



To: MCEDD Board of Directors
Date: June 3, 2021
From: Kathy Fitzpatrick, Mobility Manager
Re: Mobility Management/Transportation Report

At the June Board Meeting, Kathy will present an overview of the Gorge Transit Strategy Phase 1 report (see slides that follow). Her regular quarterly Board report is presented below.

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.

Gorge Translink Alliance—Regional Projects

Over the last three months, the Gorge TransLink Alliance has been focused on two significant regional projects: the GOrge Pass and the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy.

The GOrge Pass is a universal fare system that will allow riders to use the fixed route services of Columbia Area Transit, The Link, Mt. Adams Transportation Services, and Skamania County Transit for one low annual fee. Riders can use a mobile pass on their smart phones or can purchase a physical card at any of the providers' offices.

The soft launch for the 2021 GOrge Pass is scheduled for July 1 of this year with the major launch currently in the planning process for the 2022 GOrge Pass. MCEDD received ODOT funding for the GOrge Pass Marketing project and is the lead organization.

This project has been highlighted as one of the highest priorities for stakeholders in many regional public transportation planning processes, including the 2019 Transportation Innovations project and the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy.



Gorge Regional Transit Strategy --The final Gorge Transit Strategy Working Group convened on May 26, 2021, to review the Foundations Memo and to provide final input on the collective regional transit vision statement and goals. *All work products and meeting materials are available at <https://gorgetranslink.com/gorge-transit-strategy/>.*

Phase II funding awarded: MCEDD received grant awards from the ODOT STIF Discretionary, WSDOT and ODOT 5304, and ODOT Region 4 State Planning and Research grant programs to fund Phase II of the Strategy, which will focus on a more detailed implementation strategy including further data analysis, ridership forecasts, financial planning, and deeper operational assessments.

Gorge Transit Strategy: Phase I



Gorge TransLink Alliance---Additional Grant Successes

The public transportation providers of the Gorge TransLink Alliance have also recently received grants that will significantly enhance the local and regional systems. The following are the grant award highlights. Providers also received grants for capital purchases for vehicles and to sustain existing services.

Skamania County Transit --Two new fixed route services

- Stevenson/Carson to Bingen
- Stevenson to Cascade Locks

These new routes will connect Skamania County with Klickitat County and Hood River County. This will be the first time that Skamania County is connected to the Mid-Columbia region by public transit.

These new routes will provide Skamania County residents with critical access to medical services, higher education, and workforce options.

Columbia Area Transit—Programs for underserved communities

- Medical Services Van (transport from the Gorge directly to medical services in Portland)
- Low Income Pass Program
- Bus stop at Wyeth Native American In-lieu Site

MCEDD—Projects of Regional Significance for Public Transportation

- Gorge Transit Strategy Phase II
- GOrge Pass Marketing
- Gorge TransLink Alliance Mobility Management Project

MATS

- Existing regional fixed routes received grant awards from a more sustainable funding source
- First Bus Shelter (thanks to match funding from the Port of Klickitat)

Sherman County

- Bus Barn
- Financial Planning and Strategies

The Gorge Transit Pass: Working towards a Universal Fare System

One of the highest priority strategies referred to frequently during the 2019 Transportation Innovations and currently during the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy stakeholder discussions is the development of a universal fare system. The Gorge TransLink Alliance members have been meeting since September 2020 to develop a low-cost annual pass system that will provide access to all the fixed route services in the Columbia Gorge provided by The Link Public Transit, Columbia Area Gorge, Mt. Adams Transportation Services, and Skamania County Transit. The first iteration of the pass is scheduled for a soft launch on July 1, 2021. The Gorge TransLink Alliance will continue to develop the pass program for a more robust launch in 2022.

Commute Options

MCEDD's Mobility Manager works with ODOT's Transportation Options department and with Commute Options, a nonprofit organization, to promote the Get There platform, a tool that can help large and small employers address commute issues and to support local use of active transportation modes. The month of May is National Bike Month and Kathy used the national recognition to promote Safe Routes to School activities and a Commute Options' Bike Challenge. This news article covered the multiple activities in Hood River County: [Cycling activities get rolling for May Bike Month | Gorge Life | columbiagorgenews.com](https://columbiagorgenews.com/cycling-activities-get-rolling-for-may-bike-month-gorge-life-columbiagorgenews-com)

Gorge Regional Transit Strategy

MCEDD Board of Directors 6/17/2021



Gorge Regional Transit Strategy

Phase 1 will build on the recommendations of existing transportation plans to establish a foundation for a comprehensive transit strategy serving the bi-state, 5-county MCEDD region.

