

Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee

The Dalles Transit Center, 802 Chenoweth Loop Road, The Dalles

Via Zoom (see bottom of agenda)

Tuesday, January 18th, 2022

9:00 - 10:30 am (may end by 10:00)

Topic	Time	Item
Call to Order	9:05	
Minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Oct. 28th 2021</i>	9:05 – 5 minutes	Approve
State Grant Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Recommendation to Wasco Co. to apply for grant</i>	9:10 – 20 minutes	Information / Approve
Staff Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Update on Sara's work as mobility manager</i>• <i>Gorge Pass Updates</i>• <i>Transit Development Plan Survey Open</i>	9:30 – 20 minutes	Information / Discussion
Link Report	9:50 – 10 minutes	Information

Zoom Instructions

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85036434694?pwd=TTI2Ukc3bDkyR21YM29ZcGc3QTBCdz09>

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**WASCO COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, Thursday, October 28, 2021
MCEDD CONFERENCE ROOM & ZOOM TELECONFERENCE**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Lee Bryant (Senior), Louise Sargent (Chair for meeting- Senior rep), Jim Holycross, Maria Pena, Rita Rathkey (Opportunity Connections), Jesus Mendoza (Link Operations Manager).

STAFF: Kate Drennan (Deputy Director Transportation), Sara Crook (Mobility Travel Trainer), Kathy Fitzgerald (MCEDD Mobility Manager), Jill Brandt (Administrative Assistant)

GUESTS: Susie Wright (Kittleson), Amy Griffith (Kittleson), Krista Purser (Kittelson), Theresa Conley(ODOT)

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Kate Drennan called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. A quorum was present. A roundtable of introductions took place.

MINUTES

Jim Holycross motioned to approve the minutes of July 29, 2021 as presented. Louise Sargent seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Kate opened this topic continuing from the previous committee meeting overview presentation of the Wasco Transit Development Plan. The Plan's timeline was outlined in phases. The first phase in the 20-year long-range plan involves an in-depth look at The Link's services today. Planning considerations include: projected population growth, employment growth, population demographics, and how existing services currently and can grow to meet the needs of the region.

The project consultants from Kittelson & Associates are here today to offer their draft ideas on how to improve and grow the system over the next 20 years. The assessment addresses the needs that have been identified as well as some alternate suggestions for improvements. Kate added that these materials will be sent out to the group after the meeting.

Susie Wright gave a brief introduction of her agency's role in the Wasco Transit Development Plan contract, which is currently at the half-way point. The contract began in the spring with an evaluation stage that looked at the existing transit services in order to plan out what will be needed to support a future vision. The information gathering period identified needs through existing planning documents that show projected population growth, as well as through online and onboard surveys collecting rider feedback. The consultants have also engaged in direct stakeholder outreach (public agencies). Both identified needs and ideas on how to improve efficiency have been incorporated into the options that are brought before this committee today for public review and any additional feedback.

The overall conclusion for the best next steps forward is to evolve the current system to operate more traditionally with fixed-route service, and transition away from the relying on deviations to the fixed route. Consultants also recommend shifting able-bodied riders away from relying on

dial-a-ride services toward utilizing fixed routes. To make this transition successfully will entail incorporating changes to every aspect of the existing public transit system. Re-training riders to expect and use fixed route service requires increasing the frequency of service to make riding feasible and attractive, adding and adjusting stops to make the fixed route service convenient, extending service hours and weekend service, adding more stops and stop amenities, and new comfortable buses- which she noted that The Link already has done with the purchase of five new buses this summer.

Long range planning to support this public transit system in the future will include funding options for fleet upkeep, turnover, and new purchases in future; updated tools and technology to share schedules and information; education and marketing for services – how to use the transit system. All of these items are documented in the Needs memo.

Susie wrapped up her narrative with a quick summary of the existing and foreseeable elements that were considered and incorporated into today's presentation as goals for this Plan. Factors the team will use to evaluate the alternatives include: customer focused services, enhancements to connectivity, coordination, economic sustainability, and opportunities to develop alternatives. Examining trends has shown that there is an increasing percentage of transit population in rural areas, that populations in cities are growing and that transit for daily needs as well as trips is growing. Research shows that there are a number of transit markets that are developing alternatives to address these needs. The evaluation framework included consideration of the following: what does the alternative do for riders? How many people will be served? Expanding geographic coverage requires an understanding of how many people live within a quarter mile of the routes? Do the routes provide access to connecting services?

