

**Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee**

**Agenda**

Monday, April 10, 2023

The Dalles Transit Center, 802 Chenoweth Loop, The Dalles

Remote Option via Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87271212957>

Or call 719-359-4580, Meeting ID: 872 7121 2957

10:00 – 11:00 AM

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>
Call to Order and Introductions	10:00	
Minutes Approval <i>January 2023</i>	10:05	Approval
Wasco County Rural Transportation Equity Grant Presentation	10:10	Information/ Discussion
Staff Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fare Change</li><li>• The Link</li><li>• Travel Trainer</li><li>• Committee Vacancy</li></ul>	10:40	Information/ Discussion
New Business/ Good of the Order	10:55	
Set Next Meeting and Adjourn	11:00	

*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  
MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.  
MCEDD CONFERENCE ROOM & ZOOM TELECONFERENCE**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Louise Sargent (Chair), Jesus Mendoza, Kris Boler, Thomas Tramontina, Lee Bryant, Rita Rathkey, Maria Pena

**STAFF:** Jessica Metta (MCEDD Executive Director), Jill Brandt (Administrative Assistant), Sara Crook (Travel Trainer)

**CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS**

Louise Sargent called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.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 November 2022 meeting.

Louise noted news/good of the order verbiage, end of line 1, change to “In addition” Meeting time noted in the minutes was what was approved at the meeting. It was later changed due to scheduling conflicts.

**Tom Tramontina motioned to approve** the minutes of November 7, 2022 as amended. Lee Bryant seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

**FY 23-25 STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT DISCRETIONARY GRANT APPLICATIONS**

Jessica Metta explained that action is needed from this committee on the applications that will impact Wasco County that are listed below. The last PTAC meeting was focused on the STIF Formula funding. There is additional money from payroll taxes set aside that is put into a discretionary fund, and the PTAC will recommend if these should be funded.

- 1. Hood River County Transportation District 1 – Columbia Gorge Express.** This is not directly affecting Wasco County. The Link connects to the Columbia Gorge Express in Hood River, allowing Wasco County residents to transfer to Portland through this service.
- 2. MCEDD 1 - Gorge Regional Transit Network: Inclusive Outreach and Education Project.** This funding will continue to market the Gorge pass with local outreach general marketing for fixed routes in the Gorge and will also focus on access for disadvantaged populations. Marketing next steps seek to integrate the three separate websites that all reference how to use the transit systems. This funding will continue to support the Gorge Equity fund that provides free passes to low-income folks through partner agencies. Lastly, this funding will continue to develop last mile/ first mile transit options, such as vanpooling, that cannot be serviced by the Link due to vehicles or service hours limitations.
- 3. MCEDD 2 - Gorge Regional Transit Strategy Implementation.** The development of the Strategy was funded by previous grants. This funding will continue the next steps to operationalize the Strategy. It will support moving forward with consultant work and the coordination of existing transit providers. It will also provide general support for the Mobility

Manager's work, which includes the creation of better transport for the Gorge's Native American community.

**4. MCEDD 3- The Dalles - Hood River Intercity Service.** The Link will be taking on this service from CAT.

*Discussion: Lee asked for more info on #4. Jessica explained that there is a history of this service alternating between CAT and the Link. CAT is operating the service right now and has agreed to transfer it back to the Link under the next operating grant cycle.*

*Rita asked how this change will affect the route's service. Jessica explained that the service itself will run at the same number of times per day and the same route, the only change is that the provider will switch, so the beginning and end of route will be in The Dalles, rather than Hood River.*

*Rita asked why CAT wants the Link to take this route over. Jessica explained that this route benefits both Wasco and Hood River Counties and it has been determined that Wasco County riders use the service more. CAT has assumed the grant in the past when the Link did not have the matching funds that are required. This is no longer an issue.*

*Louise asked if there were enough funds to cover the match for all four applications. Jessica explained that the first two applications for Regional Mobility Management will receive the matching funds from WSDOT.*

*There was discussion about whether to rank the projects and consensus to recommend that all be funded without noting a priority level.*

**Lee Bryant motioned to recommend funding all four** of the applications listed as funds are available. Tom Tramontina seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

## **STAFF UPDATES**

Jessica informed the group that the applications that the PTAC recommended at the previous meeting were approved by the Wasco County commissioners. There were two regional updates. 1) 2023 Gorge passes are now available, and 2) work continues on the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy with stakeholder meetings to discuss options. Transportation agency staffers have met to discuss how to move forward and the next step will be to convene local policy makers for coordination at the community government level.

