



HOOD RIVER COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT

**HOOD RIVER COUNTY  
COORDINATED  
TRANSPORTATION  
PLAN - 2024**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Hood River County Coordinated Transportation Plan Update 2024

The Hood River County Coordinated Transportation Plan was prepared by the Hood River County Transportation District (HRCTD) to serve state and federal agency requirements (Special Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF), 5311 and 5310). This plan focuses on addressing the transportation needs of four target populations residing in Hood River County: seniors, low-income individuals, individuals with disabilities, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals.

The transportation plan looks at challenges and gaps in existing services to prioritize needs to assist in:

1. Improving transportation services for the four target populations by identifying opportunities to coordinate existing resources.
2. Providing a strategy to guide investment of financial resources.
3. Guiding the acquisition of future funds and grants.

This 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:

1. Evaluates existing community resources.
2. Assesses and documents transportation needs of the four target populations.
3. Identifies strategies to address gaps in transportation services as well as in efficiencies of service delivery.
4. Establishes relative priorities of the strategies.

This document is an update to the 2020-2023 Hood River County Coordinated Transportation Plan. The priorities and strategies identified in this plan were informed through the comprehensive planning and outreach process that was part of the 2023 Hood River County Transportation Transit Master Plan Update, which was adopted May 17, 2023. Since the Transit Master Plan Update outreach was completed recently and included the four target populations it was felt that it was appropriate to use the feedback collected as part of the Coordinated Transportation plan as well.

HRCTD staff working in coordination and partnership with the Hood River County Transportation District STIF Advisory Committee, MCEDD, and regional partners prepared this plan update. It was updated using information collected from available demographic information, the HRCTD STIF Plan, MCEDD's Gorge Regional Transit Strategy, Coordinated Transportation Plans from neighboring counties (eg. Wasco, Skamania, Klickitat and Multnomah Counties), data from the 2023 Transit Master Plan Update surveys and outreach efforts, and an updated service resource analysis.

## Coordinated Transportation Plan Priorities

The coordinated transportation plan is intended to define and prioritize general strategies that the transit service providers can use to address transportation challenges and gaps in existing service. The below graph displays the priorities which were identified by stakeholders and community members.

<b>Identified Priorities</b>	
<b>Education – Improved Awareness of Public Transportation Services</b>	Increase awareness and ridership of the free Student Gorge Pass.
	Increase awareness and ridership of the free Downtown Employee Gorge Pass.
	Improve information regarding routes, programs, schedules, bikes on buses and rider rules.
	Increase the comfortability of riders from marginalized communities
	Increase multicultural awareness and bi-lingual staff.
	Riders need to feel safe and secure at bus stops and while riding the bus.
<b>Services – Maintain and Expand Services to Ensure Equity and Meeting Community Needs.</b>	Sustain existing transportation services.
	Sustain existing transportation programs.
	Expanded service hours, service area and frequency.
	Dependable and efficient local services.
	Access to senior center and educational institutions using transit.
	Expanded transportation services for vulnerable populations including door through door service.
	Access to transit for Westside of City of Hood residents.
	Creation of multi-modal transportation options (e.g. bike-share, car-share, or shared-ride taxi, and vanpool.
	Off shift and late-night transportation options.
<b>Capital – Maintain and Expand Capital Assets to Improve Efficiency of Transportation System and Enhance Rider Experience</b>	Increase identifiable bus stops with permanent shelters, sign, and seating at each bus stop.
	Improve access to bus stops for those with mobility challenges. Make stops safer to access.
	Fleet is maintained and serviced per manufacturer's recommendation.
	Improve dispatching technology designed for fixed-route and DAR services with mobile booking capabilities.
	Improve fleet sustainability by increasing the number of electric vehicles.
	Expand CAT facility to accommodate district fleet and larger vehicles.
<b>Coordination</b>	NEMT coordination.
	Foster partnerships and relationships with local jurisdictions.
	Strong civic engagement and connections throughout the County by partnering with employers, tourism organizations, business and community-based organizations.
	Strong partner in various Transportation Alliances (Gorge TransLink Alliance, Mt. Hood Transportation Alliance, Gorge Pass)

Performance measures linked to the above strategies were created to help the public transportation provider assess how it is meeting these strategies over time. This plan is intended to be updated in three years, or as conditions change.

## INTRODUCTION

### Why is a Coordinated Transportation Plan Needed?

The State of Oregon requires Special Transportation Improvement Fund agencies to prepare a coordinated transportation plan to guide the investment of Special Transportation Improvement Fund moneys. The State directs that this plan be utilized to maximize the benefit to the elderly and individuals with disabilities within that area. Correspondingly, with the passage of the Federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) transportation authorization, Congress required a “locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan” intended to improve transportation services for individuals with disabilities, seniors, and low-income individuals. Any projects selected for funding under the Section 5310 program must be included in this locally developed plan. Additionally, the plan must be developed and approved through a process that included participation of the target populations and representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers.

Because Hood River, Wasco and Sherman Counties also have a higher than average number of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals and many of these individuals also fall into one of the three categories, HRCTD began including LEP as a fourth focal point in 2016.

The Hood River County Coordinated Transportation Plan Update 2024 meets both federal and state requirements for preparation and adoption of a Coordinated Transportation Plan.

### 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 the Special Transportation Improvement Fund agency to maximize transportation investments to assist the four target populations: seniors, low-income individuals, individuals with disabilities, and LEP individuals. It covers a three-year timeframe (2024-2027) and is intended to be updated at least every three years or as conditions change. The 2023 Hood River County Transportation District Transit Master Plan Update which was used to help inform the 2024 Coordinated Transportation Plan and was adopted May 17, 2023 and is expected to cover an eight to ten year timeframe.

### Planning Area

The planning area covered under this Coordinated Transportation Plan Update is Hood River County, Oregon. Hood River County is located on the northern border of Oregon along the Columbia River. The county covers 533.301 square miles with an average of approximately 44.96 people per square mile. The 2020 U.S. Census indicates Hood River County has a total estimated population of 23,977 with a Latino population of over 30%. The incorporated cities include Hood River (population 8,313) and Cascade Locks (population 1,379). Unincorporated communities can be found in the County’s “Upper Valley” (north of the Columbia River, south of Mount Hood). They include Parkdale CDP (population 299), Odell CDP (population 2,328),

and Mt. Hood CDP (population 400) (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates). The City of Hood River is the seat of the County government and is also the most populated city in the county. The nearest metropolitan area is Portland, Oregon, 62 miles to the west.

## PLANNING PROCESS

The Coordinated Transportation Plan Update 2024 planning process was driven by the involvement of key stakeholders within the target populations as well as agencies that serve the needs of or provide transportation services for seniors, low-income individuals, individuals with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals.

As previously stated, the Coordinated Transportation Plan Update 2024 was mostly informed by the outreach that was completed as part of the 2023 Transit Master Plan Update that was adopted on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Input for the 2023 Transit Master Plan Update was gathered through diverse methods and strategies and included partnering with local human service organizations to reach historically underrepresented voices, going to where people gathered (school events, grocery stores, places of work, coffee shops, public meetings, and community gatherings) and capturing current transit riders through on-board intercept surveys. There was an intentional focus on broader involvement by historically marginalized communities, including but not limited to low-income individuals, youth, people with disabilities, seniors, immigrants, and Limited English Proficiency individuals. This strategy resulted in a broad spectrum of perspectives from current and potential system users, Hood River County's jurisdictions, tribes, local and regional businesses, social service agencies, educational institutions, and recreation stakeholders.

There were two advisory committees (Technical Advisory Committee and Community Advisory Committee) and stakeholder interviews that helped inform the 2023 Transit Master Plan. The four targeted populations were all represented. The Transit Master Plan Public Engagement Report is in Appendix B.

### Transit Master Plan Technical Advisory Committee

Comprised of CAT staff, regional jurisdictions, state and federal agencies, and quasi-public entities, the CAT Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) served as the plan's core technical advisors on project deliverables. Providing timely review and input toward the development of the draft and final HRCTD Transit Master Plan, the TAC met three times to review and discuss the following items:

- Meeting #1: Project Overview, TAC Role, and Responsibilities, PEP Review, Existing Conditions
- Meeting #2: Draft TMP Strategies, Options, and Land Use
- Meeting #3: Draft TMP Plan

The TAC included:

- Dustin Nielsen, City of Hood River
- Jordon Bennett, City of Cascade Locks
- Stephen Elgart, U.S. Forest Service
- Jeremy Evans, Mt. Hood Meadows
- Valerie Egon, Oregon Department of Transportation
- Genevieve Scholl, Port of Hood River
- Olga Kaganova, Port of Cascade Locks
- Eve Nilender, Multnomah County
- Dan Spatz, Columbia Gorge Community College
- Krystyna Wolniakowski, Columbia River Gorge Commission



- Todd Rainwater, Hood River County School District
- Kathy Fitzpatrick, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD)

## Transit Master Plan Community Advisory Committee

Appointed by the CAT Board, a group of community members with CAT Board representation served as advisors to TMP staff and CAT Board with the tasks of:

- Guiding the development of the TMP
- Assisting with public outreach
- Monitoring the scope of the public input
- Reviewing draft deliverables and input from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and other CAT committees' input

The CAC met four times with the following tasks:

- Meeting #1: Project Overview, TAC Role, and Responsibilities, PEP Review, Existing Conditions
- Meeting #2: Public Outreach Evaluation
- Meeting #3: Review of draft TMP Strategies, Options, and Land Use
- Meeting #4: Review of draft TMP Plan

The CAC included:

- Lara Dunn, HRCTD Board
- White Buffalo Calf Wannassay, Business
- Wendy Lin-Kelly, Current Rider
- Beth Hart, Current Rider
- Britta Wilson, Current Rider
- Melvin Richardson, Current Rider
- Jody Behr, Real Estate
- Taylor England, Social Services
- Ivy Collins, Youth

*Note: Several of the CAC members are also part of HRCTD's STIF Advisory Committee.*

## List Transit Master Plan Stakeholders

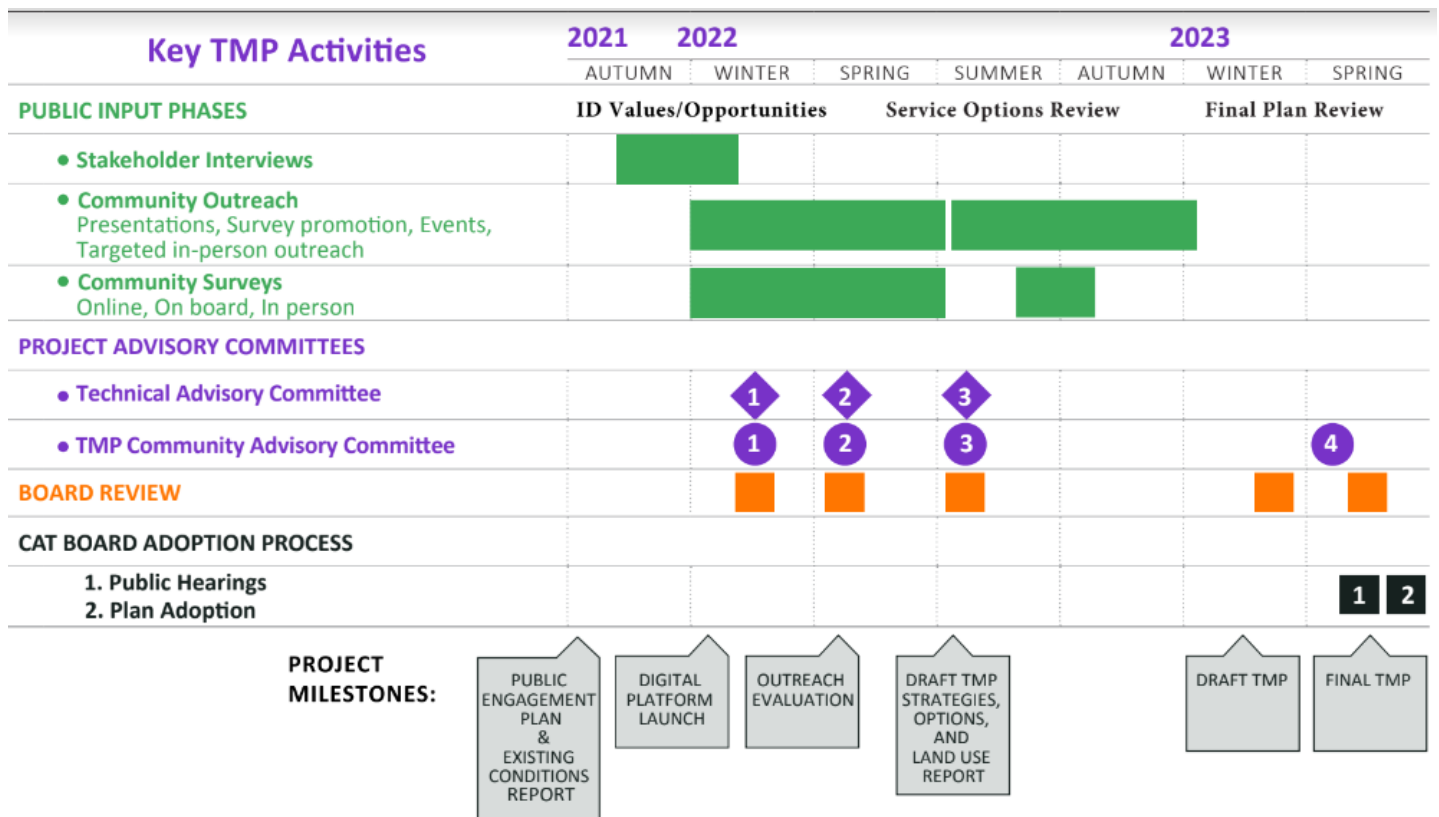
Staff contacted community stakeholders to affirm the proposed public engagement approach, explore additional opportunities for outreach leveraging, and understand the most appropriate and effective ways to reach historically underrepresented community voices. As a result, representatives from the following stakeholder groups enhanced, broadened, and deepened the public reach:

- **Mid-Columbia Housing Authority:** Provides safe and affordable housing for low-income families in Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Skamania and Klickitat counties. Serves senior populations, persons with disabilities on fixed incomes, low-income individuals, and Limited English Proficiency individuals.

