

Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee

Agenda

Wednesday, October 12, 2022

The Dalles Transit Center, 802 Chenoweth Loop, The Dalles

Remote option via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84319791177>

Or call 719-359-4580, Meeting ID: 843 1979 1177

10:00 – 11:00 AM

Topic	Time	Item
Call to Order and Introductions	10:00	
Minutes Approval <i>September 14, 2022</i>	10:05	Approval
FY23-35 Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund Formula Plan Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss sub-allocation method• Review draft of proposed projects	10:10	Discussion
New Business/ Good of the Order	10:55	
Set Next Meeting and Adjourn	11:00	

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**WASCO COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2022, 10a.m.
MCEDD CONFERENCE ROOM & ZOOM TELECONFERENCE**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Louise Sargent, Jesus Mendoza, Kris Boler, Maria Pena, Tom Tramontina

STAFF: Jessica Metta (MCEDD Executive Director), Jill Brandt (Administrative Assistant)

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Louise Sargent called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. A quorum was present. A short round of introductions took place. Jessica gave overview of the agenda.

MINUTES

Louise asked for any questions, comments or edits on the minutes as presented. No comments were noted.

Kris Boler motioned to approve the minutes of April 5th, 2022, as presented. Tom Tramontina seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

UPDATES FROM THE LINK AND MCEDD

Jessica Metta gave updates as summarized in the packet. Main topics of note were the videos being developed by Travel Trainer Sara Crook that will instruct people on how to use transit. Upcoming changes to The Link's services: On October 1st, CAT will resume the Hood River Intercity Express service. The Link will continue to support veterans and the South County residents by increasing its South County shuttle to twice per week and expanding it out to Wamic and Pine Hollow. South County service will continue to include regular stops at Canyon Rim to serve the senior population in Maupin.

Jesus Mendoza reported that the Transit Connect program funding has been replenished to provide more passes to our community partners that serve the area's low-income population. The program replenishment funding created an additional 50 gorge passes through the equity program. Jesus also reported on The Link's summer's programs in The Dalles- the free service to the Aquatics center and the farmer's market. Staffing shortages caused these programs to end sooner than expected. The plans to increase bus shelters that were outlined in the Transit Development Plan are in process: quotes for the installation of three new shelters and twenty simme seats have been collected. Prospective bus shelter sites are at the Mid-Columbia Center for Living/ One Community Health, MCMC, the High School and Water's Edge. For The Link's Operations, a new field supervisor position was approved, and driver Laura Reed has been promoted to the position. The Link is currently hiring for both full-time and part-time positions. Laura will remain as a driver until a replacement is hired. There has been focus on hiring, with ads running, tabling at Fred Meyers and community events with little to no response. Jesus asked the committee to spread the word. Jesus noted that there was a typo in the information packet, in the table showing ridership information. He reported that the total deviated fixed route rides were 2125, which was slightly down. Jesus noted that a decrease in ridership is normal and expected during the summer. The total number of dial-a-ride and deviated fixed routes was 5,326. Jesus explained that because CAT will resume the Hood River Intercity route on Oct. 1st, that The Link will show a drop in fixed route rides next quarter. Adding the extra South County day will offset this loss somewhat.

Jessica gave the committee a brief update on the status of the Wasco Transit Development Plan (TDP). The Plan has been adopted by MCEDD's Board, but not yet by the Wasco County Commissioners. Wasco County has requested more outreach to ensure that the plan will meet public needs. The Link will be part of the advisory committee, and meetings are scheduled to start at the end of the month. The Regional Transit Strategy, which brought all of the Gorge transit providers together to develop the vision, has now moved on to the next phase of operationalizing the vision. MCEDD has hired a consultant to make this happen. The floor was opened for questions.

Discussion: Louise asked for more information on the connection to Portland. Jesus explained that the Columbia Gorge Express to Portland is run by CAT, not The Link. There was some scheduling conflict between The Link's fixed route to Hood River and the connection to the Columbia Gorge Express to Portland. He explained that CAT has set the Columbia Gorge Express connections to fit CAT's bus schedules. By resuming The Dalles to Hood River service, CAT will minimize the wait time for the connection on to Portland.

Tom Tramontina asked where the drop-off in Portland was located. Jesus said it is the Gateway Transit Center, where folks can easily catch TriMet buses or the MAX.

Jesus informed the group that beginning on October 1st, the GOrge pass will run a promotion through the end of year where a rider can bring a friend at no extra charge.

