



**FISCAL YEAR 2022  
ANNUAL REPORT**

# A WORD FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the annual report for MCEDD's Fiscal Year 2022! We prepare this report to share a summary of our work with our Board, committees and regional partners. While we still had CARES funding in FY22 that impacted our work, much of our services returned to a pre-COVID level of normal this year. We continued to seek new ways to deliver on our core competencies of high quality technical assistance, business assistance and regional collaboration. Significant milestones and accomplishments in fiscal year 2022 include:

- Completion of the five-year **Columbia Gorge Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy** with adoption of the plan in March 2022 after almost a year of public meetings.
- Deployment of **CARES funding** from the US EDA in support of business websites, our chambers in the region, industry associations, several partners, grant writing workshops, and more.
- Launching a region-wide **broadband speed test** to gather data needed for federal and state grants.
- Providing **technical assistance for our members** accessing federal funding for public works projects across our five counties.
- Launch of the **Gorge Regional Transit Strategy Phase 2** to operationalize the vision for the regional Gorge TransLink public transportation system set in Phase 1.
- Completing the **Wasco County Transit Development Plan** to guide investment and improvements for the next 20 years.
- Providing **direct business assistance** through our loan programs (MCEDD, Mount Hood Economic Alliance, Oregon Investment Board) of almost \$670,000 in funding this fiscal year to businesses.
- **Expanding available business loan funds by \$2.67 Million** for the region through MCEDD, Oregon and Washington Investment Boards.

We invite you to explore this annual report, which provides a snapshot of the resources MCEDD delivered to our service area in fiscal year 2022. The strength and history of collaboration in the Mid-Columbia region that keeps us optimistic for the future of the region. It is only through the support of our members and partners that we are able to accomplish this work, and we are so grateful for your engagement!

Sincerely,



Bob Hamlin  
MCEDD Board Chair



Jessica Metta  
MCEDD Executive Director

802 Chenoweth Loop Road  
The Dalles, Oregon 97058  
[www.mcedd.org](http://www.mcedd.org)

MCEDD is an equal opportunity  
Employer, Lender and Provider.

# ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) was established in 1969 by five counties bordering the Columbia River: Hood River, Wasco and Sherman Counties in Oregon and Skamania and Klickitat Counties in Washington. MCEDD is governed by a Board of Directors representing public and private interests throughout the region.

## 2022 Board of Directors

**Bob Hamlin, Chair**  
Skamania County

**David Griffith**  
Oregon Ports

**Robert Kimmes**  
Healthcare

**Steve Kramer, Vice Chair**  
Wasco County

**Mike Foreaker**  
Cities of Wasco County

**Dr. Marta Yera Cronin**  
Higher Education

**Leana Kinley, Sec/Treas.**  
Cities of Skamania County

**Jan Brending**  
Cities of Klickitat County

**Scott Clements**  
Private Business

**David Sauter**  
Klickitat County

**Mark Zanmiller**  
Cities of Hood River County

**Ken Bailey**  
Agriculture

**Les Perkins**  
Hood River County

**Erik Glover**  
Cities of Sherman County

**Eric Proffitt**  
Workforce

**Joe Dabulskis**  
Sherman County

**Tonya Brumley**  
Oregon Chambers

**Ryan O'Connor**  
High Tech

**Pat Albaugh**  
Washington Ports

**Jonathan Lewis**  
Washington Chambers

**Buck Jones**  
Food and Beverage

## MCEDD Staff

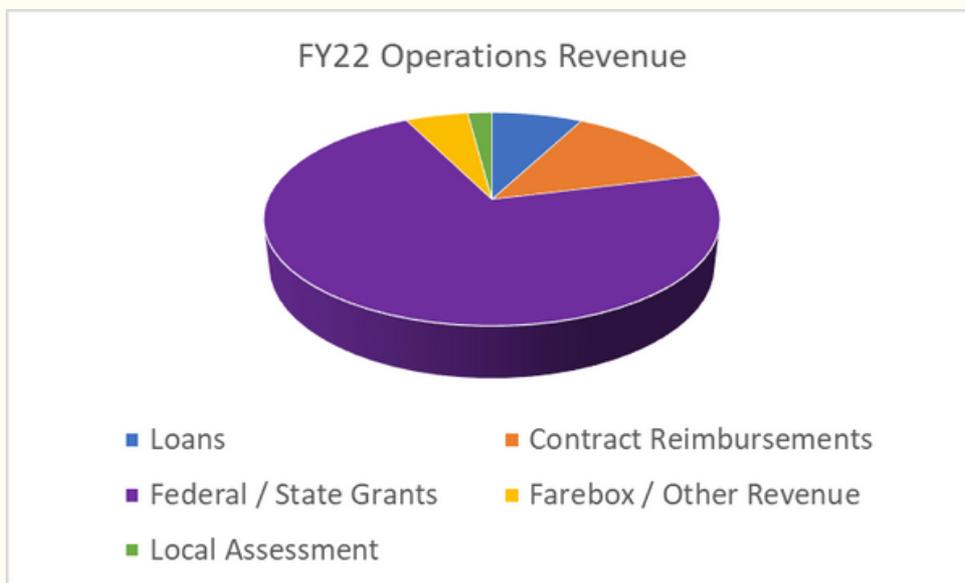
A professional staff provides business assistance, technical assistance and regional coordination for the five-county bi-state area of the Columbia River Gorge