### **Travel Training**

Sara Crook gave her Travel Training presentation to the group. Sara explained that her work is to ensure that everyone has the information and resources to ride on the transit system independently. The generic definition of "travel trainer" focuses on educating disabled and senior populations. Sara has broadened her definition to include everyone. Much of her work is updating the public's awareness that our transit system is not solely based on medical rides. Her trainings emphasize that riders do not need a reservation. Other topics that Sara's training covers include: basic trip scheduling, how to pay fares, bus safety, using bike racks, transferring and more. Sara's training can be found online on the [Gorge Translink website's Travel Training page](#).

Current work is centered on creating a library of short videos that will illustrate all possible scenarios. Examples include how to load a bike onto the bus's rack, how to purchase fares, how to transfer between providers, and more. The first welcome video is scheduled to be filmed this month and will be a basic intro and overview to all four transit providers in the Gorge. Assessment forms for the travel training program are now out in the community at the Hood River Valley High School, Mid-Columbia Center for Living, and other Transit Connect partners.

An overview of 2022 engagement was shared. Much of Sara's work was establishing relationships over the past year with various groups. Her outreach to the houseless group has helped to establish transportation as a concern to be addressed in community planning. Her presence at tribal conferences has provided transportation planners a current picture of the Gorge tribes' transportation needs so that next steps forward will include options to benefit the local Tribal communities. Sara's outreach work included tabling at events all around the region, including South County and the Maupin Centennial, at the Latin Festival, family nights, at the Kelly Avenue project, and at the larger community events such as the Cherry Festival Parade and 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade.

Sara's work with the Gorge Transit Connect has helped to establish the GorgePass Equity Program. The next step for transforming outreach is to educate staff in all Transit Connect partner agencies to be travel ambassadors who can train riders. This year, the free passes will be changed to a discount fare program in order to stretch the number of passes available and increasing the partner agencies' investment and support for the program. The discount will be determined on an individual basis as each agency can reasonably afford.

As part of Transit Connect Program, Sara helped to establish the GoVets Program, which offers free transportation for Vets in Hood River and Wasco Counties. This program is planned to be available to all vets in the Gorge if they are using services in Hood River and Wasco Counties. Sara explained that the GoVets logo will be wrapped on the bus dedicated to Vets transport for marketing, visibility and awareness. Sara explained that the Medical Shuttle that CAT runs is for everyone in the Gorge, with a service range from Celilo to Portland, with a stop at MCEDD. Sara emphasized to the group that the GorgePass does not cover South County or Dial a ride services. Fixed routes only!

*Discussion: Maria asked if travel training was available in Spanish also. Sara replied that she relies on Jesus at The Link and Rebecca at CAT for translation help when needed. Maria suggested a Spanish-speaking dedicated number that Hispanics can call directly. She explained that this will make Spanish speakers much more comfortable at first contact. Sara made note to work with Jesus to make Spanish more accessible to the public.*

### **The Link**

Jesus reported on the short-term recommendations from the Transit Development Plan that are currently in progress to complete:

- Increased number of stops from 8 stops to 21 stops on the Red and Blue fixed routes. Schedule modifications are in process that will allow time for deviations and for dropping the ramp with increased number of stops.
- The existing stops at MCMC and at DMV will move slightly closer to these agencies. Jesus explained that the Link does allow flagged stops if someone along the route being travelled waves at the driver.

- The service expansion to South County has increased to twice per week with new stops added at Wamic and Pine Hollow began on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Marketing efforts with flyers have been effective with increasing South County ridership.
- Jesus and Jessica are attending technical advisory meetings with the county and will be a presentation at the April meeting.
- Moving forward with movie theater ads, we will time the ads to be released after the route changes are complete. The ads will be in both Spanish and English.
- All Link drivers have completed tire chains training. All vehicle inspections are complete.
- The wrap designer for the Link's buses has been selected, and the design process has begun.
- An order for 4 bus shelters has been placed. These should be arriving in the next few weeks.
- Vehicle price quotes from ODOT for two hybrid vehicles is complete. The Google Tides Foundation grant will provide a match for \$45,200 to fund the hybrid buses.  
*Lee wanted people to know that Google is doing good things in the community.*
- New drivers have been hired as part of the Link's plan to increase its service. The service expansion goal is to increase hours of operations from 6am to 8pm, with an added fixed route on Saturday by this summer.
- Numbers updates: total trips for 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2022 were 4, 837 one-way trips with 1,998 senior rides. Revenue Service hours dropped to 1, 456 mainly due to discontinuing the Hood River Shuttle service.