- **The Next Door, Inc.:** Focuses on meeting needs of high-risk youth and building healthy families. Serves low income and Limited English Proficiency individuals.
- **One Community Health:** A Federally Qualified Health Center. Serves low-income, senior, disabled and Limited English Proficiency populations.
- **Hood River County School District:** K-12 public schools within Hood River County. Student population includes students from low-income and Limited English Proficiency families.
- **U.S. Forest Service:** Manages public lands, such as national forests and grasslands, provide technical and financial assistance to state, private, and tribal forestry agencies. Sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.
- **Port of Hood River:** Promotes and maintains a healthy economy and strong quality of life in the Port District and throughout the Gorge.
- **Hood River County:** Established in 1908, with a population of 23,977 and CAT's main service area. Includes several cities and unincorporated areas.
- **City of Hood River:** Located in and the seat of Hood River County with a population of 8,313. The city is located on the Columbia River and known for windsurfing and as a tourist destination.
- **City of Cascade Locks:** Historic town located in Hood River County on the Columbia River with a population of 1,379.
- **Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission:** Provides the tribes and the region with biological research, fisheries management, hydrology, climate change analysis, and other science to support the protection and restoration of the Columbia Basin salmon, lamprey, and sturgeon.
- **Columbia Gorge Community College:** Public community college in Hood River and The Dalles.
- **Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD):** Promotes the creation of family-wage jobs, the diversification of the economic base, and the growth, development and retention of businesses and industry within Sherman, Wasco, Hood River, Klickitat, and Skamania counties.
- **The Link Public Transit:** Public transit provider for Wasco County, Oregon.
- **Skamania County Transit:** Public transit provider for Skamania County, Washington which offers Dial-Ride and Fixed-Route services. Services are operated by Skamania County Senior Services.
- **Mt. Adams Transportation Services:** Public transit provider for Klickitat County, Washington offering Dial-A-ride and Fixed-Route services. Mt. Adams will transport passengers to The Dalles and Hood River, Oregon. Services are operated by Klickitat County Senior Services.
- **Sherman County Community Transit:** Public transit provider for Sherman County offering Dial-A-Ride and Fixed-Route services. Offers regularly scheduled routes to The Dalles and Portland.

## Public Meetings

HRCTD held public meetings in person, but also offered virtual options by using Zoom Conferencing technology. Public meetings were held Autumn of 2021 through Summer of 2023 for the plan update. The two formal hearings were held on April 17, 2023, and May 19, 2023 at HRCTD board meetings. The below graph represents public input opportunities. All committee meetings and board meetings were public meetings and the public was notified per public meeting law.



## Public Process

Two community surveys were distributed to the community as part of the 2023 Transit Master Plan. The first survey's purpose was to identify community values and what opportunities exist for public transportation in the region. Based on those responses staff developed a range of transit service options to share with the public and understand community preferences. The two surveys were distributed and collected between February 2022 – November 2022. All data was compiled into a draft plan that was distributed to the advisory committees for review. Additionally, the public had two formal public hearing opportunities on April 17, 2023, and May 19, 2023. Surveys were available on the CAT Website, in the CAT office, on CAT buses, local businesses, and at outreach events held in partnership with community-based organizations including Gorge Native American Collaboration, the Next Door, One Community Health, Hood River Public Library, and Hood River County School District. Surveys were available online and in paper format, written in English and in Spanish. There were 481 responses for Survey #1 and 229 for Survey #2. The survey tools used to inform the plan can be found in the Public Engagement Report located in Appendix B and highlights from the surveys in Appendix A. In addition to the public participation described above staff also referred to recent data collected by local organizations regarding transportation and community needs.

Separate from the 2023 Transit Master Plan outreach staff have conducted rider interviews and held an outreach event at the Mid-Valley market to have targeted discussions with Upper Valley riders to gain more insight on the needs for Upper Valley residents. Information gathered from the additional outreach efforts is documented in Appendix I.

## STIF Advisory Committee

The STIF Advisory Committee while not the primary advisory committee of the 2023 Transit Master Plan was concurrently involved in the 2023-2025 STIF Plan that was created from the initial feedback received from the Transit Master Plan Community Surveys. STIF Advisory Meeting Minutes and the approved 2023-2025 STIF Plan are included in Appendix C.

The HRCTD Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Committee Members are appointed by Hood River County Transportation District Board of Directors. Members include:

- Kevin Liburdy – City of Hood River (Jurisdictional Representative)
- Gisela Ayala Echeverria – CAT Board Member (Latino, Low-Income Individuals, Individuals with a Disability, and Public Transit Provider Representative)
- Dr. Meghan Larivee –CAT Board Member (Community and Public Transit Provider Representative)
- Eleazar Reyes – CAT Board Member (Latino, Low-income, Seniors, Individuals with a Disability, Public Transit Provider Representative)
- Lexi Stickel – Pacific Source (Low-Income, Seniors, and Individuals with Disabilities Representative)
- Taylor England – Providence Dethman House (Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Representative)
- Ivy Collins – Hood River Valley High School (Youth Representative)
- Rachelle Begay – Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (Native American Representative)

## DATA ANALYSIS

Planning for special transportation services is contingent upon the need for the service, thus understanding Hood River County population demographics and future population projections are important. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey estimates, as well as 2020 U.S. Census were used to provide a larger snapshot of Hood River County’s special needs populations. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, The Columbia Gorge Health Council’s Community Health Assessment, CAT ridership data, MCEEDD’s Transportation Innovations Through Collective Impact project and stakeholder information offered insight into key travel destinations for these populations. The following information was compiled to give a general overview of where the target populations for this study live and primary areas or corridors of travel.

This information will help identify any critical service gaps and key transportation challenges.

## Demographic Data Overview

Hood River County, Oregon is 62 miles east of Oregon’s largest City, Portland, and bordered by Wasco County to the east, Klickitat County and Skamania County to the north, Clackamas County to the south, and Multnomah County to the east.

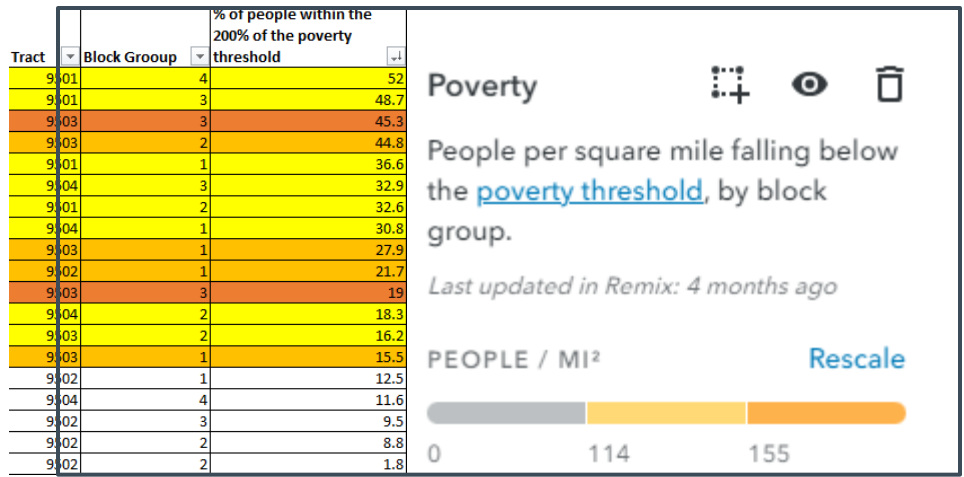
Covering 522.2 square miles, Hood River County, Oregon is the 35th-largest county in Oregon by area. The County has a median age of 40 and a median household income of \$80,254. The table that follows provides a general comparison between the County and the rest of Oregon.

Population Estimates	Hood River County	Oregon
<b>Total Population</b>	23,977	4,237,256
<b>% of Seniors (individuals 65 years and over)</b>	17.1%	19.3%
<b>% of Veterans</b>	5.3%	7.4%
<b>% Living at or Below Poverty</b>	6.6%	12.1%
<b>% of Hispanic/Latino</b>	29.8%	13.8%
<b>% Who Speak Language Other than English at Home</b>	28.7%	15.3%
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$80,254	\$75,657

(U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2022)

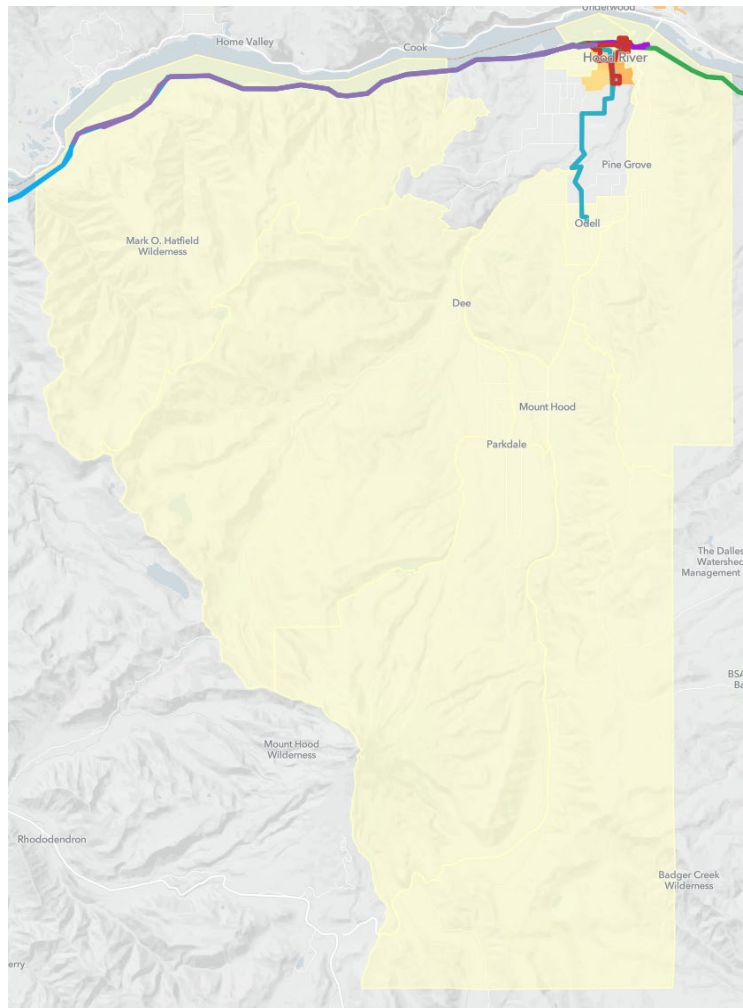
Since the previous Coordinated Transportation Plan Update (2020-2023), according to the U.S. Census Bureau Hood River County has not seen the same growth as Oregon overall. It should be noted that the Hood River County Hispanic/Latino population is significantly more than the State of Oregon. While the percentage of seniors (individuals 65 years and over), veterans and those living in poverty are also slightly lower than statewide numbers a more nuanced look at census block group data, shows a broader picture of poverty levels within the county.

Poverty is defined by the STIF Advisory Committee and approved by the Hood River County Transportation District Board of Directors as part of the 23-25 STIF Plan as census block groups within the County that have 15% or more of households with an income level that is 200% or less of the federal poverty standards. The below graph shows the block groups with the percentage of individuals who earn a household income of 200% of the FPL or less and people per square mile falling below the poverty threshold. The dark orange color depicts a higher concentration of individuals per square mile who are below the poverty threshold by block group.

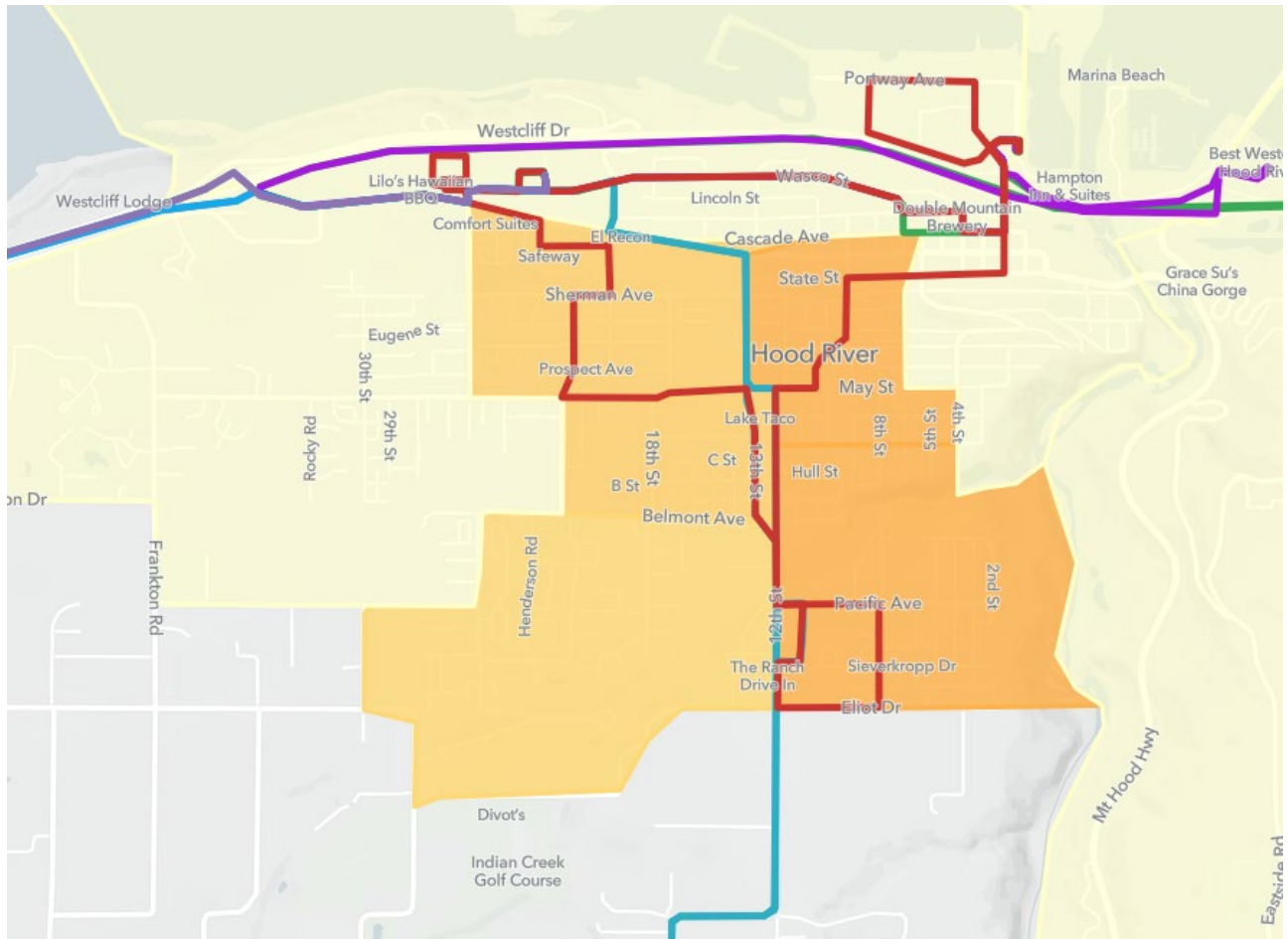


Maps 1 and 2 show census block groups within the county that have 15% or more of the population within 200% of FPL and considered a “high percentage of Low-Income households. The dark orange color depicts a higher concentration of individuals per square mile who are below the poverty threshold by block group.