Phase I Objectives

- Build Partnerships
- Complete Foundational Assessments
- Synthesize Existing Goals and Policies
- Develop a High-Level Regional Transit Vision

Gorge Transit Strategy: Phase I



February 2020

Working Group Session 1
*What regional challenges
can public transit
address?*
Survey #1

December 2020

Working Group Session 2
*Existing Framework:
Synthesize Plans
WG Vision/Goals*
Survey #2

January 2021

Working Group Session 3
*Gaps Analysis
Refinement of Vision and
Goals*

May 2021

Working Group Session 4
*Consensus on Vision and
Goals*

June-August 2021

Presentations to
Transportation Provider
Boards



Gorge Regional Transit Strategy Foundations Memo

One-Pass destinations education **visitors funding**
infrastructure **Seamless** costs **communities** **congestion**
options MultnomahFalls Washington
lifeline bi-state demand-response people
schedules **Easy** wifi **Connectivity** equitable tourism
service Communication Urban Stable housing financial
Reliable culture Connect race safety all ride free carfree electric
appointments workforce ADA river lands Linkage transit-dependent
public fixed-route accessible areas fixed convenient Trimet park rural
frequency Available integration Integrated visitation enhance
transit bus employees efficiently Klickitat funded
Shuttle efficient facilities coordinated bus-stops
Portland employment shuttle-service multi-modal livable
services Intercity recreational
affordable partnership partners **recreation** sustainable accessibility
Federal-Lands

- Summarizes the work accomplished
 - Grounded with Stakeholder input
 - Highlights the Vision and Goals

Vision and Goals (draft)

Public transit allows Gorge communities to thrive by providing access to critical services, higher education, jobs, and outdoor recreation while protecting the natural wonders of the Gorge.

Goal Areas

Community and Economic Vitality

Public transit in the Gorge supports community and economic vitality by enhancing economic and housing development, the multimodal transportation system, workforce mobility, and regional resiliency.

High Quality Service and Experience

Public transit in the Gorge provides all residents and visitors with seamless and equitable access to community resources and to key connection points.

Environmental Stewardship

Public transit in the Gorge protects the natural environment in the Columbia Gorge.

Financial Sustainability

Public transit in the Gorge is financially sustainable, expanding operations with increased capacity and new funding sources.

Celebrating Current Successes

Gorge Transit: Existing and Proposed Routes



Celebrating Current Successes

Gorge Transit: Existing and Proposed Routes



Celebrating Current Successes

GOrgo Pass
July 2021

GOrgo Pass
Marketing
Launch
Nov 2021





Gorge Transit Strategy Phase II Objectives

In a nutshell:

- Operationalize the Vision
- Identify and prioritize implementation actions to achieve the vision

A few of the details:

- Public engagement plan
- Baseline operational assessment
- Preferred options for regional transit future (mapped with high-level costs)
- Policy changes
- Funding strategies
- Organizational approaches
- Simple public-facing final document

Gorge Transit Strategy: Phase II Schedule



Present --July 1, 2021

Develop SOW and
RFP

After July 1, 2021

Release RFP

Fall 2021

Notice to Proceed

Working toward
deliverables!

June 2022

Phase II Completed





Gorge Transit Strategy Phase II Public Involvement Plan

Project Management Team

Overall guidance and project management

- ODOT
- WSDOT
- MCEDD
- Transit Providers

Advisory Committee

Project guidance, deliverables review, policy guidance

- Transportation providers
- SW WA RTC
- Local governments (transportation and land use planners)
- Tribal representative
- Human Service agencies

Stakeholder Advisory Group

Strategic direction on deliverables

- Working Group participants

Questions? Comments?





Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

To: MCEDD Board of Directors
From: Kate Drennan, Deputy Director of Transportation
Date: June 4, 2021
Re: **Transportation Activities Report**

Transportation Administration Board (TAB)

Action Needed: Motion and vote to approve dissolution of the TAB.

- The TAB was created in late 2017 as MCEDD prepared to take on administration of The Link Public Transportation. The creation was spurred by concern that the Executive Committee or Full Board would be inundated in transit-related issues and that similar to the Loan Administration Board, a new committee with transit expertise could be created to intercept issues and make recommendations to the Executive Committee. In recent years the TAB has fluctuated in membership as MCEDD Board Members and other transportation advocates.
- Over time, work of the TAB has become redundant to two other transportation-related Committees that MCEDD staffs:
 - The Deputy Director of Transportation convenes the **Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee** (PTAC), which provides recommendations on service options for The Link particularly related to seniors, disabled, low-income and limited English proficiency populations. The Wasco County PTAC is advisory to the Wasco County Board of County Commissioners. PTAC members are appointed by Wasco County and include transportation advocates for the target populations noted, as well as the MCEDD Transportation Operations Manager.
 - The MCEDD Mobility Manager convenes the **Gorge Translink Alliance**, an alliance from the five-county region “rural transportation providers, human service organizations and public planning agencies seeking to enhance connectivity and develop a seamless network of transportation services within the Mid-Columbia River Gorge area.
- Given the existence and role of the other transportation-related committees providing feedback and recommendations, the TAB voted to recommend the dissolution of the Committee to the MCEDD Board.