Amy Griffith began her presentation showing the maps of each proposed alternative route on screen. First up onscreen was the map of The Link's existing fixed routes, with the deviated area allowances marked. Amy noted that today's services also include an inner city express, van pools and demand-response (dial a ride). Amy reiterated that future planning begins using the existing services as the base point, then evolving and fine tuning. Six different updates to existing routes are being proposed. Within The Dalles, currently existing red and blue routes are have a frequency between about 30-60 minutes. Adding counterclockwise loops on the Blue Route would both increase stop frequency and reduce out of direction travel. These alternatives will increase the number and coverage of stops available, the first step towards building riders' expectations for pick- up at route stops rather than the on-demand calls. There are eight stops on the blue line today, and the proposal recommends adding thirteen more stops to maintain an hour total run time. This will provide more service to neighborhoods for people to take from home without having to request deviation.

The next route option put up onscreen was a clockwise version of the current blue line with additional proposed stops. Amy noted that this option would require an additional bus. Amy noted that today, riders have to go all the way around the loop to access a previous stop on the route. This change allows for more direct travel.

The next option shown was a figure eight loop. This alternative route could be implemented using the existing number of buses. This option would cut out travel in the wrong direction; it

would keep all of the stops that the blue line provides today and would give additional access to the Washington connection with Mt. Adams Transportation System.

Another option shown was an out-and-back route that provides access to care facilities, grocery stores, the college, medical center. This option was proposed with a one-hour run time for a full out-and-back trip. This would provide consistent coverage along the entire line in The Dalles and connect to the shuttle services to South County and the Inner City express that connects The Dalles to Hood River.

The next option shown was a modified red route changed to a full out-and-back direct route. This option has added stops to access neighborhoods in east and west The Dalles and has a 73-minute run time. Amy noted that to maintain the frequency of service that exists today, this option would require a second bus.

The next out-and-back route option that would keep existing services and provide alternating stops at the Port and Water's Edge area was put up on the screen. This alternative would provide thorough access in The Dalles. Susie added that these alternatives recognize that the coverage to the Port area is important for both health center access and the temporary housing area located out there. The loop that currently exists is inconvenient for riders if their destination is in the opposite direction where the bus is traveling. Proposed alternatives include changing the Blue route to run in both directions is one alternative, or service can be modified so that every other trip goes through the Port area and to Chenoweth. Two buses will be needed to service this route and it will take 45 minutes. This option would give access to the Services at the Port and Chenoweth area every hour and a half. This option was created as a way to increase convenience for riders.

Amy noted that the ridership data used was from May 2019 to May 2020. Because of Covid, the College was not open for in person classes at that time, so the data does not give a good baseline for what will be needed to provide convenient and timely transportation to students. The proposed options have taken off of the red routes because it is already a long route. Susie added that the proposed red route will get folks from the DMV to connect to every destination except the college. The blue route will service the college. The high number of dial a ride calls from the Lone Pine area require a transfer to get to most places in town. These alternatives try to maximize the number of folks getting to destinations without transfers, they also try to reduce the number of deviations. By serving the College with the Blue Route and supplementing the Blue Route with alternating trips that go directly to Hood River, inner city trips to The Dalles going to college can reduce transfers for students trying to get to Hood River.

Kate added that taking the Sufret Park stop off of the proposed blue route is a result of feedback from the Link drivers. Riders who live in Lone Pine between the two stops typically go west to pick up the bus at the DMV (west). Our red route drivers reported that they have never picked up a rider at Sufret Park. Therefore, the proposed red line keeps the DMV site as the most eastern stop and beginning of the loop.

The next alternative put up onscreen illustrated a new out-and-back route that travels via 10th Street and would provide services to West side neighborhoods. This route is not too far from

groceries and pharmacies. While it is not as close as the red and blue routes, it does provide access to the high school and to occupational services. This whole route is proposed to take 40 minutes, providing more direct and frequent service.

Another option offered is for a 30-minute route that will access 6th and 7th Streets that will give direct access to pharmacies and groceries. This route is within range of the High school, Veterans' Services, downtown and shopping.

The next alternatives shown onscreen paired the red line out and back with the blue line. Today's service operating two blue lines and one Red line. If the existing blue route is converted to a figure 8, it will allow for short routes with much quicker connections. The out-and-back provides faster times. Combining out-and-back with the loops will provide quick turnarounds. The next planning phase will explore which pairing options provide the best service.

Discussion: Jim Holycross asked if there was a lot of traffic from the riverboat cruises. Amy replied that this was not shown in the trip data. Kate explained that the Cruise company runs their own bus service from the boats. Jesus added servicing these boats was classified as a charter service and not a public transit service at all. Sara Crook added that generally folks riding the tour buses are not mobile enough to utilize public transit.