**Jessica Metta**, Executive Director  
**Carrie Pipinich**, Deputy Director of Economic Development  
**Kate Drennan**, Deputy Director of Transportation  
**Dana Woods**, Finance and Operations  
**Ami Beaver**, Loan Fund Manager  
**Jacque Schei**, Project Manager  
**Kathy Fitzpatrick**, Mobility Manager  
**Lindsay McClure**, Energy Project Manager  
**Kristyn Fix**, Industry Engagement Project Manager

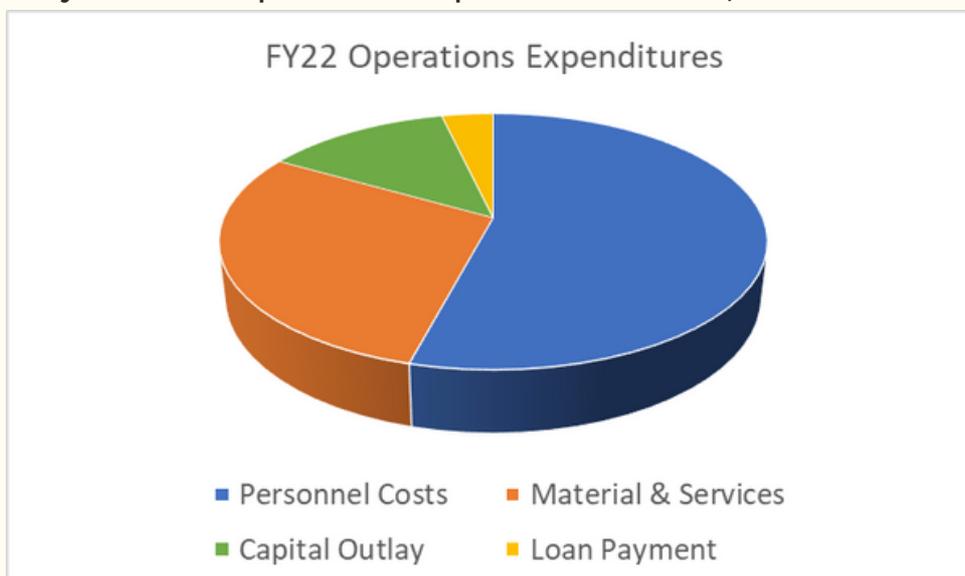
**Sara Crook**, Travel Trainer  
**Lauren Hernandez**, Office Administrator  
**Jill Brandt**, Administrative Assistant  
**Tasha Blaircobb**, RARE Project Coordinator  
**Jesus Mendoza**, Transportation Manager  
**Link Dispatchers:** Rena Bowman, Sherry Leon  
**Link Drivers:** Gerald Benedict, Fred Bergren, Scott Isaak, Kevin Lohse, Lisa Malcolm, Laura Reed, Margaret Rodriguez-Strickland, Casey Ruiz, Antonio Silva, Shane White Horse, Steve Wilson and Jesse Witkowski

# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

MCEDD's financial picture in fiscal year 2021 looked drastically different from prior years as a result of the significant state and federal relief provided for COVID-19, especially for business grants. In fiscal year 2022, the financial makeup returned to more typical levels. Operations Revenue derived from Loans (8%), Contract Reimbursements (13%), Federal and State Grants (72%), Local Dues (2%), and Farebox and Other Revenue (5%). Operations Revenue totaled \$3,838,871 in FY22.



MCEDD's Operations Expenditures are in four categories in FY22: Loan Payments (4%), Materials and Services (29%), Capital Outlay (13%), and Personnel Costs (54%). MCEDD received federal grants to purchase five new vehicles for transit operations, which resulted in the higher capital outlay. The large amount of expenditures of business grants from FY21 is completely absent this year. Total Operations Expenditures were \$3,353,482 in FY22.

