant Education Program Director	jfost@cgesd.k12.or.us	Interview
Ubaldo Hernandez	Organizing Latin Advocates (OLA)	ubaldo@columbiariverkeeper.org	Group Meeting
Gracen Bookmyer	Circles of Care	gbookmyer@ageplus.org	Interview
Briseida Bolanos	Oregon Human Development Corporation	541-716-4946 Briseida.Bolanos@ohdc.org	Interview
Debra Whitefoot, Director	Nch'i Wana Housing (Native American)	debrawhitefoot@gmail.com 509-910-8493	Group meetings, interview
Kathy White, Executive Assistant	North Wasco Co PUD	kathy-mcbride@nwascopud.org	Interview
Leadership Team Representatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHS Vocational Rehab • DHS: Self-Sufficiency • Columbia Gorge Community College • Oregon Human Development Corporation • Worksource The Dalles (CGCC) 	Northern Local Leadership Team of the East Cascades Workforce Board	ANDREA.J.ROGERS@dhssoha.state.or.us	Group meeting, interviews
Scott Baker, Director	Northern Wasco County Parks and Rec District	scottb@nwprd.org	Interview
MariRuth Petzing Jonathan Ostar, Consultant	Oregon Law Center: Transit Rider Rights	mpetzing@oregonlawcenter.org jon.ostar@gmail.com	Interview

Dan Schwanz, Human Resources (former CAT/Link Director)	Transportation Solutions	Dan.Schwanz@transols.com	Interview
Gordon Lee, Driver	Gorge Taxi	Gorgetaxi.com 541-399-5060	Interview
Sarah Kellems, Director	Hood River Shelter Services	director@hoodrivercares.org (509) 637-0771	Interview, Meeting
Darcy Long-Curtiss, Volunteer/City Council member	The Dalles Warming Shelter	longcurtiss@gmail.com	Interview
Dave Lutgens, Executive Director	St Vincent de Paul, The Dalles	541-296-9566	Interview

Programs administered by The Next Door, Inc			
Mid-Columbia Health Equity Advocates (MCHEA)			
Mayra Rosales Alicia Ramirez	Abogados de la Comunidad (The Dalles)	aliciar@nextdoorinc.org mayrar@nextdoorinc.org	Group Meeting
Raymond Estrada	Celilo Community Speaker/Community Health Worker/ Nch'i Wana Housing	raymondestrada102@gmail.com	Group meetings Interview
Dawn LeMieux	Natives Along the Big River	DawnL@nextdoorinc.org	Group meeting/interview
Jessica Smith Paola Escobedo	Community Health Workers: Wasco County	jessicas@nextdoorinc.org	Group meeting/Interview
Dawn LeMieux	Gorge Native American Collaboration	DawnL@nextdoorinc.org	Group meetings
Alicia Ramirez Tonya Sanchez	Latino Family Group	aliciar@nextdoorinc.org	Interview
Liliana Justo-Bello Anna Osborn	Family Engagement/Economic Development Leadership Group: Unidos Por Poder	<u>LilianaB@nextdoorinc.org</u> annao@nextdoorinc.org	Interview

Regional Planning Efforts

Transportation Innovations Through Collective Impact

In 2019, Providence Health & Services and PacificSource Community Solutions, the Coordinated Care Organization of the Columbia Gorge Region, awarded a grant to the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District to convene transportation provider and health and wellness organizations in the Gorge to engage in a collaborative process with the goal of identifying key regional transportation gaps and innovative transportation solutions. Over 57 organizations from both Washington State and Oregon were invited and over 40 representatives attended four group sessions to discuss improved mobility access to essential services that would help to increase the quality of life in the Columbia Gorge, especially for vulnerable populations, including rural, low income, elderly, young, disabled, undocumented, and low English proficiency residents and actual or potential users of public transportation. Working through a neutral forum facilitated by the National Policy Consensus Center, interested organizations met four times over the course of five months to get grounded in the current system, identify the most critical gaps to mobility, learn about transportation tools from a transportation expert, and begin to identify solutions appropriate for the Gorge region.

Consensus Recommendations

The Collaborative agreed to focus on those populations who are not eligible for transportation subsidies and/or are not covered for non-medical ‘wellness’ destinations (e.g. places to play, socialize, etc.). They defined ‘essential services’ to include all places for which wellness is being supported (including and beyond medical appointments).

Critical Barriers to Service

- Navigation
- Geography
- Availability of service
- Financial cost
- Limit to door-through-door
- Eligibility for service
- Language/Literacy

Mobility Barriers Identified	
Navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of First mile/last mile/bus stop infrastructure • Riders have difficulty making transfers from one bus or service to the next • Lack of Education, Training, Confidence of the Rider • Extended Service hours needed: weekends, early or late hours, holidays • Fare transactions are difficult to manage

Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorge residents need a “hospital van”: a vehicle that provides direct medical trips from Gorge region to Portland hospital facilities • Intercity Medical Trips (focus between The Dalles and Hood River) • Providers have difficulty serving people who live in remote rural areas • Vehicles have great difficulty accessing higher elevations in poor weather conditions
Communication and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to make transfers from one bus or service to the next • Poor hospital staff to transportation staff discharge communication after medical appointments and hospitalization • Riders have difficulty with information discovery and use (website, paper schedules) • Language and literacy, cultural differences are significant barriers • Better Transportation and Health Agency coordination and communication needed
Door Through Door Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique challenges in Oregon to serve those who need door through door service • Institutional barriers include Oregon Health Authority policies and liability challenges • Transit drivers are not trained or provided liability coverage to serve clients inside the home (door through door).

Prioritized Strategies	
Better Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a system of communication and accountability between transportation agencies and health agencies. • Transportation agencies will continue to work together on a regional system • Coordinate a special service to Portland for medical appointments. • Strengthen health and wellness partnerships through the Gorge TransLink Alliance.
Travel Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop programs to teach both agency staff and riders how to use public transit (travel training and travel ambassadors). • Develop volunteer champion programs.
Fare System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a universal fare system for all transportation providers. • Develop fare mechanisms that can be purchased by social service or other organizations for their clients.
Door Through Door	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support a third-party system for door through door assistance, using existing volunteer and human service programs. • Coordinate “travel assistant” program with the transit providers.

Transportation Innovations Through Collective Impact January-June 2019

Providence Health & Services and PacificSource Columbia Gorge Region CCO awarded a grant to the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District to convene transportation provider organizations and health and wellness organizations in the Gorge to engage in a collaborative process to identify and implement innovative transportation solutions to create improved mobility access to essential services and increase the quality of life in the Columbia Gorge, especially for vulnerable populations, including, rural, low income, elderly, young, disabled, undocumented, and low English proficiency residents and actual or potential users of public transportation.

Participating Organizations:

Oregon: Community Wellness

Providence Health and Services
Volunteers in Action (Providence)
Mid-Columbia Medical Center
PacificSource
North Central Public Health District
Greater Oregon Behavioral Health
Oregon Food Bank
Department of Human Services
Community Action Program (ECO)
Eastern OR Support Services Brokerage

Oregon: Transportation

Columbia Area Transit (CAT)
The Link—Wasco County
Sherman County Transit
Gilliam County Transportation
Wheeler County Transportation

Oregon Dept. of Transportation

Bi-state (WA and OR) Organizations

Columbia Gorge Health Council—staff and membership
Next Door, Inc
Gorge Grown
MCEDD
Aging in the Gorge Alliance
One Community Health
Opportunity Connections
Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
Mid-Columbia Center for Living
Community Transportation Asso of the NW

Washington: Community Wellness

Skyline Hospital
Human Services Council
Washington Community Action Program
People for People

Klickitat County Senior Services

Skamania County Senior Services
Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities of Southwest Washington
Skamania Klickitat Community Network
Washington Gorge Action Programs
Klickitat County Public Health
Skamania County Public Health
Klickitat Valley Health Clinic
Northshore Medical Clinic
Southwest WA Accountable Communities of Health
Klickitat Valley Hospital

Washington: Transportation

Mt. Adams Transportation Services
Skamania County Transit
Washington Department of Transportation
Regional Transportation Council
People for People

Columbia Gorge Health Council’s 2019 Community Health Assessment

The Columbia Gorge Health Council (CGHC) is a 501 (c)3 non-profit focused on healthcare delivery for the Medicaid population in Hood River and Wasco Counties and improving the health of the Columbia Gorge overall. CGHC works in partnership with the regional Coordinated Care Organization, PacificSource Community Solutions (Columbia Gorge Region) and consists of local leaders in health care along with county and community members, providers, and agencies to serve the needs of the poor and vulnerable. Every three years CGHC convenes multiple regional organizations to complete a regional Community Health Assessment (CHA).

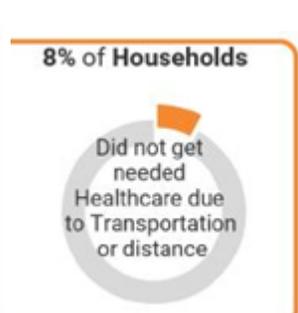
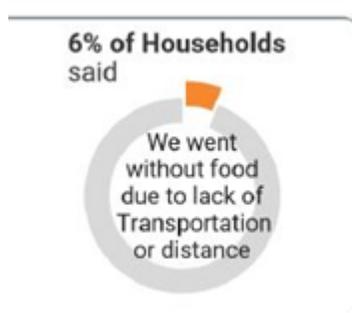
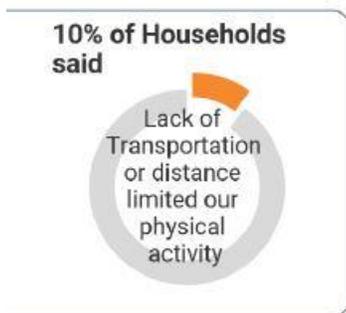
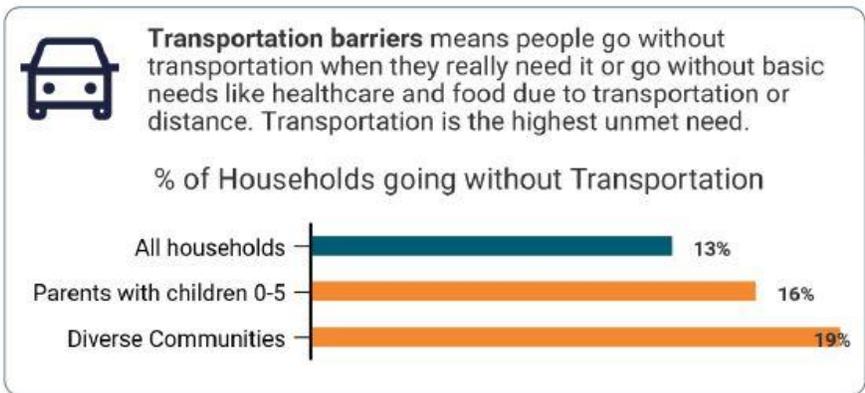
A robust consumer survey process provides the backbone of data for the CHA. The ongoing CHA process has helped the region to develop a common understanding of its health needs while adopting a broad definition of health that includes food, housing, transportation, sense of community, and access, along with traditional physical, mental, and dental health. The purpose of the community health survey is to use a representative population sample and mail-based survey to provide statistically valid

estimates of health and health needs throughout the community, including needs related to the social determinants of health.

The purpose of the community health survey is to 1) use a representative population sample and mail-based survey to provide statistically valid estimates of health and health needs throughout the community, including needs related to the social determinants of health; and 2) to supplement the mailed survey with hand-fielded surveys targeted toward communities of special interest, particularly those likely to be underrepresented in the mail survey. Over 55 organizations within the region helped to hand-field or distribute and collect surveys in 2019.

Hand-fielded surveys are important to capture the input of those residents who change addresses often or don't have a traditional mailing address. These residents are generally those that are the most vulnerable with the highest needs.

The 2019 CHA found that transportation is the highest unmet need in the Columbia Gorge Region, which includes Klickitat, Skamania, Hood River, Wasco, and the tri-county area of Sherman, Gilliam, and Wheeler counties. Survey responses described that a lack of transportation impacted the ability to access health care, food, childcare, social activities, and exercise. Of low income households, 26% report going without transportation, an increase of 4.3% since the 2016 update.



The 2019 Community Health Assessment found that transportation issues are not experienced equally

across all groups of populations in the region. A household of four people in the region living on a total of \$49,200 a year (or 200% Federal Poverty Level) is 15 times more likely to struggle with transportation needs than households earning more than 200% FPL.

On the county level, the 2019 Community Health Assessment found that people in Wasco County have a higher degree of transportation issues than any of the other Columbia Gorge counties studied. 1 in 4 residents are on Medicaid (20.1%) or are uninsured (9.37%)⁷, and of those, 25% are struggling with unmet transportation needs. This means that an estimated 1 in 8 residents in Wasco County do not have the transportation that they need to access health care, food, childcare, social activities, or exercise.⁸

North Central Region Public Transportation-Human Services Coordination Study

The North Central Region Public Transportation-Human Services Coordination Study (2016) included Hood River, Wasco and Sherman counties and identified both unmet public transportation needs and potential efficiencies in existing services. The study targeted the needs of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals. Because the primary language other than English is Spanish in all three counties, the LEP study primarily focused on the needs of Spanish speaking individuals.

The study's recommendations include co-creating LEP cultural awareness training for transportation service providers, annual outreach by MCEDD's Mobility Manager to Human Services providers to share information and resources on the available transportation services for their clients, and the development of an LEP outreach plan to increase these individuals' awareness and ability to use the public transportation system.

The Association of Oregon Counties/ODOT pilot project study found that most Human Services agencies in Wasco County employ bilingual and bicultural staff. However, transportation service providers report difficulties in hiring qualified bilingual staff, primarily drivers and call center staff. This is a real need and will only intensify under the current population projections. Public transportation services in Wasco County would benefit from employing bilingual, bicultural messaging: advertisements, educational and informational outreach; and by connecting with the Spanish speaking community to co-create effective outreach. The Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee should have at least one committee member from the Spanish-speaking community. The study found that in particular, Spanish-speaking older adults have difficulties overcoming a fear of using a transportation system that may be foreign to them in its operation. As the numbers of elderly Spanish speaking individuals continues to grow in Wasco County, public transportation will need to be responsive by planning for appropriate outreach, travel training, and bilingual services.

⁷ ACS 2014-2018 Estimate

⁸ Columbia Gorge Health Council Community Health Assessment, 2019

Recommendations
<p>Outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an LEP outreach and education plan. • Participate regularly in Latino Community Groups
<p>Staff training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEP Cultural Awareness Training. • Language training • Language interpretation tools for drivers and dispatchers • Coordinate with Latino groups to find qualified bilingual staff
<p>Travel Training Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish-speaking older adults • Develop volunteer travel champion (peer to peer) programs. • Front line staff of Latino Service Organizations and Advocacy Groups

The Dalles Transportation System Plan: Transit Feasibility Analysis

The Dalles Transportation System Plan update of 2017 included a focused transit forecast, needs, and feasibility analysis. The study assessed the need for fixed-route transit in The Dalles using population data, Wasco County Coordinated Transportation Plan finding, CAT Hood River-The Dalles-Portland ridership numbers, and origin-destination data. Remix, a transit planning software, was used to develop three routing alternatives in the transit feasibility study section. The data and routing alternatives were used to apply for a 5339 grant and STIF formula funding to launch the Link’s first deviated fixed route service in April 2019.

Concurrent and Near-Term Planning Efforts

The following plans will be relevant to this Coordinated Plan and have been launched and are in the process of completion, or are on schedule to be launched in the near future.

Gorge Transit Strategy

In 2019, MCEDD received a \$135,000 grant award from the Oregon Department of Transportation’s Statewide Transportation Improvement Intercommunity Discretionary Fund. The grant proposal was designed to expand and preserve the Gorge TransLink Alliance Mobility Manager project, with expansion to include Phase I of the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy project.

Phase I of the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy builds on the recommendations of existing transportation plans in order to set a firm foundation for development of a comprehensive transit strategy for this complex, bi-state region. The Gorge Transit Strategy Phase II will focus on a more

detailed implementation strategy including further data analysis, ridership forecasts, financial planning, and deeper operational assessments.

The Gorge Regional Transit Strategy builds on the work accomplished during the Transportation Innovations Through Collective Impact work sessions, expanding the regional partnerships to focus on key challenges in the Columbia Gorge. All materials of the work accomplished can be found at <https://gorgetranslink.com/gorge-transit-strategy/>.

Improved public transportation options can help address regional challenges:

- Workforce Mobility
- Affordable Housing
- Tourism and Outdoor Recreation
- Traffic Congestion and Safety
- Access to Higher Education, Jobs, Social, Medical, Recreation
- Environmental

Project Partners:

- Public Transportation Service Providers
- Local, State, Fed Government
- Tribal Representatives
- State and Fed Agencies
- Health and Wellness Organizations
- Higher Education
- Local Employers
- Local and Regional Planning entities
- Tourism and Outdoor Recreation
- Active Transportation

Wasco County Transit Development Plan

In 2019, Wasco County received a Transportation Growth Management Plan grant to fund a Transit Development Plan (TDP) with a planning horizon of 20 years. The plan will include:

- A comprehensive outreach process that offers community input on mobility needs and issues
- An existing conditions report including factors that impact mobility and transit use in Wasco County
- An operational and capital plan that meets identified needs and gaps
- A detailed financial and implementation plan that offers a viable and sustainable blueprint through 2040

The TDP will serve as the transit element of the Wasco County Transportation System Plan (TSP). It may also serve as the TSP transit element for the six incorporated cities within Wasco County. The plan will consider fixed route, demand response, and intercommunity services, as well as the infrastructure, technologies, and capital investments needed to support those services. The plan will also consider coordination with other transit providers in the Columbia River Gorge, in recognition of the area’s important regional connections.

Demographic Profiles and Analysis

Population Data

Wasco County, established in 1854, is home to six cities and five census-designated places (CDPs) with small population concentrations. Wasco County is also home to Celilo Village, the site of one of the oldest continually inhabited tribal centers in the world, and Lone Pine, a Tribal In-lieu/Treaty Fishing Access Site with permanent residents.⁹

Wasco County Total Population	
	25,866

Cities	Population
Antelope	74
Dufur	576
Maupin	535
Mosier	431
Shaniko	14
The Dalles	15,320
Census-Designated Places (CDPs)	
Pine Grove	102
Pine Hollow	509
Rowena	301
Tygh Valley	201
Wamic	62
Tribal Communities	
Celilo Village	61
Lone Pine In-lieu Site	40

In addition to the U.S. Census data estimates noted above, recent population data is also available from the Portland State University (PSU) Population Research Center and the State of Oregon’s Office of Economic Analysis. The most recent certified population estimates (July 2019) by the PSU Population Research Center shows a five year population growth rate of 4% for Wasco County from 26,105 in 2014 to 27,240 in 2019.¹⁰

⁹ <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/wasco-county-or#economy>

¹⁰ Oregon Population Forecast Program, Population Research Center, Portland State University. 2019.

The Dalles is the County Seat and the largest population center in the County and serves as a hub for healthcare, commerce, legal services, human services, education, transportation and employment. The top three industries in Wasco County are 1) Health Care & Social Assistance, 2) Retail Trade, and 3) Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting.¹¹

Demographic Data Overview

Planning for special transportation services is contingent upon the need for the service, thus understanding County population demographics and future population projections are important. Data from the American Community Survey 2018, 5-year estimates, were used to provide a fuller snapshot of Wasco County’s special needs populations.

Population	Wasco County ¹	Oregon ¹
Total population	25,866	4,081,943
Percentage of population 65 years and over	20.0%	16.7%
Percentage of individuals with a disability	18.2%	14.5%
Percentage of individuals living below the federal poverty level	13.4%	12.6%
Percentage of individuals living below 200% federal poverty level	35%	33%
Percentage of Hispanic or Latino individuals	17.8%	12.8%
Percentage of Veterans	8.9%	6.8%
Percentage of individuals who speak a language other than English at home	15.4%	15.4%
Limited English—Spanish Speaker (by Household)	6%	4%

Older Adults and Elders

Individuals aged 65 and over comprise 1 in 5 people in Wasco County and this ratio is projected to remain steady in the next 45 years. Wasco County’s proportion of adults aged 65 and older is higher than the state’s and with overall steady population growth, these numbers will increase.

The expected population changes will intensify demands on the transportation system, requiring more responsive services and additional replacement vehicles to meet the needs of a larger and more complex transit dependent population. Many older adults rely upon public transportation for frequent medical appointments and to safely meet the necessities of life such as access to shopping for food and medicines. Wheelchair-accessible public transportation service is paramount for older adults.

¹¹ <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/wasco-county-or#economy>

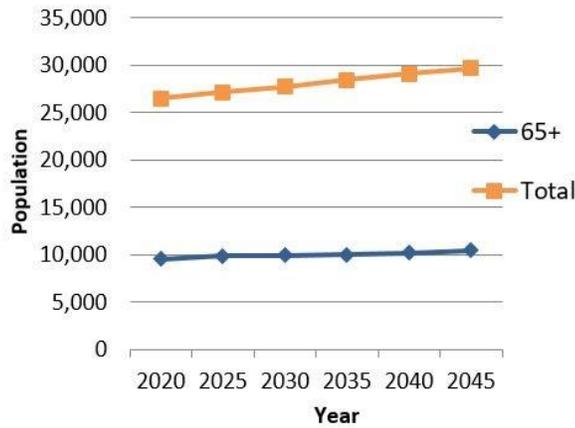
Total and Older Adult Projected Population Growth, 2020-2045

Populations at the state and county level are projected to grow over the next 25 years. The state’s and Wasco County’s aging population is projected to increase in proportion to the total population. In the future, the county’s aging population will make up a higher proportion of its population compared to the state.

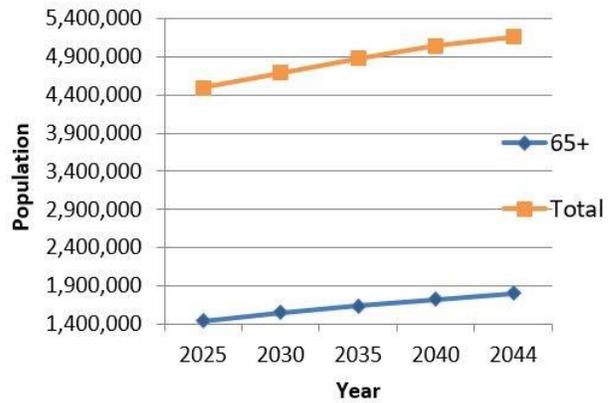
Year	Wasco County			Oregon		
	Total Population	Population 65 and over	Proportion of 65+	Total Population	Population 65 and over	Proportion of 65+
2020	25,866	5,431	21%	4,081,943	1,036,813	25.4%
2025	27,146	9,876	36.4%	4,497,000	1,439,971	32.0%
2030	27,772	9,963	35.9%	4,694,000	1,545,479	32.9%
2035	28,454	10,047	35.3%	4,878,000	1,637,406	33.6%
2040	29,097	10,215	35.1%	5,044,000	1,722,607	34.2%

Source: Oregon Population Forecast Program, Population Research Center, Portland State University (2019 and 2020 proposed).

Wasco County



Oregon



Low Income and Poverty

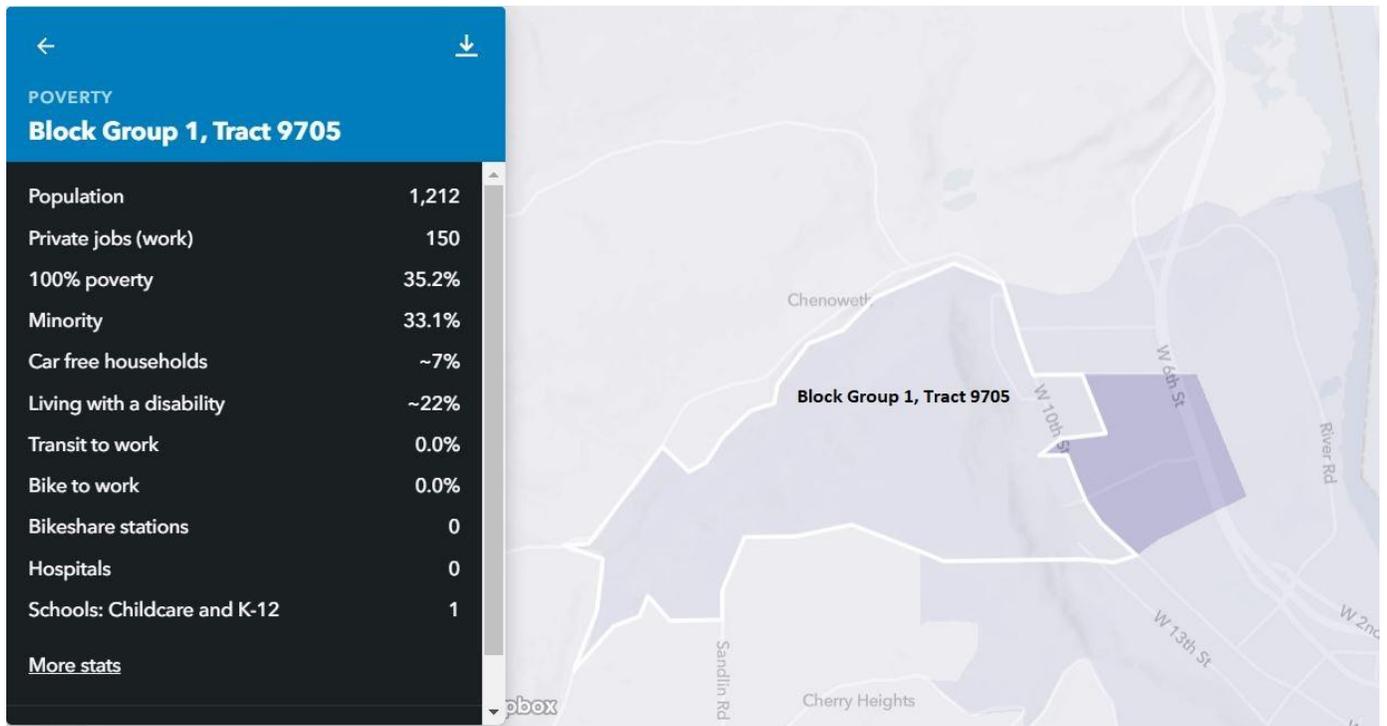
Statistically, 13.4% of the county population lives below the poverty level – more than 1 in 10. A full 35% or more than a third of Wasco County residents live below the 200% poverty level.¹² Using data from the Community Health Assessment, a household of four people in the Columbia Gorge region living on a total of \$49,200 a year (or 200% Federal Poverty Level) is 15 times more likely to struggle with transportation needs than households earning more than 200% FPL.

Celilo Village is an unincorporated Native American community on the Columbia River. Of all the population groups (cities, CDPs, Census Tracts), Celilo Village experiences the highest poverty rate. Fully half of Celilo Village’s population lives below the federal poverty rate.