Map 1: Hood River County



Map 2: City of Hood River Focused



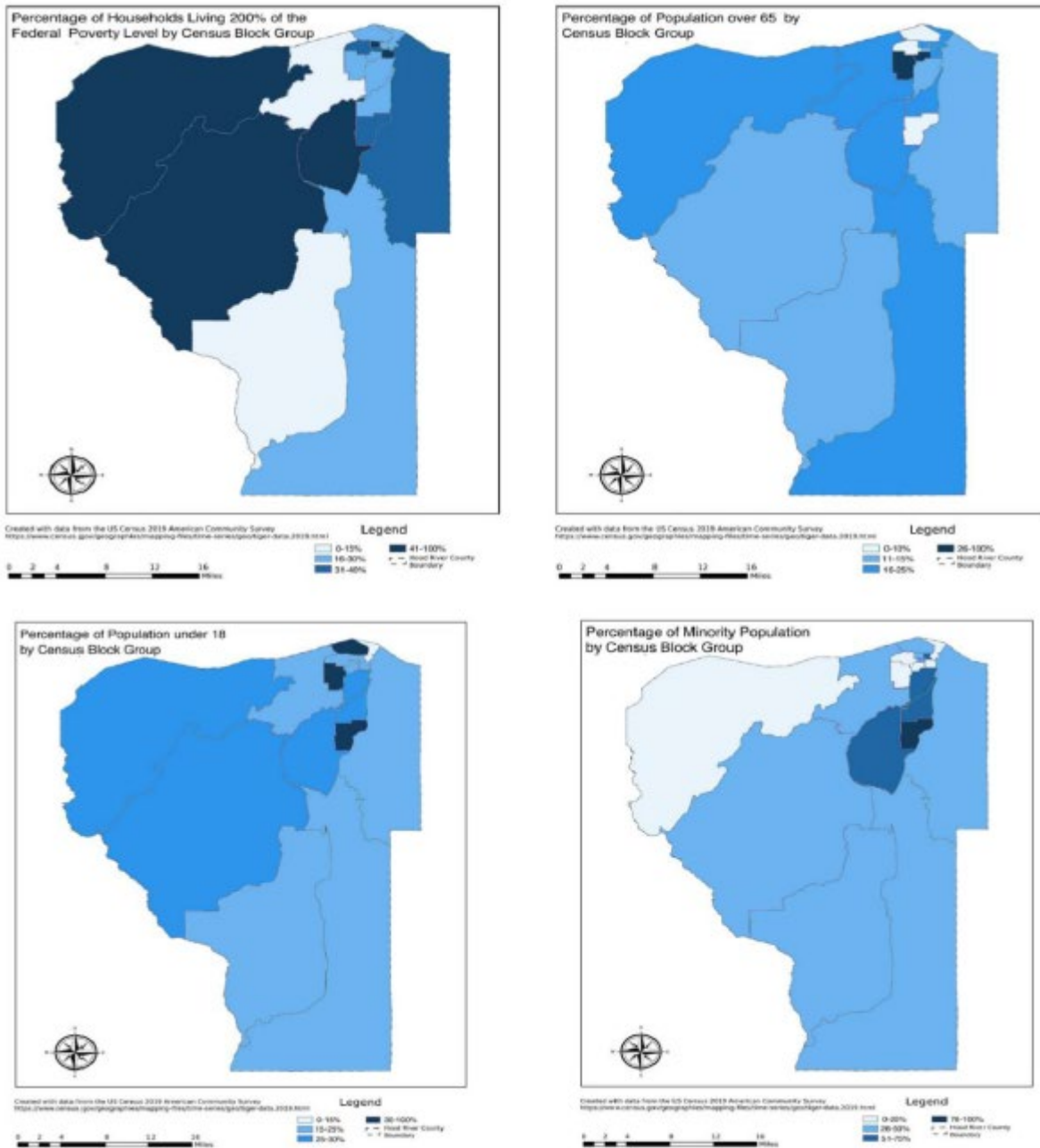
**Correlation between Poverty and Other Special Needs**

There is a strong correlation between block groups with high percentages of Hispanic/Latinos and higher poverty rates particularly in and around Hood River, Odell, and east of Hwy 35 as identified in the State Transportation Improvement Plan. While some of these poverty concentrations are associated with low-income housing facilities in Hood River (9503-BG3, 9503-BG2), others are associated with rural areas where farm workers, packing houses, and other agricultural jobs offer entry level employment (9504-BG1; 9504-BG3)

Populations of those individuals 65 and over are highest within the Cascade Locks area (9501-BG1), which also has one of the highest percentage of low-income populations in the County. Over 22.5% of the population in the Cascade Locks community are seniors and over 6.8% of this community live at or below poverty which is slightly higher than Hood River County as a whole (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022) . Other pockets of older individuals are appropriately correlated with senior living facilities within the City of Hood River (9503-, BG1, BG2, BG3) where shopping, medical and other resources are close by. That these block

groups are also correlated with lower-income households is reasonable, given that many seniors are reliant on retirement and other fixed-income assets. Figure 1 captures transportation disadvantaged population densities in Hood River County.

Figure 1: Breakdown of Key Transit Demographics in Hood River County



Transit services targeting access and mobility within the City of Hood River, the City of Cascade Locks and in and along Highways 35 and 281 in the Upper Valley will be critical to meeting these target populations' needs.



## Travel Destinations

In addition to identifying where the target populations are located, it is also important to identify where these populations are travelling. Using census longitudinal employer, household, dynamic local, and regional activity centers, bus stop data and other information we have highlighted the key local or regional destinations for these target populations.

### Work

About 15 % of jobs in Hood River County fall into Agriculture and are spread throughout the County with higher concentrations in Odell and Parkdale. 12.2% of jobs are associated with arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services, the majority of which are found at Mount Hood Meadows Ski Resort. 10.1% is retail trade and 22.1% is educational services, and health care and social assistance (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Most of the entry level jobs in the latter three categories can be found within the City of Hood River.

Just over half of those who work in Hood River County also live within the county – indicating both regional and local connections are important for low-income workers in the County.

### Medical

All medical services within Hood River County are in the City of Hood River. Large medical providers include:

- Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital
- Adventist Health (previously) Mid-Columbia Medical Centers
- One Community Health
- Mid-Columbia Center for Living

It is important to note that Hood River County residents will often need to travel to The Dalles or Portland for some of their medical needs. Residents may need to travel for specialists that are not available in Hood River and/or because their insurance requires them to receive covered medical care elsewhere.

### Shopping

Grocery stores (Walmart, Safeway, Rosauers, Mercado Guadalajara) and home improvement centers (Tum-A-Lum, Ace) in Hood River County can be found within the City of Hood River. Specialty retail can also be found in Hood River's downtown. Odell, Parkdale, and Cascade Locks all have smaller community markets that carry basic food items and a few specialty shops that are largely for tourists. Regionally, The Dalles offers the next closest access to national chains for grocery, clothing, and other shopping.

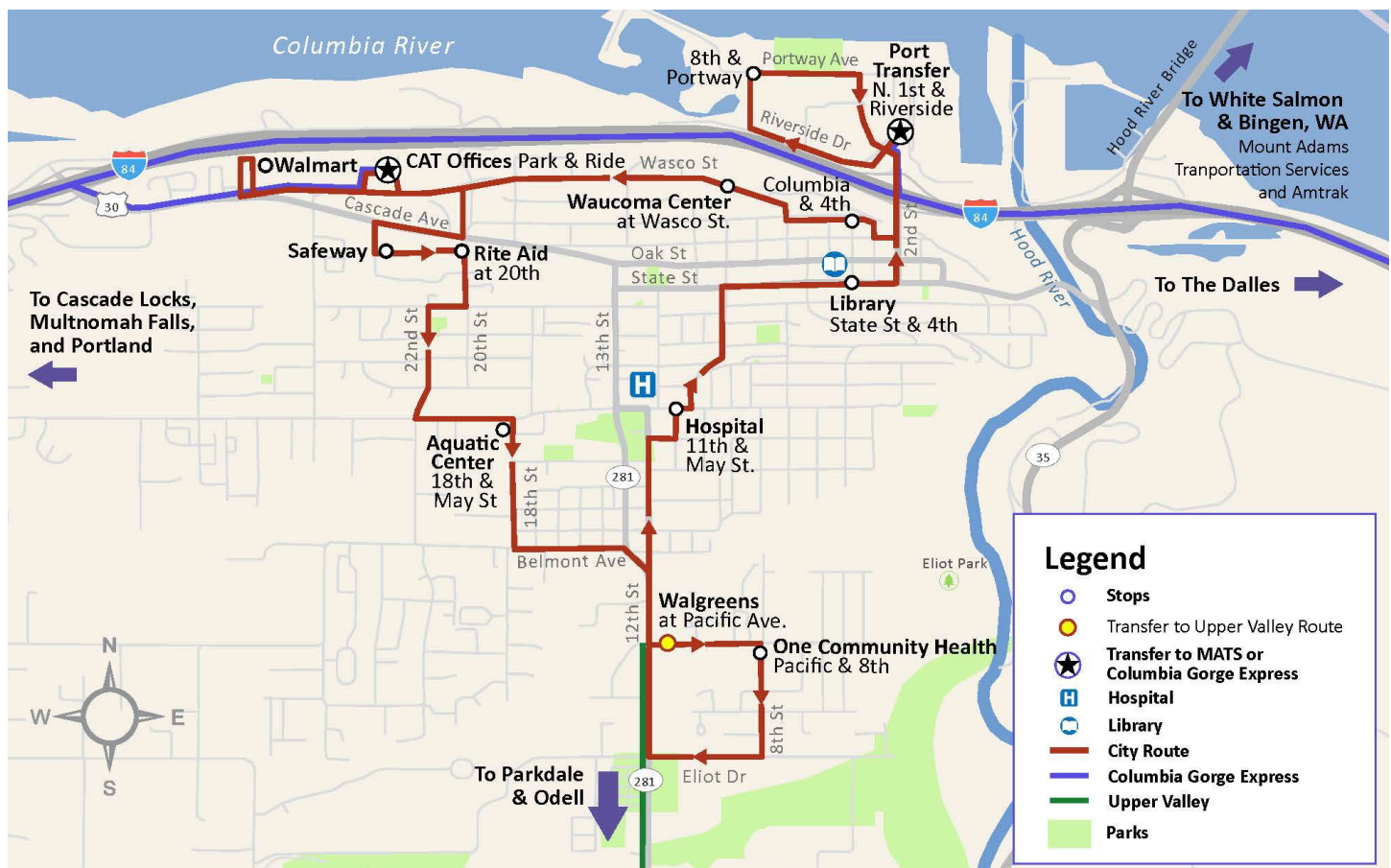
Many people also travel into the Portland Metro Area for furniture or other larger purchases. Online shopping has also become increasingly popular for a variety of purchases.

### Recreational, Educational, and other Social Services

Movie theaters, performing arts, senior activities, food banks, employment assistance, higher education facilities, behavioral health, and other County services can all be found within the City of Hood River. In addition, the communities of Mt. Hood and Cascade Locks also have community centers where senior lunches, meals on wheels and the local food bank provide options.

In addition, the Portland Metro area offers a full array of recreational, educational, and social service opportunities that are not available in the Gorge.

The map below shows the general locations for key worksites, medical, shopping, and recreational activities within the City of Hood River. While not a comprehensive list, the map does offer a general overview of where popular origins and destinations are located and where they are in relation to existing transportation services.



### Changing Conditions

Since the 2016 Hood River County Coordinated Transportation plan, Hood River County and the world has experienced changes that should be recognized as they have impacted transportation and will continue to do so overtime. The issues that have most impacted the transportation and planning include climate related wildfires, generational preference toward transportation alternatives, COVID-19, associated impacts on safety and equitable access for persons of color, inflation, and cost of living increases. This plan, the priorities, and the associated strategies, have incorporated these concerns as they directly impact the target population. For more information on these topics and how they have or are impacting transportation choices, please see Appendix E.

## HOOD RIVER COUNTY TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

As a requirement of the Coordinated Transportation Plan, the following section describes the different transportation resources available within Hood River County.

### Hood River County Public Transportation Provision

#### **Columbia Area Transit (CAT)**

Hood River County Transportation District provides public transportation services within Hood River County and along the I-84 corridor as Columbia Area Transit (CAT). Hood River County Transportation District is a Special District organized under Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 267. The major sources of funding include grants from the Federal Transit Administration, several different sources from the State of Oregon, local property tax, and user fees. The District was formed by a vote of Hood River County Residents in 1993.

CAT's mission is to provide safe, reliable, accessible public transportation services in Hood River County and between Gorge communities. To help meet our community's needs and assist the City of Hood River and ODOT in meeting Climate Change initiatives, CAT offers many transportation options for Hood River County Residents, commuters from surrounding counties, and tourists.

**Dial-A-Ride (DAR):** Dial-a-ride, a demand response system, is a valuable transportation service for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those who cannot use the standard fixed route transit systems to travel to medical appointments, employment, school, buying groceries, or any other general need. Dial-A-Ride is provided on a first come, first serve/needs basis. The service provides transportation for several rural, remote, and low-income areas within the county including Cascade Locks, Odell, Parkdale, Dee, and Mt. Hood.

