

Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee

Agenda

Monday, January 9, 2023

The Dalles Transit Center, 802 Chenoweth Loop, The Dalles

Remote Option via Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86116046365>

Or call 719-359-4580, Meeting ID: 861 1604 6365

1:00 – 2:00 PM

Topic	Time	Item
Call to Order and Introductions	1:00	
Minutes Approval <i>November 2022</i>	1:05	Approval
FY23-25 Statewide Transportation Improvement Discretionary Grant Applications	1:10	Recommendation
Staff Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grant Applications• Travel Trainer• The Link	1:20	Information/ Discussion
New Business/ Good of the Order	1:55	
Set Next Meeting and Adjourn	2:00	

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. If you have a disability that requires any special materials, services or assistance, please contact us at 541-296-2266 (TTY 711) at least 48 hours before the meeting.

**WASCO COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2022 at 10a.m.
MCEDD CONFERENCE ROOM & ZOOM TELECONFERENCE**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Louise Sargent, Jesus Mendoza, Kris Boler, Maria Pena, Thomas Tramontina, Lee Bryant

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

GUEST: Valerie Egon (ODOT)

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Louise Sargent called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. A quorum was present. A short round of introductions took place.

MINUTES

Louise Sargent asked for any questions, comments or edits on the minutes from the October 2022 meeting.

Lee Bryant motioned to approve the minutes of October 12, 2022 as presented. Thomas Tramontina seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

FY 23-25 STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT FUND

Jessica Metta opened the discussion with an explanation of STIF funding. New this year, STIF funding has combined the payroll basis portion of funding and the population basis portion. The list in the packet contains MCEDD's recommendations on how to use the population dollars that will come to Wasco County. In the past, these population-based funds have been used to match the federal funding for dial a ride service. Ninety percent of the state payroll taxes collected in Wasco County comes back to the county dedicated to improving transportation to and within the county's communities. One percent is mandated to provide service to high schoolers.

For the STIF Discretionary application for the Hood River- The Dalles Service, a letter of interest has been submitted to ODOT, and MCEDD has drafted the grant applications which have not been submitted yet. This committee is asked to recommend approval for the projects listed in the applications. Jessica asked Valerie Egon about the timeline to hear back on MCEDD's letter of interest for the Hood River to The Dalles route. Valerie said that notification should be received in a few days.

The list of projects in the packet includes rough dollar figure estimates. Because there is potential for a lot more money to come in, a contingency list has been included. All of the projects that are listed cost more than the estimated funding coming to Wasco County. Jessica provided an overview of the projects on the STIF Formular Plan list.

Discussion: Thomas asked if employers were involved. Jessica replied that the Link does not have employer passes like Tri-Met does in Portland. There is some promotion of the Link's service with large employers like the college and the hospital. The Vanpool federal money that will be coming out can help to meet needs that cannot met by the bus. This will take pressure off the bus system and simultaneously help with an identified transportation need.

Louise asked if riders would call in to request vanpool service. Jessica responded that the vanpool coordination will be organized by Kathy so folks using the vanpool go through Gorge Translink rather than The Link dispatch. Kathy will register private operators into the vanpool system.

Jessica provided an update that the reader boards on the side of the buses that scroll to show service will cost \$4300 per bus to install.

Discussion: Lee asked if it was feasible do only one bus and see what the response is before we do more.

Jesus replied that currently buses 30 and 32 have the reader feature, but it does not scroll. He added that the sign is helpful- letting clients know which bus is there.

Maria asked if the words are in Spanish as well as English. Jesus replied they are not at present. He explained that the readers on the buses do not scroll. Maria added that having the ability to program the reader signs in both languages is a priority. She explained that this will make Hispanic riders feel welcomed and increase ridership. Jessica added that if the sign is scrolling, it should be easy to program both languages. Jessica asked how many buses will need this added. Jesus replied eight. Jessica noted that the total will come up to about \$35,000. Lee added that if the funds are there, this would be an excellent use. Jesus suggested excluding vehicles 23 and 26, because they will be the next two to be replaced in the near future.

Lee asked about adding advertisements in The Dalles movie theaters. Jessica noted to notify the PTAC members when these ads will run in the theaters. Jesus added that the route that The Link is currently modifying stops by the movie theater. Maria asked for the movie theater ads to come out in Spanish as well as English.

Maria stated that she was happy to see Jesus doing outreach at One Community Health. His efforts show the Hispanic community that The Link is present, approachable, and welcoming to the Latino community. She added that presence at the Kids Fair in May and other community activities will add more Hispanic ridership to the Link.

Jessica noted the free swim bus service was not recommended to be continued next summer. This program was a challenge to implement. The planned improvements to The Link's deviated fixed route will meet the need to provide service to the pool.