FY 23-25 STIF Formula Plan Preparation, Other Grant Opportunities:

Jessica introduced this topic to the committee as the main impetus for regular meetings over the next few months. This is the time for a big push to renew the grants that support The Link's operations, in particular the STIF Formula dollars that requires the active participation of this committee. The committee will recommend projects for the Wasco County Board of Commissioners to approve by January to meet the timeline for submission to ODOT. Once specific areas of focus are identified, the committee will meet to prioritize the draft list. Wasco County will receive about \$500,000 in STIF funds in FY24, and about \$525,000 in FY25. There is no match requirement for these funds, and STIF dollars have allowed The Link to expand its services since 2019. Requirements include a focus on service to low-income populations with at least one percent going to high school student transportation. This funding can also be used as the match for other grants. She gave the example of using STIF formula funds as the match to purchase hybrid vehicles, noting that MCEDD typically budgets to reserve some of this funding to use for grant match money.

Discussion: Louise asked about the cost of electric buses. Jesus explained that prices have doubled in just a short time. Current prices for a 12-passenger bus are running about \$230,000. It was noted that prices will fluctuate until a purchase is locked in. Jessica added that the last (gas-powered) bus bought by The Link was \$90,000 with all details added. If The Link had applied to replace a vehicle with another gas-powered bus, the grant would have been unlikely to be approved.

Jessica said at the next meeting there will be a list of projects for the committee to review. Jessica invited the committee members to bring ideas as well.

Jesus suggested using STIF Funds to support vanpooling for employers whose shifts don't meet The Link's regular hours of operation. He asked the committee to consider this as it will support commute options to help with transport after hours.

Jessica next outlined the STIF Discretionary funding. This grant is competitive with a 20% match. In the last grant cycle, this funding was used to pay for the staffing of MCEDD's Mobility Manager and Travel Trainer. It was also used to fund GORge Pass marketing. The Hood River to The Dalles service is funded by STIF Discretionary money through CAT. All of these grants are coming up for renewal. Jessica will be working with CAT tomorrow to strategize. ODOT has issued a memo with the deadline of October 10th to submit letters of intent to apply for STIF Discretionary grants.

Jessica explained that MCEDD/The Link can apply for STIF Discretionary directly- there is no need for Wasco County to apply. Other grants coming up that may be used for Hood River to The Dalles or South County are the 5310 grant (supports dial a ride) that MCEDD applies for directly, and also the 5311 grant which Wasco County must apply for. ODOT's rules determine which grants must be applied for through the County and which can be applied for directly by MCEDD. She added that this is the first biennium where The Link will not apply for Special Transportation Fund dollars separately, because the State Legislature has wrapped the funding into the STIF Formula grant with a certain amount based on payroll and a certain amount based on population. The amounts awarded are slated to go up slightly in the next couple of years.

Discussion: Louise opened the floor for more questions. There were none.

NEW BUSINESS/ GOOD OF THE ORDER

Maria Pena asked about licensing requirements for The Link drivers. Jesus replied that a valid drivers license is needed (no CDL) and passing the background and drug and alcohol tests. Maria stated that she had a possible referral who speaks Spanish.

SET NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURN

Jessica suggested holding the next meeting in one month, October 12th at 10am. There were no objections or scheduling conflicts noted. Louise adjourned the meeting at 10:41 am.

Respectfully submitted by Jill Brandt, Administrative Assistant

Memorandum

To: Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee

From: Jessica Metta, MCEDD Executive Director

Date: October 5, 2022

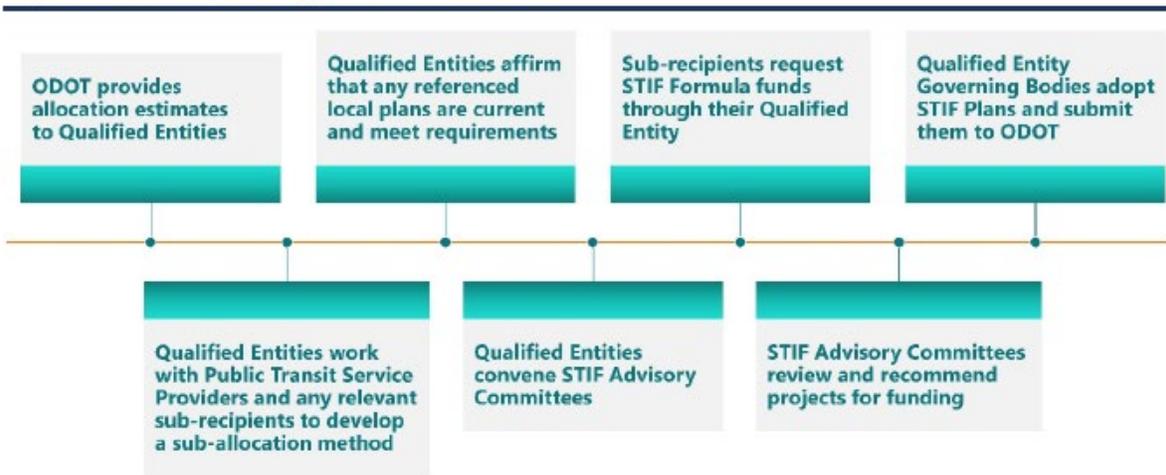
Re: 2023-2025 Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund Formula Plan Preparation: Sub-Allocation and Draft Project List

STIF Formula Fund Overview (This section copied as a reminder from the PTAC’s Sept 14, 2022 meeting memo.)