**Fixed-Route:** Defined as “a system of transporting individuals including the provision of designated public transportation service by public entities and the provision of transportation service by private entities, including, but not limited to, specified public transportation service, on which a vehicle is operated along a prescribed route according to a fixed schedule.”

**Deviated Fixed-Route:** A hybrid of fixed-route and Dial-A-Ride services. With this type of service, the CAT bus stops at fixed points and keeps to a timetable but can deviate its course between two stops to go to a specific location for a pre-scheduled request.

**Seasonal Service:** Special seasonal service is offered to encourage car free travel and reduce traffic congestion during peak tourist seasons.

<b>Services Offered</b>				
<b>Service</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Service Area</b>
<b>Dial-A-Ride (DAR)</b>	Demand Response	8AM – 5:00PM	Mon – Frid	Hood River County
<b>Columbia Gorge Express</b>	Fixed-Route	6:00AM - 7:40PM	Monday - Sunday	I-84 Corridor between The Dalles and Portland
<b>Hood River City</b>	Fixed-Route (flag stops are allowed)	7:45AM – 6:15PM 10:00AM – 7:15PM	Monday – Friday Saturday - Sunday	City of Hood River – connects the Westside, the Heights, Downtown, and the Waterfront
<b>Hood River Connect</b>	Fixed-Route	8:35AM – 3:55PM	Monday – Sunday	City of Hood River – connects the Port, Downtown, and the Waterfront
<b>Upper Valley</b>	Deviated Fixed-Route	8:20AM - 6:20PM	Monday - Friday	Connects the Upper Valley to the City of Hood River
<b>Gorge To Mountain Express</b>	Seasonal (Winter)	7:00AM – 10:00PM	Monday - Sunday	Hwy 35 corridor between Hood River and Mt. Hood Meadows
<b>Dog Mountain</b>	Seasonal (Spring)	6:50AM-5:50PM	Saturday - Sunday	Connects riders to the Dog Mountain trailhead car free from Cascade Locks and Stevenson
<b>White Salmon Weekend</b>	Seasonal (Summer)	9:00AM – 6:15PM	Saturday - Sunday	Connects White Salmon/Bingen to Hood River on weekends
<b>Portland Medical Shuttle</b>	Demand Response	9:00AM-5:00PM	Tuesday & Thursday	Connects Hood River County Residents to medical services I Portland

Since the 2020 Coordinated Transportation Plan, CAT has expanded services, fleet capacity, payment programs, and community outreach efforts. The below tables depicts the identified priorities from the 2020 Plan and the completed projects, which were designed to meet the identified priorities.

Priority	Objective	Completed Projects
<b>Services - Maintain &amp; Expand Services to Ensure Equity &amp; Meeting Community Needs</b>	Sustain existing transportation services	Maintained services and programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Columbia Gorge Express</li> <li>• HR City Route</li> <li>• Upper Valley</li> <li>• Dial-A-Ride</li> <li>• Gorge-To-Mountain Express</li> <li>• Gorge Annual Transit Pass</li> <li>• Student Fares</li> <li>• Low-Income Fares</li> <li>• Mobile Payment Option</li> </ul>
	Expand operating hours on evening and weekends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded Hood River City Route to include weekend service</li> <li>• Added summer expanded Columbia Gorge Express service</li> <li>• Added Weekend Summer White Salmon Service</li> <li>• Expanded Gorge-to-Mountain Express Service to include evening service</li> </ul>
	Expand transit to meet needs of seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased Dial-a-Ride Service Area to include Cascade Locks</li> <li>• Added seating at high use bus stops</li> </ul>
	Increase access to HWY35 Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded Gorge-to Mountain Express Service to include evening service</li> </ul>
	Increase access to medical services outside of Hood River County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented the Portland Medical Shuttle</li> </ul>
	Increase access to transportation services within Cascade Locks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added Cascade Locks shuttle which was removed due to low ridership and not meeting the needs of residents</li> <li>• Expanded Dial-a-Ride service area to include Cascade Locks</li> </ul>
	Improve access to downtown The Dalles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transferred service to The Link which allowed for easier rider access to downtown The Dalles</li> </ul>
	Diverse CAT operations staff to better reflect the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded promotion of job postings onto different platforms</li> </ul>

Priority	Objective	Completed Projects
<b>Capital - Maintain &amp; Expand Capital Assets to Improve Efficiency of Transportation System &amp; Enhance Rider Experience</b>	Ensure vehicle fleet safety and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secured preventive maintenance funding</li> <li>Secured and ordered replacement vehicles for the Columbia Gorge Express</li> <li>Secured funding for electric vehicles</li> </ul>
	Permanent shelters, seats, and signs at each bus stop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Installed 3 shelters</li> <li>Added seating and signs at high use bus stops</li> </ul>
	Increase stop accessibility for individuals with different levels of mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocated for accessible sidewalks and bike paths by creating letters of support for different entities</li> <li>Identified bus stops where accessibility should be improved – working with City of Hood River staff</li> </ul>
	Improve dispatching technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopted improved dispatching and real time bus tracking</li> </ul>
	Improve the sustainability of the CAT fleet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Installed charging station at facility</li> <li>Added an electric van to the fleet</li> <li>Secured funding for additional electric vehicles</li> </ul>
	Expand facility capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified ways to expand facility bus storage and maintenance facility</li> </ul>
<b>Information - Improved Awareness of Public Transportation Services</b>	Provide ongoing information regarding service, schedules, routing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoted services through website, radio, social media, print</li> <li>Created easy to read bilingual service brochures and service alerts</li> <li>Expanded presence at multicultural events</li> <li>Strategically worked with partners to spread awareness of services and programs through their digital platforms</li> <li>Worked with Gorge Transit Connect partners to spread awareness of services</li> </ul>
	Ensure riders feel welcome and safe using public transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented Travel Training Program</li> <li>Communicated precautionary safety measures during COVID-19</li> <li>Improved staff sensitivity training</li> </ul>
	Pursue outreach and Partnerships with vulnerable populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded Gorge Transit Connect Program Partners and improved program</li> <li>Produced Student Free Fare Program Flyers and posted at schools</li> </ul>

Priority	Objective	Completed Projects
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased outreach with community based organizations to reach marginalized community members</li> </ul>
<b>Coordination - Partner with Local &amp; Regional Organizations to Create Connections &amp; Develop a Transportation Network within the Gorge &amp; Beyond</b>	Continue fostering and developing transportation partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued as an active Gorge Translink member</li> <li>Worked with other Gorge Translink partners to create the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy</li> <li>Participated in Mt. Hood Alliance</li> <li>Created universal fare system with The Link, Mt. Adam's Transportation Service, and Skamania County Transit</li> </ul>
	Partner with employers, tourism organizations, and businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worked with the Gorge Pass program to expand employer pass program</li> <li>Continued to partner with tourism organizations, U.S. Forest Service, ODOT and others to encourage car free travel and support the Public Transportation System</li> </ul>
	Access to other transportation services for vulnerable populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued NEMT conversations</li> <li>Participated in human service organization meetings</li> <li>Expanded the Gorge Transit Connect program</li> </ul>
	Improved multi-modal options within Hood River County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocated for multi-modal transportation options within Hood River by creating letters of support</li> <li>Secured funding to offer an e-bike lending library</li> </ul>
	Coordination of local and regional planning processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopted the 2023 Transit Master Plan</li> <li>Coordinated with partner agencies to distribute transportation outreach, surveys, and questionnaires</li> </ul>

**Transportation Agency Improvement Highlights:**

Among the completed projects listed above it is important to highlight specific projects:

- Spanish speaking drivers and dispatchers were hired to reduce language barriers for Limited English Proficiency individuals.

- The Annual Gorge Transit pass was introduced on February 4, 2020 and was expanded into a 4-Agency universal fare system for fixed-route services through Columbia Area Transit, The Link, Mt. Adam's Transportation Services, and Skamania County Transit on July 1, 2021.
- In 2019, Oregon Legislature enacted the Keep Oregon Moving Act (House Bill 2017 (HB 2017)). The bill included a small employee payroll tax dedicated to funding the expansion of public transportation services. One of the areas specifically identified by the legislature is transportation services for youth statewide. One percent of all funds allocated to transit agencies is to be spent on addressing the needs of young people. In January 2020, Columbia Area Transit partnered with the Hood River County School District to use these funds to start the Student Free Gorge pass program. This program allows for all Hood River County School District Middle and High School students to receive a free Student Gorge pass each year at the beginning of the school year. Since 2020 the program has continued to gain traction and is popular during the winter season when students can use the pass to go up to Mt. Hood Meadows to recreate. However, there remains an opportunity to increase awareness of program and how to use the available CAT services.
- CAT in partnership with MCEDD expanded the Gorge Transit Connect Program (low-income fare program). The MCEDD Travel Trainer (partially funded through CAT) works with local community community-based organizations to distribute annual Gorge Transit passes to Hood River and Wasco County low-income community members at a low or no cost.
- Implementation of the travel trainer program with MCEDD has allowed the district to do targeted outreach and assist marginalized community members.
- The 2023 Transit Master Plan Update was a significant accomplishment and feedback received is reflective of community demographics. The plan highlighted the need of mobility hubs, improved efficiency of the Hood River City Route, and increased service on weekends in the Upper Valley and Demand Response.
- Gorge Translink Alliance partners completed the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy. Phase 1 of the project focused on strengthening partnerships, analyzing local transportation plans in the Columbia Gorge, and developing a collective regional vision. Phase 2 focused on a more comprehensive implementation strategy including further data analysis, funding and financial planning, assessment of potential regional organizational structures, and operational and policy strategies.



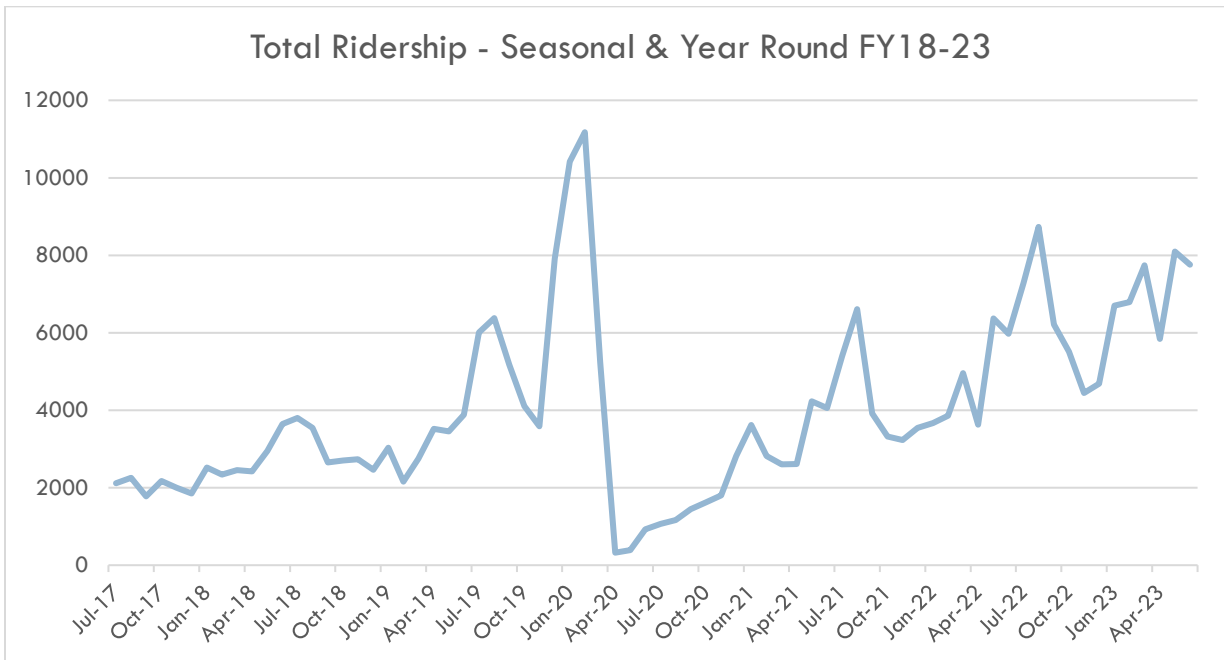
**Dial-A-Ride (DAR):** CAT DAR provides access to medical appointments, employment, school, buying groceries, or any other general need, however, the highest percentage of trips are going to or from medical or health related appointments. Popular destinations include Safeway, Rosauer’s, Mid-Columbia Center for Living, Providence Dethman House, One Community Health, and Walmart.

**Ridership:** Ridership on CAT fixed-route services has been steadily rising in the past several years due to an increase in service and demand. CAT found that ridership started increasing again after the COVID-19 Pandemic the summer of 2021. The below table shows the ridership from FY21 through FY23. For most services CAT ridership is at or above pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 3: Ridership FY21-FY23

Service	FY 20-21	FY 21-22	FY 22-23
<b>Year-Round</b>	24,408	48,969	67,673
<b>Seasonal Service</b>	5,443	7,112	12,144
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,853</b>	<b>56,081</b>	<b>79,817</b>

Figure 4: Graph Showing Ridership Pre and Post Pandemic



**Columbia Area Transit and Public Transportation Funding:**

Columbia Area Transit receives funding through Federal, State, and Local sources, and fare revenue. These funds must be used for different services as shown in the graph below. By far the largest new influx of dollars came from the passage of HR 2017 in the 2017 Legislative session. HR 2017 or the State Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) provides a dedicated source of funding to expand public transportation to access jobs, improve mobility, relieve congestion, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions around Oregon. The focus of the funding was to increase mobility and access for low-income population

across the State. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic the federal governments distributed CARES ACT funding which allowed the district to remain whole and maintain services.

This plan, as well as the 2023 Transit Master Plan will help identify top priorities and fund critical strategies over the STIF FY 23-25 Planning period.