Of the cities, both Shaniko and Antelope also have high rates of residents living in poverty.

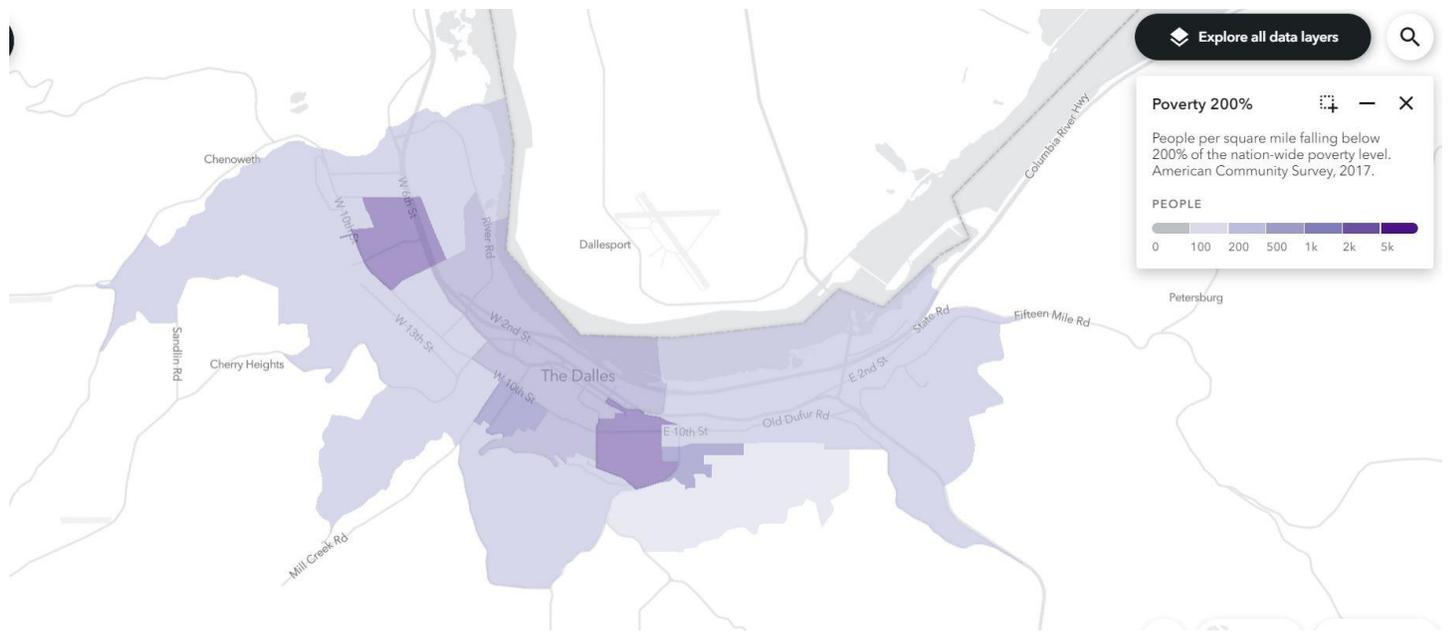
Place	Percent of population living below the federal poverty level
Dufur	1.4
Maupin	4.9
Tygh Valley	34.8
Celilo Village	50.8
Antelope	44.6
Shaniko	42.9
Pine Grove	10.8
Pine Hollow	9.1
Wamic	8.1
Mosier	6.5
Warm Springs data found only in Jefferson County	N/A

¹² American Community Survey (2018 5-yr estimate)



Within the City of The Dalles, the census block group 1, tract 9705, shown above in a map generated by the Remix program, has the highest number of individuals living below 100% of the federal poverty rate 35.2%. The Remix tool uses the American Community Survey (2018 estimates) data to calculate demographic information within the block groups.

Knowing where there are concentrations of populations most likely to need public transportation is important data for a public transportation agency when planning fixed route services. The map below shows the census block groups in the City of The Dalles by people living under the 200% level of the federal poverty. Darker purple signifies more people of that designation per square mile.



Transportation and Housing Costs

Individuals with lower incomes may not be able to afford to purchase or maintain a car or a family may only have one vehicle for multiple transportation needs. Public transportation is an important link to vital destinations such as workplaces and human service agencies for seniors, low income, disabled and Limited English Proficiency individuals. Public transportation is crucial to those who most need access to jobs, education, groceries, medical care and social services. Without reliable transportation, these individuals are, in every sense of the word, stranded. The 2019 Community Health Assessment of the Columbia Gorge Health Council found that an estimated 1 in 8 residents in Wasco County do not have the transportation that they need to access health care, food, childcare, social activities, or exercise.

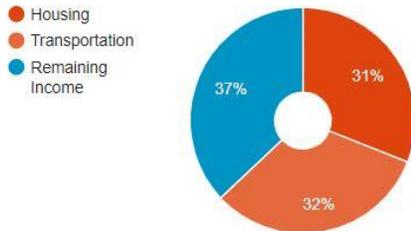
Typically, a household's second-largest expense is transportation. Factoring in both housing and transportation costs provides a more comprehensive way of thinking about the cost of housing and true affordability. The H+T Affordability Index tool (<https://htaindex.cnt.org/>) uses American Community Survey data from 2015 for Wasco County to show that the average housing plus transportation costs are 63% of Wasco County residents' income. A 2017 Housing and Residential Land Needs Assessment prepared by the State of Oregon for The Dalles highlighted that 33% of renters in the City are "severely rent burdened", or paying more than 50% of their household income on rent alone.

In the past year, fuel prices have declined, but the other costs related to ownership of a private vehicle are continually increasing. A robust public transportation system allows residents to decrease their dependence on ownership of a private vehicle, thus reducing overall household costs significantly. For low-income Americans, the high cost of car ownership means less money is available for housing, food,

healthcare, or other things that improve health and quality of life.

Average Housing + Transportation Costs % Income

Factoring in both housing *and* transportation costs provides a more comprehensive way of thinking about the cost of housing and true affordability.



Transportation Costs

In dispersed areas, people need to own more vehicles and rely upon driving them farther distances which also drives up the cost of living.



Source: <https://htaindex.cnt.org/>

Individuals with Disabilities

Since the previous Transportation Plan update in 2016, the percentage of individuals living below the poverty level has decreased; however, the percentages of other special needs populations has stayed the same or increased, most notably that of individuals with disabilities (up from 16.8% reported in the 2016 update).

The American Community Survey 2018 Estimates indicate the percentage of Wasco County individuals age 65 and older who are disabled is staying steady at around 42%. An older and disabled Wasco County population puts significant demands on transportation resources such as the need for ADA accessible vehicles in good repair and a capacity to transport individuals who need help. The table below shows population projections for disabled residents for Wasco County.

Population Estimate, Wasco County Disabled Individuals.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Wasco County	Total Population Estimate	Percent With a Disability Estimate
Total civilian noninstitutionalized population	25,464	18.2%
Population under 18 years	5,812	7.0%
Population 18 to 64 years	14,766	14.7%
Population 65 years and over	4,886	42.0%

There are many organizations serving people with physical and developmental disabilities in Wasco County, including the Community Developmental Disabilities Program provider, Opportunity

Connections, Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage, and the Oregon Department of Human Services: Aging and People with Physical Disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Developmental Disabilities sections.

Some of these organizations have access to transportation funding and contract with transportation providers to provide rides for their clients. These potential partnerships are discussed further in the Improving Coordination Chapter.

Many people with disabilities already use Wasco County's public transportation system to access medical services, employment, and other services. These transit-experienced individuals could become the transit champions needed to staff a robust travel training program.

Residents Without Houses

Wasco County has the fourth highest rate of any county in Oregon of people who are experiencing homelessness: 7.4 per 1,000 or 195 total, according to the Oregon Health Authority's 2017 estimate. Data from the Oregon Department of Education shows that almost 4% of K-12 students in Wasco County are homeless, or a total of 141 out of the 3,580 registered in the school year of 2017-2018.¹³

County residents without houses are more likely to need public transportation to access basic resources like food at food pantries, free congregant meals, and warming shelters in the winter. The Hood River Shelter Services reports that sixty percent of the region's homeless have part time or full time jobs, mainly at local gas stations and local fast food restaurants. The Link Public Transit could work with organizations serving these residents to assess their needs and to provide access to public transportation resources and to provide information to frontline staff and clients about how to use the public transit system

Residents of both Wasco and Hood River counties who do not have houses typically move between the two counties to access services. In The Dalles, St. Vincent de Paul offers a day shelter (this service has been suspended due to the pandemic), prepared meals, showers, and laundry. However, a full-time winter night warming shelter is currently only offered in Hood River County, which means that many who self-identify as Wasco County residents live in Hood River County in the coldest winter months.

Individuals with Limited English Proficiency

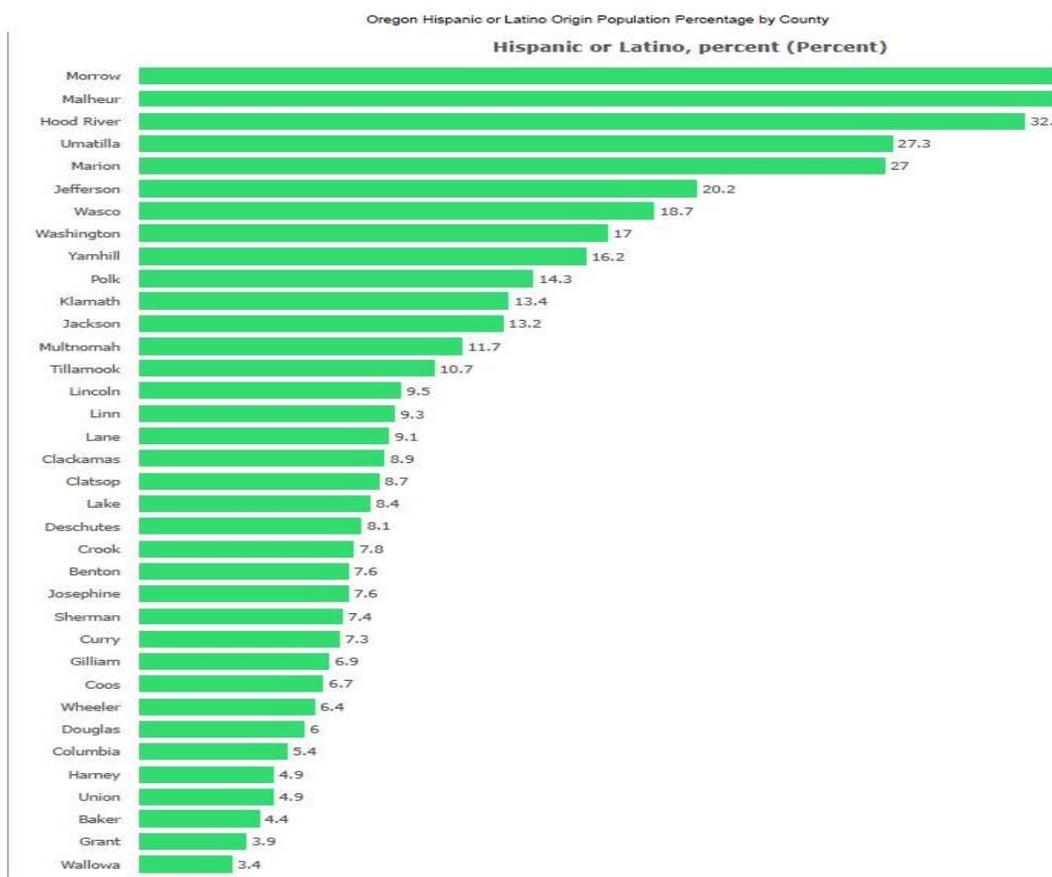
Because the primary language spoken in Wasco County other than English is Spanish, Limited English Proficiency efforts have focused mainly on the Hispanic and Latino communities. This is a population that culturally may look to public transportation as a viable means of mobility.

¹³ <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/ABOUT/Documents/indicators/homeless-county.pdf>

The number of Hispanic and Latino individuals also continues to grow and represents a higher percentage in the County as compared to the state average. Census data show the Hispanic/Latino population in Wasco County is growing at a rate of over 2.6% over the past five years.¹⁴

In South Wasco County, the volunteers at the Barlow Gate Grange Hall in Wamic heard that there was a need for English language classes. For over two years they regularly taught a full class of up to 36 Hispanic community members and migrant workers. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a suspension of the classes, but the popularity of these classes in this remote and rural area demonstrates the strong presence of the Hispanic community in the entire county and the ongoing need for language services.

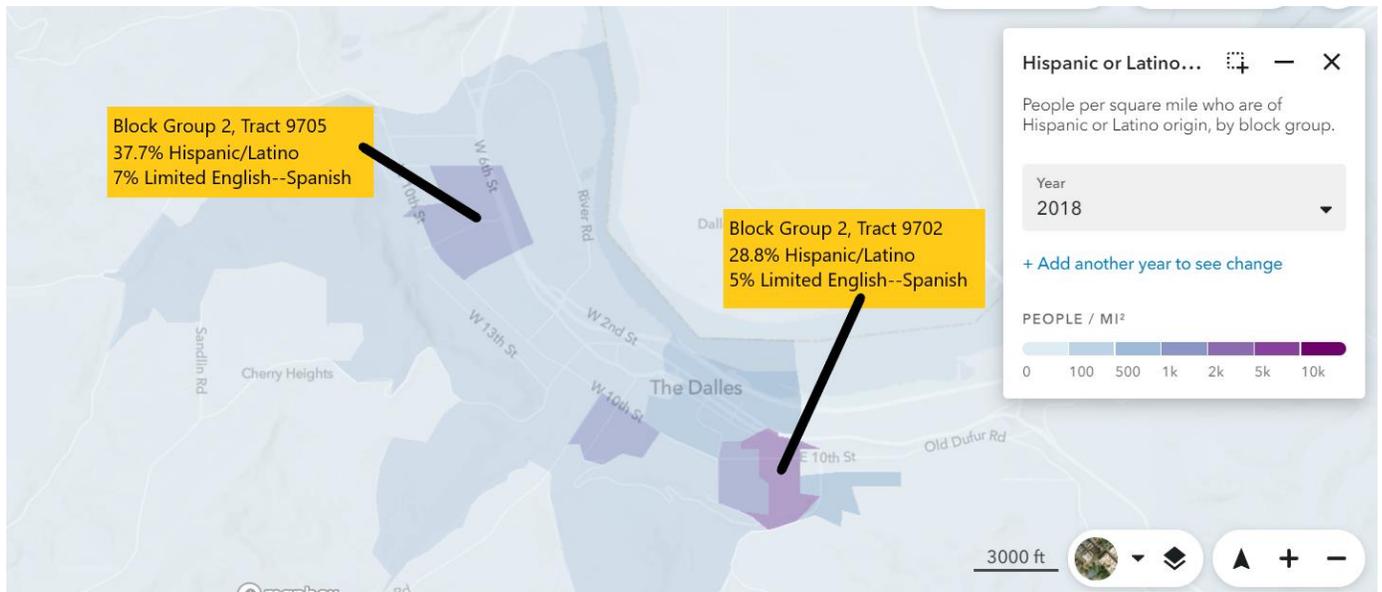
The chart below, taken from <https://www.indexmundi.com> based on data from the American Community Survey 2018 5-yr Estimates), shows that Wasco County has the 7th highest population of Hispanic or Latino residents of all counties in the State. Wasco County's Hispanic or Latino resident population is also 5% higher than the State's.



Using the Remix mapping program, the block groups and tracts that show a density of Hispanic or Latino residents are

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates. 2014-2018 and 2009-2013.

presented in darker purple. The percentages shown reflect data from the American Community Survey 2018 5-yr Estimates.



Native American Population

Wasco County is home to the 5th largest population of Native Americans of all Oregon counties. Four percent of Wasco County residents identify as Native American, more than twice the state's average of 1.8 %. Celilo Village is an unincorporated Native American community located 13 miles east of downtown The Dalles along the Columbia River. Native Americans also live at the Lone Pine Native American in-lieu treaty fishing access site located on 9 acres overlooking The Dalles Dam about 3.5 miles from downtown The Dalles.

The Columbia Plateau is home to four major tribes that share similar languages, cultures, religions, and diets: the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. These four tribes have a long history of interaction, including intermarriage, shared use of common resources like Celilo Falls, and extensive trade.¹⁵

¹⁵ https://www.critfc.org/member_tribes_overview/



The reservations and ceded lands of the four CRITFC member tribes. The combined area of these four tribes' ceded lands covers 25% of the Columbia Basin.

Source: https://www.critfc.org/member_tribes_overview/

In Wasco County, only block group 1 and three tracts (9701, 9707, 9708) show a Native American percentage of the population using data from the American Community Survey 2018 5-year Estimates. These three tracts are the eastern-most tracts of the county and include the Lone Pine in-lieu fishing site and Celilo Village (see map courtesy of REMIX below).

Locally it is estimated by multiple agencies who serve the Lone Pine in-lieu fishing site that 30-40 people reside there full-time, including children. Many of the homes are small travel trailers that have no mailing addresses, so it is not surprising that the residents do not have representation in the Census or other population counts.

Block group 1 tract 9708 that includes Celilo Village shows the highest percent of Native American residents at 4.8% of the total population of the block group, or 64 people.

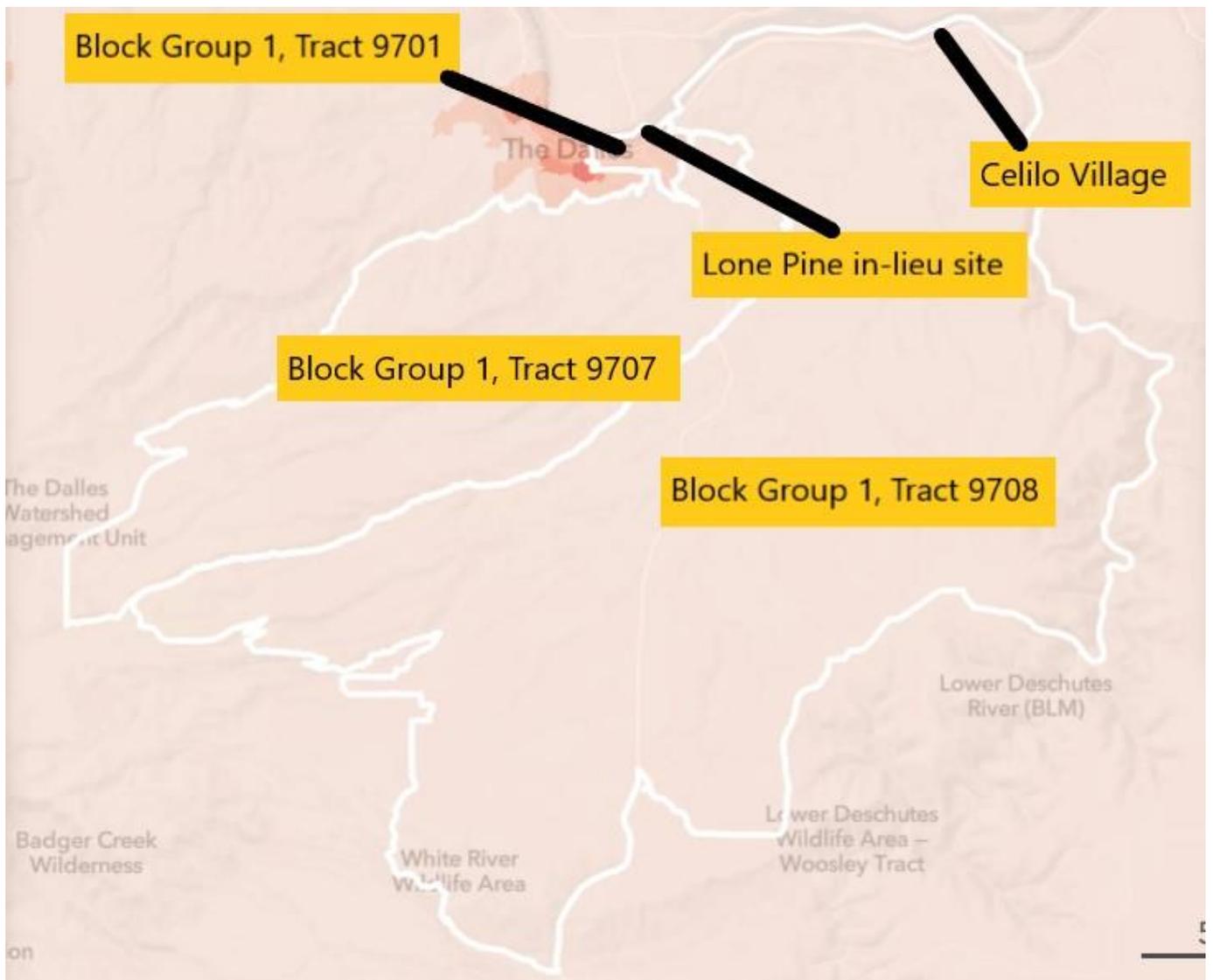
In early 2020, the Link Public Transit staff and MCEDD Mobility Manager participated in a meeting with representatives from The Next Door Inc (TNDI) who lead the Natives Along the Big River advocacy group, and with other TNDI staff and staff from the Department of Human Services (Self Sufficiency). The discussion was focused on ongoing transportation challenges for Native Americans in Wasco County. One highlighted challenge was that children from the Lone Pine in-lieu site need reliable transportation to the Head Start program at Celilo Village. Providing transportation for the children of these communities was noted as an effective way to begin building trust.

In July 2020, the Mobility Manager began to participate in weekly meetings of the Gorge Native American Collaborative, which regularly includes representatives from Tribal Leadership, the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), nonprofits like Nch'i Wana Housing, and state and federal agencies responsible for serving the Native American people in both states. The immediate focus of the meetings was to mitigate the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 has had on these communities, but with the long-term goal addressing the chronic and historic housing, transportation, health, and education needs. Many of the immediate transportation issues faced by the Native American community in the Columbia River Gorge are gaps that have only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

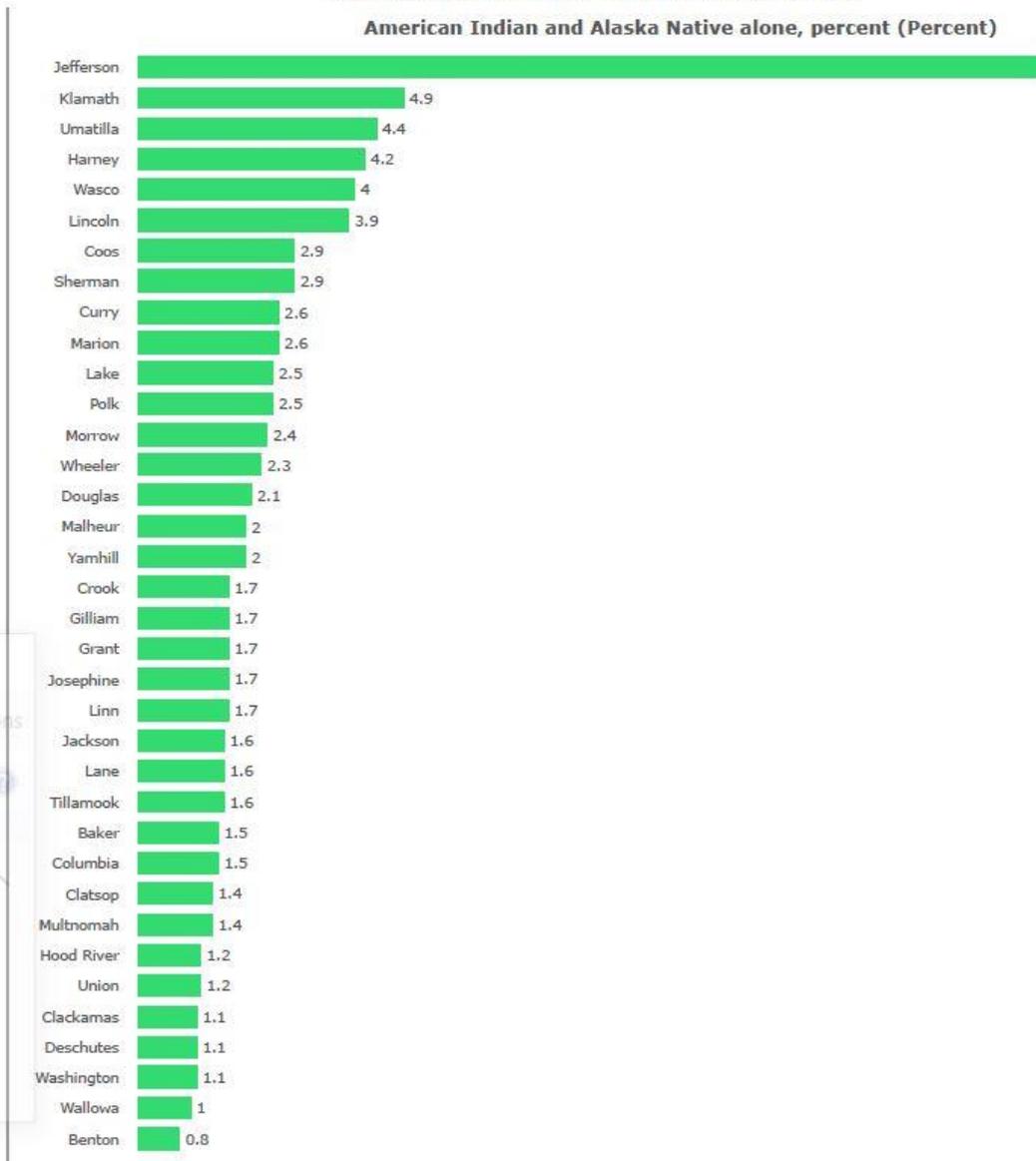
In July and August of 2020, the Mobility Manager worked closely with the five transportation providers to organize needed transportation to testing events sponsored by One Community Health and supported by the large partnership of the Gorge Native American Collaborative.

Building relationships with these communities will take time and a sustained effort. There are deep-seated trust issues that can only be resolved with slow and persistent relationship-building efforts while working alongside long-standing partners like CRITFC. Strategies for next steps include:

- Contract with organizations like Nch'i Wana Housing or The Next Door Inc for survey and outreach services. These partners have established strong ties with the local Native American communities.
- Begin by asking general questions about transportation needs.
- Use culturally appropriate printed transportation materials designed by the local Native American residents.
- Food delivery, shopping services, and transporting children to school or afterschool activities are good services to start with.
- Be patient, don't give up, and prove that you are a reliable partner.



