

Purpose of the Budget

In compliance with the State of Oregon Local Budget Law, the 2020-2021 (FY21) Budget beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021 is submitted to the Budget Committee for approval. As prepared and submitted, the annual budget is intended to serve as a financial plan for the Board's goals for the coming fiscal year. To that end the Budget should:

- Outline the forecasted expenditure requirements to meet those goals and the proposed means for financing those requirements.
- Provide a financial overview of the use and deployment of personnel, materials and services during the fiscal year.
- Offer guidance to the Board & District on overall operational priorities and expenditures.

Accomplishment of Fiscal Year 2020

Much of the focus for CAT in FY20 Budget was to begin a long-term operational and revenue strategy that would better address local and regional service needs of the community while ensuring a stable and sustainable funding source for the future.

Key outcomes of this focus included:

- Updating logo and look for CAT
- Raising local awareness and marketing within the community
- Implementing the Columbia Gorge Express and Gorge-To-Mountain services
- Hiring of a new Planning and Development Manager and two field supervisors to enhance our grant management and planning capabilities and to allow for expansion of our service to weekends.
- Implementing the GORge Go Pass and leveraging resources through strong partnerships with governmental agencies, businesses, and other community stakeholders
- Fostering new planning and visioning efforts for Gorge wide transit vision
- Growing ridership (particularly in the local City Route, Columbia Gorge Express, and Gorge to Mountain services)

Impacts of the COVID Pandemic

Pre-COVID CAT employed 23 employees (19 FTE and 4 PTE). Ridership continued to trend upward. In March CAT had met local GORge Pass sales targets and was preparing to launch sales in the Portland Market. When the Governor implemented the "stay at home order", CAT began reviewing and revising service levels and routes to support local COVID efforts and meet statewide requirements. Despite service cut backs and severe ridership impacts, CAT, working with our employees was able through retirements, family leave, furloughs and other measures to maintain 15 employees (13 FTE and 2 PTE) throughout the spring.

This puts us in a good position to begin a slow restoration of services throughout the summer and into the fall of FY2021. Our hope is by the end of FY 2021 most of our pre COVID services and will be fully restored.

Board Goals for the 2021 Budget Year

The Board's goal for the District this year is to:

- Ensure the District can financially weather the COVID pandemic. This would include:
 - Restoring and maintaining existing transit services
 - Fostering CAT's identity as an essential service within the Hood River community and working with key partners to rebuild confidence in transit use both locally and regionally
 - Maintaining and continuing to build key partnerships
 - Working to identify and secure revenues long-term for new services

Overview of the 2021 Proposed Budget

The COVID-19 Pandemic has created a variety of challenges and opportunities for CAT and other transit providers in Oregon. While there is no doubt that recovery will come slowly and revenues will dwindle the new resources available through the FTA as part of the CARES ACT show a promising new commitment on the Federal level for transit as critical and essential service going forward.

So, while it is clear that the 2021 Budget will need to grapple with the physical and financial realities of the post-COVID era, it's also an opportunity for us to strengthen our resolve, maintain what we have built and continue to move and build slowly into the future.

The outcome of this budget strategy is outlined in the attached budget. As last year we have presented the budget based on available funding sources.

- **General Budget** – The general budget is made up of federal grants, property tax revenues, state payroll tax collection and a variety of other smaller sources. The general budget proposal recognizes that some revenue decline is expected in payroll and property tax collection, but also assumes that the CARES ACT funds will allow us to fill those gaps. The goal for the general budget is to maintain funding for our local services at existing levels with only minor schedule adjustments. CAT has estimated a slow ramp up, but this budget assumes a return to full-service levels by the Fall.
- **Columbia Gorge Express (CGE) Service** – CGE Services are made up of STIF Discretionary Funds (currently match ration is 90/10). Funding for these services has not been impacted by COVID-19 and services should continue through the FY21 Fiscal year. A new grant funding application and associated match amount will be required should the Board wish to continue the CGE intercity grant into FY22. The new grant match rate is expected to be as high as 50% and will be an important source of discussion for the budget next year.
- **Gorge to Mountain (G2M) Hwy 35 Service** – G2M Services are made up of Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) funds. Funding for these services has not been impacted by COVID-19 and services should continue through the FY21 Fiscal year. A new grant funding application will be required in Spring 2021 should the Board wish to continue services in FY22.

In summary, the draft FY 2021 budget is a conservative one that is designed to offer some flexibility to address the ridership and services needed during this transition time. This year's budget should enable Hood River County Transportation District to ensure local dial-a-ride and fixed-route services are on a stable financial footing, while continuing to provide critical services to Portland, The Dalles, and Mount Hood.

I wish to thank the leadership of the HRCTD Board and the skilled employees at CAT, who continue to work as a community together to create the best transit system in the Gorge.

Further, I want to thank the citizens of Hood River County and our passengers for the continued support of their public transportation system.

I look forward to continuing the good work in the future.

Patricia Fink
Executive Director

Hood River County Transportation District

dba Columbia Area Transit

Vision

To connect the people and communities of Hood River County with an accessible and more sustainable future.

Mission

We provide safe, reliable, accessible and efficient public transportation services in Hood River County and beyond.

Our Values

Safety – We will ensure the safety of our employees, customers and transit systems.

Customer Service – We will work with our customers to meet their needs and exceed their expectations

Sustainability – We will continuously improve and be accountable for our financial, environmental and social outcomes.

Integrity – As stewards of public resources, we will use our assets prudently and conduct ourselves honestly and respectfully.

Community Driven – As stakeholders in Hood River County, we strive to ensure our services contribute to the social, cultural and economic betterment of all residents.

Innovation – We will pursue opportunities to enhance value for our customers.

Collaboration – We will cultivate strong partnerships, community connections and links to other types of travel.

Teamwork – As a team, we celebrate diversity, foster effective communication; and promote advancement and longevity.

Hood River County Transportation District is proud to present the 2021 budget to the public. We are committed to providing safe, reliable, accessible and SUSTAINABLE public transit services far into the future.

Overall Economic Outlook

The overall economic outlook for Hood River County Transportation District is one of cautious stability. The COVID Crisis and the instability of the economy has raised significant concerns regarding local funding sources (such as payroll and property tax) for the coming year. However, in April 2020 Congress passed the CARES ACT which included \$25 Billion dollars to transit agencies across the nation. Funds available under the CARES Act are available for all operating activities and justifiable net revenue losses that occur on or after January 20, 2020 and through June 30, 2021.

Oregon was allocated \$217.5M to Urban Areas (Portland, Salem, Eugene), \$24M for small urban areas (Albany, Bend, Corvallis, Grants Pass, Longview, Medford, Walla Walla) and \$42.6M for rural areas which includes 35 individual transit agencies/counties including Hood River County Transportation District. While HRCTD will need to justify funding short falls and other revenue expenses, we could be eligible for as much as \$400,000 or more from these funding sources.

Major Budget Additions

This budget has no major additions but maintains and builds off the budget additions for service enhancements that were approved as part of FY20. While the focus of last year was on investing in planned expansion, this expenditure was done with the understanding that the FY21 budget would be the year to receive the benefits of previous investments, allowing us to build on our reserves. We believe this current budget will accomplish this.