The Link Transportation

Operations

- New Services: We added two new bus stops to our deviated fixed route service. One stop will serve One Community Health to better serve a growing population of riders accessing this destination. The second stop serves the Pallet Housing Shelter off Bargeway Road.
- Jesus is working with a local charter high school to accommodate transporting local students to CGCC for classes, helping adapt our schedule to fill a crucial community need that the school district wasn't able to accommodate at this time.

- GOrge Pass: Beginning July 1, the GOrge pass will have a soft marketing launch and be accepted on the CAT, The Link Fixed Route, Skamania County and Mount Adams Transportation lines. MCEDD will receive 10% of sales revenue and will track use of the card. The Pass will be accepted on our Blue and Red lines, but not on Dial-A-Ride services.
 - The Link recently refreshed our rack cards to include our new stop schedule and information about the GOrge Pass.



What does "Deviated Plant Route" mean?

For live specimens using a 4-hour wait a regular schedule, but you can leave the road for "off-hours" start-ups or pick-up. The number of observations don't need to be limited and mix schedules in advance by calling 1-800-288-7999.

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=1541296-7595

- Low-income Pass Program: Columbia Area Transit received a grant from the Columbia Gorge Health Council to provide passes to low-income residents of both Hood River and Wasco Counties. Kate and Jesus will do ticket packet handoffs to our community service providers, including: the Veterans Service Office, Mid-Columbia Community Action Programs, DHS Action Team, Columbia Gorge Community College, Mid-Columbia Housing Authority, Gorge Grown, and The Next Door Inc. We plan to tag the passes to track ticket utilization amongst our partners.

- Wasco County Transit Development Plan (TDP): The project has kicked off with data gathering and existing conditions work. MCEDD will be reaching out to community members and stakeholders to invite them to participate in the Project Advisory Committee over the coming few weeks.
- We have hired a part-time driver Robbyn who had previously driven for the Link before retiring. We are excited to welcome her back on staff. We are also in the process of hiring a full-time and part-time driver to backfill positions and expand service on Saturdays.

Grants

- The Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee has provided a recommendation to Wasco County to award the FTA 5310 funds for public transportation services to MCEDD/ The Link following a competitive procurement process.
- We've received word that the other grants supporting The Link (FTA 5311, Special Transportation Fund, STIF Formula Funds) have been approved by the Oregon Transportation Commission, but we have not yet seen contracts. These begin July 1.

Physical Assets

- We expect the new buses we ordered to start arriving on June 16th. We are gathering quotes for bus wraps and other branding.
- We had a catalytic converter stolen off one of our buses in both April and May. In April, the converter was stolen while our vehicle gate was inoperable. The gate has since been fixed. In May, the thief cut a hole through our hurricane fence. The fence has been repaired and the converters have been replaced. Security cameras captured images of the thefts but without enough identifiable details to be actionable by police. We have been collecting estimates for installing catalytic converter shields or cages to help prevent future theft.

Mobility Management Items

- ODOT formally approved grant awards mid-May. MCEDD will receive funds to continue funding the mobility management work of Kathy Fitzpatrick, along with an additional MCEDD employee to help with program development, deployment, and travel training on The Link and CAT buses. The same grants will fund Phase 2 of the Gorge Transit Strategy, including a combined \$200k from ODOT and WSDOT for consultant services to assist with the Strategy.
- Regional Marketing: MCEDD posted an RFP for a statement of services for the GOrgo Pass Marketing Campaign. The grant includes \$240,000 for consultant services to provide marketing services around regional transit messaging, branding, advertising, creation of collateral, distribution of passes, and so on. Four marketing firms responded with proposals and the team hopes to select the winning consultant team in early June.
- MCEDD continues to engage in the Vision Around the Mountain effort to better coordinate transit systems around Mt. Hood. The project team is finalizing the framework and implementation strategy.
- Working with the Gorge Native American Collaboration, Kathy has provided transit informational materials for distribution at events to spread information about public transportation services to the in-lieu sites. Kathy coordinated transport for the Native Americans living at the in-lieu and Fishing Access Treaty sites between the vaccination scheduling outreach team and the local public transit agencies to vaccine appointments within a 7-county area.



Executive Director's Report

Prepared for the June 2021 Full Board Meeting

For items not reported elsewhere in the meeting

CEDS Update

- Our five-year update of the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is proceeding well! We have had monthly meetings of the CEDS Steering Committee to guide our work. Two of our sessions have benefited by free research assistance from the EDA University Center at the University of Oregon. We are using themes of resiliency and equitable outcomes to inform our work.
 - Our first CEDS Session on March 31 had around 65 people for the COVID-19 presentation. Two breakout discussions were held around recovery and becoming more resilient. Jane Allen presented a draft of her Needs Assessment and the University of Oregon presented research on COVID-19 impacts on the region.
 - Our second CEDS Session on April 28 had about 60 people to focus on Demographics and Economic Data. Wasco County Chair Scott Hege provided an overview of Wasco County and then Scott Bailey and Dallas Fridley presented their data. The event ended with small group discussions about the data presented.
 - Our third CEDS Session on May 26 had about 52 attendees to focus on an analysis of our key industry sectors.. Skamania County Chair Tom Lannen provided an overview of Skamania County and then the University of Oregon presented research on our key industries, areas of innovation, and suggested a focus for the future. The event ended with small group discussions about the data presented.
 - The next meeting on June 30 will develop the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis.
 - We are also exploring options with The Next Door, Inc. on separate focus groups with Latinx and Native American communities in the Gorge to ensure we are engaging these populations.
 - ***Feedback from Board members who attended the sessions is welcome! Thank you for your engagement!***