Oregon American Indian and Alaska Native Population Percentage by County



Value for Oregon (Percent): 1.8%

Source: *indexmundi.com* with data from the American Community Survey (2014-2018)

Understanding Wasco County’s Families

A good way to understand the challenges that many of Wasco County’s families are facing is to look at the school grades K-12 demographic data. Data from the Oregon Department of Education’s 2018-19 report card (<https://www.ode.state.or.us>) were used to detail the demographics of two of Wasco County’s school districts, North Wasco County School District #21 and Dufur SD #29.

North Wasco School District #21 serves most of northern Wasco County with 4 elementary schools, a middle school, and one high school with a total student enrollment of almost 3,000 students. The

Oregon Department of Education Report Card website data shows that of those students, 38% identify as Hispanic/Latino, and 25% are Ever English Learners. North Wasco County SD 21 has almost twice the percentage of Hispanic or Latino students when compared to the State of Oregon for grades K-12. The school district report card also reports that students speak a total of 17 different languages. The Dufur School District #29 includes both the Lone Pine in-lieu site and Celilo Village and reports that 8% of enrolled students are Native Americans, almost 8 times higher than the percentage state-wide.

Wasco County’s school districts have a high rate of students who qualify for free and reduced price lunches, almost twice the state percentage. Wasco County also has a total of 131 students enrolled that are homeless, compared to Hood River County’s 45 homeless students and Sherman County’s 16 homeless students. The Oregon Department of Education defines a homeless student or youth as “lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.”

Wasco County School Districts’ Demographics	N. W. County SD #21	Dufur SD #29	Oregon
Total student enrollment	2,956	336	4,081,943
Percentage of Hispanic or Latino students	38.0%	7.0%	23.4%
Percentage of Native American students	2.0%	8.0%	1.3%
Ever English Learners	25.0%	<10 students	15.4% (Spanish)
Percentage of Students that qualify for free/reduced price lunch	83%	>95.0%	49.0%
Students with Disabilities	17%	14%	7.4%

Veterans

There are 2,294 Veterans living in Wasco County, almost 9% of the total population. Over 25% of those Wasco County Veterans are disabled and may need transportation services. The largest percentage of Wasco County Veterans served in Vietnam, 3.18 times greater than any other conflict, which means that Wasco County Veterans are older and thus more likely to need transportation services. See graph below.

The Hood River Shelter Services reports that up to 25% of the people they serve from the Wasco and Hood River county area self-identify as Veterans. St. Vincent de Paul in The Dalles reports an estimated 20% of the people that they serve are Veterans.

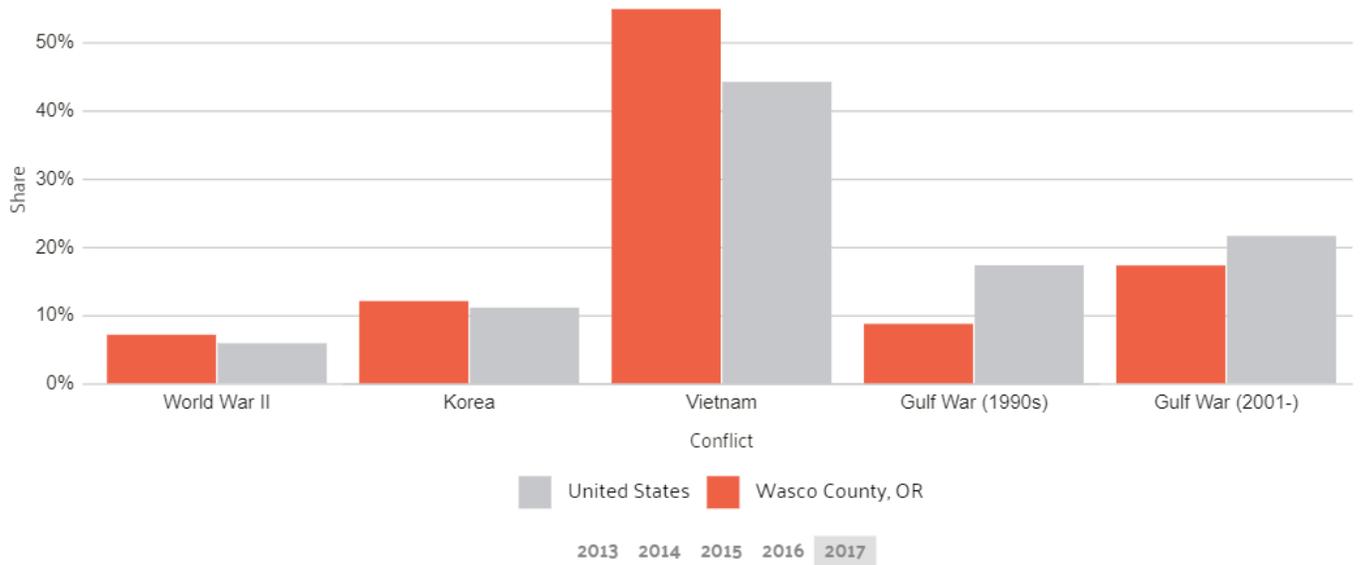
During Governor Kate Brown’s Shelter in Place order March through May of 2020, the Gorge Outreach program provided hotel rooms to people without homes in Wasco and Hood River county area and discovered multiple Veterans with combat status who did not know how to access the Veterans services like transportation services for which they were eligible.

The Wasco County Veterans Service Officers report that they are not familiar enough with the Link’s transportation services to share this information with Veterans, but would be interested in learning more or collaborating on a transportation project. In general, the Veterans Service Office volunteer at the front desk fields Veterans’ requests for transportation, although that position has been eliminated since March of 2020 when the office closed for walk-ins because of COVID-19 precautions.

Because the Link does not provide transportation to Portland, the Link refers calls from Veterans needing transportation to the Veterans Affairs office in Portland or to Sherman County Community Transit.

More specific information about Veterans Transportation services and notes from regional interviews with Veterans Service Officers and the regional transportation providers can be found in Appendix B.

County or State	Veterans	Percent of Population	Disabled Veterans
Wasco County	2,294	8.9%	593
Hood River County	1,166	5%	193
Sherman County	164	10.2%	49
Gilliam County	200	10.5%	32
Wheeler County	154	10.8%	53
Klickitat County	2,343	11%	420
Skamania County	1,238	10.7%	265
Oregon	288,540	7%	67,523
Washington	537,713	7.37%	126,070



Source: datausa.io using data from the ACS 2018 5-year estimates

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Van

Background: In response to government cuts to Veterans travel benefits in 1987, the Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit organization, created a national network of volunteer drivers administered by the DAV at VA facilities nationwide. DAV Van Transportation takes veterans to and from VA Hospitals and clinics. The DAV donates vans where needed in order for DAV and Axillary volunteers drive the veterans where they need to go. There is one staff person in Washington DC who manages the nation-wide program. The program has been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Service: All rides must be scheduled at least four days in advance by calling (503) 721-7804. The DAV transportation schedule can be found online.

DAV Vans are NOT Wheelchair Accessible and are not equipped to carry oxygen canisters larger than can be carried in a sling or backpack. DAV riders must be able to access/egress vehicles without any assistance.

Counties served by the Mid-Columbia area DAV van:

1. Sherman
2. Klickitat
3. Gilliam
4. Wheeler
5. Skamania
6. Hood River
7. Wasco

Summary of Veterans transportation program opportunities and challenges

The general view of transportation providers and Veterans Service Officers interviewed is that the DAV Van program does not work well in the Columbia Gorge region.

A successful regional program will need to include more data and research, good survey work conducting by a Veterans champion (someone from within the Veterans community), and outreach. Rogue Valley Transportation District launched a successful pilot program called [GO Vets](#) that used an Individualized Marketing Program strategy. RVTD also developed a Go Vets toolkit that gives a blueprint for how to conduct a successful Veterans mobility program. Basic information like how to use the wheelchair lift in a public transit vehicle (demand-response or fixed route) was key to convincing Veterans in wheelchairs to use those services.

DAV Van Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not serve Veterans in wheelchairs or those needing assistance. • Veteran needs to find a ride to the pickup/ drop-off points at the scheduled times. • Schedule is inconsistent and depends on volunteer drivers. • Service to areas outside of the stop in The Dalles and the stop in Hood River depends on the willingness of the driver to leave earlier and return later and drive further.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Veterans are unaware of existing transportation services, both public and Veterans. • Many VSOs are unaware of or not familiar with public or Veterans transportation services. • It is difficult to reach Veterans with information about services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many Veterans would be very uncomfortable in the same vehicle with civilians without individualized training and support tools and techniques (using noise-blocking headsets, sitting in the back of the bus). ▪ One-call, one-click resources are not successful without individualized training
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful outreach is done by forming strong partnerships with other institutions and organizations who serve Veterans (fraternity clubs, Housing Authority, Community College, Easter Seals, VSO). • Younger Veterans aren't joiners, but you can reach them through email. • Older Veterans are harder to reach through email, but many are on Facebook.

- Travel Training programs can be successful when planned and implemented thoughtfully. A highly successful program, RVTD’s Go Vets, has a toolkit available.

Income, Employment, and Commute Data

The annual average wage in Wasco County in 2018 was \$40,679¹⁶ compared to the national average of \$51,960 or 78% of the national average.¹⁷ In 2018, Wasco County had a per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$43,658. This PCPI ranked 17th in the state and was 86% of the state average, \$50,843, and 80% of the national average, \$54,446. The 2018 PCPI reflected an increase of 3.5% from 2017.¹⁸ Wasco County’s December 2018 seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 4.4% compared to 4.2% for Oregon and 3.9% nationally.¹⁹

A 2014-2018 analysis of commuting patterns using U.S. Census data shows a shared labor market inside and outside the Columbia River Gorge. While a majority of Wasco County workers are employed within the county, those who are not travel most frequently to Hood River County and secondly to Multnomah County. Wasco County is the second top work destination for residents of Hood River County. This is illustrative of the interconnectivity of the region’s economies and supports the need for greater interconnected regional public transportation.

Journey to Work:

2018 ACS Commuting Patterns (5-Year 2014-2018)

	Hood River	Sherman	Wasco
Total Workers	11,299	684	11,131
In-County %	86.9%	68.6%	80.5%
Top Work Destination	Multnomah	Wasco	Hood River
2 nd Work Destination	Wasco	Multnomah	Multnomah
3 rd Work Destination	Klickitat	Yakima	Clackamas
4 th Work Destination	Clackamas	Deschutes	Klickitat

Note: *Work Destination (for 2017) provided by Census Bureau’s On-The-Map <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/> ACS Table S0801-2018 (5-Year) Commuting Characteristics by Sex <https://data.census.gov>*

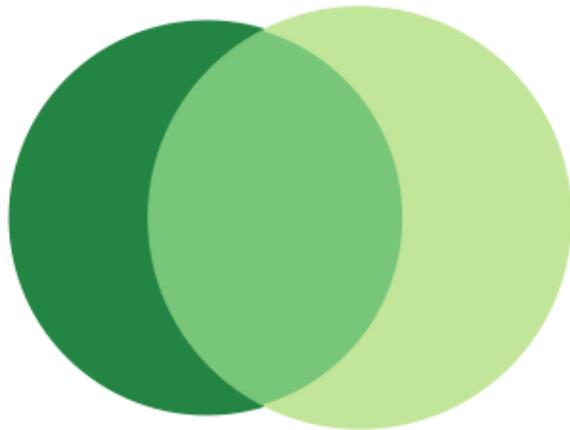
¹⁶ Oregon Employment Department. 2018. Quality Info Employment and Wages by Industry, Wasco County

¹⁷ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2018. National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates. https://www.bls.gov/oes/2018/may/oes_nat.htm

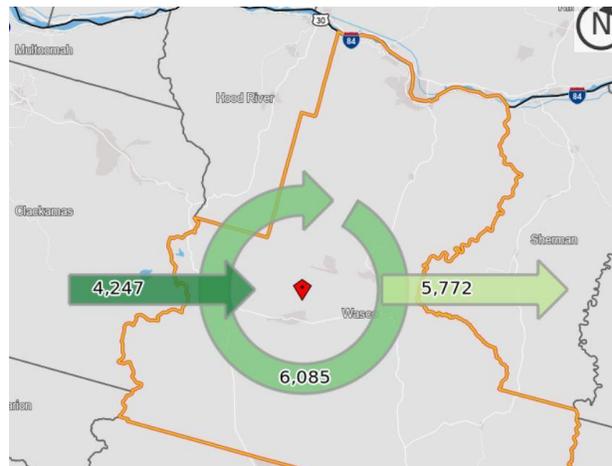
¹⁸ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. 2018. Local Area Personal Income

¹⁹ Oregon Employment Department. 2018. Quality Info Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Inflow/Outflow Job Counts in 2017



- 4,247 - Employed in Selection Area, Live Outside
- 5,772 - Live in Selection Area, Employed Outside
- 6,085 - Employed and Live in Selection Area



From: Census Bureau's On-The-Map (2017 data)
<https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

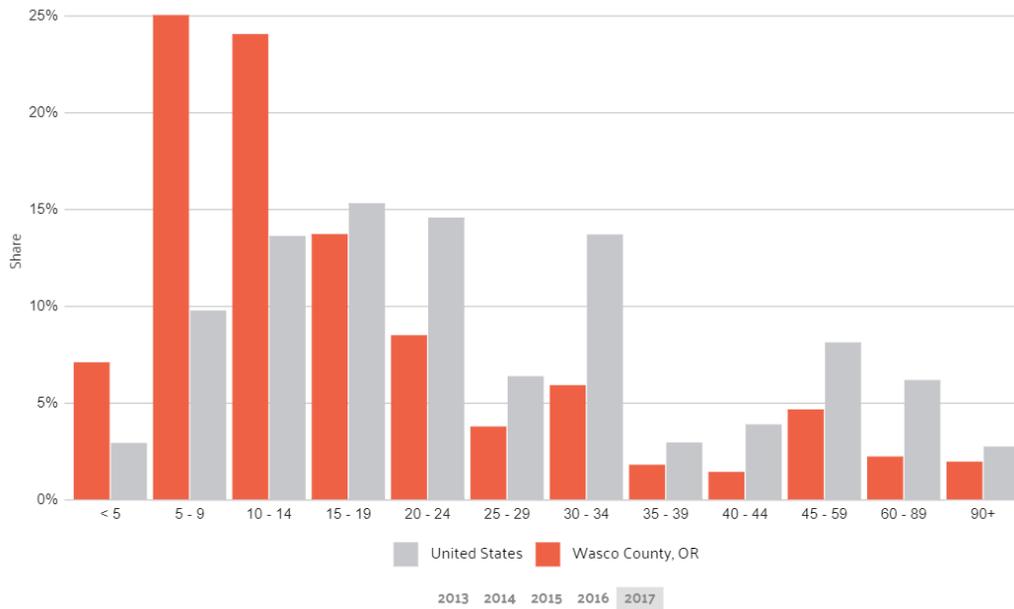
Jobs Counts by Places (Cities, CDPs, etc.) Where Workers Live - Private Primary Jobs

2017

	Count	Share
All Places (Cities, CDPs, etc.)	7,717	100.0%
■ The Dalles city, OR	3,142	40.7%
■ Chenoweth CDP, OR	242	3.1%
■ Hood River city, OR	214	2.8%
■ Portland city, OR	180	2.3%
■ Salem city, OR	80	1.0%
■ Dufur city, OR	74	1.0%
■ Gresham city, OR	72	0.9%
■ Goldendale city, WA	60	0.8%
■ Bend city, OR	58	0.8%
■ Eugene city, OR	50	0.6%
All Other Locations	3,545	45.9%

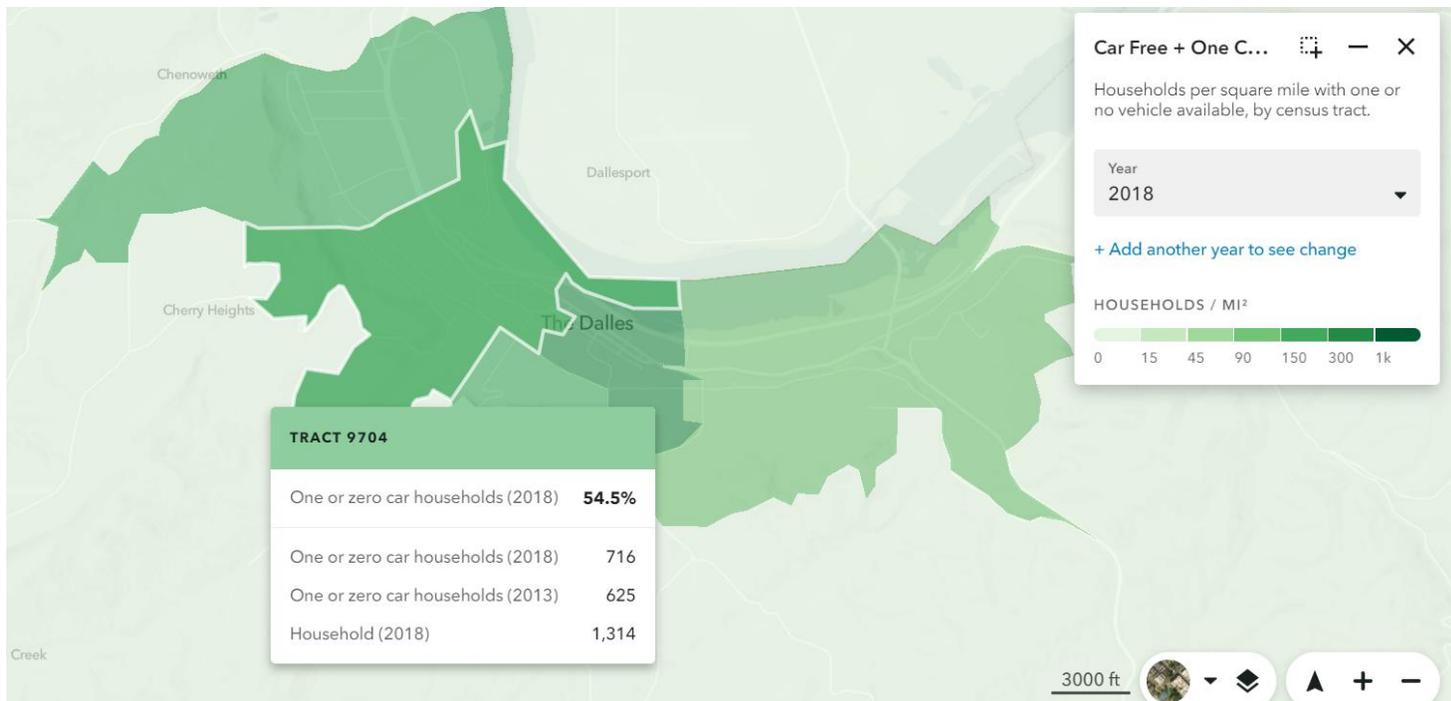
The data above illustrate that over 6,000 residents live and work in Wasco County, while almost 6,000 live in Wasco County but work in another county. The breakdown shows the largest percentages of workers traveling outside the county for work are headed for Hood River and Portland.

Data from the American Community Survey 2018 5-yr Estimates and the below graph from <https://datausa.io> indicates that mean travel time to work is still well below the state and national average. However, the percentage of “super commutes” over 90 minutes is above the State percentage and most likely reflects the number of people traveling to the Portland or Salem areas to work.



Commuter and Personal Vehicle Data	Wasco County ¹	Oregon ¹
Total population	25,866	4,081,943
Mean travel time to work in minutes for workers 16 years and over	17.8 min.	23.7 min.
Percentage of Super-Commutes (over 90 minutes one-way)	1.95%	1.85%
Percentage of 60+ minute commutes	4.0%	6.0%
One-car households	29.0%	32.0%
Car-free households	7.0%	7.0%

The map below was created on Remix’s Explore program, which uses American Community Survey 2018 5-yr Estimates data. The map shows that census tract 9704 in The Dalles has the highest percent of one- or no- car households at 54.5%. Households with one or no cars are likely to use fixed route transit service.



Columbia Gorge Community College Students

The Columbia Gorge Community College (CGCC) has two campuses, one in The Dalles and the other in Hood River. This community college draws students from throughout the Columbia Gorge region, including from Klickitat and Skamania counties in Washington, and is preparing to launch a nursing internship at the Klickitat Valley Hospital in Goldendale, WA. Both Columbia Area Transit and the Link have worked with CGCC staff to develop routes that would serve students and staff wishing to use transit to access either campus or to travel between campuses.

Columbia Area Transit, the Link, and Mt. Adams Transportation Service have discussed development of a student pass system with CGCC staff that would allow a student to purchase a pass at a discounted rate and would also allow them to transfer more easily between providers. While a pass system has not yet been developed, the organizations all identify this project as a high priority.

Over one third of CGCC students are considered low-income or dependents of low-income families. In the school year of 2018/2019, 36% of CGCC students received Federal Pell Grants. For dependent Pell recipients, the median parent annual income was between \$24,000 and \$29,999. For independent Pell recipients, the median student/spouse annual income was between \$12,000 and \$15,999.

Student Demographics		
Total enrollment 2018/2019	1,124	100.00%

American Indian or Alaskan Native	27	2.38%
Hispanic/Latino	324	32.03%
Asian	20	1.88%
Black or African American	8	.68%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	9	.73%
White	710	60.44%
Unknown	26	1.86%

In 2018 the college announced that they would be building a new skill center and student housing building. A student housing survey with 21 respondents included a question about transportation. Fifteen percent of the respondents said that they would use the bus daily while living on campus. Fifteen percent said that they would use the bus occasionally while living on campus.

Changing Conditions

Changing conditions will affect the ways in which the target populations travel in the next few years. Public transportation providers must anticipate these changes when planning for current and new services. Changing conditions outlined in this section include House Bill 2017, regional service changes, and Gorge TransLink Alliance projects.

House Bill 2017: Keep Oregon Moving

With the passage of the Keep Oregon Moving (HB 2017) transportation funding package, the Oregon Legislature made a significant investment in transportation to help further the things that Oregonians value, such as a vibrant economy with good jobs, choices in transportation, a healthy environment, and safe communities.

The public transportation payroll tax generated from a 1/10 of 1% tax on wages will provide sustainable funding for better public transportation in Oregon.

Wasco County is the STF agency and the STIF Qualified Entity that receives these state transportation funds. The Wasco County STIF Advisory Committee was established by the Wasco County Board of County Commissioners on August 1, 2018 in accordance with the state rules for receiving the STIF dollars for Wasco County. In June, 2020, the Wasco County STF and STIF Advisory Committees were merged into one committee called the Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC). As operator of the LINK Public Transit, MCEDD serves as staff to this committee and helps the PTAC to develop a STIF Plan that includes a list of projects required to address the transportation needs of people residing in or traveling into and out of the Qualified Entity's area of responsibility.

The Link Public Transit: Operations and Management Transfer in 2018

On February 1, 2018, operations and management of the Link transportation system was transferred from the Mid-Columbia Council of Governments (MCCOG) to the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD).

The Link Public Transit: New Programs and Services

Farmers Market Bus: In 2018 and 2019, the Link received grant funds from the PacificSource CCO and from Providence Hospital to provide a dial-a-ride service on Saturdays in order for residents to access The Dalles Farmers Market. This program worked supported the Veggie RX program, a fruit and vegetable prescription program designed to address food insecurity and increase intake of fresh produce in the Columbia Gorge. The program empowers health care and social services providers to 'prescribe' vouchers to community members who screen positive for food insecurity. Vouchers can then be used to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables at farmers markets, farm stands and other select

sites. Now that the Link operates Dial-A-Ride on Saturdays as a regular service, residents can access the Farmers Market all season and special private grant funding is no longer needed.

Summer Swim Bus: In 2017, the Link partnered with the North Wasco County Parks and Recreation District to offer a shuttle service two days a week for children to access the District’s public swimming pool between the hours of 1-3:30 pm. The North Central Public Health District continues to offer free swim passes to children in Wasco County upon request. The Parks and Recreation Director, Scott Baker, is still interested in continuing a similar summer public transportation program for children and thinks that it would be much more successful with more marketing during the school year. Free swim passes for low income families are available through the North Central Public Health District.

Deviated Fixed Route Service: The Link Public Transit launched the first deviated fixed route service in April 2019, and expanded that service in 2020.

Bus Stop Amenities: The Link has received several grants to purchase and install bus shelters and is working with the City of The Dalles on an installation process.

New/Expanded services also include expanded hours (6 am to 6 p m), Saturday Dial-a-Ride service, a shuttle to the southern communities in Wasco County, and a shuttle serving Celilo Village.

Gorge Translink Alliance: Expansion of Regional Fixed Route Services



In the last three years, Columbia Area Transit, Mt Adams Transportation Service, and the Link Public Transit have launched a significant expansion of fixed route services that connect the region.

The Link Public Transit launched the Deviated Fixed route, a loop route within the City of The Dalles, in April 2019 and increased the headways from 1 hour to 30 minutes in July of 2020. The Link is scheduled to add a second route with new stops in September of 2020.

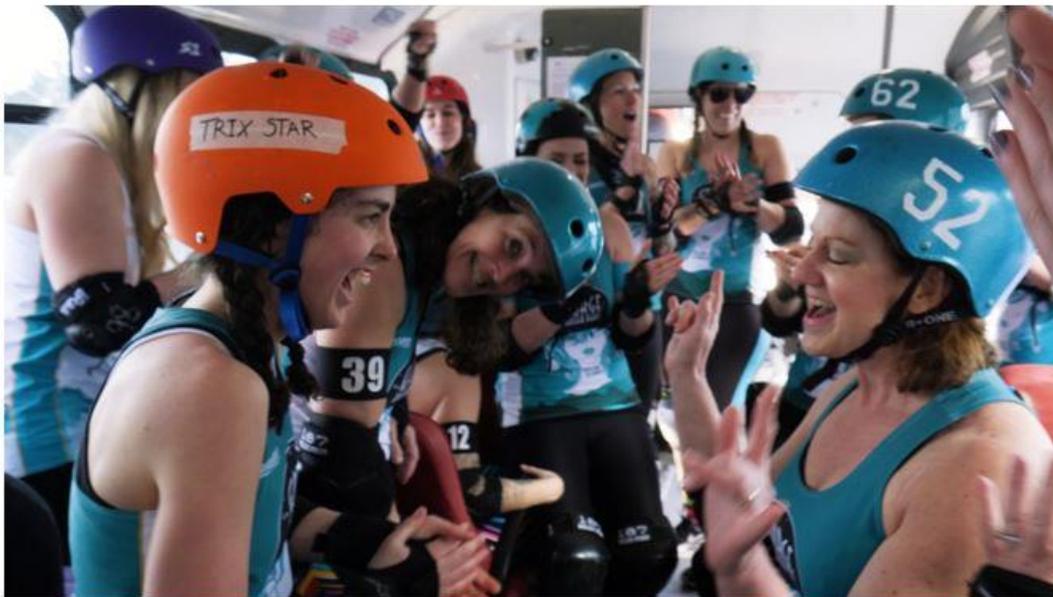
GorgeTransLink Alliance: Projects

GorgeTransLink.com Website Redevelopment

The redeveloped Gorgetranslink.com website was launched in 2019 using open source website plugins developed by Trillium Transit Solutions for the NW Connector website (with ODOT funding) and continues to be improved with new technology tools. The new website is rider-focused with a trip planner for individual trips, an interactive regional route map, and timetables and interactive maps produced for each route based on a single template. The route timetables and maps use the GTFS data produced by Trillium Transit Solutions for an ODOT webpage that hosts the files. The GTFS data is then used by the Mapbox and GTFS-to-HTML plugins to present the data as maps and timetables.