We are coming up on the biennial process to develop a plan for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Formula fund dollars received by Wasco County (the “Qualified Entity”). The STIF Formula fund receives 90 percent of all STIF revenues (payroll tax) and is intended to expand and improve public transportation services for current and future transit users. STIF Formula funds may be used for public transportation purposes that support the effective planning, operation, and administration of public transportation programs.

ODOT has released information for developing the 2023-2025 STIF Plans, which must be submitted by January 16, 2023. Wasco County’s estimate for these funds as of September 2022 is \$500,277 in FY24 and \$525,350 in FY25, with no match requirement. The PTAC will be developing a draft plan over the next few months and submitting it to the Board of Commissioners for approval and adoption. Please see the timeline below copied from ODOT’s STIF Program Guidebook.

Figure 2-1. STIF Plan Application Timeline



Some ODOT requirements to note:

- On an annual basis, each Qualified Entity must allocate at least one percent of its estimated STIF Formula fund disbursement to a program(s) supporting student transportation (student transit services for students in grades 9 through 12), if practicable.

- A STIF Plan must address the transportation needs of people residing in or traveling into and out of the Qualified Entity’s area of responsibility.

It is the Advisory Committee’s responsibility to approve or reject project proposals and to recommend project prioritization. The ORS for the Advisory Committee state that it should consider the following criteria when reviewing project proposals:

- Whether the project would:
 - Increase the frequency of bus service to communities with a high percentage of low-income households
 - Expand bus routes and bus services to serve communities with a high percentage of low-income households
 - Reduce fares for public transportation in communities with a high percentage of low-income households
 - Result in procurement of buses that are powered by natural gas or electricity for use in areas with a population of 200,000 or more
 - Improve the frequency and reliability of service connections between communities inside and outside of the Qualified Entity’s service area
 - Increase the coordination between Public Transportation Service Providers to reduce fragmentation in the provision of public transportation service
 - Expand student transit services for students in grades 9 through 12
 - Enhance services for older adults and people with disabilities
- Whether the project would maintain an existing service
- The extent to which the project goals meet public transportation needs and are a responsible use of public funds
- The extent to which the project might benefit or burden historically- or currently-marginalized communities both now and in the long term
- Other factors to be determined by the Qualified Entity or Advisory Committee (e.g., geographic equity)

September’s Meeting

At the September meeting, the PTAC agreed to meet in October to review a draft of proposed projects, and then in November to prioritize and finalize a plan to send to the Board of Commissioners. We also planned to bring more information about a sub-allocation method in October.

No other entities were suggested to reach out to for project proposals at the September meeting and no other prioritizing criteria were suggested. Staff however did consult with Tygh School Community Center who did not have a project to include.

Sub-Allocation Method

The state requires that Qualified Entities work collaboratively with Public Transportation Service Providers and other potential sub-recipients, as relevant, to develop a method for sub-allocating STIF Formula funds. To the extent possible, using the best available data, the sub-allocation method used by

Qualified Entities must be proportionate to the amount of employee payroll tax revenue generated within the geographic territory of each Public Transportation Service Provider. Staff reached out to the Oregon Employment Department for information about the amount of payroll tax collected in different parts of Wasco County and received the following data.

2021 Total Payroll		
Location of Payroll Collection	Amount Collected	Percentage of County Total
Wasco County	\$569,712,483	100.0%
City of The Dalles	\$464,244,289	81.5%
City of Maupin	\$8,364,734	1.5%
City of Dufur	\$6,582,049	1.2%
City of Mosier	\$2,321,724	0.4%

The Qualified Entity’s sub-allocation estimate should be a starting point for the Qualified Entity’s STIF Plan and funding prioritization process. However, for Qualified Entities that are the only Public Transportation Service Provider within their area of responsibility—and when no other potential Public Transportation Service Provider has expressed interest in applying for STIF Formula funding—the Qualified Entity may describe these conditions and state that there are no options or reasons to sub-allocate funding. This approach has been used in prior STIF Formula Fund Plans, expressing that The Link is the only Public Transportation Service Provider based within Wasco County and thus all funds go to The Link. The Link’s draft projects below do try to reflect some of the geographic distribution of payroll collection in Wasco County through service to South County and to Mosier via the Intercity Service.