Discussion: Louise asked for confirmation that there will be a stop near the pool. Jesus assured the group that the stop will be located right across the street and will have regular service Monday through Friday. Saturday service will be covered by the fixed route service that is in planning to be added. The proposed Saturday route will cover both the farmers market and the swimming pool. Last summer's pool service route did not have many riders and was not the best use of service. Louise liked the planned regular bus route service, noting that this would allow riders to get used to riding to and from the pool.

Jessica was optimistic that all of the listed projects could be completed. She asked if the group would be in favor of adding a grant match reserve fund project to the list.

Discussion: Lee commented that this list looked really good. She asked if the Travel Trainer Sara's time was really split evenly 50/50 between CAT and The Link. Jessica replied that CAT has needed Sara's support while updating their service plan because Sara is familiar with CAT's system. MCEDD and The Link advocate for her to be in Wasco County half the time. Jessica offered to invite Sara to these meetings so that she can inform the group directly about her time allocation and her outreach efforts.

Louise asked for any further comments on this proposed list or budgeted amounts. There were none.

Lee Bryant motioned to recommend using the population and payroll dollars as recommended in the packet, with emphasis on adding reader boards in both English and Spanish and the creation of a general grant match reserve fund. Kris Boler seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

FY23 DIAL-A-RIDE GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR THE LINK

Jessica explained that both the 5311 (STIF Formula Grant) and the 5310 (Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and People with Disabilities Grant) were coming up for biennial review. The 5311 funds dial a ride service to rural areas throughout the county and Wasco County is the applicant. The 5310 is also used to fund dial a ride and MCEDD is applicant.

Thomas Tramontina motioned to recommend that Wasco County apply for the 5310 grant and that MCEDD apply for the 5311 Formula Grant for The Link's use to cover preventative maintenance for dial-a-ride service and support operations. Lee Bryant seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the recommendation passed.

NEW BUSINESS/ GOOD OF THE ORDER

Lee asked what MCEDD sees as the biggest dream for transport in the future. Jessica replied that the addition all of The Link's proposed additional service will allow so many more people to use the bus.

Lee observed that more bus shelters will make it visible and obvious that The Dalles has regular and usable public transportation. She was also in favor of electric buses and reader boards. Louise added that the transition to electric will begin with Hybrid that are cheaper and require less infrastructure to operate.

Jessica brought up the Transit Development Plan's plan for a transit center downtown as a transformational goal. Lee agreed that a more central place in downtown would be great. She asked if the Greyhound stop would move downtown. Jessica explained that the City plans include a plaza downtown that would have a transit stop, so a shelter downtown has not been included in MCEDD's list. Where the best place would be is not yet evident. Louise suggested that the transit stop have building access so that riders could go inside to get warm and use restrooms.

SET NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURN

Jessica explained that the next time when the group's feedback will be needed is during the next discretionary grant funding applications process. She asked Valerie to clarify the timeline for the STIF

discretionary funding process. Once the applications are submitted, review will be needed. Valerie replied that ODOT's process will run from December through February. She recommended meeting the second or third week of January for the advisory group to review to meet the feedback deadline for ODOT that will be in early February.

The next meeting was set for January 9th at 10 am, to be held in the MCEDD conference room. Louise Sargent adjourned the meeting at 10:52 am.

Respectfully submitted by Jill Brandt, Administrative Assistant

To: Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee
From: Jessica Metta, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District Executive Director
Date: January 4, 2023
Re: Review of STIF Discretionary and Statewide Transit Network Grant Applications Affecting Wasco County

Request: For each application, the Committee is asked to recommend “Fund” or “Do Not Fund” and *may* provide additional comments and/or a prioritized list of applications to be funded.

Background

Wasco County has asked the Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee, acting as the county’s Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Advisory Committee to review the following STIF Discretionary and Statewide Transit Network Grant Applications that could impact Wasco County. The full application materials for each grant listed below can be found here:

<https://www.oregon.gov/odot/RPTD/Pages/STIF-Discretionary-Grant-Applications.aspx>

A summary of each application follows:

- 1. Hood River County Transportation District 1 – Columbia Gorge Express.** Hood River County Transportation District (HRCTD) is seeking funding to sustain the existing Columbia Gorge Express (CGE) intercity transit service which operates between the City of Hood River, City of Cascade Locks, Multnomah Falls, City of Troutdale, and Gateway Transit Center in the City of Portland seven days a week. Staff is working with partner organizations to potentially add a stop at the Bonneville Fish Hatchery to serve the Bonneville Dam, Fish Hatchery, and local hiking systems. The CGE service will provide 7 trips per day Mid-September through April and increase to 11 trips per day between May and early September. This project is listed here as impacting Wasco County but that is only as a result of service from The Link connecting to the Columbia Gorge Express in Hood River.