Everybody Rides/ ¡Todos Arriba! Marketing Campaign

Designed to provide enhanced awareness of available public transportation resources throughout the five-county region, this public outreach campaign engaged Gorge communities by using creative and innovative public outreach techniques. Campaign products in both Spanish and English included individual videos for each transportation provider, a rack card designed for LEP individuals with a map of the regional services, and Spanish language radio productions for Wasco and Hood River counties.



Wasco County video: the Gorge Roller Derby
21,000 views, 1334 engagements

Adoption of a Mobile Fare Application

In 2018, Columbia Area Transit and Mt. Adams Transportation Services both adopted the mobile fare application Hopthru in order to provide a platform for the Gorge Commuter Pass. The Link adopted HopThru in 2019. Columbia Area Transit later adopted a different mobile fare application called Token Transit in order to support the launch in 2019 of the GORge Pass, an annual transit pass that is available for all to purchase.

COVID-19 Pandemic 2020

On January 31, 2020, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared that a new coronavirus disease, COVID-19, was a public health emergency for the United States. Coronavirus are a group of viruses that can cause respiratory disease with the potential to cause serious illness or loss of life.

On March 8, 2020, Governor Kate Brown declared a State of Emergency for the State of Oregon, stating that the novel infectious coronavirus had created a threat to public health and safety, and constituted a statewide emergency under ORS 401.025(1). On March 23, 2020, Governor Kate Brown issued Executive Order 20-12, Stay Home Save Lives, ordering Oregonians to stay at home, closing specified retail businesses, requiring social distancing measures for other public and private facilities, and imposing requirements for outdoor areas and licensed childcare facilities.

In May and June 2020, select Oregon counties including Wasco County that had met certain criteria were able to open their economies in a phased approach. However, in July there was a worrying increase in the number of new COVID-19 cases reported across the nation and in Oregon.

The long-term impact on the economy is unknown, but the short-term impact has been concerning.

Impact to Transit

While data showing the impacts to public transportation agencies in Oregon has not been analyzed, demand for transit services in Wasco County decreased by about 75% in March and April, as most non-essential medical appointments were cancelled and residents heeded the directive to stay at home. The Link Public Transit responded to the Governor Kate Brown's Stay Home, Save Lives order and Public Transit guidelines on March 23rd by immediately decreasing both the deviated fixed and the Dial-A-Ride services, decreasing hours of operation, and eliminating fare charges. The Link's ridership decreased by 70% for the next few months.

The Link's services resumed in June and reflected the State of Oregon's guidance for public transportation providers, which included sanitation procedures, physical distancing for riders, extra protections for drivers, and mask requirements. Columbia Area Transit's intercity service between The Dalles, Hood River, and Portland resumed on June 5th with a reduced schedule and by reservation only in order to maintain physical distance requirements between riders.

Broadband in Wasco County's Remote Areas

Recent broadband projects in the southern portion of Wasco County will potentially have an impact on the transportation needs of these remote areas.

The Maupin fiber optic network project was completed in 2019, connecting residences, businesses, and anchor institutions like the school, library, City Hall, Deschutes Rim Health Clinic, as well as Canyon Rim Senior Living with speeds of up to 1 gigabit per second. Before Maupin built its own fiber optic network, the town had some of the slowest download and upload speeds in the state, putting businesses, healthcare services, and students at a disadvantage.

The health clinic is now able to partner with Mid-Columbia Medical Center in The Dalles for telehealth services and is in discussion with other health care partners like Mid-Columbia Center for Living.

Improvements to connectivity have been made for areas like Tygh Valley, Wamic, and Pine Hollow, although not to the same level enjoyed by Maupin.

Inclusivity

The challenge of a public transportation agency is to create a safe and welcoming public place for all. During the public outreach process for this Coordinated Plan, leaders and representatives of minority communities were interviewed who described the fears that these populations have of using public transportation in Wasco County, which included:

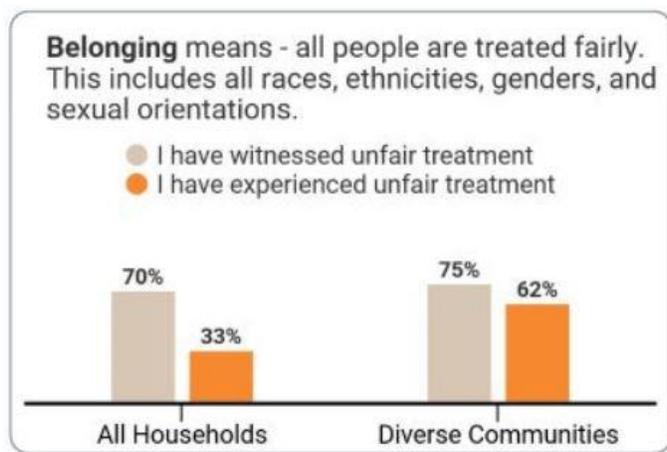
- Law enforcement boarding the bus to conduct non-targeted searches.
- Possibility that a bus driver will call law enforcement for any reason.
- Bus driver may negatively perceive culturally-specific home arrangements and call a state agency, resulting in family separations.
- Discriminatory comments or attacks from other riders.
- Vulnerability to attacks in public spaces when using public transit (it is difficult to escape when dependent on a transit schedule and unclear what safety entering a public bus can offer anyway).

The 2019 Community Health Assessment survey asked two questions about discrimination:

1. Have you experienced unfair treatment some, most, or all the time because of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation?
2. Have you witnessed others receiving unfair treatment because of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation?

In Wasco County, the representative population sample indicated that 39% of county residents have had personal experience with unfair treatment because of discrimination and 68.3% have witnessed this discrimination. Region wide, 61.8% of self-identified persons of diverse communities state that

they have personally experienced discrimination and 75.3% have witnessed discrimination towards another person.



Action steps for a transit agency to establish trust and relationships with minority communities could include²⁰:

1. Develop a statement of belief that welcomes all people and post it conspicuously.
2. Distribute information about civil rights relevant to using public transit with other transit information.
3. Train drivers and frontline staff in techniques to de-escalate situations regarding rider discrimination or violation of rights (discrimination de-escalation toolkit).
4. Require relevant staff training.

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination against racial or ethnic groups (protected classes) by any federal financial recipient and is enforced by U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) civil rights regulations which provides that “[n]o person or group of persons shall be discriminated against with regard to the routing, scheduling, or quality of service of transportation service furnished as a part of the project on the basis of race, color, or national origin.”²¹

For transit agencies actually seeking to change the status quo, “equitable” or “inclusive” suggests something more ambitious, important, and challenging: proactively improving access to opportunity for those with the greatest transportation challenges, especially residents in low-income communities and communities of color.

²⁰ Interview with Jonathan Ostar, Transit Civil Rights Attorney based in Portland, OR, 8/20/2020

²¹ 49 C.F.R. § 21.5(b)(2)

Transportation Resources in Wasco County

Vehicle-based Transportation Service Options

Wasco County has a number of vehicle-based transportation options for residents. Included in this list are both private and public transportation providers. Some services are only accessible if the person meets specific eligibility requirements. Some services have geographical limitations or are not ADA accessible.

Transportation Provider	Public/Private	Service Type	Hours	Days	Service Area
The Link Public Transportation, Wasco County	Public	Dial-a-Ride, Deviated Fixed, Shopping bus, NEMT	6 a.m. to 6 p.m.	Monday-Friday Saturdays (9 am-4 pm)	City of The Dalles and select areas in Wasco County
Columbia Area Transit (CAT), Hood River County Transportation	Public	Fixed Route, Dial-A-Ride, ADA Paratransit	6 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.	Monday-Sunday	Hood River, Wasco County, Portland
Mt. Adams Transportation District, Klickitat County	Public	Fixed Route, Dial-A-Ride	8-5 pm	Monday-Friday	Klickitat County, Hood River County, Wasco County, Multnomah County, Yakima County.
PacificSource, CCO Contracts with Logisticare, a Non Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) Brokerage	Must meet eligibility requirements	Non Emergent Medical Transportation	7 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Monday - Friday	Hood River, Wasco counties
The Next Door, Inc.	Public – serves eligible clients only	Client transportation	As needed for Klahre House students	As needed	Wasco and Hood River counties

Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage	Public – serves eligible clients only	Client transportation reimbursement or contracts with public transit, Taxi	As needed	As needed	13 counties in Eastern Oregon including Wasco, Hood River
Opportunity Connections	Public – serves eligible clients only	Client Transportation via group home vehicles; Supportive Living transportation	As needed	As needed	The Dalles/ Hood River
Mid-Columbia Center for Living	Public – serves eligible clients only	Client Transportation	As needed	As needed	Wasco, Hood River and Sherman counties
CAPECO/ The Dalles Senior Center - The Dalles Meals on Wheels	Public – serves eligible homebound seniors	Delivers home cooked meals, reducing or eliminating the need for transportation	Mon – Fri deliveries	Monday - Friday	Wasco County
Veterans Administration	Serves eligible Veterans only	Medical Transportation – Reimbursement and Beneficiary Travel programs	As needed	As needed	Columbia Gorge and Portland
Disabled American Veterans (DAV)	Serves eligible Veterans Only-- Not ADA accessible	Veterans Transportation to Portland for Medical. Fixed route, no Door to Door.	As needed; Pick-up at Safeway (The Dalles)	Depends on volunteer driver availability	Columbia Gorge and Portland

Oregon Veterans Home	Serves eligible clients only	Client Transportation	As needed	As needed	The Dalles/Portland
Tygh School Community Center Bus (TSCC bus)	Private. Contracts to provide NEMT rides.	Volunteer drivers serving South Wasco. Pricing varies. Shopping bus.	As needed	Monday - Friday	South Wasco County to The Dalles
The Dalles Explorer (Blue Bus)	Visitor-focused/ Seasonal	Partnership of The Dalles Chamber of Commerce, The Dalles Dam Visitor Center, Grayline of Portland	Variable	Monday-Friday, Summer only	Hood River to The Dalles and The Dalles Dam
Five Dollar Taxi, The Dalles	Private company serves the public	Taxi: door-to-door	24/7	Monday - Sunday	City of The Dalles; will transport outside city limits at a charge of
The Dalles Taxi, LLC	Private company serves the public	Taxi: door-to-door	24/7	Sunday and Monday: 6am to 6pm; Tuesday – Saturday operates 24/7	City of The Dalles; will negotiate long trips with interested individuals or under contract to area Human Services Agencies.
Gorge Taxi	Private-- Also contracts to provide NEMT rides	Taxi: Door to Door	Monday Sunday	Hours are changing due to COVID--19	The Dalles/Hood River
Flagstone Senior Living, The Dalles	Private	Client Transportation	As needed	As needed	The Dalles
Cherry Heights Living, The Dalles	Private	Client Transportation	As needed	As needed	The Dalles

The Springs at Mill Creek, The Dalles	Private	Client Transportation	As needed	As needed	The Dalles
Nightingale Care Homes, The Dalles	Private	Client Transportation	As needed	As needed	The Dalles
The Dalles Health and Rehabilitation Center	Private	Client Transportation	As needed	As needed	The Dalles
Canyon Rim Manor, Maupin	Private and NEMT Contractor	Client Transportation, NEMT	As needed	As needed	Maupin, Hood River, The Dalles, Bend
Greyhound Lines	Private	Bus- Fixed Route	By schedule	Monday-Sunday	I-84 corridor
Amtrak	Quasi-public	Train- Fixed Route	By schedule	Monday-Sunday	Wishram and Bingen, WA to Portland
Get There Oregon	Public – Free to participate	Carpool/Ride Share/Trip Planner	As arranged	As arranged	State of Oregon (ODOT)
Commute with Enterprise	Private	Vanpool	As arranged	As arranged	Throughout Oregon/Washington

Active Transportation

A car-dependent community leaves many people without access to basic resources like food, medical services, higher education, jobs, and social and civic opportunities. One third of people living in the U.S. do not drive. Seven percent of households in the Wasco County do not own a vehicle and 29% of households own only one vehicle to share between multiple members of the household.

Children, the elderly, the visually impaired or otherwise physically challenged, those with lower incomes, or those who simply choose to not have access to a car, are among the groups that benefit most when opportunities to safely walk or bicycle are improved. Active transportation modes include walking, biking, wheelchair rolling, and transit.

The walk score of the area around The Dalles Transit Center is 45 points out of 100²², which means that the neighborhood is car-dependent and that most errands require a car. In a one-mile radius around The Dalles Transit Center, only 50% of the roadways have sidewalks (per City Engineer). The first part of any transit trip usually requires walking, biking, or rolling to the bus stop, which is why transit is usually included in a discussion about Active Transportation needs.

During this Coordinated Plan’s interview process, many community partners from The Dalles Senior Center, North Wasco Parks and Recreation District, and North Central Public Health District noted that safer walking and biking infrastructure would provide more freedom and independence to youth, older adults, those with low incomes, and others who do not or cannot drive. They also pointed out that if more residents could walk or bike to their destinations, they would not be dependent on a bus schedule, but would have the power to meet their own mobility needs. Lack of safe active transportation infrastructure impacts their ability to access resources, including public transportation services.

ODOT’s Transportation Options

The Transportation Options, or TO, program focuses on implementation of the Oregon Transportation Options Plan, including: managing demand across the transportation system; educating students and the public on travel options and how to safely use them; connecting veterans, low income populations, communities of color, and others with ways to get to and from work or school; supporting vanpooling; and more.

Transportation Options programs connect people to transportation choices, allowing them to bike, walk, take transit, drive, share rides, and telecommute. TO programs do not address capital infrastructure or service investments – like sidewalks, bike lanes, and transit service. Rather, they provide information and resources to help people learn about their travel options for all types of trips. Transportation Options is also sometimes referred to Transportation Demand Management.

Investments in transportation options can provide numerous benefits to the existing transportation system including cost savings, improved health, and congestion mitigation, and safety.

While ODOT leads a number of statewide efforts to support and encourage transportation options, local partners across the state work on the ground to implement programs. Each local partner customizes their programs to meet the unique needs of the local population, the geography of the community, and the transportation services and infrastructure available.

ODOT partners with MCEDD and with the non-profit Commute Options to support Transportation Options programs in the counties of Wasco, Sherman, and Hood River.

²² <https://www.walkscore.com/score/802-chenowith-loop-rd-the-dalles-or-97058>

Ride Share

In the more remote and rural areas of Wasco County, community leaders report that residents form natural support systems for those who have transportation needs. A trip to the grocery store in the Dalles from some locations in South Wasco County can take up to an hour by car one way, so residents carpool or take on a neighbor's grocery list.

ODOT provides a free ridesharing tool and database called Get There (<https://getthereoregon.org>) that allows residents to find carpool options for their commute, to get to school, or to find a ride to a posted event. The website includes a trip planner which allows people to find information about using other modes like walking or biking. MCEDD's Mobility Manager works with both ODOT and Commute Options to promote this tool in the counties of Wasco, Sherman, and Hood River.

During the year the focus is on employers, targeting employee commute modes, but every October ODOT and its partners work to promote the Get There tool for general public use by hosting a public challenge with prizes for those who participate in logging their transportation options trips.

The Link Public Transit

Service Highlights

- **Deviated Fixed Route:** The Dalles Deviated Fixed Route operates on a loop to key destinations in The Dalles on Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM. Rides are \$1.50 each.
- **Dial-a-Ride:** The dial-a-ride, door-to-door public transportation operates Monday through Friday, 6:00 AM – 6:00 PM and on Saturday from 9:00 AM- 4:00 PM. Trips are \$1.50 each way, scheduled in advance and may include other passengers going to different destinations. Riders can be picked up in the communities of The Dalles, Dufur, Mosier, Celilo and points between in unincorporated Wasco County.
- **The Dalles Shopping Bus:** The shopping bus offers door-to-door service to grocery stores and shopping centers in The Dalles on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Cost is \$3.00 for unlimited stops with no shopping bag limit. Our drivers will help load and unload riders' bags (bags must be under 25 pounds). On the 3rd Wednesday of each month, the bus visits Hood River.
- **South County Shuttle:** The LINK has a shuttle every Tuesday that picks up riders in Maupin, Tygh Valley and Dufur for a few hours of shopping and appointments in The Dalles. This service is \$5.00 round trip for pickups in Maupin and Tygh Valley and \$3.00 round trip for pickups in Dufur.
- **Celilo-Lone Pine Shuttle:** Every Friday, The LINK picks up riders at 9:50 AM in Celilo Village and 10:10 AM near the entrance of Lone Pine In-Lieu Site. Riders can get shopping or appointments done in The Dalles and then are returned to Lone Pine and Celilo. This service is \$3 roundtrip and riders are encouraged to book ahead.
- **Bike Capacity:** Most of the Link's cut-away buses will have bike racks by January 2021.

The Link Public Transit Ridership

Service	Trips for FY19
Dial-A-Ride (not including NEMT contracts)	17,613 trips
NEMT rides	3,836 trips
Shopper Shuttles	994 riders
Total Service Hours	6,990 hours
Total annual Mileage	98,195 miles
Total annual rides	21,449 rides

Ridership on the Fixed Route By Month/Year		Riders Picked up at a Fixed Stop
April	2019	0
May		24
June		28
July		48
August		56
September		71
October		133
November		60
December		56
January	2020	60
February		85
March		76
April		30
May		33
June		48
July		46
August		53

Common Origins and Destinations

As the major population center and because the public transportation provider currently serves primarily the City of The Dalles, a majority of transportation needs originate within the city.

Wasco County residents often require transportation traveling to and from and within The Dalles as it is a major destination for accessing human service agencies, shopping centers, and medical facilities. Human Service agency staff note that Hood River as the second highest priority destination city, especially for residents who live in or near Mosier, located on the western edge of the county.

A map of common destinations may be found in Appendix D. Common destinations concentrated in The Dalles include the following:

- Medical Care: MCMC Family Medicine, Mid-Columbia Center for Living, Mid-Columbia Medical Center, Fresenius Kidney Care (dialysis).
- Work: various locations, no specific location.
- Shopping and Pharmacy: Safeway, Fred Meyer, Grocery Outlet/Cascade Square, BiMart
- Schools: elementary and middle school primarily, Columbia Gorge Community College
- Veterinarians and Dog Groomers

- Wasco County Library
- Community Action Program (during winter months)
- Post Office
- Mid-Columbia Senior Center (congregant meals)
- Marijuana Dispensaries
- Social visits to other residences

The Link and Public Transportation Funding

The Link Public Transit’s funding sources and actuals from the Link Public Transit FY19 and FY20 are detailed in the tables below. Included are funding sources that the Link may not have received funding from during FY19 or FY20, but could apply to in future cycles.

FY20 includes the months of March-June during the time of statewide COVID-19 quarantine in Oregon. The fare box revenue total (includes Dial A Ride and the Deviated Fixed Route) for FY20 was \$23,968.29, considerably lower than that of FY19 at \$31,372.77. The Link’s new Deviated Fixed Route was launched in April of 2019.

FEDERAL Program/Source:	Purpose	Allocation Method	The Link Revenue FY19	The Link Revenue FY20
		ODOT		
FTA 5310/ODOT Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities	Seniors and individuals with disabilities; often limited to capital projects	Formula to STF agencies	\$85,761	\$64,668.21
FTA 5310/ODOT Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities	Eligible projects are operations, mobility management, purchased service, and preventive maintenance.	Discretionary to rural and small urban	\$14,457.95	\$71,081.00
FTA 5311: Formula Grants for Rural Areas	Rural Populations less than 50,000	Formula to Rural providers	\$102,393.06	\$123,680.00
Transit Network and Intercity (5311 f) (see STIF Intercity below)	Bus service between cities and regions	Discretionary to intercity providers	\$11,510	0
FTA 5339: Bus and bus facilities	Vehicles, facilities, equipment	Discretionary rural and small urban via state	\$33,200	\$61,227.00

				(Bus/bus shelters) \$59,165.00 (vehicle)
FTA 5303/4	Transportation Planning	Discretionary	0	0
STIP Enhance	--		\$4,304.87	\$131,466.13
CARES Act	COVID relief funding to cover COVID-related expenses	Distributed through Formula and through Needs-based programs	N/A	\$17,612.00
FHWA FLAP: Federal Lands Access Program	All transit purposes for services that access federal lands		0	0

STATE Program/Source	Purpose	Allocation Method	The Link Revenue FY19	The Link Revenue FY20
		ODOT		
STF: State of Oregon's Special Transportation Fund (final cycle before STF and STIF are merged for the 2023-25 cycle) =composed of cigarette gas tax, non-highway use gas tax, ID card revenues (General fund removed per 2018 legislature)	Older Adults, people with disabilities	ODOT by formula and discretionary; STF agency discretionary local prioritization	\$67,000	\$67,700
STIF: Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (Statewide employee tax)	Enhance public transportation	Formula with a base of at least \$100K	\$209,267	\$389,301.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>STIF Discretionary</u> • <u>Statewide Transit Network Program</u> --FTA 5311(f) --STIF Intercommunity Fund	Enhance public transportation services	Competitive grant program	0	0
	Improve transit, coordination, reduce GHG,	STIF Intercommunity Fund: Competitive	0	0

	improve active transportation			
Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation Grant Program (Oregon Lottery funds to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs)	Connect Veterans to healthcare services	Competitive Grant program Managed by ODOT	N//A	0

Income from "Eligibility Programs" Program/Source	Purpose	The Link revenue FY19	The Link Revenue FY20
PacificSource NEMT benefit	Qualified Medical	93,193.40	\$63,115 *Impacted by COVID-19 March-June *Impacted by new CCO 2.0 Contract
Medicaid: Through contracts with organizations like the local CDDP provider, EOSSB, and others serving the developmentally disabled.	Non-medical Medicaid resources for the developmentally disabled.	0	0

Local sources Program/Source	Purpose	The Link revenue FY19	The Link Revenue FY20
City of The Dalles	Local Assessment	\$10,000	\$20,000
Farebox Revenue—Dial A Ride (Inclusive of ticket sales to organizations)	Farebox	\$31,374.77 DAR and Deviated Fixed (April-June)	\$19,526.11
Farebox Revenue-Deviated Fixed Route	Farebox	See above	\$4,577.18 (Impacted by COVID-19 March-June)
PacificSource	Farmers Market	\$9,685	0
Providence Health Services and Mid-Columbia Medical Center	Farmers Market	\$2,750	0
Greyhound Line	Bus stop	\$3,600 (\$300/month)	\$3,524.37
Greyhound Line	Ticket Sales Commission	N/A	\$657.20

		Not yet launched during this time period	
Lobby Vending Machine	Sales percent	\$400.00	--
Northern Wasco County People's Utility District	Economic Development	\$5,469.55	0

Total Income	FY19	FY20
	\$788,003.59	\$1,392,412.77

Local Grant Opportunities

- Google Community Grant (for wifi on the buses)
- Joan Birchell Grant Program: Applicants must be a nonprofit. MCEDD has 501 (c) 3 status with the Four Rivers Nonprofit
- AARP Community Challenge
- Transportation Growth Management Program (DLCD and ODOT)
- Columbia Gorge Health Council Community Grant programs
- PacificSource Foundation

Other Local Public Transportation Funding Options:

- Advertising
- Local general funds (City, County)
- Transportation Impact Fees
- Transportation Utility Fees
- System Development Charges
- Special Assessments
- Other nonprofit or private grant programs
- Partner investments in pass purchases (Community College, employers, health care organizations)
- Donations
- Local grants

Improving Coordination

As the Link's city-wide fixed-route services and the regional public transit system expands, there are new opportunities to partner with other organizations to meet their client's transportation needs.

The Gorge TransLink Alliance

Wasco County enjoys a well-established level of coordination between the area's transportation providers through The Link's participation in the Gorge TransLink Alliance, a bi-state coalition of five county's transportation providers, state transportation officials and local agency partners in the Mid-Columbia region. The Alliance is facilitated by MCEDD's Mobility Manager. This individual works closely with Alliance members and other partners to consider local and regional transportation services, service gaps, costs, funding needs, available funding streams, innovative and appropriate technologies. The Mobility Manager is also responsible for identifying opportunities for collaboration and coordination and convening and facilitating these potential partnerships.

To help promote existing transportation services, MCEDD's Mobility Manager conducts community outreach to area organizations serving the needs of vulnerable and special needs populations, as well as to employers and the general public. Quarterly meetings of the Gorge TransLink Alliance are organized and facilitated by the Mobility Manager in order to aid communication and build partnerships, thus fostering an environment where regional transportation concerns can be addressed.

The Mobility Manager position is grant-funded. Gorge TransLink Alliance members support the Mobility Manager position through agency resolutions and Memorandums of Understanding, along with match and in-kind assistance.

Organizations serving Target Populations

The Community Developmental Disabilities Program

This program currently in transition as the Mid-Columbia Center for Living's contracted role ends in September 2020. CDDP services include eligibility determination, case management, licensure of Foster Homes and protective service investigations for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities for Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman counties.

Previously, the Link did have a contract with MCCFL for nonmedical Medicaid transportation services supported by the Local Match funding program, but did not continue the contract.

There is an opportunity for the Link to reach out to the new CDDP provider (not selected at this time) to provide transportation services using Developmental Disability transportation funds to purchase bus

passes, especially for the deviated fixed route services, or to purchase dial-a-ride services. A travel training program should be established and could engage other people with developmental disabilities who are already using the bus system as travel trainers.

Opportunity Connections

Changes in state and federal regulations have resulted in Opportunity Connections, a social services agency that supports adults with intellectual disabilities, no longer operating its sheltered workshop known as the Columbia Gorge Center in Hood River. Rather than providing jobs, Opportunity Connections is now focused on finding jobs within the community for its clients and helping their clients succeed at these jobs. Opportunity Connections workers need transportation to their community job location rather than the previous centralized worksite. Opportunity Connections is dedicated to providing more opportunities for their clients to become more integrated with their communities. Transportation funds would come from the CDDP organization or service brokerages like the Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage.

A joint travel training program with Opportunity Connections, the Link, and Columbia Area Transit could train both independent clients and staff to use the fixed route bus services within and between the counties. A travel training program would also include a fare mechanism that would be easy for clients and staff to use as part of the contract.

Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage (EOSSB)

The Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage provides services to people with intellectual or developmental disabilities in 13 counties including Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman counties. Eligibility is determined through the CDDP. EOSSB also has transportation funds that can be used to provide transportation services to their clients, whether dial-a-ride or a bus pass on the fixed route system. EOSSB contracts with both public and private transportation providers to provide for their clients' varying needs.

The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS)

ODHS has many programs that assist older adults and people with disabilities, including Aging and People with Disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation, Developmental Disabilities, and Self Sufficiency. Staff also participate in the East Cascades Workforce Board Local Leadership Team that includes the Oregon Human Development Corporation and meets at the Columbia Gorge Community College once a month. This Leadership Team has access to transportation funds for the people that they serve and would be interested in purchasing bus passes or participating in an ongoing travel training program.

Community Action Program of East Central Oregon (CAPECO)

CAPECO serves Gilliam, Hood River, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Wasco, and Wheeler counties and focuses on CAPECO focuses on four key social service needs in east central Oregon. Services include the Area Agency on Aging, Oregon Project Independence, Congregant and Meal Delivery, Food Pantries, and the Aging and Disability Resource Connection of Oregon (ADRC). ADRC staff connect their clients to local resources like public transportation services. CAPECO's Senior Advisory Council meets once a quarter in The Dalles and would be an excellent meeting for the Link staff to attend on a regular basis.

The Gorge Native American Collaboration

Facilitated and convened by the Next Door Inc, this bi-state collaborative includes representatives from tribal and community leadership, state agencies, non-profits, health care organizations, and other tribal agencies, with a focus on serving the tribal people who live and work along the Columbia River. Initially the project efforts focused on addressing the severe impacts of COVID-19 on these communities, but project goals have expanded to addressing the chronic needs that were exacerbated by the pandemic. These needs include transportation, housing, education, healthy food access and medical. These meetings represent a rare opportunity for transit agencies to learn more about these communities and to identify ways that public transportation can serve them.

The Next Door, Inc (TNDI)

The Next Door, Inc operates many programs that are community- and advocacy based. These programs empower and create leadership within historically underserved communities like Native Americans, migrant workers, and Latino and Hispanic populations. TNDI also operates a consulting service that gives other organizations access to the communities that TNDI serves by contracting to conduct in-depth needs assessments, extensive survey work, and focus groups.

Resiliency: Emergency Management Partnership

Long before disasters and other events hit, local communities must continually reassess plans and responses to all kinds of emergencies. Transportation is a critical component of these efforts, particularly for non-drivers and people who need mobility assistance during emergency situations or require other means to have access to essentials such as food, medical care, and prescriptions.

Strategies to become a key stakeholder in Wasco County's Emergency Management planning, response, recovery, and mitigation activities include building relationships with the key emergency management officials, identify capabilities and limitations of services and resources, inventory residents and pockets of populations with special needs (physical disabilities, low income, LEP), and engage the organizations who serve those people with emergency planning efforts. Participating in county-led emergency management planning and tabletop exercises is a good way to become integrated into the emergency management systems planning for Wasco County.

The Mid-Columbia Economic Development and Wasco County have approved a Memorandum of Understanding outlining an agreement that in the event of an emergency or disaster MCEDD would provide buses and drivers if available to Wasco County for assistance in transporting threatened citizens.

Coordinated Care Organizations and Non Emergency Medical Transportation

A **Coordinated Care Organization** is a network of all types of health care providers (physical health care, addictions and mental health care and dental care providers) who work together in their local communities to serve people who receive health care coverage under the Oregon Health Plan (Medicaid). CCOs focus on prevention and helping people manage chronic conditions, like diabetes. This helps reduce unnecessary emergency room visits and gives people support to be healthy.

From January 1, 2020, and over the next four years, the CCOs must focus on the governor's four priority areas: improve the behavioral health system, increase value and pay for performance, focus on social determinants of health and health equity, and maintain sustainable cost growth. The new contract has new requirements for the CCOs, the transportation brokerages they contract with, and the transportation providers that contract with the brokerages to provide direct transportation services.

The CCOs contract with transportation brokerages to provide non-emergency medical transportation, a Medicaid benefit. The largest share of federal transportation funding for human services comes from Medicaid-funded NEMT benefits. PacificSource, the CCO for Wasco County, did not continue the previous transportation brokerage contract with GOBHI, but contracted with Logisticare, a for-profit transportation brokerage based out of Florida.

Conflicting goals are a fundamental challenge to human services and public transportation coordination. Public transportation goals involve transporting as many people as possible in the most cost-effective way possible. Public transportation goals include serving the entire community. For the CCO, transportation is a benefit provided only to eligible clients, with a focus on individual needs, not general public or community needs.

These conflicting goals were highlighted by the 2013 Transportation-Human Services Coordination Study, a collaborative effort by ODOT's Public Transit Division (PTD) and the Oregon Department of Human Services. The study examined the opportunities and barriers for improved coordination of public transportation and human services in Oregon. A primary conclusion of the study was that the greatest potential for improved coordination is at the state agency level. However, currently there is no state mandate for coordination and, with exceptions, coordination among state agencies is limited at best. The 2013 study noted that the absence of a statewide policy forum for discussion of how transportation services will be provided in the State's new Coordinated Care Organizations (CCO) model was an example of the need for collaboration among state agencies and regional and local service providers on coordination policy and implementation.

One of the outcomes of the new OHA requirements and the onboarding of a new transportation brokerage has been a significant drop in use of the local public transportation providers for NEMT rides like the Link, the Tygh School Community Center bus, and Columbia Area Transit. For the Link Public Transit, this will have an impact on the NEMT revenue historically used as match for State and Federal grants. Also, as transportation becomes more and more expensive to provide as a service and as current investor-

subsidized transportation services lose their subsidies, the switch to a taxi-based model may prove unsustainable financially for the State's Medicaid system.

Additionally, some local residents with NEMT benefits are using the Link's Dial-a-Ride service instead of calling the PacificSource transportation brokerage (Logisticare) to use their transportation benefit because they would rather be served by the public system that they trust. This also creates a hardship for the Link Public Transit, as the public transportation system is then forced to cover most of the actual cost of the rides that should be covered by the Oregon Health Plan.

As was noted in the 2013 ODOT Transportation-Human Services Coordination Study, better coordination and communication between DHS, OHA, the CCOs, Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs, and public transportation providers should be established in order to create a coordinated, efficient, and effective transportation system that serves the entire community. The study recommended establishing a Statewide Transportation-Human Services Coordination Initiative to accomplish these objectives:

1. Identify actions to overcome regulatory, jurisdictional, geographic and cultural barriers to coordination.
2. Identify opportunities to improve regional and out-of-region connectivity in public transportation and human services.
3. Identify opportunities to leverage public transportation funding and resources at the state and local levels to achieve cost efficiencies and strengthen the public transportation system.
4. Engage service providers, including Coordinated Care Organizations, in order to increase their awareness about the most efficient and effective transportation service options.
5. Identify opportunities for interagency coordination with veterans programs and public transportation services, barriers to veterans transportation and strategies to address them, and opportunities to improve coordination with brokerages for veterans transportation.

In the long-term, the Link Public Transit could work with the CCO and OHA to clarify OHA's goals and intentions and to continue to communicate the consequences and impacts of those requirements on public transportation providers. In the short-term, the Link Public Transit could partner with other public transportation agencies like CAT to work with the transportation brokerage to identify strategies for better coordination and support for public transportation services.

Federal transportation policy calls for coordination of public transportation with human services transportation to avoid duplicative and overlapping services and to achieve cost savings for all federally funded programs. The Medicaid program is the largest federal program for human services transportation, spending approximately \$3 billion annually on Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT). The successful coordination of transportation services is affected by the extent to which resources for NEMT are coordinated with and complement public transportation and other human services transportation programs. Because the Medicaid program is administered by states, which are able to set their own rules within federal regulations and guidelines set by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services,

Circles of Care

The Circles of Care program operates under AGE+, a statewide nonprofit created to support successful aging for all Oregonians. Circles of Care intends to address the challenge that the US has a rapidly growing aging population and not enough resources to meet the needs of older adults, especially those living in rural areas. The mission of this program is to develop solutions within the community to improve the lives of older adults, their families and the communities that they live in. Circles of Care is a volunteer-based program supporting older adults in The Dalles to age in place and to feel more connected to their community. Volunteers help with yard work, transportation, light housecleaning, meal preparation and companionship. Volunteers provide door through door assistance with transportation needs.

The Link Public Transit is coordinating with this new volunteer program in The Dalles, sharing information with residents who may need this service. Circles of Care volunteers could also coordinate with the Link to provide travel training services for residents who might be able to use public transit if they had initial assistance or door through door assistance.

Transportation Needs and Barriers

Across the target populations, there was great consistency in the identified service needs, gaps, and barriers with a few exceptions for special groups of residents. The list was developed through the analysis of the survey responses and stakeholder meetings and interviews.

Mobility Barriers	
Service Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded Dial-a-ride service throughout the entire county: South Wasco County, Dufur and Mosier. Consistent fixed route service between The Dalles and Hood River that includes a stop in Mosier is needed. Weekends and later evenings are needed. Regular service that is dedicated to providing medical trips from Gorge region to Portland Medical Centers.
Dial-A-Ride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30-minute wait window causes anxiety and for some populations is untenable. Reservations must be made in advance (ability to pre-plan required). Riders would like to schedule and receive real-time information about their ride from their phones.
Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intercity Medical Trips (from The Dalles to Hood River) Expanded service throughout the entire county: South Wasco County, Dufur and Mosier. Vehicles have great difficulty accessing higher elevations in poor weather conditions.
Transit Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No real-time information available. Most riders have difficulty reading a bus schedule. Printed schedules still circulating that are out of date. Riders need transit information at the bus stops.
Fares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fare transactions are difficult to understand and to manage: exact change, paper tickets, cash only. Tickets only available for purchase at the Transit Center. Cost: \$1.50 or \$3.00 roundtrip is out of reach for some, especially older adults on Medicare without transportation benefits. \$5.00 for the South County Shopping Bus is out of reach for some. People transferring from one provider to another must pay for each leg of the trip.

Regional Provider Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfers from one bus service to the next are difficult to make. • Dispatchers aren't familiar with other providers' updated schedules and policies. • Service and operational procedures are not consistent.
Organizational Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor hospital staff- to- transportation staff discharge communication after medical appointments and hospitalization. • Fare mechanisms are hard to administer to clients, especially when they need to access multiple transit providers. • Human Service Organizations, front line staff, and case workers do not know what public transportation resources exist and do not know how to use them. • Emergency Management preparations for mass evacuations or other needs for public transit.
Targeted Needs Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted transportation needs assessments for Veterans, Native Americans, Migrant Workers, Latino and Hispanic Communities, Work Force (commuters), South Wasco County.
Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some populations need carefully designed outreach programs. • More general outreach needed.
Travel Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some populations need carefully designed travel training programs (Veterans, Native Americans, older adults and elders, youth, people with developmental disabilities). • Ongoing Train the Trainer program needed for Human Service agencies.
Language and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers and dispatchers need more training in language and cultural differences • Bilingual staff • Bilingual and culturally appropriate transit informational products. • LEP-appropriate or Plain Language for public-facing materials.
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fare costs for multiple family members traveling at the same time can be prohibitively expensive • Confusion over car seat requirements.
Door Through Door Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are unique challenges in Oregon to serve those who need door through door service. • Institutional barriers include Oregon Health Authority policies and liability challenges. • Transit drivers are not trained or provided liability coverage to serve clients inside the home (door through door). • Most in-home health care programs don't provide enough hours per week to include transportation assistance.
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General public concerns about contracting COVID-19 on the bus. • Minority and marginalized communities concerned about racism or discrimination on the bus or in the public space. • Fears that the bus driver will call policing authorities, resulting in arrest, deportation, or removal of their children (Latino and Hispanic, Native American communities).

Rider Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More opportunities for riders to participate in service design. • More opportunities for riders to give feedback about existing services.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited local funding: a significant issue for Wasco County, and relevant mainly to The Link, is the limited amount of local funding that can be used to leverage state and federal funding sources. The Link has no taxing authority to supplement for local match. Local general fund contributions are a common source of local match for non-district providers.
NEMT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicaid recipients lose their transportation benefits when they turn 65 yrs old and are transferred to Medicare • NEMT ride bookings have decreased since January 1, 2020. NEMT revenue is an important source of revenue for the Link, providing match for state and federal funding,

Strategies to Address Needs, Barriers and Gaps

Based upon information gathered from public meetings, surveys, and stakeholder interviews the following are strategies to address Wasco County's transportation needs, barriers and gaps. Strategies affecting seniors are marked by an S, those affecting individuals with disabilities are marked by a D, those affecting low-income individuals are marked by an LI and those affecting Limited English Proficiency individuals are marked by and LEP. The Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee was tasked with determining the Priority rankings for each of the strategies corresponding to an identified transportation need, barrier or service gap. In the chart below, 1 indicates a #1 priority, 2 indicates a #2 priority, and 3 indicates a #3 priority.

Category: Sustain Existing Transportation Services

Identified Transportation Needs/Barriers and Service Gaps	Strategies to Address	Priority	Population Affected(S/D/LI, LEP)	Resource Capacity
Continue to provide the current dial-a-ride transportation service which is vital to special needs populations.	Maintain dial-a-ride transportation operations.	1	S,D,LI, LEP	Administration capacity exists. Financial resources likely available through STF funding for operations.
Continue to provide current shopping buses which are very popular and highly utilized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain shopping bus service. Conduct regularly scheduled review of service to ensure target populations needs are 	3 (High)	S,D,LI, LEP	Administration capacity exists. Financial resources likely available to fund operations.

Maintain intercity service to Hood River to connect with CAT's intercity Portland bus service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain intercity service to Hood River to connect with CAT's intercity Portland bus service. Conduct regularly scheduled review of service to ensure target populations needs are being met. 	2 (high)	S,D,LI, LEP	Administration capacity exists. Financial resources likely available to fund operations.
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Category: Operations

Identified Transportation Needs/Barriers and Service Gaps	Strategies to Address	Priority	Population Affected(S/D/LI, LEP)	Resource Capacity
Fleet Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide for replacement of vehicles that have exceeded their useful life. Provide funding for ongoing and timely preventative vehicle maintenance to ensure the safety and reliability of the transportation services. Seek funding for additional vehicles required for any service expansion. Continue to explore fleet electrification 	1	S,D,LI, LEP	Administration capacity exists. Financial resources likely available through STF funding for operations as well as through other state transportation grants, e.g. 5310.
Maintain affordable fares as cost is an issue for the target populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to secure state, Federal and local funding to keep fares minimal. Explore other fare options and mechanisms, pass systems, and partnerships. 	1	S,D,LI, LEP	Administration capacity exists.

<p>Address scheduling difficulties presented by the need for 24-hour advance notice for dial-a-ride services. Resolve frustration over the 30-minute pick-up window/wait-time for dial-a-ride service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better educate target populations about how the transportation system operates and encourage people to use the fixed route service when possible. Travel training services can help more people to use the fixed route service. Explore new technologies that can track the bus in real time and allow online or mobile scheduling. 	<p>3 (High)</p>	<p>S,D,LI, LEP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration capacity exists. The Transit Development Plan will explore the feasibility and sustainability of additional fixed route or deviated service within the City of The Dalles. A travel training program can be shared with Human Services and other Transit Agency partners.
<p>Expand current payment options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Link has already adopted a mobile ticket app, but riders might need outreach and training for higher adoption rate. Continue to monitor and explore new fare payment systems and technologies. Explore options for monthly and annual passes. Review locations and distribution options for purchase of tickets. 	<p>3 (high)</p>	<p>S, D,LI,LEP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative capacity exists. Special foundation or local/regional grant money may be available for start-up costs when a viable option is identified.
<p>Address staff language and cultural training skills to meet the needs of those with Limited English Proficiency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a regular Staff language and cultural training program. Work with community-based partners to train and hire bilingual staff. 	<p>2 (High)</p>	<p>S,D,LI, LEP</p>	<p>Administrative capacity exists.</p>

<p>Adopt new technologies to address riders' needs and realize more efficiencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and adopt new technologies to help overcome rider barriers like dispatching software and rider-facing tools. • Coordinate with the Gorge TransLink Alliance so that tools are used across the system and enable transfers. 	<p>3 (High)</p>	<p>S,D,LI, LIP</p>	<p>Administrative capacity exists. Transit Development Plan will address this topic. Transit Tech Assessment will provide specific recommendations</p>
<p>Implement the Transit Development Plan to enhance service delivery and better serve the transportation needs of the City of The Dalles.</p>	<p>Use the Transit Development Plan's recommendations as a guide to next steps.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>S,D,LI, LEP</p>	<p>Administration capacity exists. May require additional financial and staff resources. Some financial resources are likely available through STF & 5310 funding as well as through other state and Federal transportation grants, e.g. discretionary funds; local funds will be necessary as will be fares; private partners may be interested in supporting.</p>
<p>Continue to improve rider experience at bus stops.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rider information tools • Benches/seating • Shelters 	<p>3 (Medium)</p>	<p>S,D,LI, LEP</p>	<p>Administrative capacity exists.</p>
<p>Continue to expand organizational capacity and seek opportunities to create efficiencies with regional coordination</p>	<p>Work with the Gorge TransLink Alliance to create a more streamlined, efficient, and coordinated regional public transit system.</p>	<p>1 (Medium)</p>	<p>S,D,LI, LEP</p>	<p>Administrative capacity exists. •Transit Development Plan will address this topic.</p>

Category: Service Expansion

Identified Transportation Needs/Barriers and Service Gaps	Strategies to Address	Priority	Population Affected(S/D/LI, LEP)	Resource Capacity
Expand dial-a-ride service area coverage inclusive of the entire county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze operations to see if efficiencies would provide greater ability to offer more reliable service to outlying areas of the county. • Consider public/private partnership to expand services throughout the county. • Continue to seek state/federal and private grant funding to support expanded service. 	3 Medium	S,D,LI, LEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration capacity exists. • Would require additional financial and staff resources. • Financial resources are likely available through STF funding as well as through other state and Federal transportation grants, e.g. discretionary funds; local funds would be needed; private partners may be interested in supporting. • Transit Development Plan will address this challenge.
Employment transportation: improve access for individuals in the target populations needing regular public transportation to/from work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek state/federal/local and private grant funding to support service expansion to meet workers' needs. • Consider cooperative partnership with employers to help fund service expansion. • Conduct a survey of employers to clarify needs, identify partners and define potential contributions. • Explore incentives for employers to participate. 	3 (High)	D,LI,LEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration capacity exists. • Would require additional financial and staff resources. • Discretionary funding; local funding would be needed; private partners may be interested in supporting. • Foundation funds for needs assessment.

Continue to develop a more robust regional transit network, especially to destinations including Hood River and Portland.	Discuss connections through the Gorge TransLink Alliance.	1	S,D,LI,LEP	Administration capacity exists. Would require additional financial and staff resources.
Expansion of service hours. Expansion to include weekends.	Seek state/federal and private grant funding to support expanded service hours.	3 (High)	D,LI,LEP	Administration capacity exists. Would require additional financial and staff resources.
Expansion to provide a regional van system that goes directly to OHSU, the VA, and other major medical facilities in Portland.	Seek state/federal funding. Partner with health care organizations, the DAV van program or Veterans Service Officers, and non profits.	1	S,D,LI,LEP	Administration capacity exists. Would require additional financial and staff resources.

Category: Stable Funding

Identified Transportation Needs/Barriers and Service Gaps	Strategies to Address	Priority	Population Affected(S/D/LI,	Resource Capacity
<p>Address limited local funding that can be used to leverage state and federal funding sources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to seek all Federal and state transportation grants that The LINK is eligible for. • Leverage all match against Federal and state grants. • Engage local groups to advocate for public transportation funds. • Identify potential additional sources/partners to support local operational funding or local match, such as support from the Chamber, the City, Community College etc. • Identify and secure nontraditional sources of local funding, such as support from the business community. • Develop a strategy to discuss the feasibility of establishing a taxing authority through referral to voters to establish a Public Transit District. • Work with PacificSource and OHA to develop NEMT policies that create a stronger partnership with public transit. 	<p>2 (High)</p>	<p>S,D,LI, LEP</p>	<p>The Link currently seeks out and applies for eligible grants. Working with local groups to develop advocates for public transportation requires additional administrative capacity. Work to identify and build collaborative operational support from potential additional sources/partners.</p>

Category: Marketing/Education/Outreach

Identified Transportation Needs/Barriers and Service Gaps	Strategies to Address	Priority	Population Affected(S/D/LI, LEP)	Resource Capacity
Improve bilingual marketing and public awareness of the County's transportation services and how to access them.	Work with community based partners on marketing and outreach.	2 High	S,D,LI.LEP	Administrative capacity exists.
Continue general outreach to highlight new services available to all. Market and promote the system to ensure target populations are aware of the services available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the work of the "Everybody Rides" campaign for outreach. Distribute material about the transportation system at key sites. Maintain existing promotion routes, including website, Radio and print. Explore effective opportunities to better promote the services offered. 	2 High)	S,D,LI.LEP	Administrative capacity exists.
Address safety and security concerns voiced by Limited English Proficiency stakeholders, Native Americans, older adults and elders, and other target populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a strong agency statement of support for marginalized groups. Understand a riders' civil rights. Engage in the outreach necessary to learn how to address fears. 	3 (High)	S,D,LI.LEP	Form partnerships with organizations representing target populations.
Needs Assessments	Engage community-based organizations to conduct an in-depth needs assessment for underserved communities like Veterans, Native Americans, migrant workers, individuals without homes.	3 (High)	S,D,LI.LEP	Apply for grants that will fund these activities.

Travel Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Travel Training program with other transit agencies and community partners. • Increase connections to Community Health Workers (CHW) and other frontline staff who work directly with clients. Provide marketing materials and information; provide education at training events. • Develop a travel training program that uses leadership and individuals from within these communities to lead the trainings. • Address the ease of using the system for target populations with better connections to the natural communication points, such as Community Health Workers, the Next Door Inc's Advocacy groups, Veterans' organizations, and service providers for older adults and individuals with developmental disabilities. 	3 (High)	S,D,LI.LEP	Apply for grants that will fund these activities. Work with community partners who can lead the program. Apply for grants to fund these activities
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Category: Planning and Coordination

Identified Transportation Needs/Barriers and Service Gaps	Strategies to Address	Priority	Population Affected(S/D/LI,	Resource Capacity
Increase options for regional travel in the Mid-Columbia area.	Continue participation in the Gorge TransLink Alliance to network and collaborate with the Mid-Columbia transportation service providers. Gorge TransLink Alliance members continue to identify and bring to fruition funding opportunities to support regional transportation connections.	1 (Medium)	S,D,LI.LEP	Capacity currently exists through the Administrators' regular participation in the Gorge TransLink Alliance.
Continued collaboration with Human Services providers is essential to meet the needs of the target population.	Attend regular public Human Service organization meetings to maintain strong working relationships and bolster the ability to respond collaboratively to emerging needs or changing conditions. Many of these organizations have their own transportation budgets that could be used to expand services or leverage grant funds.	2	S,D,LI.LEP	Capacity exists within the current Administration.

<p>Coordinate with local and regional planning processes to develop more transit-supportive land use policies, infrastructure, and communities.</p>	<p>Establish regular communication channels with local and regional planning departments including emergency management. Establish the public transit agency as a key stakeholder in all planning efforts.</p>	<p>3 (Medium)</p>	<p>S,D,LI.LEP</p>	<p>Capacity exists within the current Administration.</p>
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Plan Review and Adoption

2007-2010 Coordinated Transportation Plan Adoption

The first draft of this coordinated transportation plan was presented to the Wasco County STF committee on January 11, 2007 and to the Wasco County Board of County Commissioners on January 17, 2007. It was discussed at both of these meetings. The draft plan was approved for submission to the Oregon Department of Transportation with the applications to the Public Transit Division Discretionary Grant Program. The final plan was completed in April 2007.

2009-2011 Coordinated Transportation Plan Update

Under contract with Association of Oregon Counties, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District began updating the plan for 2009-2011. A draft was presented to the Wasco County STF committee in January and March 2009. The draft plan was also posted on MCEDD's website (<http://www.mcedd.org>) for public review between February 2009 and March 2009. Stakeholders were encouraged to provide feedback. The final plan was approved by the Wasco County STF committee and the Wasco County Court in April 2009.

2016-2020 Coordinated Transportation Plan Update

Under an ODOT subcontract with the Hood River County Transportation District, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District began updating the plan for 2016-2019. A draft was presented to MCCOG's Transportation Network's STF Committee on September 21 and October 24, 2016. The draft plan was also posted on MCEDD's website (<http://www.mcedd.org>) for public review between September and October 2016. Stakeholders were encouraged to provide feedback. The final plan was approved by the Wasco County STF committee on October 24, 2016 and by the Wasco County Commissioners on November 2, 2016, and extended through 2020 on August 1, 2018.

2020-2023 Coordinated Transportation Plan Update

Using STIF funding, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District completed the Wasco County Coordinated Transportation Plan update in 2020. A draft was presented to the Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee on October 29, 2020. The public comment period was open from XX to XX. The draft plan was posted on MCEDD's website (<http://www.mcedd.org>), the Gorge TransLink.com, and the Link's and the Gorge TransLink's social media. Stakeholders were encouraged to provide feedback. The final plan was approved by by the Wasco County Commissioners on XXX.

Future Plan Reviews

This plan is designed to be reviewed and updated at least once every three years. It should be reviewed and updated in 2023/2024 at the latest.

Appendices

Appendix A: Updated Fleet Inventory for the Link Public Transit

Operator	Model/ Year	Mileage Estimate	ADA Accessible	Remaining Useful Life*	Seating Capacity
The LINK	2011 Toyota Van	96,371	No	0	6
The LINK	2012 Toyota van	134,829	no	0	6
The LINK	2018 Dodge Van	19,440	Yes	3	5-1
The LINK	2010 Ford Eldorado	167,025	Yes	0	12-2
The LINK	2011 Ford Eldorado	93298	Yes	0	12-2
The LINK	2011 Ford Eldorado	165,161	Yes	0	12-2
The LINK	2014 Ford Elkhart	123,894	Yes	3	12-2
The LINK	2007 Ford Eldorado	129,420	Yes	0	12-2
The LINK	2020 Ford Starcraft	15,650	Yes	5	12-2

*Note: Useful life is defined as 5 years or 150,000 miles.

Appendix B: Veterans Transportation Needs and Services

Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA): Veterans Transportation Programs

Beneficiary Travel: Reimbursement program for mileage and/or costs incurred while traveling to and from VA health care facilities, to include special modes of transportation and some common carrier transportation, such as bus, taxi, airline, or train travel.

Veterans Transportation Service (VTS): A transportation program for non-ambulatory and remote VA patients that provides transport to VA Medical Centers within a 20-mile radius only. Currently only serving Veterans with dialysis or chemotherapy needs (essential medical). All Veterans with federal VA-funded medical appointments are eligible to ride VTS, but first priority is given to wheelchair-bound patients with no other transportation alternatives.