Type of Funding	Funding Source	Purpose	FY20-21 Revenue	FY21-22 Revenue	FY22-23 Revenue
<b>Federal</b>	FLAP Funds	All transit purposes for services that access federal lands	\$155,655	\$0	\$0
	5310	PM, Capital, Mobility Management for Services that target Seniors and Persons with Disabilities	\$115,951	\$80,561	\$93,766
	5311	Rural populations (deviated fixed route, DAR)	\$167,828	\$0	\$390,176
	CARES	COVID-19 Assistance	\$0	\$415,426	\$194,414
	5304	Planning	\$0	\$37,496	\$48,491
<b>State</b>	STF Formula	Seniors, Individuals with disabilities	\$67,700	\$67,700	\$67,700
	STIF Project Formula	Enhance public transportation services	\$559,957	\$560,871	\$498,949
	STIF Discretionary	Intercity Service	\$592,385	\$578,546	\$605,324
	Falls-To-Locks	Summer Intercity Service	\$0	\$12,590	\$107,026
	Mass Transit PYRL	Public Transit Services	\$31,631	\$37,713	\$39,988
	GO VETS	Fares for Vets	\$0	\$0	\$6,405
<b>Local</b>	Property Tax	Public Transit Services in Hood River County	\$203,961	\$206,157	\$217,316
<b>Other</b>	Contract	Medicaid, Seasonal services	\$19,868	\$5,580	\$63,044
	Fare	Fare from riders, Employer pass program	\$61,556	\$202,693	\$201,764
	Interest/other		\$11,239	\$12,894	\$78,259
<b>Total</b>			\$	\$	\$

## Public Transportation Providers in Surrounding Counties

Several small public transportation providers operate in neighboring counties. TRIMET, which operates in the Portland Metro area is the largest provider. Columbia Area Transit shares several stops with TRIMET for the Columbia Gorge Express service. The Link, Mt. Adams Transportation Services, and Skamania County Transit all have routes that stop at designated Columbia Area Transit transfer stops. Clackamas County operates the Mt. Hood Express, which travels to Mt. Hood and stops at Timberline and Government Camp. While no direct connection is currently made with the Mount Hood Express, CAT & Clackamas County are currently working towards meeting in Government Camp in the next several years.

Transportation Provider	Service Type	Hours	Days	Service Area
<b>The Link Public Transportation, Wasco County</b>	Dial-a-Ride, Deviated Fixed-Route, Shopping bus, NEMT	6am-6pm 9am-4pm (Sat & Sun)	Monday – Sunday	City of the Dalles, and select areas in Wasco County
<b>Mt. Adams Transportation District, Klickitat County</b>	Fixed-Route, Dial-A-Ride	8am-5pm	Monday-Friday	White Salmon area and Goldendale area
<b>Skamania County Transit, Skamania County</b>	Fixed-Route, Dial-A-Ride	8am-4:30pm	Monday-Friday	Skamania County and select surrounding areas
<b>TRIMET</b>	Fixed-Route, LIFT Paratransit, Portland Streetcar, Light Rail, Commuter Rail	24-hour	Monday-Sunday	Portland Metropolitan Region
<b>Clackamas County</b>	Fixed-Route, Deviated Fixed-Route, Shopping bus, Dial-A-Ride	5:30am-9:55pm 5:30am-10:25pm (Saturday) 7am-10pm (Sunday)	Monday-Sunday	City of Sandy and select surrounding areas (including Government Camp and Timberline)
<b>Amtrak</b>	Train Service	One trip daily	Monday - Sunday	Amtrak Empire Builder service between Portland and Bingen. Connects with MATS.
<b>Greyhound/Flix Bus</b>	Fixed-Route Services	Several trips daily	Monday - Sunday	Greyhound I-84 service

## Human Services Transportation Providers

Transportation is an important component for Columbia Gorge Region community-based organizations and their clients. For the Bridges to Health program, transportation related expenses are the biggest expense items they incur to serve their clients. Most local social services or health organizations encourage clients to use CAT services when appropriate and do not provide transportation services directly to clients. A table which outlines the extensive number of human service providers in the Hood River Area is available in Appendix F.

## Other Transportation Providers

There are several other transportation providers who operate within Hood River County. These providers offer a wide range of types of services, everything from taxis to retirement home shuttles to carpool/vanpool options for work trips. The full list can be found in Appendix G.

## Transit Access Amenities, Walking, and Biking

Roughly one-third of the U.S. population cannot drive or does not have access to a private vehicle. This includes youth, seniors, individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, and those who choose not to have access to a car. Transportation access can become difficult for these demographics when community infrastructure does not promote walking, biking, public transit, or wheelchair rolling.

Within Hood River County there is a wide variety of walkability and bike infrastructure. In the more affluent neighborhoods, the walkability tends to be higher because of development and in the less affluent neighborhoods they are lower.

Area within Hood River County	Walk Score	Bike Score
<b>City of Hood River, Downtown</b>	77 (Very walkable – some errands can be accomplished by walking)	53 (Bikeable – some bike infrastructure)
<b>City of Hood River, The Heights</b>	87 (Very Walkable – most errands can be accomplished by walking)	55 (Bikeable – some bike infrastructure)
<b>City of Hood River, Westside</b>	17 (Car dependent – difficult to access essential needs by walking)	37 (Somewhat bikeable – minimal bike infrastructure)
<b>Odell</b>	30 (Car dependent – difficult to access essential needs by walking)	34 (Somewhat bikeable – minimal bike infrastructure)
<b>Parkdale</b>	41 (Car dependent – difficult to access essential needs by walking)	40 (Somewhat bikeable – minimal bike infrastructure)
<b>Cascade Locks</b>	42 (Car dependent – difficult to access essential needs by walking)	36 (Somewhat bikeable – minimal bike infrastructure)

(Walk Score, 2024)

A reoccurring theme during completed surveys, discussions with riders, and stakeholder interviews was that it can be difficult or unsafe to walk or roll to bus stops due to lack of sidewalk infrastructure within Hood River County.

## REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES COORDINATION

Within the past eight to eleven years there has been a large amount of strategic work done to improve regional multi-modal transportation access. Several organizations within the Columbia Gorge Region have identified the need of Multi-Modal transportation options and car-free options to travel between and within the Gorge communities. The various projects, plans and programs working toward enhanced coordination are outlined in Appendix H.

While CAT has tried to have an active voice in regional coordination, staff has been most actively involved with the Gorge Translink Alliance and the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy believing an integrated gorge wide transit approach has the most opportunity to advance the needs of the transit dependent population in the Gorge.

## IDENTIFIED TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES AND SERVICE GAPS

A variety of agencies, community stakeholders and community members offer individual and unique perspectives on transit, challenges, and service gaps. Across all target populations it was clear that frequency of service and evening/weekend service in the Upper Valley and Dial-A-Ride and having no permanent shelter or place to sit at most bus stops are the biggest challenges. Additionally, more information is needed about existing public transportation services in English and Spanish at key sites throughout Hood River County. The below transportation challenges and service gaps were identified through the surveys collected, stakeholder interviews, and advisory committees. To see the detailed survey responses and all data collected, please refer to Appendix A.

Education	Improve information regarding routes, schedules, bikes on buses and rider rules.
	Increase awareness and ridership of the free Student Gorge Pass and Downtown Employee Pass.
	Increase multicultural awareness and bi-lingual staff.
	Riders need to feel safe and secure at bus stops and while riding the bus.
	Increase the comfortability of riders from marginalized communities
Services	Expanded service hours, service area and frequency.
	Expanded options for utilizing transit to access recreational and social opportunities.
	Dependable, efficient local services.
	Access to senior center and educational institutions using transit.
	Other transportation services for vulnerable populations including door through door service.
	Access to transit for City of Hood River Westside community members.
	Multi-modal transportation options (e.g. bike-share, car-share, or shared-ride taxi, and vanpool.)
	Off shift & late night transportation options.
Capital	More identifiable bus stops with permanent shelters, sign, and seating at each bus stop.
	Creation of Mobility Hubs at key locations and transfer points.
	Improve dispatching technology designed for fixed-route and DAR services with mobile booking capabilities.

	Increase stop accessibility for those walking or using a wheelchair (multi-modal system). Make stops safer to access.
	Improve fleet sustainability by increasing number of electric vehicles. Ensure access to dependable gas- or diesel-powered vehicles during transition to electric vehicles.
	Expand CAT facility to accommodate district fleet and larger vehicles. Relocation of park and ride.
Coordination	Continued participation in various Transportation Alliances (Gorge TransLink Alliance, Mt. Hood Transportation Alliance, Gorge Pass)
	Encourage additional Multi-Modal Transportation options within Hood River County.
	Work with employers, tourism organizations, and businesses to encourage car free travel.
	Work with MCEDD to continue to refine and expand the Gorge Transit Connect (Low-Income Fare) program.
	Coordinate local and regional planning processes.

## STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS IDENTIFIED TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES AND SERVICE GAPS

After the transportation challenges and service gaps were identified based on survey responses, advisory committee meetings, discussions with riders, stakeholder meetings, and discussions with staff strategies were created to address those priorities.

### Priority 1: Services - Maintain & Expand Services to Ensure Equity & Meeting Community Needs

Objectives	Strategies	Resource Capacity	Performance Measure
Sustain existing transportation services	Sustain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dial-A-Ride</li> <li>• Columbia Gorge Express</li> <li>• Upper Valley</li> <li>• Hood River City</li> <li>• Gorge-To-Mountain Express</li> <li>• Dog Mountain</li> <li>• Summer Weekend White Salmon</li> </ul>	Administration capacity exists. Financial resources likely available to fund operations. Apply for grants to continue funding Dial-A-Ride, Hood River City, Upper Valley, Columbia Gorge Express, Gorge-To-Mountain Express, Dog Mountain, Weekend White Salmon.	Ridership
Sustain existing transportation programs	Sustain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Free Fare Gorge Pass Program</li> <li>• Downtown Employee Pass Program</li> </ul>	Administration capacity exists.	Gorge Transit passes distributed as part of a program or sold at retail rate

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gorge Transit Pass Program</li> <li>• Mobile Payment Options</li> <li>• Regular reviews of service to ensure target population needs are met</li> </ul>		
Expanded service hours, service area and frequency	Expand service area of Dial-A-Ride to include Upper Valley.	Apply for grants to fund operations. Additional administration or operations staff may be needed.	Ridership and rider stories.
	Extend evening service hours to 10pm to accommodate off-shift workers on Hood River City and Upper Valley Routes.	Apply for grants to fund operations. Additional administration or operations staff may be needed.	Ridership and Gorge Transit Pass sales.
	Increase frequency of Columbia Gorge Express, Hood River City and Upper Valley Routes with a focus on commute times.	Apply for grants to fund operations.	Implementation and ridership.
	Offer Dial-A-Ride to Upper Valley, City of Hood River, and Cascade Locks on weekends.	Apply for grants to fund operations. Additional administration or operations staff may be needed.	Implementation, ridership and rider stories.
	Extend service area to include City of Hood River - Westside	Apply for grants to fund operations.	Implementation and ridership.
	Work with partners to expand commuter services to serve recreational sites (trailheads along I-84 and other attractions)	Apply for grants to fund operations.	Implementation and ridership.
	Expand hours of Columbia Gorge Express to accommodate more commute and evening services.	Apply for grants to fund operations. Additional administration or operations staff may be needed.	Implementation and ridership.

Expanded options for utilizing transit to access recreational and social opportunities.	Add stops at additional recreational sites or social activity centers along I-84 and in Portland.	Apply for grants to fund operations. Additional administration or operations staff may be needed.	Implementation and ridership.
Dependable and efficient local services	Transition the Upper Valley Deviated Fixed Route Service to a fixed-route service.	Apply for grants to fund operations.	Implementation, ridership and rider stories.
	Separate the Hood River City Route into two linear services.	Apply for grants to fund operations.	Implementation, ridership and rider stories.
	Ensure local and intercity services meets the needs of commuters	Administration capacity exists. Financial resources likely available to fund operations.	Ridership and rider stories.
Access to senior center and educational institutions using transit	Add a fixed route stop closer to senior center.	Administration capacity exists. Apply for grants to fund stop infrastructure.	Implementation, ridership and rider stories.
	Add a fixed route stop near educational institutions (i.e. Columbia Gorge Community College, Hood River Valley High School)	Administration capacity exists. Apply for grants to fund stop infrastructure.	Implementation, ridership and rider stories.
Expanded transportation services for vulnerable populations including door through door service.	Resuming participation with NEMT services.	Administration capacity exists.	Rider stories and work with community based organizations to understand effectiveness.
Access to transit for Westside of City of Hood residents	Separate the Hood River City Route into two linear services.	Apply for grants to fund operations.	Implementation and ridership.
Creation of multi-modal transportation options (e.g. bike-share, car-share, or shared-ride taxi, and vanpool.)	Grow Hood River Vanpool Program	Apply for grants to fund operations. Additional administration staff may be needed.	Number of vanpools
	Create mobility hubs at key bus stops	Apply for grants to fund stop infrastructure. Additional administration staff may be needed.	Number of mobility hubs and amenities added.



Off shift and late night transportation options.	Work with Local Taxi companies to spread awareness of services	Administration capacity exists. Financial resources likely exist to fund operations.	Number of services available and demand.
	Extend City of Hood River and Upper Valley Services	Additional Funding needed	Implementation and ridership.

**Priority 2: Capital - Maintain & Expand Capital Assets to Improve Efficiency of Transportation System & Enhance Rider Experience**

Objectives	Strategies	Resource Capacity	Performance Measure
Increase identifiable bus stops with permanent shelters, sign, and seating at each bus stop.	Add bus stops along the Hood River City Route to make it easier to use for those with limited mobility and cannot walk long distances.	Administration capacity exists. Funding for bus infrastructure needed.	Implementation and ridership.
	Add bus stops in Cascade Locks as part of Columbia Gorge Express Services	Administration capacity exists. Funding for bus infrastructure needed.	Implementation and ridership.
	Add bus stops on Upper Valley service	Administration capacity likely exists. Funding for bus infrastructure needed.	Implementation and ridership.
Creation of Mobility Hubs at key locations and transfer points.	Partner with the Port of Hood River to create a robust mobility hub at the waterfront that would serve as a key transfer location.	Administration capacity exists. Funding for consultants and construction of bus infrastructure needed.	Implementation and ridership.
	Redevelop the CAT bus stop to better accommodate larger vehicles and multiple services.	Administration capacity exists. Funding for consultants and construction of bus infrastructure needed.	Implementation and ridership.
Improve access to bus stops for those with mobility challenges. Make stops safer to access.	Relocate the Aquatic Center bus stop.	Administration capacity exists. Funding for bus infrastructure needed.	Implementation and ridership.
	Add a in lane bus stop in front of Rosauer's on 12 <sup>th</sup> street.	Administration capacity exists. Funding for bus infrastructure needed.	Implementation and ridership.