Draft of Proposed Projects

Projects would largely continue existing services or match other grants. The Link consulted the Wasco County Transit Development Plan (2022), Technology Assessment for The Link (2020), and Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan (2020) for projects.

Project Name	Project Description
Routes and Connections	
Deviated Fixed Route in The Dalles	Continue Red and Blue Routes in The Dalles with the improvements noted in the Wasco County Transit Development Plan (TDP)
South Wasco County Service	Service would increase to twice per day on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Bus would stop in Maupin, Tygh Valley, Wamic, Pine Hollow, and Dufur before reaching The Dalles. Route allows for ½ mile deviation for needed pickups.
The Dalles Weekend Dial-a-Ride	Continue Saturday dial-a-ride service from 9am to 4pm. Add Sunday dial-a-ride service from 9am to 4pm.

The Dalles Weekday Dial-a-Ride Hours	Continue dial-a-ride service starting a 6am. Increase evening service to run until 7pm (currently 6pm).
Intercity Service Between The Dalles and Hood River	Provide grant match for The Link to run the intercity service four times per day on weekdays and three times per day on Saturday and Sunday. Includes a stop in Mosier in both directions.
Swim Bus	Provide free shuttle in The Dalles to The Dalles Aquatic Center two or three times per week when school is not in session over the summer.
Vanpooling	Subsidize two vanpools serving Wasco County residents and/or businesses. This would match the statewide vanpool subsidy for a 7-passenger vehicle. Vanpools increase hours of operation and service area, address equity issues for shift workers and rural areas hard to serve with transit, and can enhance a transit agency's public image (The Link can wrap the vehicles).
Fleet and Technology	
Hybrid Bus Purchase	Provide grant match for the two hybrid buses we received a grant for and provide additional match the second year anticipating another grant request for hybrid buses.
Bus Wraps	Adding graphics to make the buses stand out. We might be able to fit this in existing grants.
Technology Upgrade	Exploring upgrades to our scheduling software Ecolane to provide real-time vehicle arrival info so passengers can track the bus. We possibly would need to go with a different technology solution.
Facilities	
Bus Shelters	Set aside grant match to purchase some additional shelters.
Bike Racks	Add bike racks to all existing shelter sites and some key bus stops.
Marketing	
Billboards, Brochures, Print Media & Radio	General marketing fund for The Link's services.
Marketing the GORge Pass	Grant match to promote the GORge Pass in Wasco County.
Free Low-Income Passes	Purchase of GORge Passes and dial-a-ride tickets to distribute to low-income residents through community partners.
Spanish Language Outreach	Specific marketing materials and outreach to the Spanish-speaking community in The Link's service area.
High School Passes (Grade 9-12) @ 1%	Providing free rides to high school students on all services. Required at 1% of STIF plan.
Planning & Mobility Management	
Mobility Management	County-level approach for managing and delivering coordinated transportation services to customers, including older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with

	lower incomes. Also completing an updated Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan, due in 2024/25.
Travel Trainer	Staff support for teaching people how to use the transit system, setting up “train the trainer” programs, event tabling, etc.
Administrative Support	
Administrative Support	Supports planning, grant reporting, administration.

Questions

- Are there any projects missing from the list above?
- Are there any projects you would want to remove from consideration at this point?
- Does the geographic distribution of service meet your expectations?
- Are there other criteria besides those suggested by ODOT that you would want to use for prioritizing projects at the next meeting?

Other Grant Applications Submitted/ In Development

Because these funds are so flexible, are state funds and have no match requirement, they are very helpful for matching other state or federal grants to provide greater leverage. Several of the projects mentioned above are match for other grants already in hand or planned for submission. These include:

- Deviated Fixed Route in The Dalles: grant is secured through June 30, 2024. We would need to plan to reapply for this discretionary grant.
- Dial-a-Ride: many other grants received by Wasco County and MCEDD support dial-a-ride services as currently offered.
- Intercity Service: MCEDD intends to apply in fall 2022 for a Statewide Transit Network grant for this service.
- Vanpool: MCEDD intends to apply for Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act grant to support developing vanpools.
- Fleet: grant is secured for two hybrid buses. An additional grant would need to be secured for two more.
- Bus Shelters: grant would need to be secured.
- Gorge Pass Marketing: MCEDD intends to apply in fall 2022 for a Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund Discretionary grant for this program.
- Mobility Management: MCEDD intends to apply in fall 2022 for a Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund Discretionary grant for this program.
- Travel Trainer: MCEDD is considering an application for rural veterans transportation that could support this task, as well as a 5310 Discretionary grant request.

Request, Next Steps

Provide feedback on the Sub-Allocation Method and draft of proposed projects. Staff will then detail the budget for the projects on the list to determine what can fit within the amount of funds Wasco County will receive. This list will be brought to the PTAC in November to prioritize and then recommend for approval by the Board of County Commissioners.