- 2. MCEDD 1 - Gorge Regional Transit Network: Inclusive Outreach and Education Project.** This project would build on the existing Gorge Pass Marketing project. The primary goals are to increase public awareness of the regional fixed route services and to educate potential riders about how to use the local bus services and the regional system. The target audience lives locally within the four Gorge counties and within the Portland/Vancouver metro areas, with a special focus on transportation disadvantaged residents, including Migrant/Seasonal Farmworkers, people with Limited English Proficiency, older adults, people with disabilities, people experiencing low incomes, the houseless population, and Native Americans. This project will use culturally appropriate, language-specific, and engaging outreach and education strategies. Tasks include:
 - Task #1: Co-create messaging and outreach activities with community-based organizations.
 - Task #2: Develop new outreach communications targeting transportation disadvantaged populations by using inclusive photography and videos, events, guided transit trips, social media, printed materials including targeted itineraries & trip guides.
 - Task #3: Integrate 3 separate websites: gorgetranslink.com, gorgepass.com, columbiagorgecarfree.com and review for accessibility
 - Task #4: Expand awareness and support of the Gorge Equity fund, which provides free annual GORge passes to low-income residents by engaging more local employers.

- Task #5. Communicate first mile/last mile, car-free transportation, and vanpool options including active transportation and local low-income carshare programs.

3. MCEDD 2 - Gorge Regional Transit Strategy Implementation. This project would build on the prior and existing Gorge Regional Transit Strategy (GRTS) project, a multi-year planning effort that is developing strategies to achieve the region's collective vision of a regionally coordinated and integrated public transit system. The GRTS covers a rural 5-county, bi-state region in the Mid-Columbia Gorge, which includes the counties of Sherman, Wasco, and Hood River in Oregon and Klickitat and Skamania in Washington. This planning process has received funding and support from both ODOT and WSDOT and will be completed in June 2023. A large, diverse group of stakeholders including the five transit service providers, elected leaders and staff of local governments, state and federal agencies, human service agencies, health care organizations, local employers, nonprofits, and tourism representatives have been actively engaged in the process since 2020. The vision and goal statements were accepted by each of the five transportation providers' boards (County Commissions, County Court, Hood River County Transportation District board) and the MCEDD board in the fall of 2021.

Project Description: GRTS Stakeholders have identified the foundational components necessary to build a successful regional transit system, which include 1) regionally cohesive decision-making (governance) 2) coordinated and seamless regional services & operations and 3) regional services that meet the needs of vulnerable populations. These are expressed below as Tasks and Deliverables. The GRTS Implementation Project will implement the preferred strategies as outlined in the GRTS. Note that although stakeholders are currently still providing input on a menu of organizational structure options, Task #1 deliverables reflect the foundational steps necessary to develop any one of the proposed models. Note also that the focus of the GRTS Implementation project is on the intercounty fixed route services, as each of the providers will maintain operations of the Dial-A-Ride services within their own counties. Tasks include:

- Task #1: Establish the preferred organizational structure for regional decision-making and management (Task led by Mobility Manager with consultant assistance).
- Task #2: Facilitate coordination of the regional fixed route services so that they function as one regional system. (Task led by Mobility Manager)
- Task #3: Complete the foundational work necessary to address a prioritized regional service gap for a historically underserved population, the Native Americans living along the Columbia River at In-lieu and Treaty Access Fishing Sites and villages. (Task led by Mobility Manager)

4. MCEDD 3- The Dalles - Hood River Intercity Service. The Link, operated by Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, would provide service between the Cities of The Dalles and Hood River, with a stop in between in the City of Mosier, 4 times per day on weekdays and 3 times per day on weekends. This grant would not alter the existing service frequency, but rather transfer the operations responsibility to The Link and maintain this essential route for commuters, transit-dependent populations, and visitors. Service would begin July 1, 2023.

To: Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee
From: MCEDD Staff
Date: January 4, 2023
Re: Staff Reports

Gorge TransLink Alliance—Regional Projects

The Gorge TransLink Alliance continues work on two significant regional projects: the GORge Pass Marketing Project and the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy.

Gorge Regional Transit Strategy, Phase II

The Gorge Regional Transit Strategy committees are advancing in their discussions of the transit service vision and opportunities, governance, and funding and initiatives to address the gaps and opportunities. There will be a special workshop for transportation providers and their boards on January 9th to dive into the governance and funding discussion and further refine the documented work. For more information, please visit:

<https://gorgetransLink.com/gorge-transit-strategy/>

GORge Pass Marketing

The 2023 GORge Pass went on sale December 15. Remember that a portion of each individual sale goes to the Gorge Transit Connect program, which connects our human service and community-based organizations with travel training and Gorge Passes for the people they serve. We will also offer employers the opportunity to invest in the Buy One Give One program. For a minimum purchase of 10 employee passes, a GORge Pass will be donated to the Gorge Transit Connect program for every employee pass purchased.