Regional

- We held a May 6 meeting of the Mid-Columbia Economic Resiliency Team meeting to review funding opportunities coming from the federal and state governments and to discuss using the group to implement the COVID-19 Needs Analysis being prepared by Jane Allen and Carrie Pipinich.
- I submitted comments to Wasco County on behalf of MCEDD related to their consideration of not implementing a National Scenic Area ordinance. Not implementing an ordinance would mean Wasco County loses eligibility for OIB funding which would negatively impact MCEDD's contract with OIB. I also supported OIB in submitting their own letter.
- We completed our semi-annual reporting to the EDA on our two planning grants (regular and CARES). We have been reaching out to our local partners to ensure they are ready for any

federal funding package and reviewed the EDA's latest priorities with EDA staff at the April meeting of the Oregon Economic Development Districts.

- I have had discussions with Gorge Grown Food Network about how we can support the region in working towards a successful food infrastructure grant request to USDA.
- My work with Oregon Economic Development Districts has been busy, with meetings around statewide coordination of our broadband efforts and coordination of our COVID-19 action plans. We are also considering applying to The Ford Family Foundation for a capacity building grant for the organization that would allow OEDD to fund contracted staff support to spur the work of the entity forward. OEDD is also part of an Oregon statewide economic development mapping project.
- I engaged in regional outreach with a presentation to the Port of The Dalles Commission, the White Salmon Rotary, Hood River Lions, and met with the new Executive Director of Visit Hood River (the new name of the Hood River Chamber).

Business Assistance

- As approved at the March Board meeting, I applied to defederalize our EDA Revolving Loan Fund. We received approval a few months later. The lower amount of reporting every six months will be a welcome change.
- I finalized the five-year update of the Economic Vitality Plan, which informs the work of the Bi-State Advisory Council. The Council is made up of the Oregon and Washington Investment Boards as well as staff from the Gorge Commission and USFS. The Council approved the plan on May 12. I have sent it to Business Oregon and Washington Department of Commerce for their signatures and forwarding to the USFS for their final approval. I'll be presenting the plan to the Gorge Commission, likely in August.
- I supported Hood River County in recruiting a new representative to the Oregon Investment Board and supported their selection of Gil Kelley. We are now waiting on the Governor's appointment.

Facilities and Operations

- I was pleased to welcome Jesus Mendoza, Transportation Operations Manager, in March and Kate Drennan, Deputy Director of Transportation in April. They have been receiving training and support and are taking off in management of the transportation program.
- I conducted evaluations for Jill Brandt (3 months) and Ami Beaver (6 months at new position).
- Lauren Hernandez helped us update our COVID-19 travel procedures and I completed an update of our COVID-19 procedures overall. We did have a positive case in the office and several staff had to quarantine. As of June 7, we are allowing no masking for employees and visitors with proof of vaccination. Staff who have been fully working from home will be returning at least two days per week as of June 21.
- I participated in a half-day Leadership Essentials training webinar provided by HR Answers and appreciated the information.
- We signed the contract and sent in the deposit for our new financial software Caselle. The company has started to reach out about implementation!



Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

Executive Committee Report

June 2021

The MCEDD Executive Committee met in April, May and June to address business of the District. The activities of the committee included the following:

- Heard an update from Rye Development on the Goldendale Pumped Storage project.
- Discussed the purpose of the Transportation Administration Board (TAB) and recommended to the Board the dissolution of the TAB.
- Conducted a salary survey for all positions. The committee discussed the process, and then a subcommittee reviewed data collected by staff and made recommendations to the committee for adjustments. The committee made a recommendation to the Board through the FY22 budget process and recommended that salaries be reviewed on annual basis to ensure we are staying competitive. Additional information can be shared if desired.
- Approved grant applications for the RARE position and with Oregon Community Foundation to support entrepreneurs.
- Discussed how MCEDD could be involved in several regional initiatives including, transportation, housing and the USDA grant for National Scenic Area funds.
 - Suggested staff bring back Connect Mid-Columbia to answer regional desires for transportation project collaboration.
 - Approved staff getting involved in regional housing conversations and requesting ARPA funds from our counties to support the work.
 - Approved the plan for the USDA Rural Business Development Grant for the National Scenic Area.
- Discussed outreach ideas and then the sole proposal for the auditor.
- Discussed when MCEDD Board and Committee meetings might resume in person. The suggestion was that committees might resume more quickly than the large full Board.