Improve dispatching technology designed for fixed-route and DAR services with mobile booking capabilities.	Procure and source new dispatching software.	Administration capacity and funding exist.	Implementation and reduction of staff time to complete ridership and demand response scheduling.
Improve fleet sustainability by increasing number of electric vehicles.	Procure and source vehicles.	Administration capacity exists and funding has been secured.	Implementation and reduction in fuel costs.
	Modify facility to accommodate electric vehicles and necessary infrastructure.	Funding has been secured. Project management is needed.	Modifications to facility
	Ensure access to dependable gas- or diesel-powered vehicles during transition to electric vehicles.	Administration capacity exists. Funding is needed.	Implementation and reduction in preventative maintenance and repair costs.
Expand CAT facility to accommodate district fleet and larger vehicles. Relocation of park and ride.	Modify facility to accommodate district fleet.	Funding and project management assistance is needed.	Implementation and reduction of minor incidents at the facility.
	Relocation of CAT Park and Ride.	Funding and project management assistance is needed. Additional work is needed to identify a preferred location.	Implementation.
	Redevelop current Park and Ride into bus storage and maintenance facility.	Funding and project management assistance is needed.	Implementation and reduction of minor incidents at the facility.
Fleet is maintained and serviced per manufacturers recommendation.	Regular maintenance is tracked and performed.	Administration capacity and funding exists.	Tracking of fleet out of service.

**Priority 3: Education - Improved Awareness and Understanding of Public Transportation Services**

Objectives	Strategies	Resource Capacity	Performance Measure
Increase awareness and ridership of the free Student Gorge Pass	Work with school and teachers to build transit education program.	Administrative capacity exists.	Ridership
Increase awareness and ridership of the free	Create a more robust marketing initiative.	Administrative capacity and funding exists.	Ridership

Downtown Employee Gorge Pass	Work with downtown employers.		
Improve information regarding routes, programs, schedules, bikes on buses and rider rules.	Update Dial-A-Ride Brochure	Administrative capacity and funding exists.	Ridership and rider stories
	Create large schedule for year-round/seasonal services to be posted at shelters and key locations	Administrative capacity and funding exists.	Ridership and rider stories.
	Improve real-time information at major bus stops	Administrative capacity and funding exists.	Ridership and rider stories.
Increase the comfortability of riders from marginalized communities	Coordinated outreach and needs assessment within different communities to ensure CAT is meeting the needs of target populations.	Administrative capacity and funding exists.	Ridership and rider stories.
	Continue Travel Training program to assist with trip planning, transfers and understanding of the Gorge Transit System and how to use it.	Administrative capacity and funding exists.	Ridership and rider stories.
Increase multicultural awareness and bi-lingual staff.	Continue to recruit bi-lingual and multi-cultural staff.	Administrative capacity and funding exists.	Number of events attended and bilingual staff employed.
Riders need to feel safe and secure at bus stops and while riding the bus.	Provide regular and ongoing training to drivers in safety, emergency procedures, de-escalation, cultural awareness, etc.	Administrative capacity and funding exists.	Reduction of customer issues.

**Priority 4: Coordination - Partner with Local & Regional Organizations to Create Connections & Develop a Transportation Network within the Gorge & Beyond**

Objectives	Strategies	Resource Capacity	Performance Measure
NEMT Coordination	Work with PacificSource and	Administrative capacity exists.	Resumed NEMT services.

	Modivcare staff to improve services.		
Foster partnerships and relationships with local jurisdictions	Continue City of Hood River Downtown Employee Pass	Administrative capacity exists.	Access to transit for Downtown City of Hood River employees.
	Encourage additional Multi-Modal Transportation options within Hood River County	Administrative capacity exists.	More multi-modal transportation options throughout Hood River County.
	Participate in local and regional planning processes.	Administrative capacity exists.	Hood River County Transportation District and transit is included in local and regional planning processes.
Strong partner in various Transportation Alliances (Gorge TransLink Alliance, Mt. Hood Transportation Alliance, Gorge Pass)	Active participation in the different Transportation Alliances meetings and planning activities.	Administrative capacity exists.	Streamlined regional coordination.
	Work with MCEDD to continue to refine and expand the Gorge Transit Connect (Low-Income Fare) program.	Administrative capacity exists.	Number and efficiency of distributed Gorge Pass Transit Passes
Strong civic engagement and connections throughout the County by partnering with employers, tourism organizations, business and community-based organizations.	Active participation in meetings (e.g.) Gorge Car Free) and collaboration on outreach activities.	Administrative capacity exists.	Ridership

## PLAN REVIEW AND ADOPTION

A review of the Hood River County Coordinated Transportation Plans history and adoptions can be found in Appendix I.

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# APPENDICES



# APPENDIX A – 2023 TRANSIT MASTER PLAN SURVEYS

APPENDIX B – TRANSIT MASTER PLAN ENGAGEMENT PLAN FINAL REPORT

APPENDIX C – STIF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES AND FY23-25 PLAN

## APPENDIX D – COLUMBIA AREA TRANSIT FLEET INVENTORY

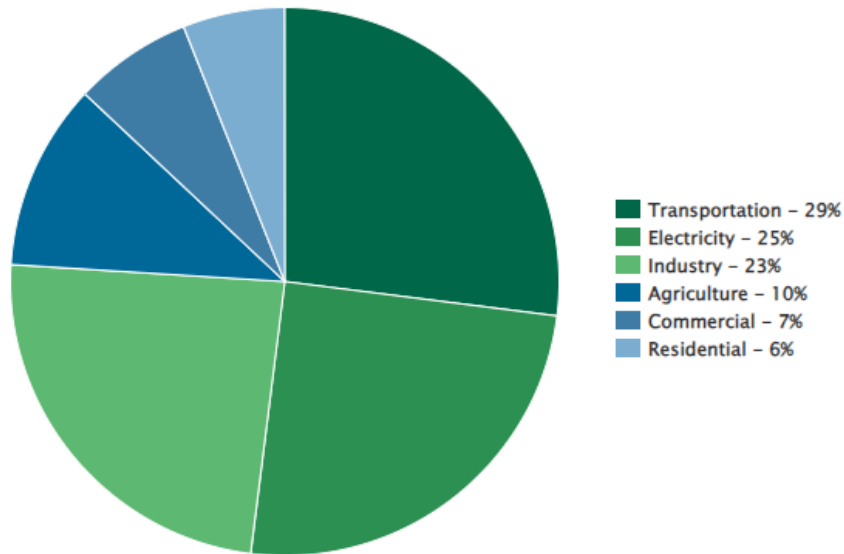
<b>Operator</b>	<b>Model/Year</b>	<b>Mileage Estimate</b>	<b>ADA Accessible</b>	<b>Remaining Useful Life (Years)</b>	<b>Seating Capacity</b>
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	Dodge Grand Caravan 121	45,266	Yes	1	4 or 1/1
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	Ford EV Van 124	7,567	Yes	3	7 or 3/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	Ford E-450 2013 193	276,179	Yes	0	14 or 12/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	Ford E-450 2016 197	171,591	Yes	0	14 or 12/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	Ford E-450 2019 198	219,765	Yes	1	18 or 16/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	Ford E-450 2019 199	193,219	Yes	1	18 or 16/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	Ford E-450 2023 204	43,762	Yes	4	14 or 12/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	Ford E-450 2023 205	47,000	Yes	4	14 or 12/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	Chevrolet Arbo G4500 2014 200	38,733	Yes	0	12/3
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	Chevrolet Arbo G4500 2014 200	35,292	Yes	0	12/3
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	GILLIG 207	390,931	Yes	0	28/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	GILLIG 212	500,980	Yes	0	42/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	GILLIG 213	472,114	Yes	0	42/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	GILLIG 214	510,639	Yes	0	42/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	GILLIG 216	544,122	Yes	0	42/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	GILLIG 217	505,155	Yes	0	28/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	GILLIG 218	510,708	Yes	0	28/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	International 469	306,865	Yes	0	35/2
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	International 470	297,561	Yes	0	35/2

## APPENDIX E – CHANGING CONDITIONS

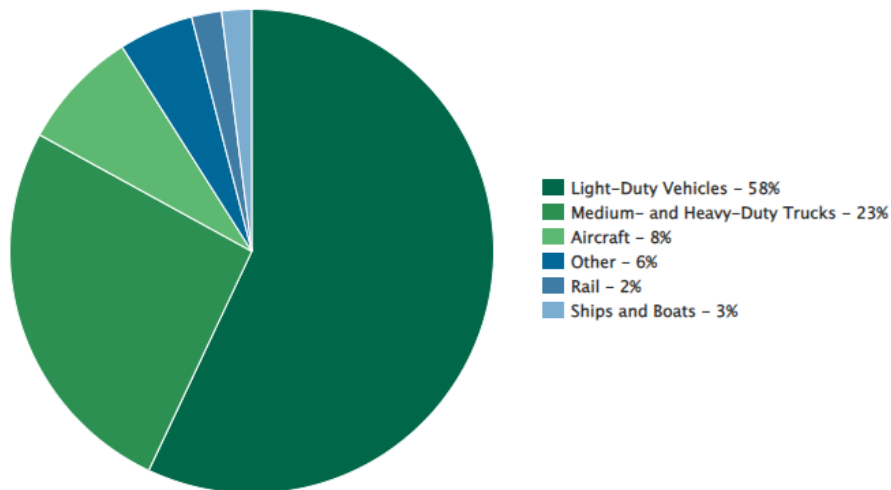
**Regional Climate Change Goals:** Climate Change and the creation of a more environmentally sustainable community continues to be a high-priority item within Hood River County, The Columbia Gorge Region, and more broadly at the State level. Public transportation like many other industries can be impacted by Climate Change through extreme weather events, flooding, rising sea levels, landslides, and increased wildfire risks causing providers to shut down service and aid emergency management operations instead. During the 2020 fire season in Oregon, several public transportation providers throughout the state were asked by officials to help evacuate vulnerable populations in impacted areas. In recent years, this has become more of a trend than an unusual event.

Transportation is the largest contributor (roughly 28%) of total U.S. Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, which is the leading cause of Climate Change. 58% of the GHG emissions caused by transportation is caused by light duty vehicles (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2021). Encouraging people to switch from using private vehicles for personal travel to public transit or telecommuting could have an impact on GHG's. If one person uses public transportation instead of a private vehicle for a 20 mile round trip commute they could reduce their annual CO2 emissions by 4,800 pounds per year (American Public Transportation Association, 2008). Within the Columbia Gorge region, the I-84 corridor is heavily trafficked and connects Gorge communities with Portland. By increasing ridership and services as needed on the Columbia Gorge Express service which operates along the I-84 corridor, CAT has the ability to continue to reduce GHG emissions that normally would be caused by visitor or local private vehicle trips.

## 2021 U.S. GHG Emissions by Sector



## 2021 U.S. Transportation Sector GHG Emissions by Source



(U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2021)

In the 2020 City of Hood River Work Plan, it highlighted three projects which would help manage stormwater runoff, establish a baseline of energy use and emissions for all City owned buildings and equipment, and look at trees on private property. The goal of these projects is to create a more environmentally sustainable community and supports Resolution 2019-16 Climate Change.

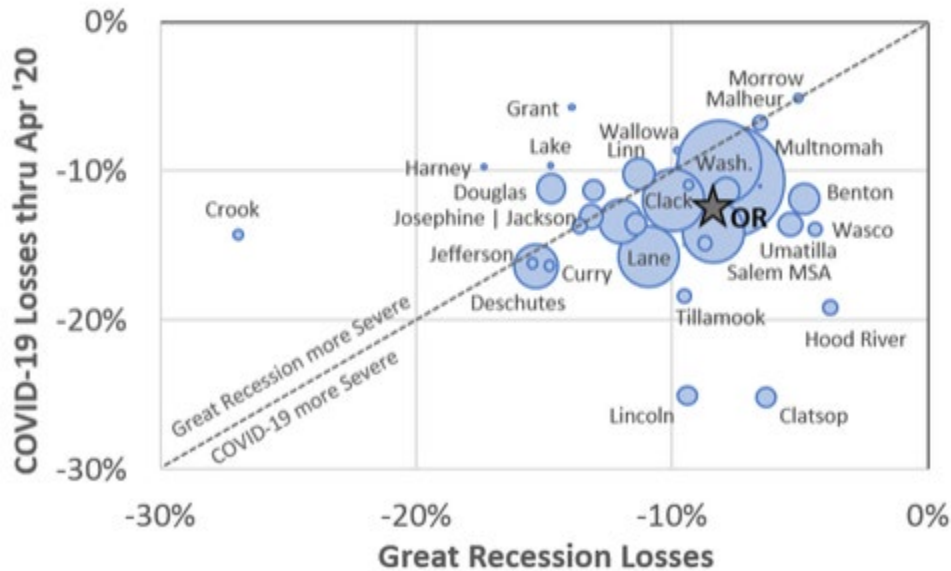
Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) is working to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases admitted through operations and management of the state's transportation system. More specifically, through ODOT's The Oregon Sustainable Transportation Initiative (OSTI), which is a statewide effort to reduce

greenhouse gas and emissions from transportation. The goal being to create healthier, more livable communities and allowing for greater economic opportunity. OSTI is working on this goal by development and implementation of the Statewide Transportation Strategy, which examines the transportation of people and goods and identifies strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (ODOT).