MCEDD Travel Training Program

New Web Page: Travel Trainer Sara Crook manages the Gorge Transit Connect program, the Go Vets Columbia Gorge program, and is available to assist individuals with their travel training needs. MCEDD has launched a new page on the gorgetransLink.com website just for the Travel Training services—check it out at <https://gorgetransLink.com/travel-training/>

Travel Training Videos: MCEDD has launched a Travel Training video project with LarvickMedia as our videographer and chief story-teller. These videos will be evergreen products that will assist the travel training program and will live on the new Travel Training webpage.

The Link Public Transit

Routes and Services:

- The Operations Manager completed the new schedule for the Blue and Red Fixed Route. The modifications are based on the community needs and assessment defined in the Transit Development Plan. Benefits include increasing number of stops, reduced dwell time, shorter walking distances, and targeting dense areas. The map and brochure modifications were



outsourced to Sirius Media with the first draft expected to be returned on December 2 for review.

- South County Service Expansion: Beginning October 3rd, The Link expanded the South County route to include Pine Hollow and Wamic. We have also increased the service twice per week, which will be provided every Tuesday/Thursday.

Planning:

- Jessica and Jesus are participating in a Technical Advisory Committee for Wasco County Planning regarding a Rural Transportation Equity grant they received. The work is intended to set the County up for adopting the Wasco County Transit Development Plan.
- Jessica and Kathy met with staff from Age + to explore their interest and process in supporting the transportation needs of seniors in South Wasco County. We are connecting them to the Wasco County Planning process noted above.
- Staff is communicating with the movie theater in The Dalles to get a bilingual ad on their screens. Some of our marketing has been on hold as we develop the map and time table for the updated Red and Blue Routes.

Assets:

- The Link has completed annual inspections for all vehicles. The vehicles also cycled through the Winter tire changeover and are prepared for winter weather conditions!
- We received parts to replace a broken element in the gate to access the rear of the MCEDD shelter and bus barn. ASET completed the installation, and the gate is now operating properly.
- The Link will be partnering with Kaleido Design to create a bus wrap design that is unique to Wasco County. The installation/ printing will be completed by KolorKraze. This initiative revamps The Link marketing strategy and supports its public image by sending the message that “Everybody” rides. The Operations Manager will also be ordering “Leave Behinds” to further promote The Link service at future events.
- Bus/Bus Shelters: The Link submitted and received order for 20 Simme-Seats (see example to right). The installation is a subsequent effort that will follow implementation and approval of the fixed route modifications. The Link ordered the purchase of 4 new bus shelters through Oregon Corrections Enterprises. Lead-time is 5-6 weeks. In the meantime, the Operations Manager will be working to complete all required documentation for bus shelter installation. Locations being considered are One Community Health / Mid-Columbia Center for Living, Waters Edge, the Employment Department and The Dalles High School.
- A Request for Transit Vehicle Price Quote (RFQ) will be sent out this week to begin the procurement process of 2 hybrid vehicles.



Grants:

- We are pleased to announce that Google LLC through the Tides Foundation will be awarding The Link with the match funds for 2 hybrid vehicles. The matching funds are for a total of \$45,200 and are intended to be for Low Emission Vehicles. This is a great start for The Link to

develop the work and progressively transition to fully electric vehicles.

- The LINK submitted the STIF Discretionary and Statewide Transit Network Grant Application. If the funds are received, it would allow LINK to operate The Dalles – Hood River Intercity Service. The service level would be 4 times per day on the weekdays and 3 times per day on weekends. This is a great opportunity to push for expanded services in Wasco County.
- Staff presented the PTAC's recommend FY23-25 Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Plan to the Wasco County Board of County Commissioners for their approval on Dec. 21, along with the request to apply for the 5311 grant through Wasco County to fund Dial-a-Ride services. We are now finalizing the grant applications, along with the 5310 grant through MCEDD to fund Dial-a-Ride services.

Staff:

- The Link hired two full-time drivers (Norm Kennedy and John Anderson) and one part-timer (Peter Koch). The added staff will provide an opportunity to expand service hours Monday-Friday and enhance service level provided on the weekend. The goal is to expand service hours from 7am to 7pm during the weekday and add the fixed-route service on Saturday from 9am to 4pm.
- As of Oct 1, we moved Laura Reed into the new Field Supervisor position. This is allowing Jesus to focus on service improvements and grant writing and helping increase skills among our existing staff.

Ridership figures will be brought to the meeting.