Jesus noted that operating the Inter-city Express last summer brought notably increased ridership to the Link. Wrapping the shuttle will really advertise and increase the Link's presence.

#### **NEW BUSINESS/ GOOD OF THE ORDER**

None was noted.

#### **SET NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURN**

**The next meeting was set for April 10th**, to be held in the MCEDD conference room at 10am.

Louise Sargent adjourned the meeting at 1:46 am.

*Respectfully submitted by Jill Brandt, Administrative Assistant*

Partnership between  
Wasco County Planning, MCEDD, and  
Oregon DLCD



# Rural Transportation Equity Grant Update

April 10, 2022

# Project Overview

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- **Project Purpose**: Through outreach, research and coordination, learn more the transportation needs of South Wasco County residents and seasonal ag employees around The Dalles. Promote existing transit services and gauge early interest in the TDP's future investments.
- Examines how Wasco County and MCEDD can enhance the rural transportation network.
- Integrate feedback from rural Wasco County transit users, employers and residents without access to cars.

# Project Overview -- continued

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- Funded by a new State initiative called the **“Rural Transportation Equity Program.”**
- The program aims to support communities underserved by transportation options such as public transportation, bicycling, and walking.



# Activities to Date

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- Researched 2020-2022 Dial-A-Ride (DAR) data
- Interviewed 11 employers and agencies who support seasonal employees.
- Planned spring public involvement events.
- Coordinated with Cascades West Transit (in Bend) about their new vanpool program, serving Warm Springs.
- Held three interagency coordination meetings.



# What we learned in interviews

- Ski resorts are diversifying into summer recreational activities
- Some employees travel from homes in South Wasco County to the Gov. Camp area for jobs.
- Retaining employees is difficult.
- In the service industry, reliable transportation is a challenge for South County employees who don't have many travel options.
- Interest in vanpools



# What we learned in the interviews

- Since COVID, trend toward more reliance on workers from H-2A visa program.
- Many farmers and employees are unaware of Dial-A-Ride (DAR) services.
- Reliable transportation impacts employee attendance.
- Opportunity to offer travel training and build awareness of DAR.



# Upcoming promotions funded by the grant

- Current travel training videos will be available in Spanish.
- Promotional posters and refrigerator magnets will be available at spring outreach events and for distribution to service agencies/partners.



# Upcoming events

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- **April 15, 2023:**  
South Wasco Alliance/Barlow Gate Grange Community Meal -- Wamic
- **April 19, 2023:**  
South Wasco High School Redsides Pow Wow - - Maupin
- **April 21-22, 2023:**  
Northwest Cherry Festival -- Downtown The Dalles
- **Late May/early June, 2023:**  
Focus group with seasonal ag employees, convened by The Next Door, Inc – The Dalles
- **June 6, 2023:**  
Pre-Cherry Harvest Farm Tour - - The Dalles area

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# Questions?

**To: Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee**  
**From: MCEDD Staff**  
**Date: April 3, 2023**  
**Re: Staff Reports**

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## **The Link Public Transit**

### **Committee Feedback Requested: Fare Change**

The Committee is asked to provide feedback on the idea of reducing the Deviated-Fixed Route fare from \$1.50 to \$1.00 and increasing Dial-a-Ride from \$1.50 to \$2.00. Below you can see the comparison with other Gorge Transit Providers.

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Deviated-Fixed Route</b>	<b>Dial-a-Ride</b>
The LINK	\$1.50	\$1.50
Mt. Adams Transportation	\$1.00	\$2.00
Columbia Area Transit (CAT)	\$1.00	\$2.00
Skamania County	\$1.00	\$2.00

### **Routes and Services:**

- The LINK completed identifying new bus stop locations for the Blue and Red Route. Press Release highlighting the route modifications will be out the week of 4/3/2023. Hours will expand to 7pm as of July 1 for both the routes and dial-a-ride. Advertisement will be conducted through The Dalles Movie Theater, social media, and MCEDDs website.

### **Vehicles:**

- The request for Transit Vehicle Price Quote (RFQ) went out via email. We have received one response and are waiting to receive two more. This is for the procurement of two hybrid vehicles.
- LINK received the final draft of the bus wrap design (see images in packet). We shared it with leaders/partners of the Native American Community and received positive feedback.