Special Mode Transportation: Service is contracted out with private providers such as Metro West and American Medical Response (AMR). Veterans must be eligible for this service by meeting criteria including:

6. 30%+ disability rating
7. The disability itself must require the specific service
8. Must be medically necessary and the physician must place the transportation request
9. Poverty level
10. Transportation benefit cannot be placed through Medicare/Medicaid.

Counties served within this region: Sherman, Klickitat, Gilliam, Wheeler, Crook, Deschutes, Skamania, Cowlitz, Hood River, Wasco.

Notes from Interviews with Columbia Gorge Transportation Providers and Veterans Service Officers

Gilliam County Transportation: GCT does not connect to the DAV van because it is more difficult to schedule the rides to meet the van at the stop in The Dalles than to take the Veteran directly to the VA. GCT feels that the DAV van's schedule is too long day for any person, especially if they are ill or older. GCT uses the Highly Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation grant program to cover transportation costs to pick up Veterans at their door and transport directly to medical appointments. The grant fully covers the cost of transporting Gilliam County Veterans to their medical appointments in The Dalles, Hood River, or Portland. Gilliam serves between 15-21 unique Veterans per month, with an average of 40-50 trips per month.

Sherman County Community Transit: SCCT does not connect to the DAV Van because it is more difficult to schedule the connection rides than taking the Veteran directly to the VA. They are also sensitive to the long day required of Veterans who take the DAV van service. Sherman County uses the Highly Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation grant money to transport Veterans to medical appointments. These grant funds usually only cover rides that Sherman County provides for 9 months out of the year. Sherman County provides the funds for the rides not covered by the grant, on average

\$18,000 per year that must be covered by the general Sherman County Community Transit budget. At one time, the Sherman County VSO did allocate a part of the VSO's budget to transportation and the VSO budget still has a line item for transportation (currently budgeted at \$0). Sherman County's contribution to the VSO budget is \$4,200. Brenna Banstra from ODVA stated that per ORS 406 450, the "pass-through" dollars that fund the VSO's budget do not include Veterans' transportation services.

Wheeler County Transportation: Jonathan Asher states that STF grant funds cover any Veterans transportation costs not covered by the Highly Rural Veterans grant.

The Link, Wasco County: The Link does not provide transportation to Portland. The Link refers calls from Veterans needing transportation to the Portland VA or to Sherman County Community Transit.

Columbia Area Transit, Hood River County: CAT is interested in coordinating with other transportation providers and possibly with the brokerage and PacificSource to provide transportation for Veterans and other residents to OHSU, the Portland VA, and Providence in Portland. Prior to 2018, CAT provided a service 2 days a week that left from Hood River and would make a stop at OHSU. The Link connected to that service in Hood River.

Tri-County Veterans Service Officer (Gilliam, Wheeler, Sherman), Paul Conway: Paul doesn't know any Veterans who use the DAV Van. He refers the Veterans who have transportation needs to each county's transportation provider.

Wasco County Veterans Service Officer, Russell Jones: Russell has heard that the DAV Van works really well and getting to the VA in Portland is not a problem. He feels that the issue is getting the Veterans to other medical appointments scheduled by Veterans Evaluation Services (VES) or QTC Medical with local providers or those located elsewhere in Portland, Newberg, or Vancouver. He does get 2-3 inquiries per month from Veterans needing transportation services, but usually the VSO volunteer at the front desk fields the calls, so Russell Jones does not have much first-hand knowledge of the transportation challenges of Veterans in Wasco County. Another issue is reaching the Veterans with information about services. The younger Veterans are not joiners (American Legion, DAV, VFW). Many of the older Veterans are on FaceBook.

Wasco County Veterans Service Office Manager, Elijah Preston: The primary transportation challenge for Veterans is accessing the VA in Portland. The County Commissioners and County Administrator are very supportive of Veterans services and most likely would bring more resources to a Veterans transportation project.

Hood River County Veterans Service Officer, Eric Akin: The DAV Van program is not working well for Veterans in Hood River County. The DAV Van program serving this region has difficulties finding volunteer drivers. Before the Stay Home, Save Lives directive, there were two drivers on the list. The schedule says that the service is available M-F, but only if they can locate and schedule a volunteer driver. The DAV Van program covers 7 counties: Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Wheeler, Klickitat, Skamania with specified stops (different stops than what is indicated on the two schedules

online). The Director of the program (office in Washington DC) retired in January and has not been replaced. It's very difficult for Veterans to get a ride to the specific stops at the scheduled times. The alternative is a taxi, which is \$160.00 from Hood River to the Portland VA. Many cannot use the regular public bus service because they can't get to the bus stops. 90% of appointments that he is aware of are scheduled for the Portland VA. The DAV van usually sits in the parking lot in Hood River unused. He sees it sitting there when he comes to work. Another reason that Veterans do not use the DAV van could be that there is no outreach or marketing of the program to Veterans in the area. Only 50% of Hood River Veterans are currently aware of the Veterans Service Office in Hood River. 50% awareness is actually an improved number over a few years ago because of the VSO's current strong outreach efforts over the last few years. Eric Akin states that there is a great need for door-to-door transportation service.

Human Services Council (SW Washington): In 2011, the Human Services Council spearheaded a project to put together existing resources in a Veterans Transportation booklet. Their One Call/One Click resource website has a filter for Veterans to discover more transportation resources and is kept current: tripresourcecenter.org.

ODOT Transportation Human Services Coordination Plan (2013)

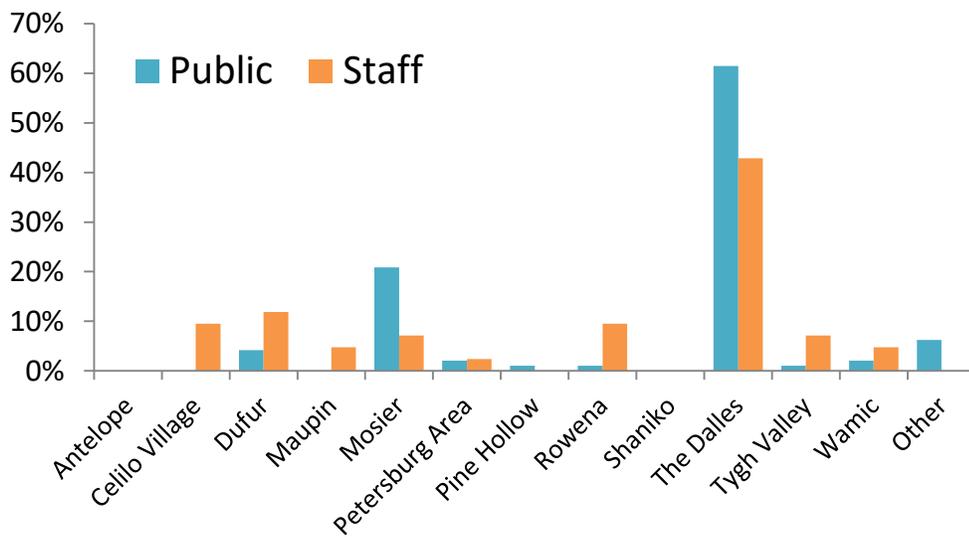
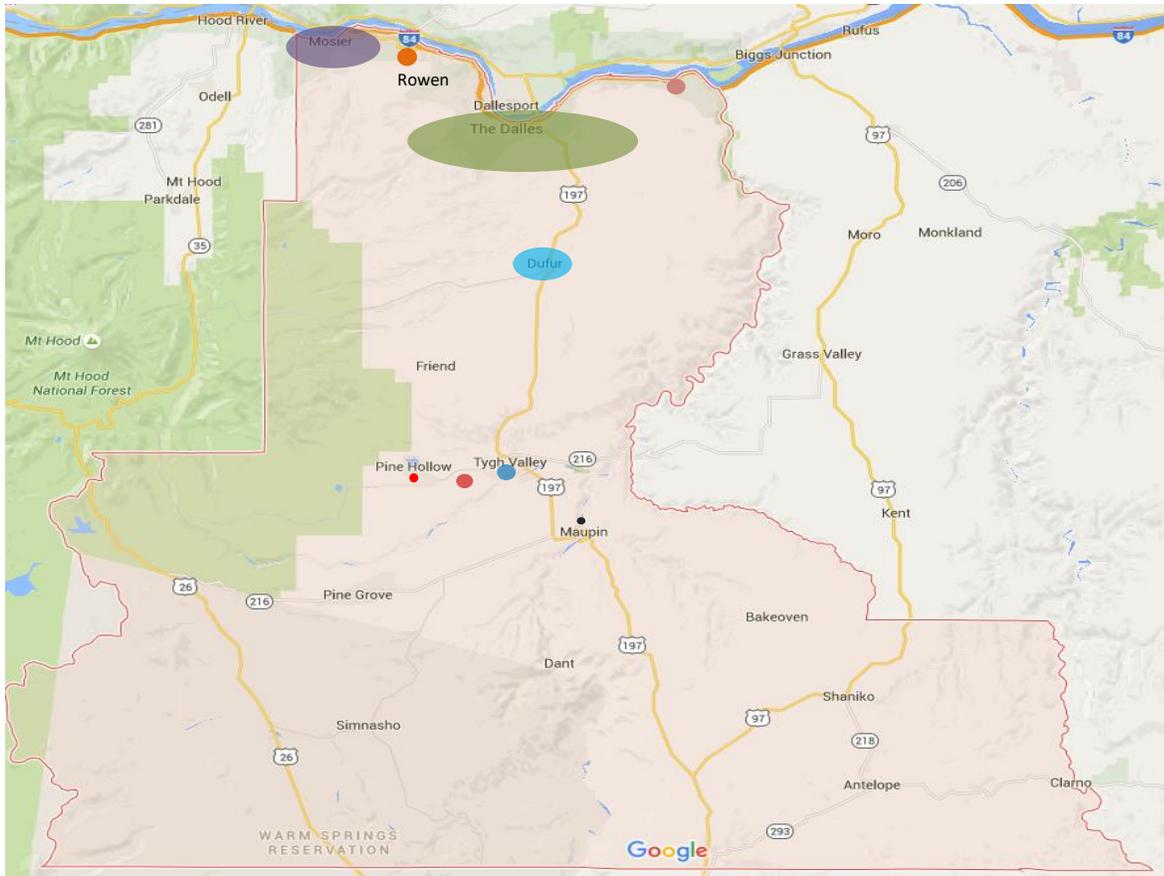
This plan recommended identifying opportunities for interagency coordination with Veterans programs and public transportation services, barriers to Veterans transportation and strategies to address them, and opportunities to improve coordination with brokerages for Veterans transportation. This could include a OHSU/VA dedicated hospital van that services the Columbia Gorge and makes daily trips to medical facilities in Portland.

Mid-Columbia Action Council

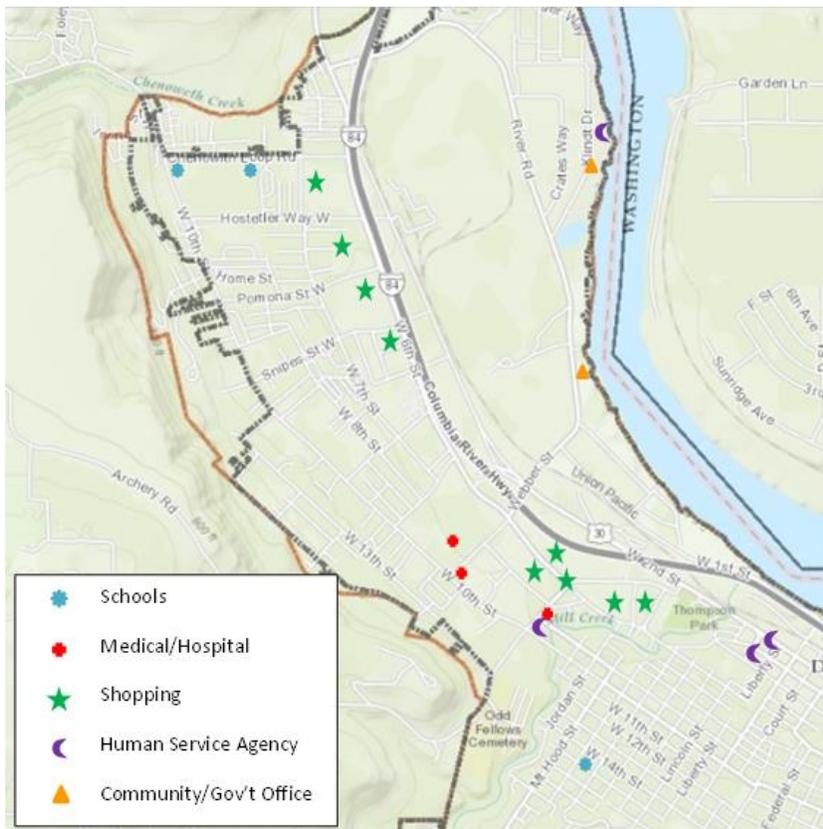
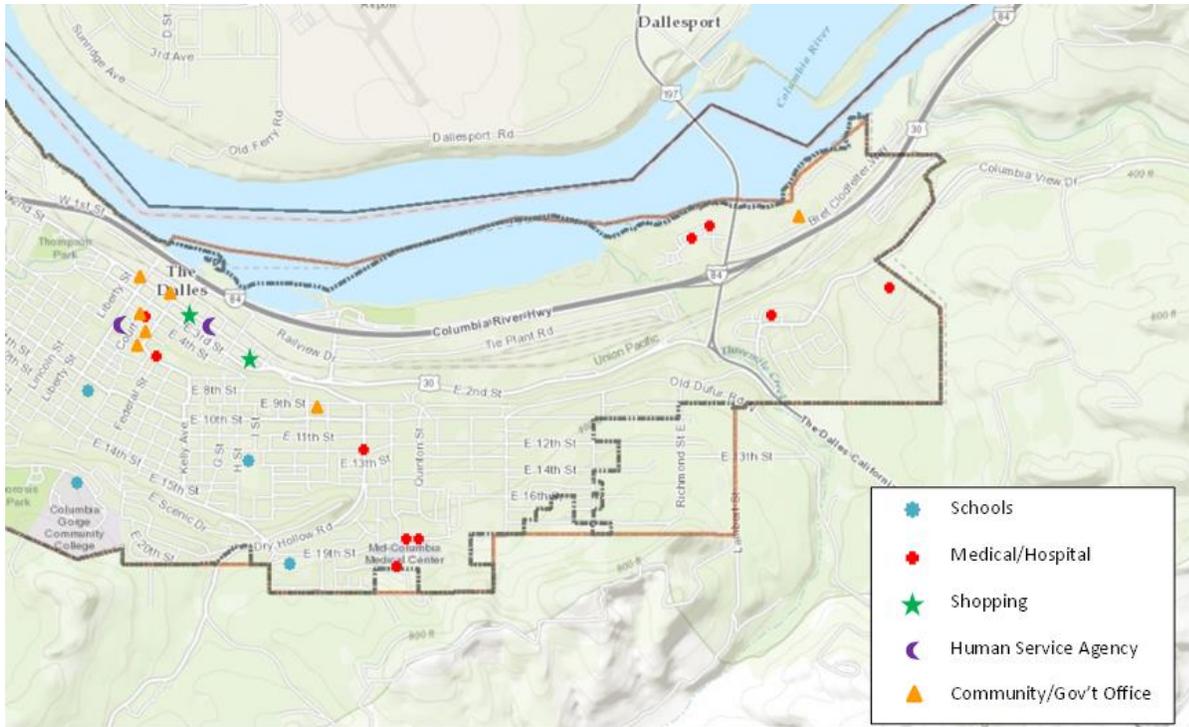
The Mid-Columbia Action Council administers the Supportive Services for Veteran Families in Hood River, Sherman, and Wasco counties. The program provides supportive services for low or very low-income veteran families residing in or transitioning to permanent housing. These services are designed to increase the housing stability of veteran families that are at-risk of or are experiencing homelessness. A Veteran family may be comprised of a single individual or of multiple persons. The head of household or the spouse of the head of household must be a veteran.

Appendix C: Where do Survey Respondents Live?

Note: Staff responses = where staff think/know their clients live

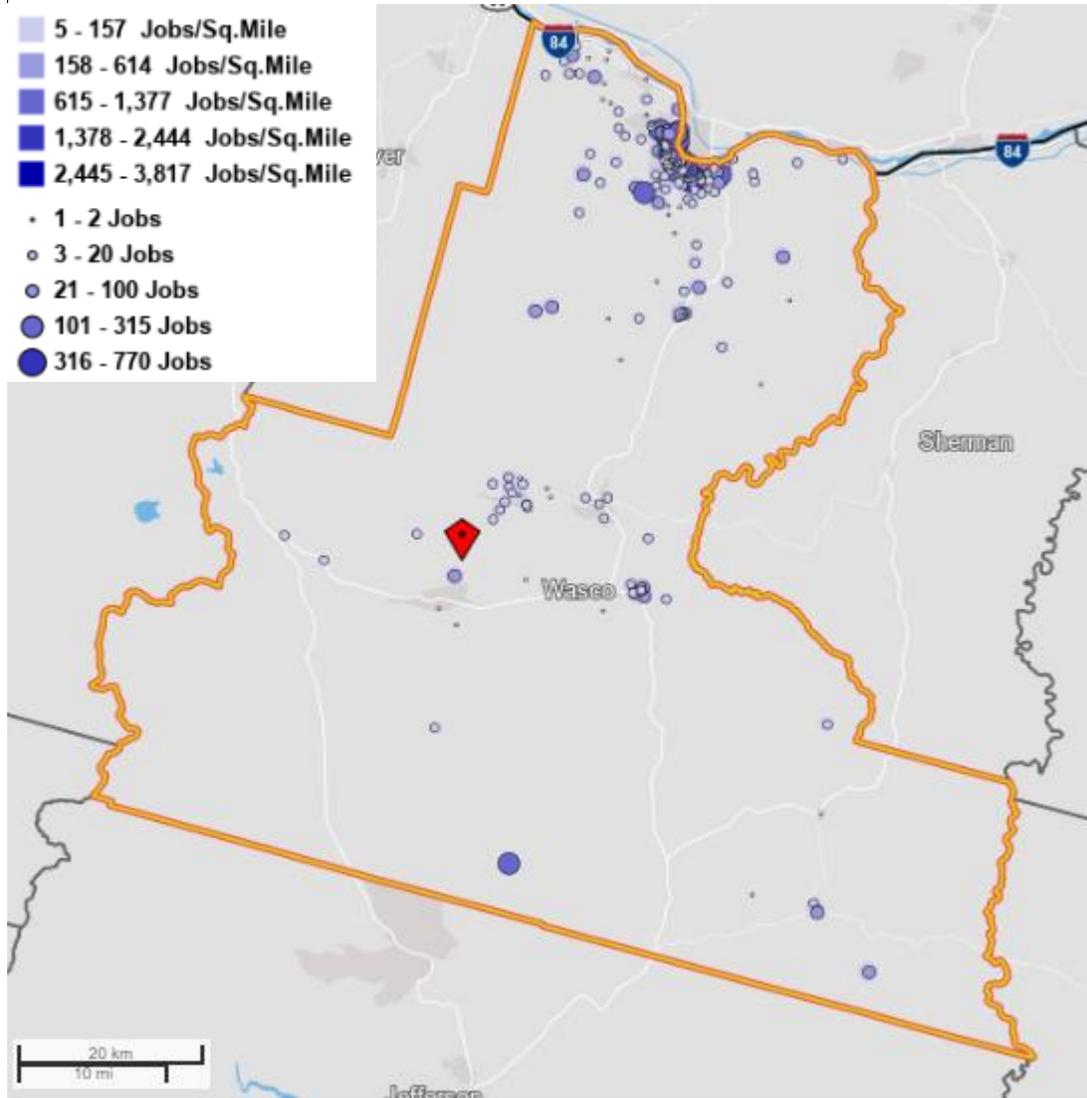


Appendix D: Primary Destinations Map

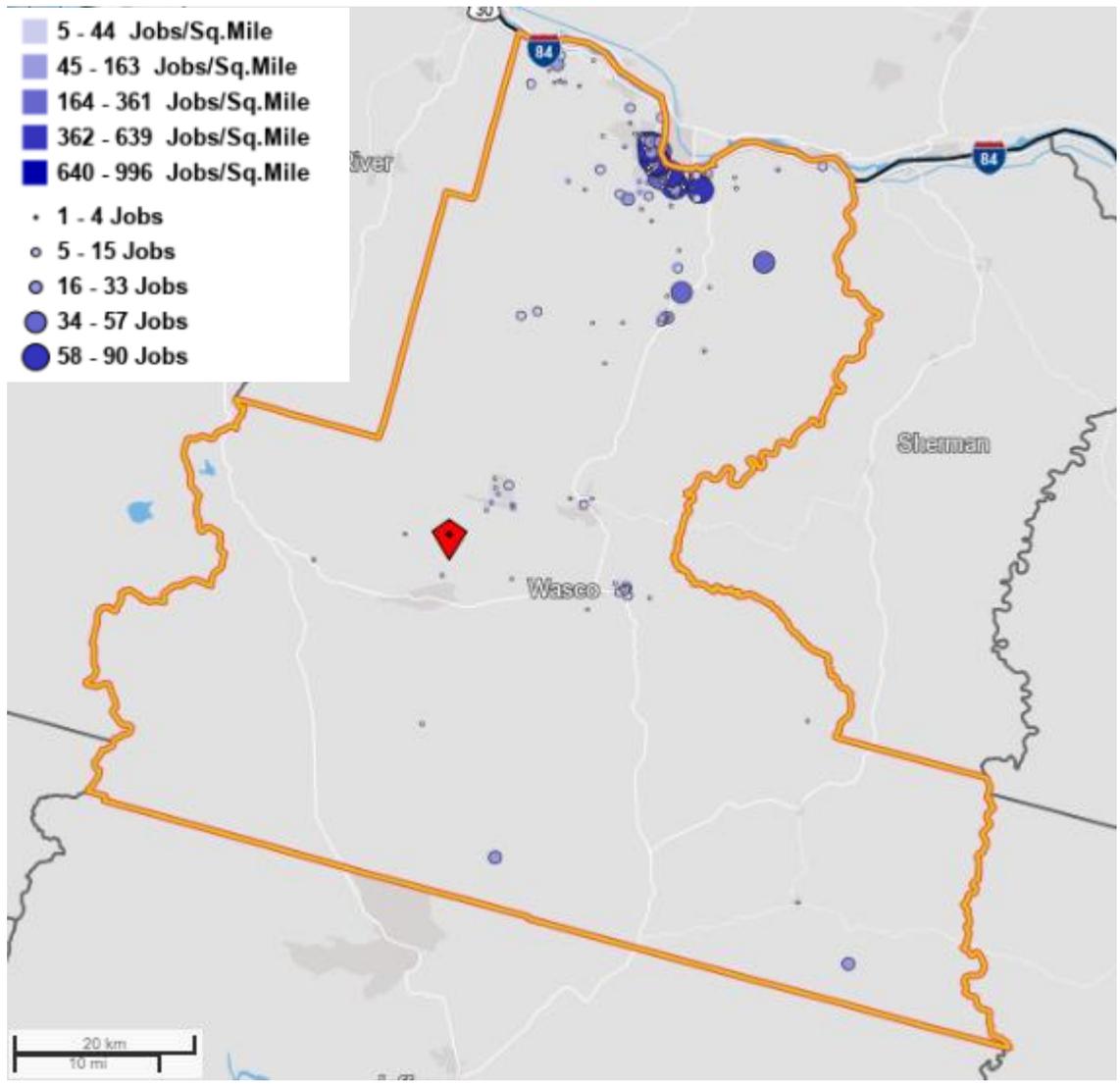


Appendix E: Distribution of Work Areas

(Data: U.S. Census Bureau OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2017; Universe: Counts and Densities of all jobs and all workers)