To: MCEDD Board of Directors

Date: June 4, 2021

From: Carrie Pipinich, Deputy Director of Economic Development

Re: Project Management Report

Broadband and Economic Resilience

- **Mobile Classroom:** With support from the Rural Business Development Grant from USDA RD and a Business Oregon Rural Opportunity Initiative Grant staff has developed a mobile training lab that would allow for improved video of training sessions while using an online meeting platform to support remote attendance when in person events are safe again. This will also support MCEDD in hosting hybrid virtual/in person meetings in the conference room unless it is needed to support a training session.
- Staff met with Petrichor, the consultants completing the Skamania County Broadband Needs Assessment, funded by CERB, to discuss their approach and next steps for the project. Staff is exploring strategies to support mapping efforts in Klickitat County that will better define gaps in service availability and costs to close them.
- Staff is participating in a Q-Life Strategic Planning process on broadband in Wasco County.
- Staff has been engaging with a group of broadband action teams in Oregon to share lessons learned and opportunities to support addressing the digital divide.
- Staff worked with Sherman County and Wasco County stakeholders to submit four projects to Business Oregon's Request for Information related to broadband projects. These included support for a communications tower at Cottonwood Canyon, expansion of Sherman County's solar repeater trailer network to increase coverage, Q-Life's Cascadia East Interconnection Point project and expansion of fiber based broadband services in South Wasco County.
- Staff is reviewing NTIA's recently published Notice of Funding Availability for its new Broadband Infrastructure Program to better understand opportunities for investment in the region. Staff is working closely with Q-Life to explore the viability of this resource to support the South Wasco County Fiber Expansion process.
- Staff met with the Early Learning Hub Director Christa Rude to discuss opportunities for engagement in addressing childcare access challenges in the region.
- Staff participated in meetings with the RARE program to discuss opportunities for collaboration across economic development districts participating in the RARE program with a focus on economic resilience in the coming year. Staff submitted a community application and position description as well as a grant request to The Ford Family Foundation to support this work at MCEDD.

Wasco County Economic Development Commission (EDC):

- **COVID-19 Response:** Staff has completed a second round of intake with Northern Wasco County PUD to support their small business utility bill relief program. Staff processed 73 applications and supported approximately \$34,000 total in bill reduction to businesses. The PUD is interested in issuing a third round of business support and staff is working with them to update the program requirements for a relaunch.
- In partnership with CGCC and the Port of The Dalles, the Wasco County EDC is beginning work with the Center on Rural Innovation to conduct an assessment and strategy development

April and bids were opened May 27. The District only received one bid and it was \$800,000 over the budget for the project, so staff is working with the District and engineer to determine options and potential sources of funding.

City of Hood River Stormwater Line Replacement: The City has requested MCEDD's support in training their staff on grant/loan administration procedures for state and federal funding contracts. MCEDD proposed supporting the City with administration and concurrent training of City staff over a few projects. The City has secured DEQ funding for the first phase of their stormwater line replacement project (completed). USDA is uncertain that they will be able to provide any grant funding since this is a stormwater project, so staff have been helping the City identify other sources of funding. An application to Business Oregon's Water-Wastewater program is currently in development and is expected to be submitted soon. This funding, along with additional DEQ loan funds would be used to support the costs of Phase 2 of the project which the City would like to start this year if possible. Staff will continue working with the City on identifying funding for Phases 3 and 4 of the project.

Economic Resilience

COVID-19 Business Grant Program: Wasco County received \$360,000 in CARES Act funds from the state to support small businesses affected by the County's move to Extreme Risk starting April 30. Staff worked with the County to revise the business grant program from December with new priorities based on impacts to sectors in moving to Extreme Risk. Staff implemented the revised program, with applications opening May 7 and closing May 16. After initial review, it was determined there were still funds available, so the application was opened for another four days. Staff are currently working on final review and processing of awards but expect to make awards to over 60 businesses in the county.

Business Resiliency: Staff have been working with Immense Imagery to refine previously recorded videos of the training sessions. In addition, MCEDD has contracted with Blue Marble Creative (graphic design) to create a template for a business profile that will be used to highlight regional businesses and their resiliency. Staff have started interviewing local businesses for these profiles. MCEDD is also working with Gorge Web Design to update the MCEDD website to better reflect the resiliency work we do.

MCEDD staff worked with The Next Door, Inc. and the Oregon SBDC to host a series of four business training sessions in Spanish in May. The sessions were well attended and much appreciated by participants. This completed a series of trainings hosted over the last year on business resilience and incorporating broadband based tools. The series and content developed reached almost 200 businesses in the region, who learned new skills in topics such as cyber security, digital marketing, accessing capital, and business preparedness. These efforts were funded through a USDA RD Oregon Rural Business Development Grant and Business Oregon's Rural Opportunity Initiative program.