**Generational Change in Transportation Preference:** Younger generations (born after 1982) have grown up during times of economic disturbance and massive technological advances. According to the American Public Transportation Association, history shows that because of technological advances (radio, television, smartphone) during large world events (The Great depression, WWII, Great Recession) major shifts in societal behavior occur. Within the past decade there has been a reduction in the number of miles Americans drive and a shift towards other transportation modes (U.S. PIRG Fund, Frontier Group, 2014). “Millennials & Mobility: Understanding The Millennial Mindset”, states that Millennials are Multi-Modal whether they live in urban or suburban areas and the decision to change their transportation modes are often based on lifestyle and the need to save money. Additionally, the study found that when it comes to public transportation Millennials want more reliable systems, real-time updates, easy access to Wi-Fi and user-friendly transportation experiences. Even though the Columbia Gorge region is rural and has a large population of seniors, Hood River County will need to take into account the change in travel preference of millennials as it continues to grow in population and develop within cities and urban growth areas.

**COVID-19 Global Pandemic:** On January 31, 2020 the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) global health crises. The Governor of Oregon, Kate Brown, declared a State of Emergency on March 8, 2020 due to the threat to public health and safety caused by the virus 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 to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Due to these closures COVID-19 job losses within Hood River County were greater than job losses seen during the Great Recession. The graph below depicts job losses compared with other counties in the State of Oregon.

## COVID-19 Job Losses Larger than Great Recession for Most Counties



Source: Oregon Employment Department, Oregon Office of Economic Analysis

In May and June of 2020, select Oregon counties (including Hood River County) that had met certain criteria were able to open their economies in a phased approach. However, in July there was a concerning increase in the number of new COVID-19 cases reported across the nation and in Oregon. Hood River County, having reached Stage II of reopening, was put on the “watch list” early in July due to several workplace outbreaks.

CAT and other regional transportation agencies stopped operating fixed-routes and only operated the Dial-A-Ride services for essential trips only. Not only did the Executive Order and the pandemic create a sharp downturn in the economy in 2020, but has changed work, travel, and social behavior of community members.

CAT continued to operate Dial-A-Ride services for essential trips only until June 1, 2020 when limited fixed-route services between Portland and the Gorge communities resumed. CAT resumed all public transportation services by Fall of 2020. Ridership had returned to pre-pandemic levels during the summer of 2021. The residual impacts of the pandemic include inflation, higher cost of living, and supply chain difficulties.

The COVID-19 Pandemic highlighted how important it is for transit agencies to have Coordinated Emergency plans and to have strong partnerships with other local agencies and the county’s Emergency Management office. Having those strong partnerships in place during times when there is no emergency allows for quick connections between agencies in times of an emergency. Additionally, when organizations continuously update their Emergency Action Plans it allows for plans to be current and include learnings from previous emergencies (i.e. what to do if there is a COVID-19 workplace outbreak) to ensure that the organization will be more resilient to future emergencies.

State of emergencies affect different populations disproportionately. During the COVID-19 health crisis, seniors, low-income individuals, disabled individuals, homeless, Native Americans, veterans, and farmworkers have experienced difficulties meeting basic needs. Transit agencies were used to help individuals get access



to food or other essential needs by partnering with food banks and other organizations. Equity is an important issue during times of emergencies and consistently needs to be advocated for.

**Safety:** Consistent and effective communication regarding safety within the community and while using public transportation is key. During the current climate, riders, and the community at large need to be reassured that it is safe to use public transportation. Originally when the COVID-19 pandemic began, people greatly reduced the number of trips they took by using public transit for fear of contracting the virus. In the months that have followed current studies show that public transportation systems which have put in place COVID-19 mitigation measures (i.e. required masks to be worn, reduced capacity, etc.) are not “super spreaders”.

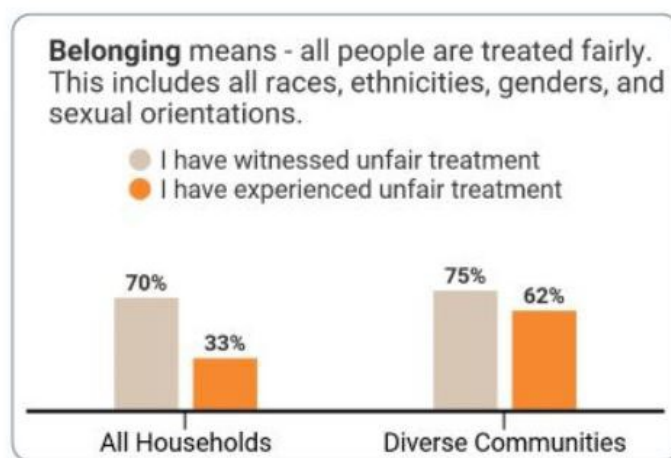
Riders also need to be reassured that they will be safe from individuals on drugs and ICE when using public transit. Systemic racism and discrimination have caused minority groups to be cautious and untrusting of public transit for fear of deportation and other safety concerns. Constant ongoing communication showing the public how transit agencies are operating to keep them safe is needed to rebuild ridership.

The months long national and international police brutality protests which were sparked by the death of George Floyd by police, have caused a collective recognition that racism remains prevalent in today’s society. The renewed commitment by former Oregon Governor, Kate Brown, to serve the most vulnerable populations, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, has brought new resources and more focused attention to chronic inequities in the state. The Governor created a Racial Justice Council in July 2020 and developed an “Equity in Response and Recovery” plan to center public health, education, and economic support activities on these vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and after.

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 Hood River County, the representative population sample indicated that 39% of county residents have had personal experience with unfair treatment because of discrimination and 67.4% 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.



The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated racial tensions nationwide. In Hood River County the virus has disproportionately affected migrant workers, the majority of whom are Hispanic/Latino. This has also stoked more incidents of discrimination within the broader Hood River County community, as reported by public health practitioners and by community leaders.

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.”

## APPENDIX F – HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS

Transportation Provider	Service Type	Hours	Days	Service Area
<b>PacificSource, CCO Contracts with Logisticare, a Non Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) Brokerage</b>	Non-Emergent Medical Transportation (NEMT) for eligible clients.	7am-5pm	Monday-Friday	Hood River, Wasco counties.
<b>The Next Door, Inc</b>	Client Transportation (Klahre House Students)	As needed	As needed	Hood River and Wasco Counties
<b>Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage</b>	Reimbursement program for client public or private transportation expenses.	As needed	As needed	Hood River and Wasco Counties (plus 11 other counties in Eastern Oregon)
<b>Mid-Columbia Center for Living</b>	Client transportation for the Supported Employment program and other programs.	As needed	As needed	Hood River, Sherman, and Wasco Counties
<b>Hood River Adult Center (Meals on Wheels)</b>	Delivers cooked meals to those who are over 60 and have diverse abilities.	9AM-5PM	Monday-Friday	Hood River County
<b>Veterans Administration</b>	Serves eligible veterans only. Reimbursement and beneficiary travel program for Medical transportation expenses. Medical transportation.	As needed	As needed	Columbia Gorge Region and Portland
<b>Bridges to Health</b>	Reimbursement program for public or private transportation expenses.	As needed	As needed	Hood River and Wasco Counties
<b>Disabled American Veterans (DAV)</b>	Veterans transportation to Portland for Medical Care. Fixed-Route only. Not ADA accessible.	As needed	Depends on driver ability	Columbia Gorge Region and Portland

## APPENDIX G – OTHER TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS

Transportation Provider	Service Type	Hours	Days	Service Area
<b>The Dalles Explorer (Blue Bus)</b>	Partnership of The Dalles Chamber of Commerce, The Dalles Dam Visitor Center, Grayline of Portland – Visitor focused seasonal	Varies	Monday-Friday, Summer only	Hood River to The Dalles and The Dalles Dam
<b>Gorge Taxi</b>	Taxi with door to door service	Varies	Monday - Sunday	Hood River County, Columbia River Gorge and Surrounding Areas
<b>Hood River Pedicab &amp; Taxi</b>	Taxi with door to door service	Varies	Monday-Sunday	City of Hood River and Portland
<b>Providence Brookside Manor</b>	Client transportation	As scheduled/needed	As scheduled/needed	City of Hood River
<b>Providence Down Manor</b>	Client transportation	As scheduled/needed	As scheduled/needed	City of Hood River
<b>Hawks Ridge Senior Living</b>	Client transportation	As scheduled/needed	As scheduled/needed	City of Hood River
<b>Parkhurst Place</b>	Client transportation	As scheduled/needed	As scheduled/needed	City of Hood River
<b>Greyhound (Flix Bus)</b>	Bus – Fixed-Route	By schedule	Monday - Sunday	I-84 Corridor
<b>Drive Less Connect</b>	Carpool/ Ride share	As arranged	As Arranged	State of Oregon (ODOT)
<b>Commute with Enterprise</b>	Vanpool	As arranged	As arranged	City of Hood River, City of The Dalles, and Portland Metro
<b>Get There Oregon</b>	Carpool/Ride Share/Trip Planner – Free to Participate	As arranged	As arranged	State of Oregon (ODOT)

## APPENDIX H – REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION

### ODOT's Transportation Options

ODOT's Transportation Options (TO) program is the implementation of the Oregon Transportation Options Plan. The goals of the plan include:

- manage demand across the transportation system,
- educate students and the public on travel options and how to safely use them,
- connecting veterans, low-income individuals, communities of color, and other vulnerable populations with ways to travel to and from work or school, and
- supporting vanpooling and more.

Through the TO users are connected to different transportation choices, allowing them to bike, walk, take transit, drive, share rides, and telecommute. Capital infrastructure or service investments (sidewalks, bike lanes, and transit service) are not included within this program. TO provides information and resources to understand and use the different travel options available (ODOT). By investing in different transportation options, the community in general can reduce costs, improve health, mitigate congestion, and increase safety.

ODOT is the leader of many statewide efforts to support and encourage transportation options, but local partners implement the programs. It is up to the local partners to ensure the program meets the needs of the population, geography, transit services, and infrastructure available. MCEDD and Commute Options support the TO programs located within Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman Counties.

### Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance

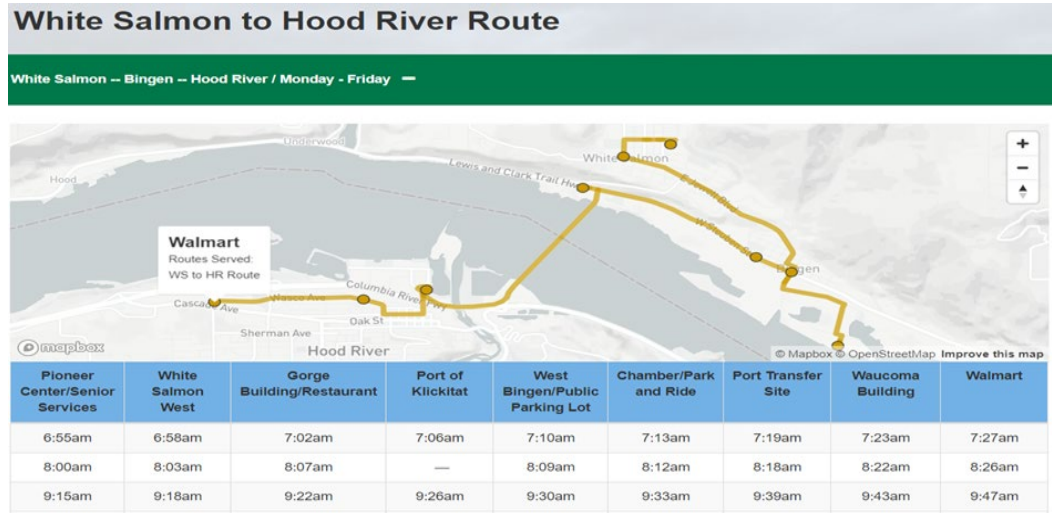
The Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance, a non-profit organization made up of businesses and organizations focuses on how tourism can positively impact local communities while protecting natural resources. One of their six focuses for the next 15 years is for a multi-modal “integrated region-wide transportation system which allows visitors to come, travel, explore, and connect – all without needing a car” (Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance). To do this they collaborate and connect public and private transportation providers to help visitors explore the Gorge by foot, bike, bus, or train through the Columbia Gorge Car Free ([www.columbiagorgecarfree.com](http://www.columbiagorgecarfree.com)) website.

### The Gorge TransLink Alliance

Columbia Area transit is an active participant of the Gorge TransLink Alliance. This is an alliance between the transportation providers of Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Klickitat, and Skamania Counties and is facilitated by MCEDD's Mobility Manager. The Mobility Manager works with the Alliance members and other partners to consider local and regional transportation services, service gaps, costs, funding needs, available funding sources, and appropriate technology enhancements. Additionally, this individual conducts community outreach and identifies collaboration and coordination opportunities between potential partners. The five transportation providers meet quarterly to address regional transportation concerns. The Mobility Manager position is grant funded and is supported by Gorge TransLink members through Agency Resolutions, memos of understanding, match, and in-kind assistance.

**Projects completed:**

**GorgeTransLink.com Website Redevelopment:** In 2019, the Gorge TransLink website was launched ([www.gorgetranslink.com](http://www.gorgetranslink.com)). This new website is rider-focused with a trip planner, interactive regional route map, timetables, and interactive local maps for each Alliance member. The website helps riders understand bus routes, schedules, payment options, and navigate transfers between multiple providers.



The GorgeTransLink.com website won a National Association for Development Organization award for this innovative project.

**Everybody Rides/ ¡Todos Arriba! Marketing Campaign:** The goal of the Everybody Rides/ ¡Todos Arriba! Marketing Campaign was to increase awareness of public transportation resources throughout the Columbia Gorge Region. This campaign received a National Association of Development Organizations Impact Award and the Transportation Options Group of Oregon Best Program of the Year award. It was funded by grants from the Columbia Gorge Health Council and ODOT. The following was achieved through this project:

- Campaign branding was created, including a logo and style guide for printed materials and social media.
- Stylized and easy to read regional transportation system map.
- Six fun videos featuring local organizations and character of the diverse five counties. Videos were in English and Spanish.
- English and Spanish rack cards explaining regional transportation services available
- Developed Gorge TransLink accounts and content on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Snap Chat in English and Spanish.
- Spanish Language Radio programming (1 and 2 hour programs), advertising, and live radio interviews.
- Conducted a community challenge with local prizes awarded.

Outreach Metrics	
Video (total views)	103,354

Facebook Total Reach (unique users)	134,735
Page Viral Reach (page shared with others)	86,210
Display Ads (total impressions)	384,378
Display Ads (Engagements - Spanish 51, English 49%)	681

**The 4-Agency Gorge Transit Pass Program: On July 1, 2021** CAT, Mt. Adams Transportation Service, Skamania County Transit and The Link partnered together to implement the 4-Agency Gorge Transit Pass. This allows the rider unlimited rides on all provider fixed route services.