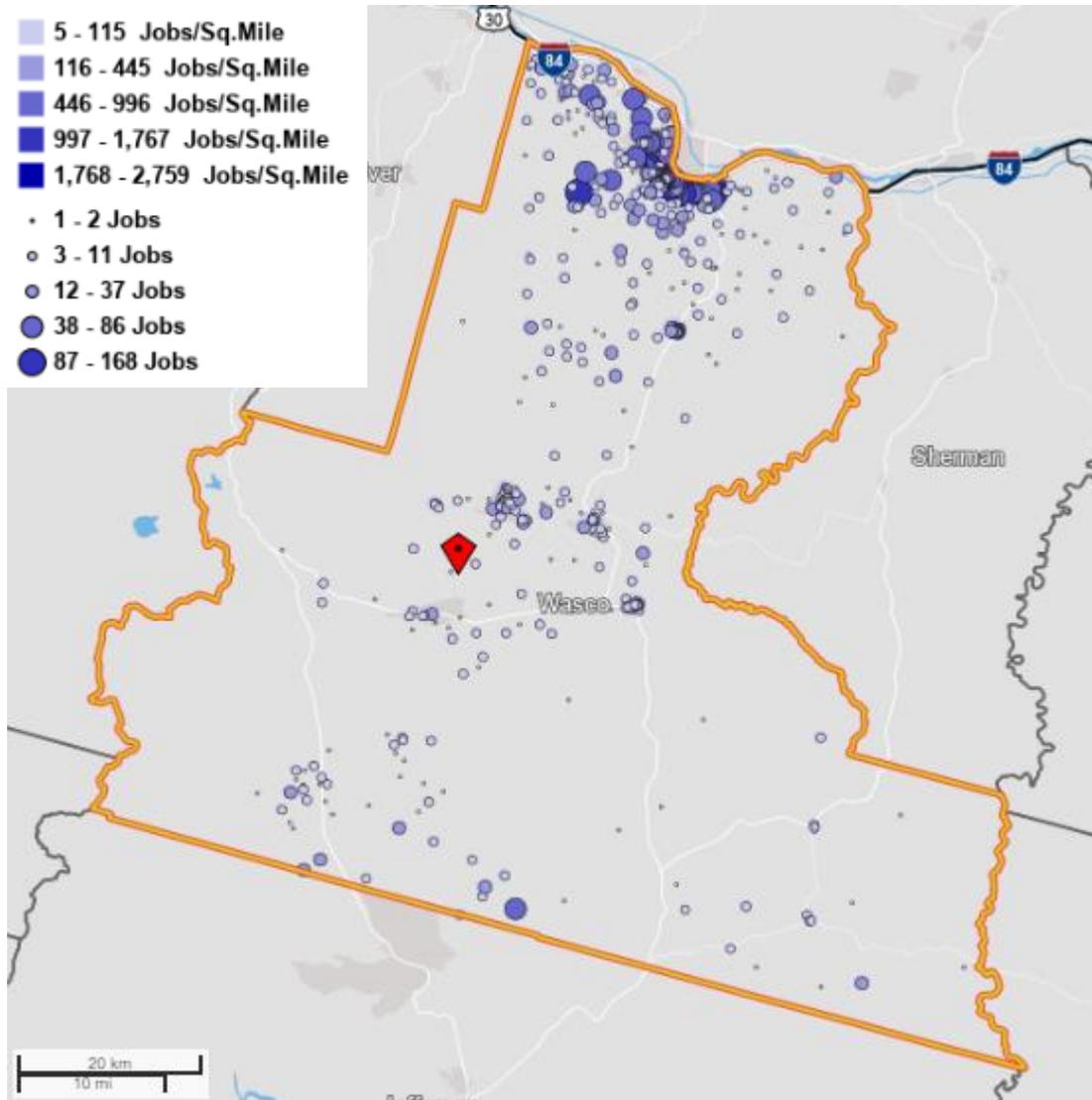


Distribution of Work Areas for Low Income Workers in Wasco County



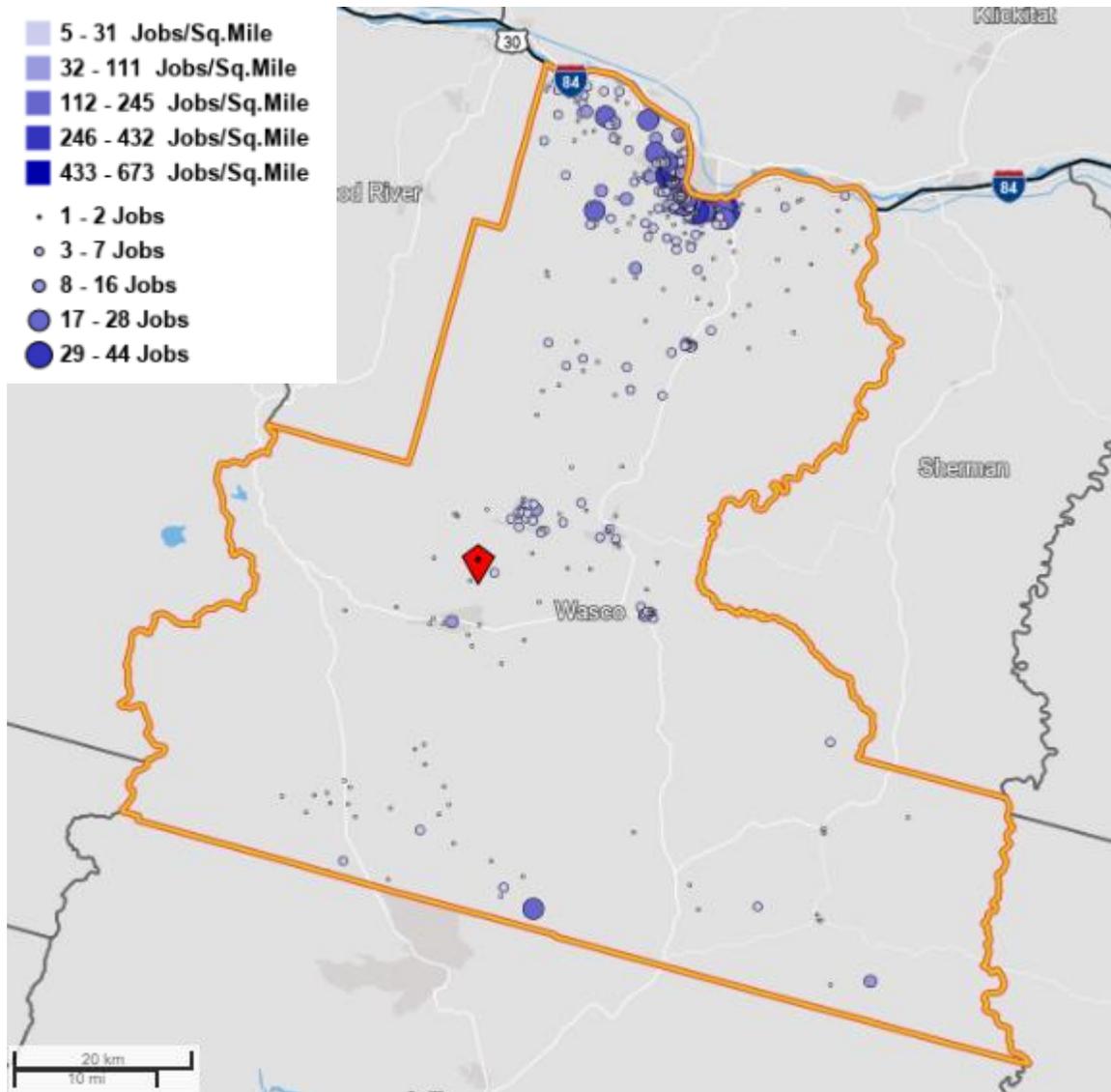
Distribution of Home Areas for Workers in Wasco County

(Data: U.S. Census Bureau OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2017;
Universe: Counts and Densities of all jobs and all workers)



Distribution of Home Areas for Low Income Workers in Wasco County

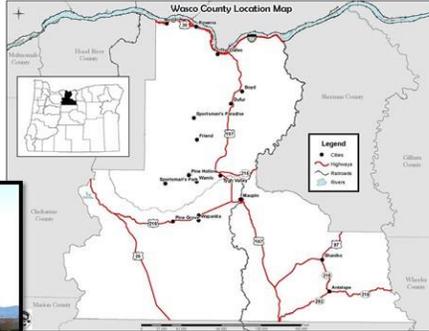
(Data: U.S. Census Bureau OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2017;
Universe: Counts and Densities of all jobs and workers making \$1,250 per month or less)



Appendix F: Survey Response Summary

Wasco County Community Outreach

*Summary of Community
Engagement and Responses*

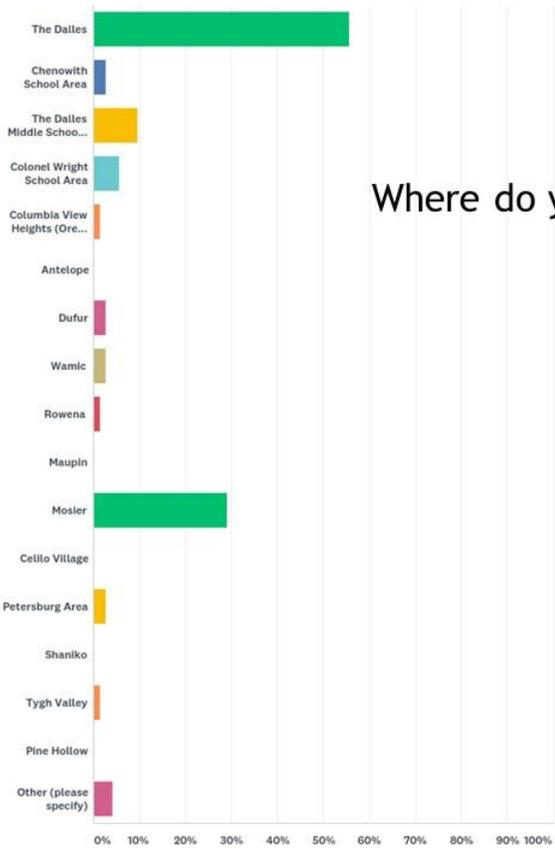


Stakeholder Surveys

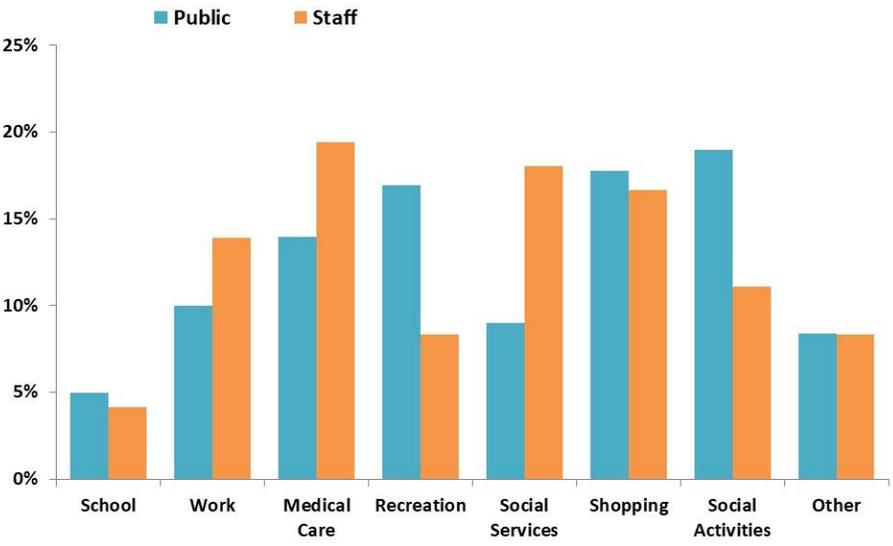
These organizations distributed paper copies and electronic links to a SurveyMonkey survey. 92 public surveys were returned: 72 electronic surveys and 20 paper surveys. 8 Staff surveys were returned: 7 electronic surveys and 1 paper survey.

- | | |
|---|---|
| DHS - Aging & People with Disabilities | • Abogadores |
| DHS - Vocational Rehab | • Natives on the Big River |
| DHS - Self-Sufficiency | • Columbia River Community Health
Worker Collaborative |
| Mid-Columbia Center for Living - The Dalles | Organizing Latin Advocates |
| Mid-Columbia Housing Authority | City of Mosier |
| Opportunity Connections | City of Maupin |
| The Dalles Senior Center | Gorge TransLink-Social Media (FaceBook) |
| The Dalles Senior Center - Meals on | The Link-Social Media (Facebook) |
| WheelsWasco County Veterans Service Office | Bridges to Health Pathways Huddle |
| North Central Public Health | |
| The Next Door, Inc: | |
| • Mid-Columbia Health Equity Advocates | |
| • Latinos en Accion | |

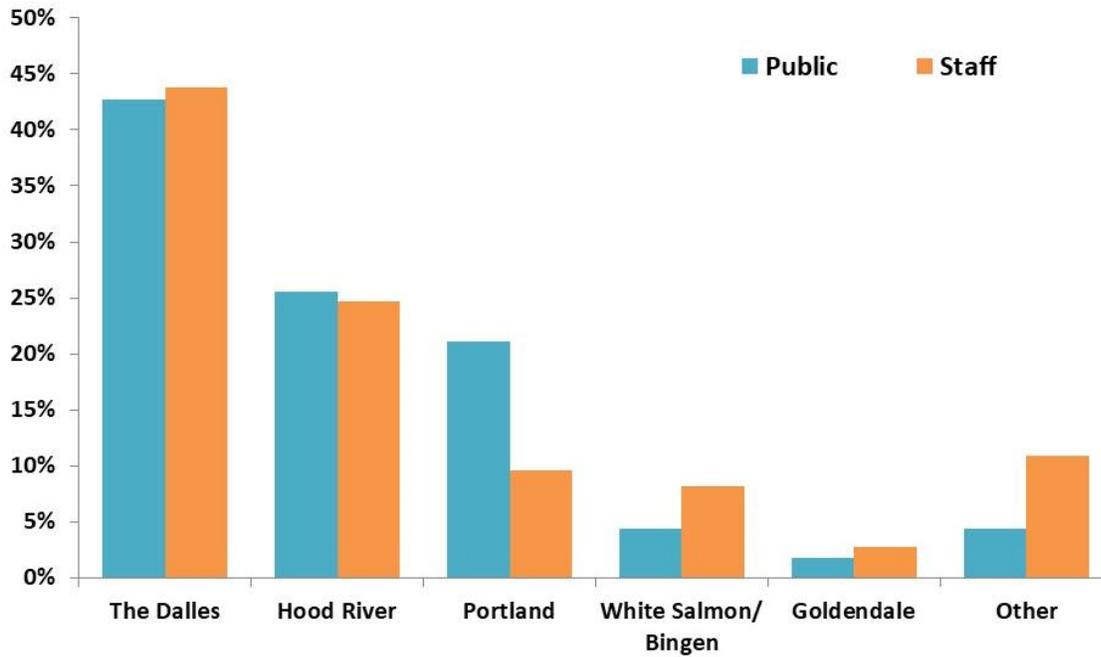
Where do you live in Wasco County?



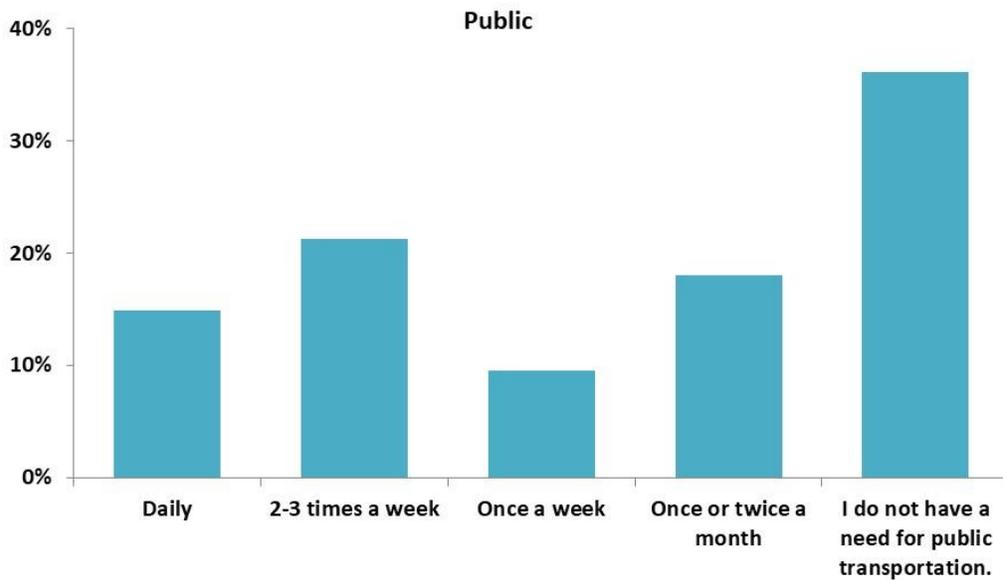
What are your main purposes for using public transportation?



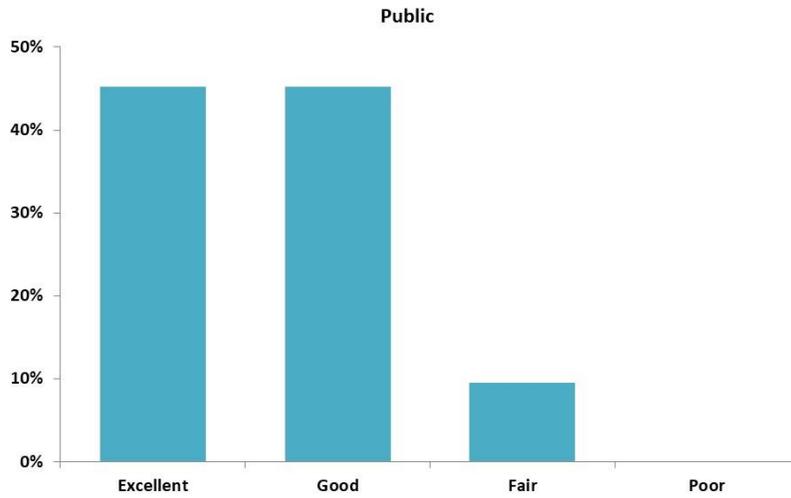
What are your main destinations when using public transportation?



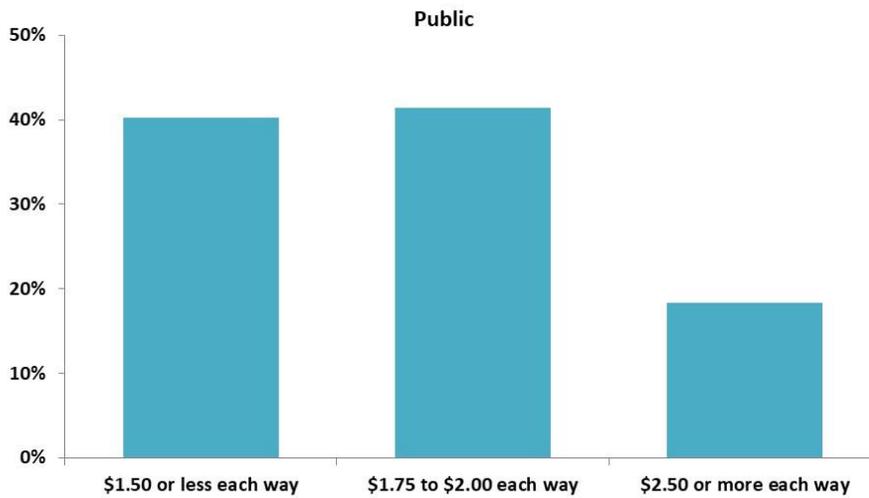
How often do you have a need for public transportation?



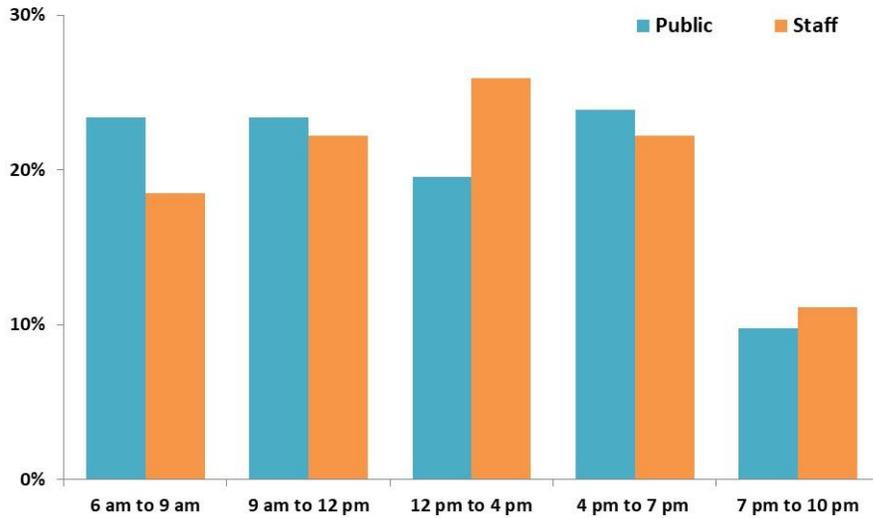
How would you rate the service of The LINK Bus?



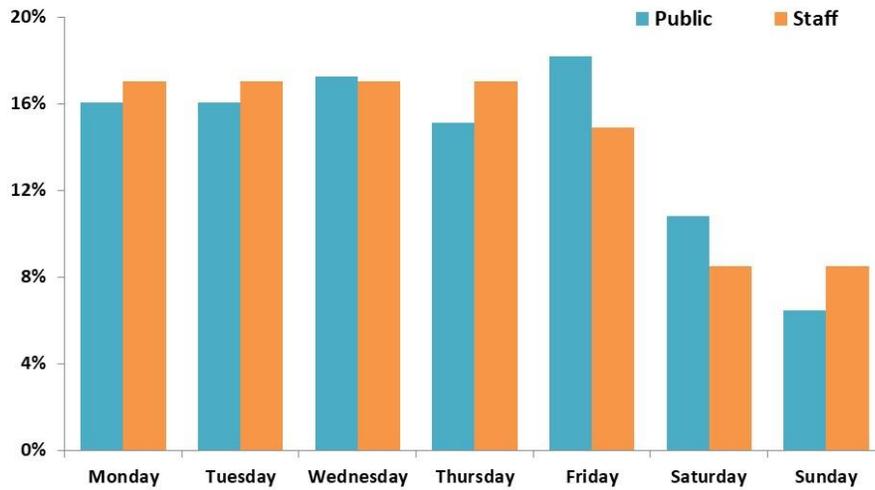
What fare would you be willing to pay for public transit within Wasco County?



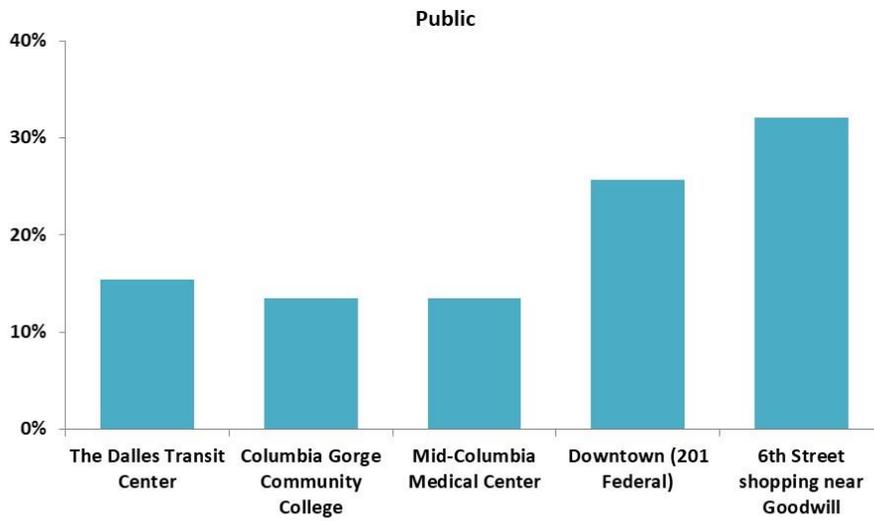
If you use or are thinking about using public transportation, what times of day are you most likely to use it?



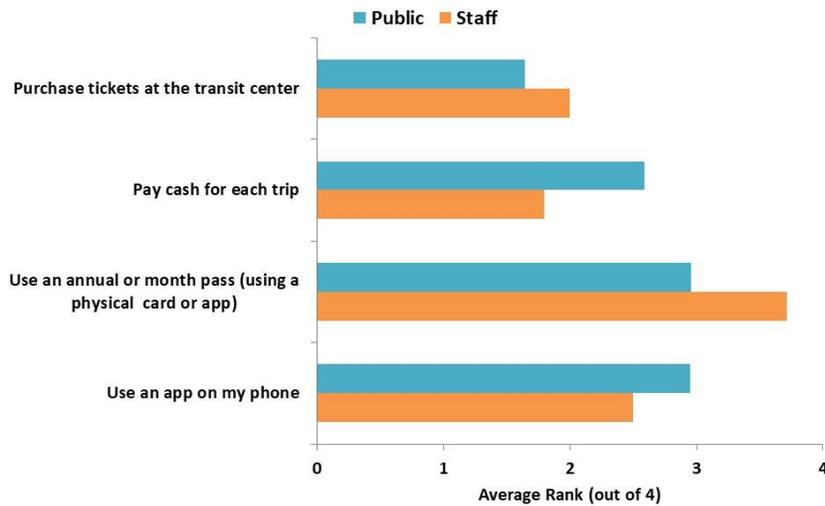
If you use or are thinking about using public transportation, what days of the week are you most likely to use it?



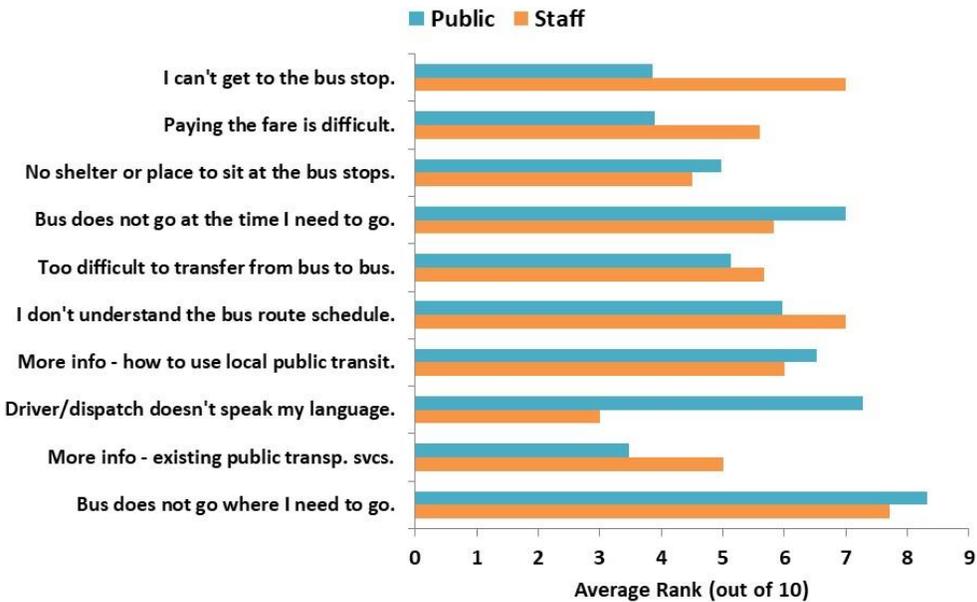
Which of the current stops for the Link's regular bus route in The Dalles would you/do you use?



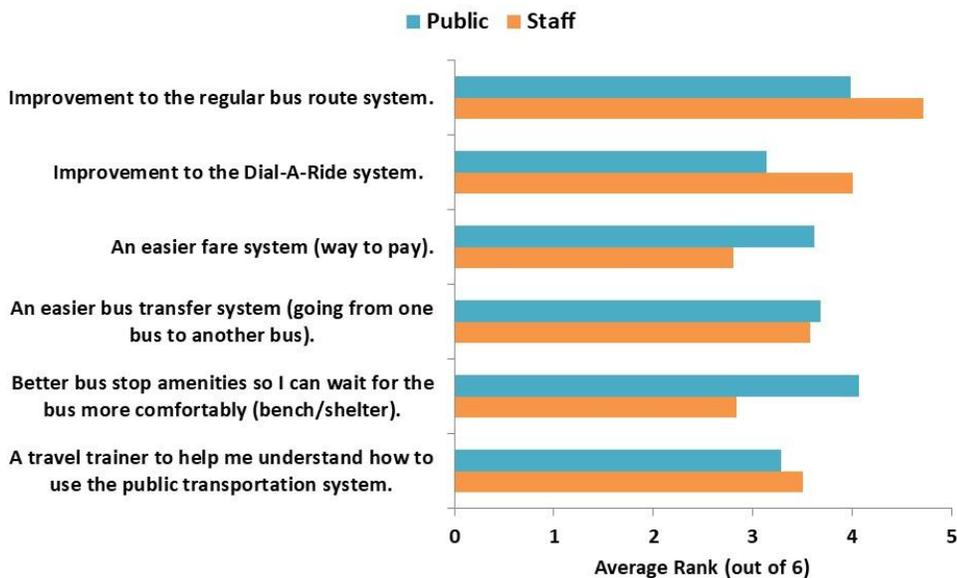
What would be the easiest way for you to pay your fare?