### **Grants:**

- Grants submitted this quarter and waiting approval:
  - STIF Formula Grant: The grant supports new and existing projects recommended by Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee. Projects include Routes and Connections, Fleet and Technology, Facilities and Bus Shelters, Marketing, Planning and Mobility Management.
  - STIF Discretionary Grant: Supports the intercity service between The Dalles and Hood River.
  - 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities- this grant supports Dial-a-Ride operations.
  - 5311 Federal Grant- supports Dial-a-Ride, preventative maintenance, and administration.
- The LINK was approved for \$5000 Micro Grant- supports purchasing marketing supplies that we can give away at community events The LINK actively participates in. Materials would include reflective beanies, rechargeable flashlights, bike safety coloring material for kids, etc. We are waiting for the Grant Agreement to complete the formal acceptance.

### **Facilities:**

- The LINK has ordered 4 bus shelters. The installations sites are: One Community Health/ Mid-Columbia Center for Living, Water's Edge, Foley Lakes, DHS building in downtown The Dalles.
- Bus Shelter Construction Request for Quote (RFQ) went out via email. Responses are due by March 24, 2023.

### **Committee:**

- We are sad to note that Jim Holycross has passed away, leaving a PTAC vacancy. Committee discussion on recruitment is welcome.

**Ridership figures will be brought to the meeting.**

### **MCEDD Travel Training Program**

- **Gorge Transportation Workshop:** 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. Sara is facilitating a Gorge Transportation Workshop for the many Gorge Transit Connect partner organizations and staff. The focus is a basic toolkit of regional transit information for staff who work with clients facing transportation challenges.
- **Travel Training Videos:** The videography work continues with great footage of the transit centers, staff, and bus drivers, and beautiful drone footage of the bus routes throughout the Gorge. We lucked out with planning production on the rare sunny days in February. These videos are evergreen products that will assist the travel training program and will live on the new Travel Training webpage.
- Both Columbia Area Transit and The Link participate in the **Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation** grant project. Sara continues to grow the program with continued outreach to Veterans and the organizations that serve Veterans. Each Veteran has unique transportation needs that Sara addresses with public transportation and at times with the support of other partners like Circles of Care in Hood River and The Dalles.

### **Gorge Translink Alliance**

*MCEDD's Mobility Manager coordinates the Alliance which seeks to enhance regional connectivity and develop a seamless network of transportation services in the five-county region. These providers include Mt Adams Transportation Service (Klickitat County), Skamania County Transit, Columbia Area Transit (CAT), the Link (Wasco County), and Sherman County Community Transit.*

- **Operational Coordination:** Public transportation staff have initiated a series of workshops to align policies, design a universal rack card template for visual consistency of schedules and routes, and modify timetables to improve transfers between services.
- **GORge Pass Marketing:** The GORge Pass Marketing grant project built great momentum in 2022 and now 2023 pass sales are already surpassing expectations. 2023 pass has already sold three times more passes than the 2022 pass when comparing the first two months of sales for



both passes. To give another perspective on this increase, the gross sales for the first two months in 2022 were \$6,370.00 while the first two month's gross sales in 2023 were \$20,420. Fall 2022 and the current winter seasonal social media campaigns have driven a very high engagement rate with a total 3.6k clicks to the website and a reach of 156k to date. The number of followers on Instagram and Facebook are growing steadily, mostly due to the engaging videos produced by the marketing team. If you haven't seen those videos yet, take a quick look here: <https://www.youtube.com/@gorgepass864/videos> The most popular videos are those that highlight the towns of Cascade Locks and Stevenson and the video that shows a rider being whisked right to the departure and arrivals gates of the airport.

GOrge Passes Sold **First 2 months** of 2022 vs 2023:

	2022 (First 2 months)	<b>2023 (First 2 months)</b>
Passes Sold	170	<b>610</b>
Gross Sales	\$6,370.00	<b>\$20,420</b>

- **Gorge Regional Transit Strategy, Phase II:** Mobility Manager Kathy Fitzpatrick and the consultants are working on Memo #6, which will include input from the Key Initiatives Workshop, the Advisory Committee, the Stakeholder Advisory Group, and input from the boards of the decision-makers. This memo will summarize next steps, roles and responsibilities, related funding opportunities, constraints, and a combined rating of potential organizational scenarios.