To: MCEDD Board of Directors

Date: May 28, 2021

From: Marla Harvey, Energy Coordinator

Re: Program Manager Report

Regional Renewable Energy Coordination:

- **Columbia Gorge Bi-State Renewable Energy Zone (CGBREZ):** Staff supported a CGBREZ meeting focused on the role of the federal hydro-electric dam system in the Columbia River Gorge and Douglas County Public Utility District's renewable hydrogen production facility.
- **Goldendale Energy Exchange:** Staff is coordinating with project proponents driving efforts for a combined-heat and power plant and community microgrid in Goldendale that could provide energy to the hospital and school district, among others. The group discussed funding and project development opportunities through the Economic Development Administration. Project proponents secured \$3 million in funding from the state to procure a fuel cell, diesel generator, electrical upgrades, and feasibility studies to investigate a district heating system and microgrid supporting a Goldendale hospital and school.

Hood River County Energy Council Coordination:

- **Energy Resilience Planning:** Staff submitted deliverables to complete the Hood River County Energy Resilience Planning project supported by the Energy Trust of Oregon. The project focused on better defining the value of energy resilience and exploring strategies for implementation. Staff was invited to present the findings of this project at a Solar Oregon Wine Tour, a Solar Oregon webinar, and a Sustainable Northwest workshop on the value of energy resilience. Deliverables included:
 - A report that summarizes the value of energy resilience in the face of a 3-hour, 3-day and 2-week grid disturbance for 8 diverse businesses representing agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. These are three of the most significant industry sectors in Hood River County. In addition to business interviews, staff interviewed an insurance provider. The report will be available after Energy Trust of Oregon internal review.
 - Providing examples of electrical de-energization Hazard Annexes that the Emergency Manager could use as a template if capacity or resources permitted creating one to address potential impacts of a public safety power shut off in the County.
 - Compiled updates from prioritized facilities on Hood River County's Critical Facilities and Infrastructure list, including information on backup power, seismic readiness, and up-to-date contact information. This will allow Hood River County and the Energy Council to identify important gaps in existing infrastructure and prioritize facilities for future investment and technical assistance.
 - A report on potential funding resources to support energy related project investments.
- **Meyer Memorial Trust Foundation:** MCEDD was awarded a two-year \$120,000 grant focused on increasing capacity for Energy Council Work Plan implementation. The grant will provide funding to work with a community-based organization (CBO) to co-develop strategies

to increase access to energy efficiency resources among low-income and Latinx communities. Staff is developing project scopes and Request for Qualifications for this effort.

- **Public Safety Power Shutoffs:** Staff supported Hood River County in submitting comments to the Public Utility Commission regarding their Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) interim rules and utility ignition plans. Specifically, staff highlighted the opportunity and gathered information for county stakeholders to consider in crafting comments, as well as coordinated and participated in a conversation with PUC staff and a County Commissioner. The County's comments were heavily referenced during PUC discussions.
- **Affordable Housing:** Staff connected the City of Hood River and their development consultant to resources to incorporate energy resilience strategies into the City supported housing development efforts at Rand Road. Opportunities included Energy Trust of Oregon incentives and an electric car-share grant application.
- **Energy Resilience Curriculum:** Staff and Energy Trust of Oregon met with Columbia Gorge Community College (CGCC) staff to discuss opportunities to support energy workforce development. CGCC is interested in working with Energy Trust of Oregon and others in developing energy efficiency curriculum as part of its new construction tech program.
- **Business Energy Audits:** Staff introduced Oregon Department of Energy staff working on a new statewide rural and agricultural business energy audit program to local utilities and stakeholders to help develop the program. Staff also discussed opportunities to collaborate on outreach for the program once available and data sharing from the energy audits.
- **Energy Council project funding:** In coordination with Energy Council members and the Energy Trust of Oregon, staff supported Commissioner Perkins in submitting the nine solar plus storage feasibility studies for legislative funding consideration as the state considers allocation of \$780 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Staff also supported Energy Council discussion on strategies to “ready” local energy projects for additional federal funds, should it become available.
- **Governing Body Presentations:** Staff presented on Energy Council progress and the value of energy resilience to businesses faced with power outages to the Port of Hood River. Staff and the Energy Trust of Oregon are scheduled to present to the City of Hood River soon.
- **Energy Council Policy Approach:** Staff helped develop a streamlined approach to Energy Council engagement on energy policy related topics to increase process transparency and reduce capacity required to implement, while maintaining the Energy Council’s role as an “advisory” body. The strategy will be reviewed by the Hood River County governing bodies who adopted the Energy Plan before implementation.