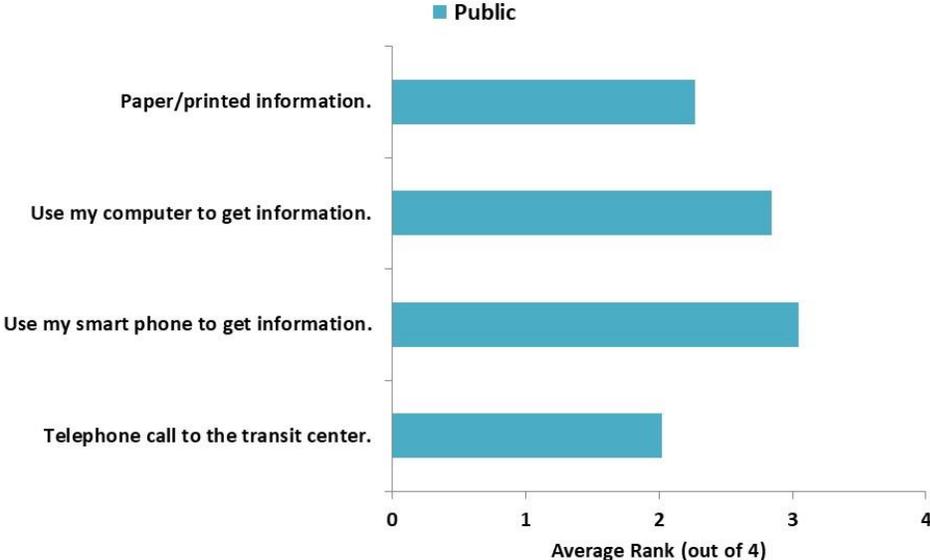
What are the barriers that make it hard for you to use public transportation?



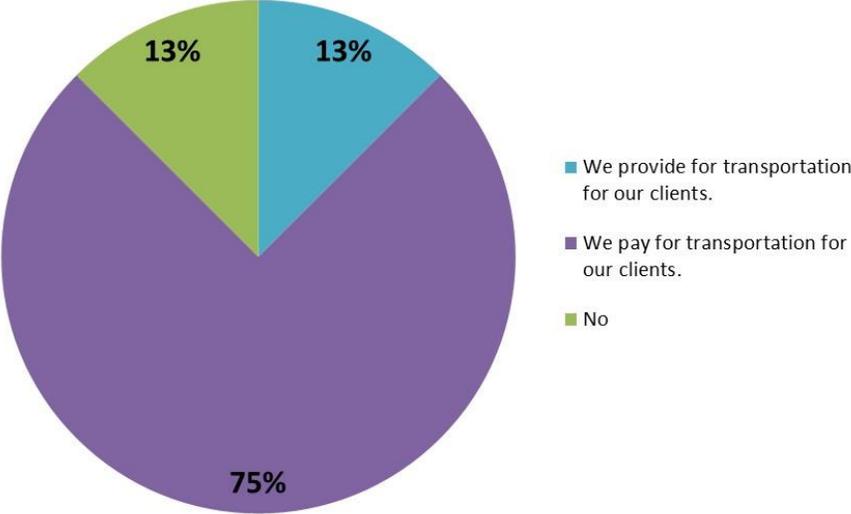
Ways to improve the public transportation system for the barriers noted.



How would you prefer to get information about the bus?



Staff: Does your organization provide or pay for client transportation?

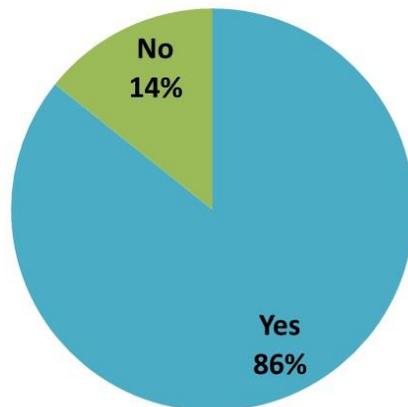


Staff: Please estimate the number of unique clients/week that you assist with transportation and the total number of trips/week provided.

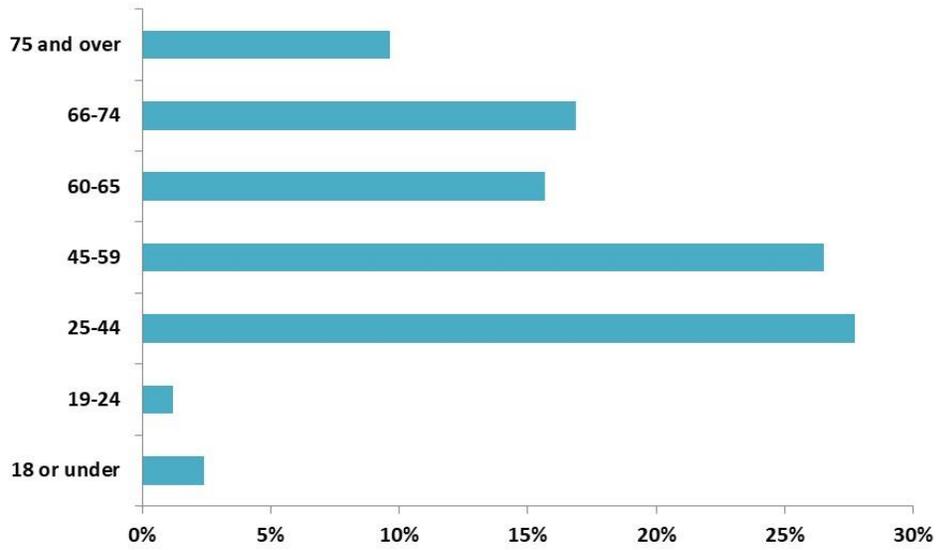
7 staff responded:

- ~20 unique clients per week
- ~21 total trips per week provided

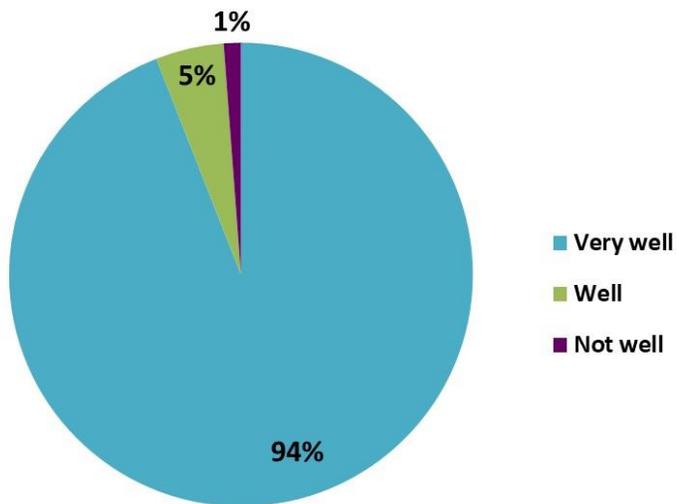
Staff: Do transportation issues interfere with the effectiveness of your organization or agency to serve your clients?



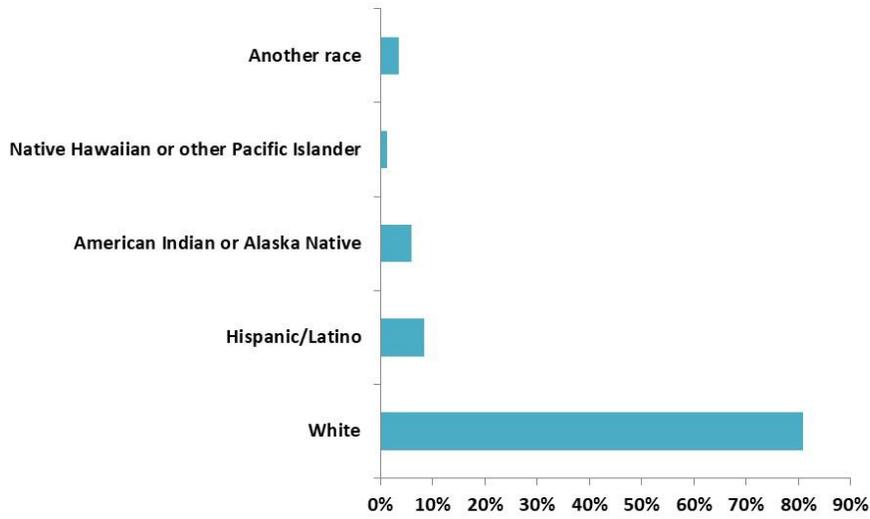
Public Demographics: Age



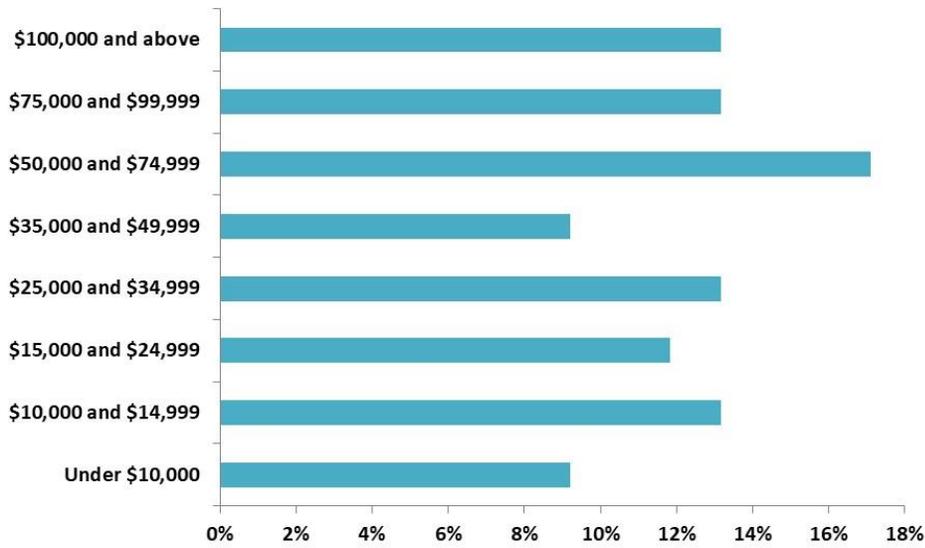
Public Demographics: How well English is spoken



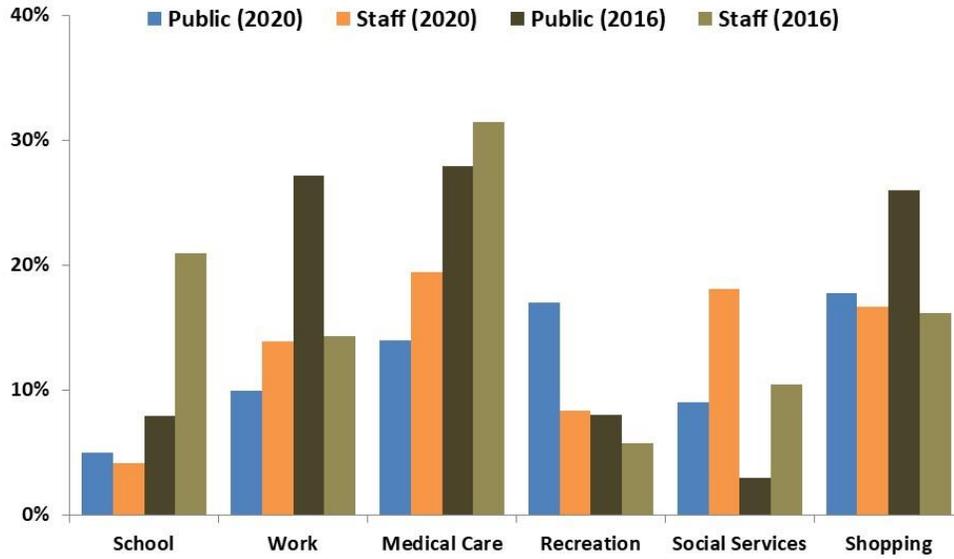
Public Demographics: Race



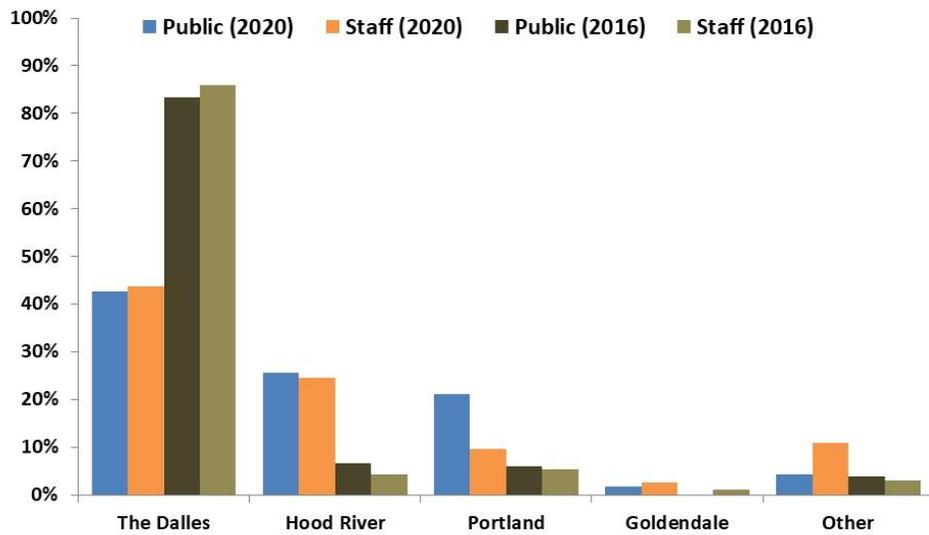
Public Demographics: Total household income last year before taxes



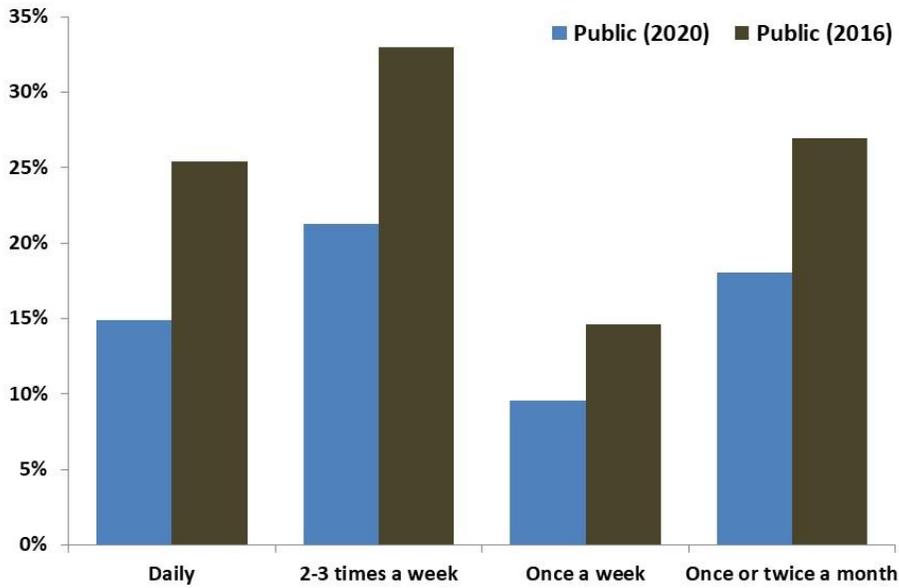
What are your main purposes for using public transportation? 2020 vs. 2016



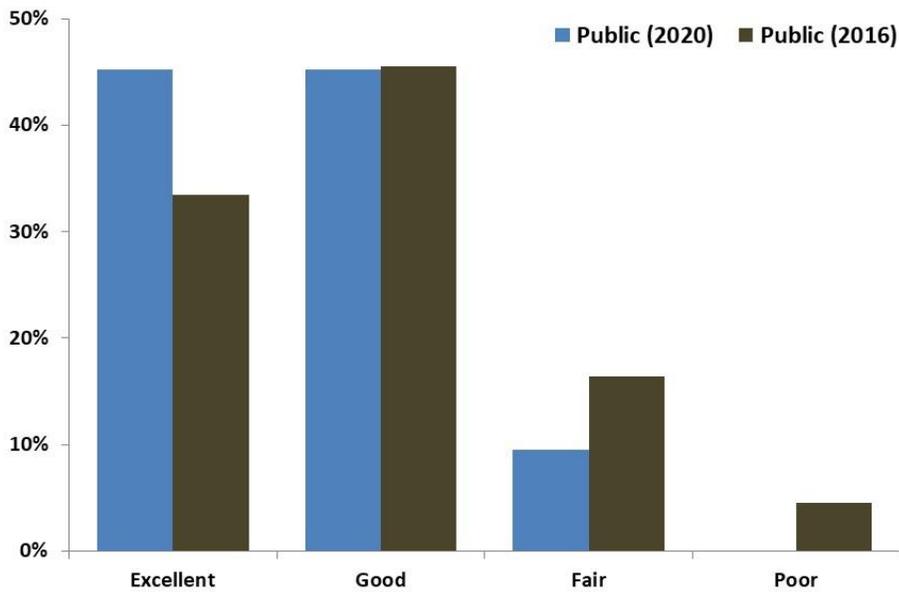
What are your main destinations when using public transportation? 2020 vs. 2016



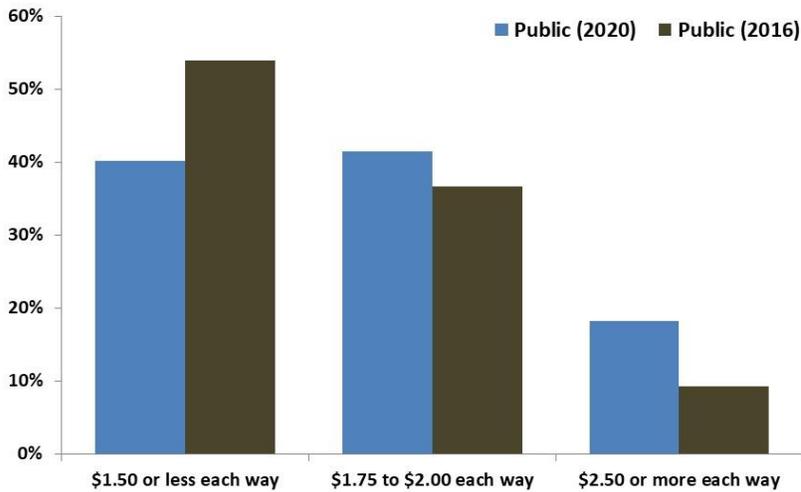
How often do you have a need for public transportation? 2020 vs. 2016



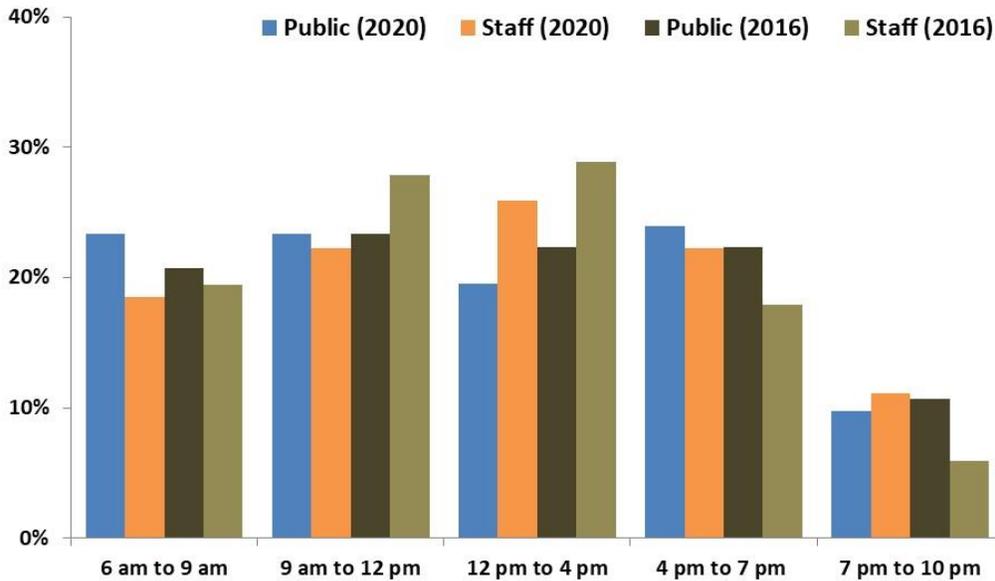
How would you rate the service of The LINK Bus? 2020 vs. 2016



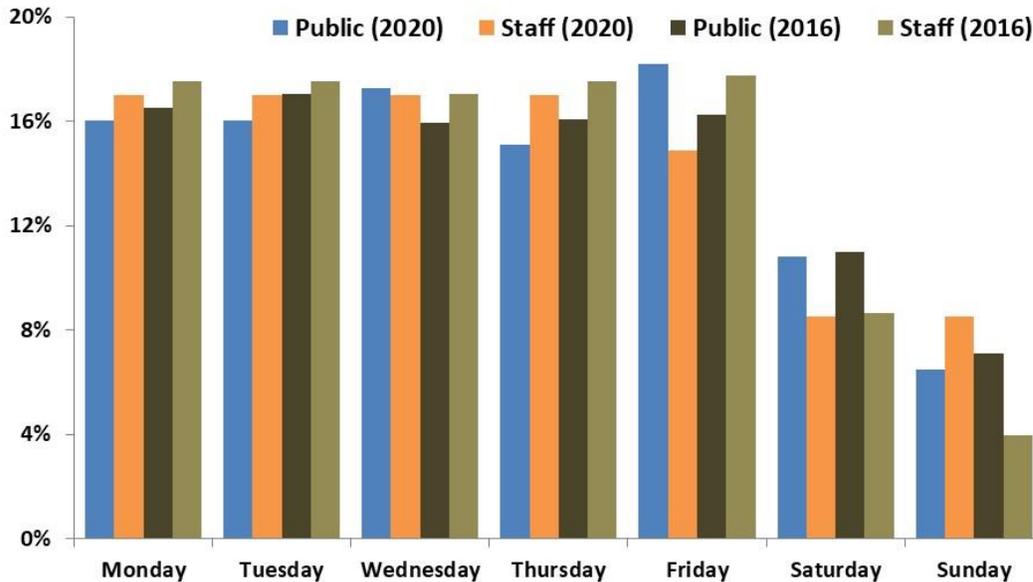
What fare would you be willing to pay for public transit within Wasco County?
2020 vs. 2016



If you use or are thinking about using public transportation, what times of day are you most likely to use it?
2020 vs. 2016



If you use or are thinking about using public transportation, what days of the week are you most likely to use it?
2020 vs. 2016



Survey Comments

What is working well with Wasco County's public transportation services (the Link)?

- Dial-a-Ride and door to door service
- Helps the elderly
- Vital for people who need to get to a medical appointment
- The buses are everywhere
- Reliable and on time
- Free for OHP clients
- Better than it was in the past
- Nearly always on time
- Drivers and dispatch polite, patient and helpful.
- Without LINK I'd be stuck most of the time in my apartment.
- Great service. Signs posted inside front of buses are good (but not all buses have them).
- Working with various agencies to provide public transport to TD from Portland and airport is huge.
- Friendly staff

Survey Comments

What needs improvement in Wasco County's public transportation services (the Link)?

- Less wait time to be picked up
- More stops, regular service
- Need more than one day service to Dufur and out lying areas.
- More defined/advertised stops and pickups
- Easier and direct to Portland (stop in HR ok); liked the old Gateway, OHSU, Clackamas Town bus, airport run early in the day.
- LINK on weekends to downtown to merge with CAT. Easy transfers. Dufur service on shorter notice-day ahead (noted as a barrier)
- Clearer communication about how the system works at stops.
- Direct transport to and from Portland.
- Shorter wait times, more storage for people that go grocery shopping once a month and a helper for disabled people.
- More service to South County
- Protection from the weather at bus stops. Expanded routes.
- Chairs and benches at all stores where the bus stops.

Survey Comments

What needs improvement in Wasco County's public transportation services (the Link)?

- Wish all buildings had stops located so you can see when the bus actually stops. Can't see the stop so you have to wait outside and there is no place to sit outside. Sign and label the benches so elderly/disabled have first choice to use this seating.
- I'd like to go to Portland downtown but too many bus transfers and don't know how to get from 205 transfer to downtown.
- Don't want to pay for extra bus trip just to buy passes at Transit Center.
- When you call for a Mosier stop the bus driver forgets to pick you up.
- I was left in the rain with a cast on my foot because the schedule online was incorrect and said "Lewis and Clark Park".
- Need a loop route that allows for flag stops.
- More timely.
- I need to know where the stops are and when the buses are coming and what the schedule is.
- Does not serve all communities. A stop in Mosier would be helpful for kids and commuters.

Survey Comments

What needs improvement in Wasco County's public transportation services (the Link)?

- I am uncertain as I can't seem to get a straight answer. Link, local and CAT aren't on the same page with their communication to the general public. Train whoever is answering the phones to have the ability to answer easy questions like: Who (which service - if any) picks up where and when. After spending about 10 minutes each on two phone calls to gain clarity, the individual basically said I should consider a taxi.
- Common sense in all activity, especially during snow storms... re-direct route if needs be and reduce the risk of accidents and incident(s).
- Rides to the College, stops at DHS
- Make it family friendly for young families.
- Service to Mosier to main shopping area. Fixed route from exit 69 to main st, past post office, then back to exit 69 to TDL.

Survey Comments

What needs improvement in Wasco County's public transportation services (the Link)?

- The Link needs to make more stops in neighborhoods so that people can walk to the bus. It also needs to be on the same fare system and scheduling line-up as the Cat so people can transfer to Hood River/Portland without having to wait for 30+ minutes and pay another fare.
- More services for those outside of The Dalles (Dufur, Wamic, Maupin, Tygh Valley)
- For me to use it, it would have to be early in the morning every day in order for me to get to work.
- Transportation from Mosier.
- I have never used the Link because it does not go where I need it to go (work, home, Hood River, and Portland). I only use the Cat, and have to drive or bike to the Link station to get on it.

Summary of survey responses identifying needs and gaps:

Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dalles to OHSU • Reaching Rural areas like South Wasco County and Mosier
Navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First/Last mile to transit stop • Transfers: need more coordination between providers to decrease wait times, common fare mechanism needed • Travel Training needs • Expansion to Weekends, holidays, hours • Coordinated Fare system and mechanisms • Bus stop enhancements like shelters and benches • More stops in The Dalles: CGCC and neighborhoods • Difficult to use transit with children (car seats, carrying shopping items) • Demand-Response: Window of wait time too long • Family pass needed
Communication and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear how to make transfers • More communication and coordination needed among providers
Special Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More assistance for older adults and disabled

Appendix G: 2020-2023 Plan Adoption

The 2020-2023 Wasco County Coordinated Transportation Plan was presented to the Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee in October 2020 and to the Wasco County Commission in December XXX, 2020.

Notice of plan availability was also noted on the MCEDD and Gorge Translink websites and was available in hard copy or electronic (PDF) form.

Recommended by the Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee:

Chair Date

Adopted by the Wasco County Board of Commissioners:

Chair Date