**Adoption of a Mobile Fare Application:** By 2021 CAT, Mt. Adams Transportation Service, Skamania County Transit and The Link had all adopted a Mobile Fare Application. All providers use Token Transit as part of the Gorge Pass Program.

## Gorge Transit Strategy

The Gorge Regional Transit Strategy, which was led by Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) and created recommendations from existing transportation plans to establish a foundation for a comprehensive transit strategy which would serve the bi-state, 5-county (including Hood River County), MCEDD region. This project was funded through ODOT’S Statewide Transportation Improvement Intercommunity Discretionary Fund. The overall goal being to address regional challenges (workforces mobility, affordable housing, tourism and outdoor recreation, traffic congestion and safety, access to higher education, jobs, social, medical, recreational) through improved transportation options (Mid-Columbia Economic Development District).

The Gorge Transit Strategy consisted of two phases:

- Phase 1: Review of existing transportation plan recommendations to create a foundation for a comprehensive transit strategy for the MCEDD region.
- Phase 2: Implementation strategy which will include additional data analysis, ridership forecasts, financial planning, and operational assessment.

This strategy was adopted by the MCEDD Board in July 2023. In 2023 MCEDD received grants from ODOT and WSDOT to put the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy’s recommendations into action, focusing on the operational strategies with the goal of improving coordination of the regional transit system. This Strategy Implementation project will also engage both policy makers and the Gorge community in outreach activities, culminating in a large community event and building community and policymaker support for public transportation. All Gorge Transit Regional Materials can be found at <https://gorgetranslink.com/gorge-transit-strategy/>.

## Transportation Innovations Through Collective Impact

The Transportation Innovations Through Collective Impact project was funded through a grant from Providence Health & Services, and PacificSource Community Solutions (Coordinated Care organization of the Columbia Gorge Region) to engage transportation providers and health and wellness organizations in a collaborative process to identify key regional transportation gaps and innovative transportation solutions. Four group sessions facilitated by the National Policy Consensus Center and spread over five months discussed improved mobility access to essential services that would help increase the quality of life for vulnerable populations. The group agreed that initiatives should focus on those populations not eligible for transportation subsidies and/or not covered for non-medical ‘wellness’ destinations.

The two graphs below list the mobility barriers identified and the and prioritized strategies.

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

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

## **Columbia Gorge Health Council’s 2019 Community Health Assessment**

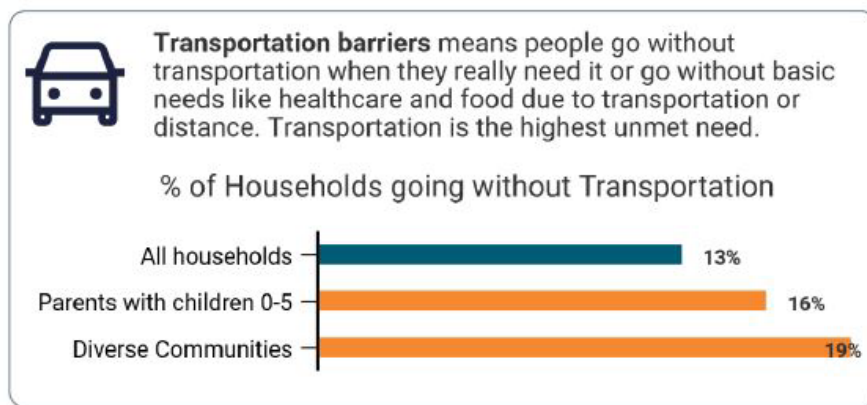
The Columbia Gorge Health Council (CGHC) is a 501 (c)3 non-profit focused on the health and wellness of the Medicaid population in Hood River and Wasco Counties. CGHC works in partnership with the regional Coordinated Care Organization, PacificSource Community Solutions (Columbia Gorge Region), local health care leaders, human service agencies, providers, and community members to serve the needs of the low-income individuals and other vulnerable populations. The CGHC works with multiple regional organizations to every three years to complete a regional Community Health Assessment (CHA). The 2019 CHA was the third collaborative iteration of the assessment within the Columbia Gorge Region (Klickitat, Skamania, Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, and Wheeler counties). There has not been an additional Community Health Assessment completed since 2019.



Most of the data collected from the community was done through the consumer survey (mailed and hand-fielded surveys) and helped the region gain a common understanding of the health needs. This broad definition of health includes food, housing, transportation, sense of community, and access in addition to physical, dental, and mental health. The purpose of the Community Health Assessment was to:

1. Provide a statistically valid estimate of health and health needs by having a representative population sample and mail-based survey.
2. Supplement mailed surveys with hand-fielded surveys targeted toward underrepresented communities whose residents may change address often or do not have a traditional mailing address.

The 2019 CHA found that transportation is the highest unmet need in the Columbia Gorge Region. The combined Survey responses showed that a lack of transportation reduced access to health care, food, childcare, social activities, and exercise. Of low-income households, 26% reported going without transportation, which is an increase of 4.3% from the 2016 update.



**10% of Households said**



**6% of Households said**



**8% of Households said**



Transportation issues were not experienced equally among different income groups. The 2019 Community Health Assessment found that a household of four 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 (Columbia Gorge Health Council, 2019). Below are selected answers from the CHA based on community members location of residence. These answers show the variety of needs throughout Hood River County.

<b>Selected answer to question</b>	<b>Hood River County</b>	<b>Cascade Locks, Dee, Parkdale</b>	<b>HR Westside</b>	<b>HR Downtown &amp; The Heights</b>	<b>Odell, Mid-Valley, Pine Grove</b>
Went without transportation due to lack of money.	<b>11.5%</b>	13.9%	5.8%	16.4%	6.0%
I have housing of my own, but I am worried about losing it.	<b>9.3%</b>	20.3%	3.8%	9.4%	4.0%
Went without food or meals due to lack of money	<b>8.3%</b>	13.9%	2.6%	8.3%	10.1%
Went without food or meals because of no transportation or the distance too far.	<b>6.9%</b>	9.7%	5.1%	8.0%	2.0%
Went without healthcare because of no transportation or the distance too far.	<b>5.2%</b>	8.3%	5.1%	4.3%	2.0%
Went without childcare because of no transportation or the distance too far.	<b>1.8%</b>	1.4%	2.6%	0%	4.0%
Went without social activities because of no transportation or the distance too far.	<b>13.2%</b>	20.7%	6.4%	15%	8.1%
Went without exercise or sports because of no transportation or the distance too far.	<b>9.2%</b>	19.3%	3.8%	6.0%	10.1%

## Coordinated Care Organizations and Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

A Coordinated Care Organization is defined as 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). Hood River County’s CCO is PacificSource. As a CCO PacificSource focuses on prevention and help people manage chronic conditions to reduce unnecessary emergency room visits and support healthy lifestyles. In 2019, the Oregon Health Authority enacted new requirements to reduce the cost of Oregon’s Medicaid program and improve medical care of OHP members. This has become known as CCO 2.0.

As part of these new requirements, CCO’s (PacificSource) must focus on Governor Brown’s four priority areas (improve behavioral health system, increase value and pay for performance, focus on social determinants of health, and maintain sustainable cost growth) through January 1, 2024. Additionally, new requirements were also put in place for contracted transportation brokerages who setup non-emergency medical transportation

(Medicaid benefit) and the direct transportation providers. Modivcare is the current transportation brokerage in the Gorge.

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.

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.

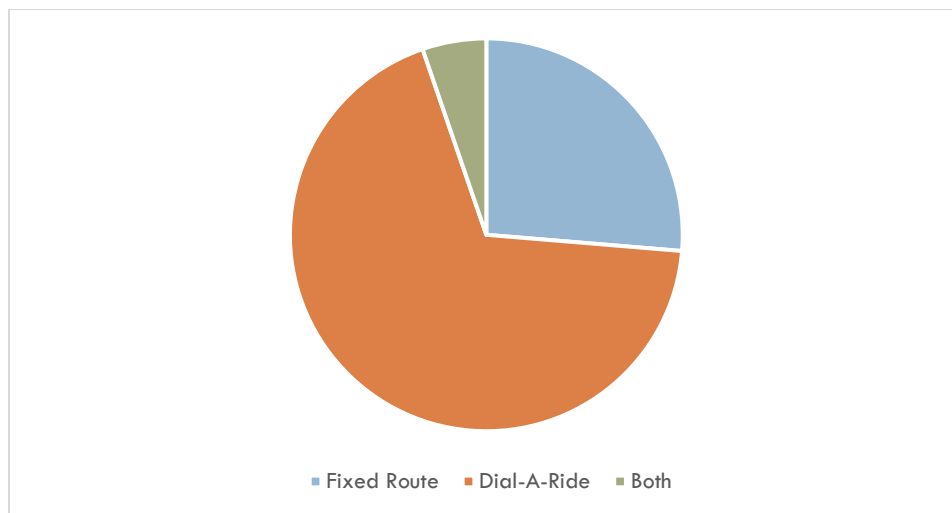
A more recent study published by the Eno Center for Transportation in 2020 also points to the need for coordination between NEMT, the second largest publicly funded transportation program after public transit. Medicaid NEMT costs were estimated at \$3 billion in 2014, which are less than 1 percent of total Medicaid costs, but equal to about 25 percent of total federal transit expenditures that year (Eno Center for Transportation, 2020). This study also highlights the need for coordination between the largest subsidized transportation programs in the US: Public Transit, Medicaid NEMT, and VA transportation.

In the short-term, the CAT and other public transportation providers can 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. Additionally, CAT and The Link Public Transit can work with the brokerage to identify strategies for better coordination and support for public transportation services.

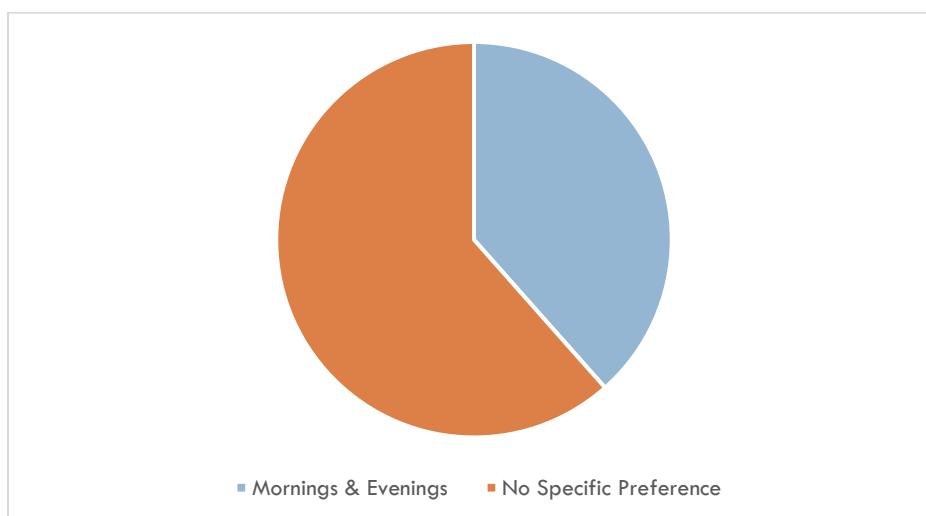
## APPENDIX I – OTHER OUTREACH CONDUCTED

A small amount of targeted outreach was conducted with Upper Valley riders and residents. CAT staff tabled at the Mid-Valley Market and conducted on-board rider surveys on the Upper Valley service for a day. Additional outreach will need to be completed to understand appropriate service times for when the Upper Valley deviated fixed route service is transitioned into a fixed route per the 2023 Transit Master plan.

Participants were asked if the Upper Valley Deviated fixed route was separated into a fixed route and Dial-A-Ride service, which service would they utilize most. The majority of residents opted towards the Dial-A-Ride service, but several did note that if the fixed route service operated at convenient times they would use it more often. Those who chose Dial-A-Ride most stated they would use the service to get to and from medical appointments.



For participants who expressed interest in the fixed route service, there was a small majority of individuals wanting to use the service for commuting over those with no specific preference.



## APPENDIX J – OVERVIEW OF COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN ADOPTIONS

### **2007-2010 Coordinated Transportation Plan Adoption**

The first draft of this coordinated transportation plan was presented to the Hood River County Special Transportation Fund committee on January 8, 2007 and to the Hood River Transportation District Board of Directors on January 10, 2007. It was discussed at both 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.

### **2009-2012 Coordinated Transportation Plan Update**

Under contract with Association of Oregon Counties, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District began updating the plan for 2009-2012. A draft was presented to the Hood River County Special Transportation Fund committee in January and March 2009 and to the Hood River Transportation District Board in February 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 Hood River County Special Transportation Fund committee in March 2009 and by the Hood River Transportation District Board on April 8, 2009.

### **2016-2019 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 the Hood River County Special Transportation Fund committee on August 31, 2016 and October 6, 2016 and to the Hood River Transportation District Board on October 12, 2016. The draft plan was also posted on MCEDD's website (<http://www.mcedd.org>) for public review between August and September 2016. Stakeholders were encouraged to provide feedback. The final plan was approved by the Hood River County Special Transportation Fund committee on October 6, 2016 and by the Hood River Transportation District Board on October 12, 2016.

### **2020-2023 Coordinated Transportation Plan Update**

Hood River County Transportation District updated the plan for 2020-2023. A draft was distributed to the Hood River County Transportation District Transportation Advisory Committee and Board of Directors on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The draft plan was posted to the Columbia Area Transit website October 2020 through November 2020 for public review. The final plan was approved by the Hood River County Transportation District Board of Directors on November 18, 2020.

### **2024-2027 Coordinated Transportation Plan Update**

Hood River County Transportation District updated the plan for 2024-2027. A draft was distributed to the Hood River County Transportation District STIF Advisory Committee and Board of Directors on March 21, 2024. The draft plan was posted to the Columbia Area Transit website March 2024 through April 2024 for public review. The final plan was approved by the Hood River County Transportation District Board of Directors on April 17, 2024.

### **Future Plan Reviews:**

This plan is designed to be reviewed and updated at least once every three years. It should be reviewed and updated by 2027/28.