Lee Bryant added that Bi Mart is no longer a pharmacy stop.

Jesus Mendoza asked about the ability to deviate off of these proposed fixed routes, adding that The Link's drivers care about getting to stops on time. Susie replied that these alternatives add more stops in order to reduce number of deviations. As the service exists right now, all riders use the deviated stop. Service with more direct trips will ultimately reduce number of deviations allowed, and the new routes intentionally have less time built in for deviations. Currently drivers are given the ability to do two deviations per run, and the rest of The Link's service is more traditional dial a ride. In the evolution to get more fixed routes and less dial a ride, buffers will need to be drawn for dispatch around the boundaries. Kate added that the expected speed of the bus, calculated with the stops and time at the stops is calculated into the average 13 mile per hour time for these proposed routes.

The next options to be presented were the broader south county regional routes. Routes to Maupin with stops in Dufur and Tygh Valley were put up onscreen. The service to Madras proposed route was also put up on the screen. This option is designed to link larger regional areas, providing connections to Bend and central Oregon as well as communities along the way.

Re-focusing on The Dalles itself, Amy then showed a proposed inner city express with two to four or five stops in the city that would provide improved service. This route would stop at the Transit Center, then downtown at the Veterans Center, and at the Columbia Medical center. It would then go through Dufur, stopping at the post office and the school, next stopping in Tygh valley at one place, then onward to the existing three stops in Maupin and adding a fourth stop at the Bridge. There are four proposed stops in Madras that will connect to other lines, to the Health Department, the High school, and the grocery markets in the area. This route is proposed to run

twice per day, two days per week. It is not proposed as a daily service, but more as a framework for access to lifeline service access destinations in the area. The second alternative for this route goes only to Maupin, two days per week, twice a day. This one is faster overall route time because the run does not go as far. Time is 160 minutes for this proposed route. The longer Madras ride is projected as 320 minutes per route – a six- hour trip.

The next slide shown onscreen was a table of the evaluation criteria that were used. Criteria included: who is served, the quarter mile area around each stop, the overlap in service areas-including packages of alternatives to use these overlaps, calculated operating costs associated with providing additional buses as well as extended service hours. While the route to Maupin was allotted more time than the current service allows, it will replace the current shuttle service with a more regular route.

Susie added that the group is also looking at costs that will keep amount of service hours equal to today but give increased service to riders. Some of the refinements to routes that have been suggested do not involve any budget increase. The consultants will be looking at the costs to add expanded hours, earlier and later service, and moving to seven days per week. She explained that Kittleson is looking at all costs and scenarios, and calculating the funding needed to support each option. Kate requested any last thoughts from the group on this information presented.

Discussion: Jesus commented that the expanded hours will be beneficial. Sara Crook added that the option for students to go directly from Hood River to the College is great. Jim Holycross liked that Maupin services were included and expanded. Maria asked about future plans to advertise. Susie responded that the plan would include recommendations and costs for the increase of advertising and promotion of services. She added that the group will continue to solicit public input once the alternatives memo is done and will be promoting to the community with an online event. She acknowledged that the online opportunity for feedback is important. Susie added that summaries of all work to date will be posted on the website. She also added that the online event will be translated. Louise also voiced her support for the improved Maupin routes. She asked if there was any data on ridership needs down to Madras. Louise asked if anyone has talked to transport providers in Madras and Bend to see about meeting halfway. Amy replied that the funding source opportunities for this southern route come from a different pot of money. Sara asked if there is a greyhound route from Madras to the Gorge, adding that this could be a potential lifeline service to grow. Louise noted that there needs to be sufficient money to “not put ourselves underground.”

STAFF UPDATES

Kate introduced Sara Crook, the newly hired Travel Trainer. Her position was created with a grant within the STIF grant cycle. Sara’s time is split between Wasco and Hood River County transit providers. Sara will work with the Transit Connect program that offers community-based organizations free passes to low-income folks. Up until now, transit providers have not been able to provide support to help people learn how to use the bus system, use the passes. Sara gave a brief personal background to the group.

Kate then gave a STIF plan project update to the committee. The new cycle began July 1st with ongoing fixed route and dial a ride services carried over into the new funding cycle. Work is focused on how to make The Link's service more efficient to better serve people. Strategies are being developed that will get people to use fixed route service rather than demanding dial a ride service. The mobility grant is helping to fund the Transit Connect program. The new proposed routes and connections are under consideration. Continue to think of ways to get better ridership on the South County shuttle, including increasing outreach to South County communities.

Jim commented that the seniors at Canyon Rim would like to use the South County run as a shopping trip every two weeks, that could transport up to ten residents. Jesus commented that The Link already stops at Canyon Rim on Tuesdays between 9 and 10am.