To: MCEDD Board of Directors

Date: June 2, 2021

From: Alice zaWitt, Project Manager

Re: Project Management Report

Economic Resilience

- **Recovery Plan Monitoring:** Staff have monitored emerging guidance and opportunities from the American Recovery Act as part of MCEDD's EDA CARES ACT Planning Recovery Grant to ensure that opportunities for funding are understood and applied for in MCEDD's region. Staff met with regional tourism representatives to discuss potential projects that may fit this resource. In May, staff wrote letters of support for partners across the region seeking funds for Travel Oregon's Competitive & Recovery Grant Program, which sought to support economic recovery by investing in projects that enhance and expand the visitor experience and prepare communities and visitors for COVID-19 safe travel. The following projects in MCEDD's region were funded through this grant program:
 - **Maupin Area Chamber Endowment (\$100,000)** to install a regulation eight-lane polyurethane track and related spectator facilities replacing the current track located on South Wasco County School District property.
 - **MountNbarreL (\$13,266)** for hand, fruit and vehicle sanitation systems and safety messaging in order to offer a COVID-19 appropriate visitor experience.
 - **Mt. Hood Outfitters (\$12,760)** to construct an onsite boat storage building to provide a safer and more efficient way for boat renters to have access to watercraft recreation at Trillium Lake.
 - **Port of Cascade Locks (\$99,998)** for parking lot and trail improvements to ease congestion on the Easy CLiMB family-friendly mountain bike trail in Cascade Locks.
 - **Port of Hood River (\$40,000)** to improve the visitor experience by increasing safety and expanding water access and amenities along the Hood River waterfront.
 - **Port of The Dalles (\$45,230)** to improve safety and infrastructure, including launch ramp repairs and wayfinding enhancements, at The Dalles Marina.

Wasco County Economic Development Commission (EDC):

- **The Dalles Brownfield Program:** Staff continue to support the City of The Dalles' Coalition Brownfield Assessment Grant with partners from Wasco County, The City of The Dalles, the Port of The Dalles, Regional Solutions, and Business Oregon. Staff started to implement the Public Involvement Plan developed earlier in the year by identifying outreach opportunities and developing necessary materials for these efforts. Additionally, staff supported building the Expanded Brownfields Advisory Committee. A first meeting of the Brownfield Advisory Committee will be held on June 17, with the focus on introducing the Committee to the grant goals and timeline and getting feedback on the draft project priorities and outreach plans. After the priorities are approved by the Committee, staff will begin promoting the Brownfields Assessment program more broadly and support targeted outreach to potential users of the program.

Hood River County Economic Development Group (EDG):

- The Cascade Locks-Hood River Enterprise Zone, which provides three-to-five-year local property tax exemptions for businesses on new investments, was designated in 2010 and will sunset on June 30, 2021 unless renewed. Staff supported coordination with the zone sponsors (County of Hood River, City of Hood River, Port of Hood River, Port of Cascade Locks, and the City of Cascade Locks) through Hood River County EDG and Business Oregon to move through the process to redesignate the Enterprise Zone. Because of changes in the economic criteria required by the State to qualify the zone, the areas included in the re-designated enterprise zone will be smaller than the existing zone. A public meeting with all taxing entities affected was held in mid-May as part of the process. Staff is working closely with the sponsors to support formal adoption and developing the final application package for submission.

Gorge Technology Alliance (GTA):

- **Events:** GTA events continue to be held mostly virtually to meet COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. Most events are recorded and posted to the GTA YouTube channel for members who are not able to make the live events.
 - In April, Rob Coatney of Zepher Flight Lab (and 2020 GTA Tech Leader of the Year) gave a Geek Lunch on his career and work developing the ZF1.
 - GTA continues to host virtual, bi-monthly coffee chats for the human resources and recruiting staff of member and sponsor companies, which has provided an important platform for tech companies in the region to navigate the impacts on businesses and workers from the pandemic. May's meeting included a presentation from Commute Options to ensure that tech employers in the region are aware of available incentives for alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles.
 - The Gorge Women in STEM (GWIS) group hosted a virtual film screening of the film *Picture a Scientist* in partnership with the Columbia Gorge STEM Hub for Oregon STEM Week in May. The GWIS also hosted its first in-person event since the start of the pandemic in early June. The event, a small happy-hour, was held outside in accordance with public health guidelines. The GTA Board has started discussing opportunities to reconvene members in-person over the summer as restrictions allow.
- **Board Updates:** Elections for three positions on the GTA's Board were held in late April. Three candidates ran for and were elected to the open positions. Erica Bogard of Sigma Design and Christy Christopher of the Columbia Gorge STEM Hub were elected to second terms on the Board, and Beth Alcouloumre of Trillium Engineering filled a position previously held by Michael Graham of Real Carbon. Additional Board turnover has occurred, including the election by the Board to fill the remainder of Brad Schrick's term with Brock Bonte of Jentay Group and to fill the remainder of Mark Bauman's seat with Ali Faddis, both of Insitu. Officer elections were held at the May Board meeting and the same officer slate was maintained for the 2021-2022 election year.
- **Corwin Hardham Memorial Scholarship:** Annually, the GTA awards a \$2,000 scholarship to one high school senior from the Gorge who are graduating from high school, home school or receiving a GED and pursuing post-secondary degrees in the fields of science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM). The scholarship committee met to review the seven applications received for the 2021 scholarship, and selected Grace Guertin of Hood River Valley High School. Grace has been a key part of the high school's robotics team and will attend the University of Oregon in the fall, double majoring in Business and Computer Information Sciences.