Kate added that The Link has taken over service to Hood River from The Dalles. This service runs four times per day with an added stop in Mosier in each direction. Marketing is ongoing - using social media and local newsletters. Kate added that she is definitely open to any ideas about marketing. Reporting on facilities and shelters - The Link has five new buses in service this summer. The new buses have received positive feedback from riders, more comfortable! The Link's retired vehicles are up at auction. A new bus shelter has been installed at the Port on Klindt Drive, and there is another new shelter scheduled to go in next week at the Next Door, Inc.

Kate next reported on the roll out of the 2022 GorgePass. Kate put the map on screen showing all places that can be accessed with the GORgepass. She explained that the GORgepass cannot be used for the dial a ride, south county and shuttle services. The pass can be used in Hood River on the CAT bus, it can be used on Mt. Adams Transportation Service in Klickitat County Can, and it can be used on the Skamania County transit that travels all the way to Vancouver. The pass can be used on the Columbia Gorge express to Portland, as well as on the Mountain shuttle up to Mt. Hood in the winter. Kate then explained about the Outdoor equity fund. Pass will support the Gorge. \$1 for every pass sold goes into fund. Businesses can donate. Fund will give direct donations to Gorge Search and Rescue to recognize the impact of people visiting. The equity fund will also provide passes to outdoor equity organizations focused on getting underserved folks to the outdoors. Finally, the fund will subsidize low income passes available to local groups.

Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance helping with the Marketing campaign.

LINK REPORT

Jesus reported that The Link continues to operate at full capacity. Drivers are required to wear masks and observe all Covid safety cleaning protocols. The Link now operates The Dalles to Hood River shuttle. This service operates four times per day between 7-10am and between 3:45 and 6pm. This shuttle gives approximately 60 rides per week. Three new drivers have been hired as well as Sara's position that assists with community outreach. Jesus reported on the service data for the quarter, giving breakdowns in all categories. Jesus then asked if there were any questions.

Jim asked for any updates on electric buses and infrastructure. Kate replied that this will be a big project that ODOT will manage. Lee Bryant remarked that this meeting has presented a lot of information to digest.

ADJOURN

Louise moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:34 am. Rita seconded.

Respectfully submitted by Jill Brandt, Administrative Assistant

MEMORANDUM

To: Public Transit Advisory Committee

From: Kate Drennan, Deputy Director of Transportation, MCEDD

Date: Jan 18, 2022

Re: Application to ODOT 5310 Transit Funds

Recommendation: Provide recommendation to Wasco County Commission to apply to 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Discretionary Program in partnership with MCEDD.

Overview

MCEDD/ The Link Public Transit has long utilized the 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Discretionary Program to help fund deviated fixed routes serving seniors and people with disabilities, along with the general public. This grant makes up a significant portion of operating revenue to fund our drivers and dispatchers operating these routes. Traditionally MCEDD/ The Link has applied directly to, and received, these funds for our operation, however a new ODOT rule requires that grant is applied for and funded through a Special Transportation Fund recipient – e.g., Wasco County. MCEDD recommends that Wasco County apply for this important source of funding with application support from MCEDD.

Grant Details:

Purpose: This solicitation supports projects for operations, mobility management, purchased service, and preventative maintenance for transportation providers serving seniors and individuals with disabilities in rural areas.

Eligible Projects: Eligible projects include operations, mobility management, purchased service, and preventative maintenance

Match Requirements:

Operating projects: local share 50 percent, federal share 50 percent

Other projects: local share 20 percent, federal share 80 percent

Timeline: Applications due February 14, 2022

Grant agreements executed July 1, 2022

Memorandum

To: Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee

From: Kate Drennan, Deputy Director of Transportation

Date: January 18, 2022

Re: Wasco County FY22 Q2 STIF Plan Project Update

Project Name	Project Description in Plan	Status
Fixed Route & Dial-A-Ride Services	Operate fixed routes and Dial-A-Ride services for seniors, individuals with disabilities and general public	In Q2 we continued to operate our Blue, Red, and Hood River Routes in addition to DAR services. With a rise in omnicron, we are trying to stay nimble as bus driver and dispatchers' shortages may briefly impact services.
Planning & Mobility Management	Increased outreach in Wasco County to encourage familiarity and ridership on transit, especially to low income populations and minority communities. Outreach will include development of online travel training materials to improve community knowledge of public transit connections and build confidence in using transit.	Jesus and Sara have done significant outreach over the last quarter, including attending numerous outreach events and making presentations. We've attended events through Next Door Inc, CRITFIC, CGCC Lantin X group and done direct outreach with senior centers and DHS.
Administrative Support	Administrative support for MCEDD-LINK operations to successfully administer the complex STIF Plan, including financial tracking and reporting, outcome measure tracking and reporting, development and implementation of STIF projects.	This task is ongoing and includes regular quarterly reporting.
Routes & Connections	Support for bus routes and bus services to communities with a high percentage of Low-Income Households, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing support of the deviated fixed routes in The Dalles, service to smaller communities in Wasco County, and maintaining dial-a-ride hours on weekends, early mornings and evenings 	We continue to operate Dial-A-Ride on earlier hours to meet medical needs, including during snow days or other closures. Our South County shuttle continues weekly and we added new service to Mosier in the fall. We continue to pursue ways to raise awareness of these services for potential riders.
Fleet	This project uses STIF funds to match a grant to replace buses at the end of their lifecycle, and supports vehicle spill protection at the Transit Center.	Partially complete. The match was used toward buses that arrived in the fall. The spill

		protection kit has not yet been purchased.
Marketing	Actions to boost ridership on The Link, including marketing, fare subsidies, and Spanish-language outreach.	This last quarter we have done a 2 local radio interviews promoting services – with hope to be featured on radio Alterra this winter. We’ve also paid for facebook and print ads, produced newsletters and marketing videos around the rollout of the Gorge Pass. There have also been radio ads and tabling at events such as Saturday markets and more. The transit connect program continues to provide subsidized passes and dial-a-ride tickets to low income individuals.
Facilities & Bus Shelters	Increase bus shelters available for service on The Link. 1) Purchase and install two bus shelters	A new shelter was opened in the fall at Next Door off Kelley Avenue.

To: Public Transportation Advisory Committee
From: Kate Drennan, Deputy Director of Transportation
Jesus Mendoza, LINK Operations Manager

Date: January 18, 2022
Re: Quarterly LINK Operations Report

Operations

- The MCEDD- The Link continues to operate at full capacity but follows federal guidance which requires that everyone wear a mask and practice COVID-safety cleaning protocols on and in public transportation facilities. This means our drivers and passengers will continue to wear masks on buses.
- The new Omnicron variant is highly contagious and has begun to impact staffing as those who are diagnosed or were a close contact must quarantine. We aspire to maintain full service, but in the event of short staffing, we will prioritize medical rides and higher ridership routes.

Grants

- Marketing: Via the Gorge Pass marketing grant, we've been very busy spreading the word about both the Link services and the ability to use the Pass throughout the Gorge. Since the rollout Kate has done two local radio interviews, along with paid radio ads for the Pass. We've also rolled out paid facebook and Instagram ads, posted large banners in every community throughout the Gorge, and tabled at many community events. Finally, we've made presentations to a number of government councils and commissions, along with willing civic groups such as Rotaries and Chambers of commerce.
- Each month the Gorge Pass rolls out a new video on youtube, facebook and embedded in the monthly newsletter. In November the video focused on visiting Cascade Locks, taking in hikes and supporting different local businesses. In December the video focused on how to use the Gorge Pass and the bus to get to the Portland Airport. Upcoming videos will feature winter weather driving and other communities throughout the Gorge.
- The Wasco County Transit Development Plan has been working on their proposed service ideas that were presented in the previous PTAC meeting. An online survey has been posted on the project website to solicit feedback on these ideas. A large public outreach effort with rollout of the Draft Transit Plan.

Physical Assets

- Buses – The remaining buses that the Link took out of service have been sold at auction.
- Winter tires were put on all the Link buses and drivers were retrained on how to put on winter chains.

Ride Information for The Link

ALL DEMAND RESPONSE	JUL-SEPT 2021	OCT-DEC 2021
Total Passenger One-Way Trips	2,692	3,053
Elderly/Disabled One-Way Trips	1,709	1,752
Revenue Service Hours	1,165	1,472
Revenue Service Miles	15,627	15,698
DEVIATED FIXED ROUTE		
Total Passenger One-Way Trips	1,594	2,351
Elderly/Disabled One-Way Trips	241	165
Revenue Service Hours	2,662	2,112
Revenue Service Miles	16,826	30,661*
<i>*this jump accounts for our new Hood River shuttle, with four daily, runs it creates about 200 additional service miles per day</i>		
TOTAL DAR + DFR* includes South County and Shopping Shuttle		
Total Passenger One-Way Trips	4,589	5,404
Elderly/Disabled One-Way Trips	1,932	1,917
Revenue Service Hours	4,002	3,584
Revenue Service Miles	33,479	46,359