To: MCEDD Board of Directors
From: Jacque Schei, Project Manager
Date: June 2, 2021
Re: Project Manager's Report

Grant Administration/Labor Standards Projects

For the following projects, Jacque serves as a main contact to coordinate grant activities, ensures grant recipients meet the conditions of the grant contract, monitors progress of the project, and ensures that contractors fulfill contractual obligations.

Crystal Springs Water District (CSWD) Mid-Valley Reservoir: CSWD has been awarded funds from the Safe Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund (SDWRLF; \$6,144,200 loan and \$530,000 forgivable loan) for the mid-valley reservoir and replacement of 13,000 feet of pipe. Construction on Phase 2 started in November 2020 and is expected to be complete by November 2021.

CSWD South Valley Reservoir: CSWD has received funding from the SDWRLF (\$2,717,000 loan and \$280,000 forgivable loan) to construct a reservoir for the south half of the District. Bids for construction were opened in January. The lowest responsible bidder was Moore Excavation, Inc. The amount of the bid was approximately \$1.1 million over the available project funding. Staff has been working with the District and Business Oregon to discuss funding options. The District will present a request to the IFA Board in August to increase SDW loan funds to cover the gap.

CSWD Odell Water Company Consolidation: Funding from the SDWRLF to support the District in consolidation of its water system with the Odell Water Company (OWC) has been contingent upon a sale agreement between the District and OWC. An agreement was finalized in late February 2021. As part of that agreement, the District will take over an existing SDW loan with OWC. It is likely that Business Oregon will amend that agreement to add the planned funds for the improvements to the system proposed by the District. Once that agreement is final, MCEDD will provide grant administration (already contracted).

City of Cascade Locks Wastewater System Improvements: The City has received interim funding (\$4,456,600) from Oregon Department of Environmental Quality under the Clean Water State Revolving Fund program to perform wastewater system upgrades to their aging system, including repair and rehabilitation of collection system deficiencies, improvements to the main wastewater lift station, and improvements to the treatment facility. Long term financing will be provided by USDA Rural Development. MCEDD has an agreement with the City to support grant administration and labor standards management for the project. In April, staff worked with the City to develop and submit an application for the CDBG program. A decision on an award is expected at the end of June.

Biggs Service District Water System Improvements: Biggs Service District was awarded a loan/grant (\$1,560,000 loan; \$535,500 grant) by USDA Rural Development for improvements to its water system, including drilling of a new well, construction of a new pump station and reservoir, installation of distribution and service lines, valves, and meters for water users. Well construction and testing of the well was completed in late November. A bid advertisement was published in late

around opportunities to increase the share of the digital economy in the County's firm and job creation. This effort is being supported by Google.

- Staff has begun the process to update the EDC's five-year Strategic Action Plan in conjunction with the CEDS update. The June EDC meeting focused on data, demographics, asset mapping, and a SWOT analysis.
- Staff on-boarded two new EDC Commissioners, Brian McCormick from the Mosier area as well as Amy McNamee from South Wasco County.
- Staff supported several grant applications to Travel Oregon's Competitive and Recovery Grant pool, including City of Maupin for Kaiser Park Improvements and the Wasco County Fairgrounds for improving accessibility and modernizing their bathroom facilities. The Kaiser Park application was successful in accessing funding!
- The EDC provided letters of support for several congressionally directed spending requests.

Sherman County Economic Development:

- Staff has been supporting resource identification for Biggs Service District to address wastewater planning needs as well as resources for managing the system moving forward.
- Staff developed two additional housing incentive programs focused on property preparation (demolition, abatement, and utility extension) and new unit construction for ownership. These have been reviewed and revised by the Housing Grant Review Committee and the County Court and are being considered for adoption shortly.
- Staff processed three successful housing grant program applications, two for the New Rental Housing Grant and one for the Housing Rehab Grant. There is an additional application that has been submitted for the Rehab Grant that staff is processing as well.
- Staff has continued to participate in the John Day River Territory's Management Team to represent Sherman County. The group developed a transition plan for its management to be provided by the largest Chambers of Commerce in the region, the Condon Chamber and the Grant County Chamber. They will manage the brand moving forward with input from an advisory committee representing the region.
- Staff continues to support Little Wheats as they begin implementation of their business planning.
- Staff is working with the Wasco Event Center to define support needs for strategic planning and capital campaign development to support critical building maintenance.

Additional Items:

- **Conferences and Trainings:** Staff attended a Business Retention and Expansion training offered by the Oregon Economic Development Association, an Entrepreneurship Led Economic Development training offered by the International Economic Development Council, and a Financial Assistance Workshop focused on federal financial assistance
- Staff completed an annual review for Project Manager Jacque Schei.