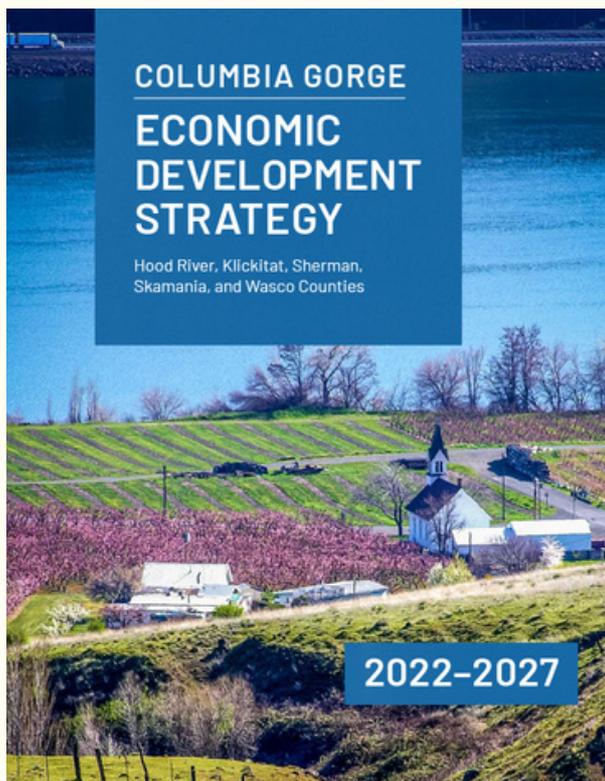


# REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

## Completing the Regional Strategy

MCEDD continued convening monthly meetings with regional partners to complete the next five-year economic development strategy, with a focus on resiliency and equitable outcomes. Started in early 2021, this process concluded with adoption of the strategy in March 2022 by the MCEDD Board of Directors. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a guide to understanding the regional economy and crafting goals, strategies and actions to create jobs, raise income levels, diversify the economy, and improve the quality of life.

**The Strategy is presented on an interactive website at [www.gorgeeconomy.org](http://www.gorgeeconomy.org), including a shorter summary in English and Spanish.**



The cover features a local photographer's springtime image near Maryhill, WA.

## Columbia Gorge Economic Symposium

MCEDD hosted the Columbia Gorge Economic Symposium in November 2021, again in a virtual format. The event featured presentations from regional Oregon and Washington economists plus leaders in local business, attainable housing and workforce development sharing innovative models for economic development. MCEDD also used the forum to present the draft 2022-2027 CEDS.

## Vision

A bi-state Mid-Columbia region with a resilient, thriving, sustainable, rural economy that supports equitable access to diverse business opportunities that act in harmony with the area's unique qualities, values, cultural and natural resources.

## Goal Areas

- Strong Businesses
- Robust Workforce
- Resilient Infrastructure
- Powerful Regional Collaboration

Join us for the next Columbia Gorge Economic Symposium on November 4th, 2022 in The Dalles! Details at [mcedd.org/strategy](http://mcedd.org/strategy)

# ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

With a second year of support from a CARES grant through the US Economic Development Administration (EDA), MCEDD continued its work on supporting our businesses and communities recover from COVID-19. Some of our projects included:

- **Business Spotlights:** MCEDD interviewed regional business owners to learn about resources they used to start their business, be successful, and prepare for unexpected economic shocks. The resulting profiles highlight the businesses and provide insight for other business owners to learn from.
- **Business Websites:** We enabled 17 businesses across the region to develop robust websites to enhance their online presence and access to customers. Additionally, we worked with the Breweries in the Gorge and Columbia Gorge Winegrowers Association to boost their online presence to support these industries that were harder hit by the pandemic closures.
- **Childcare Businesses:** We developed a template business plan for potential childcare businesses to support the work of the Klickitat County Childcare Committee and participated in the planning group for a Child Care Center Feasibility study at Columbia Gorge Community College.
- **EDA Regional Diversification Summit:** We supported the Central Klickitat County area in hosting an EDA Regional Diversification Summit in the fall. We continued coordination with the leadership organizations throughout the year to keep momentum toward a shared vision for economic resilience in the Goldendale area through increased collaboration and progress on key projects.
- **Grant Writing Training Series:** We offered this series that highlighted grant prospecting, narrative drafting, budgeting, and grant management. 27 participants came from entities across the region and provided positive feedback on the experience.

MCEDD AND REGIONAL PARTNERS PRESENT

## GRANT WRITING WORKSHOP

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**FOUR WEEKLY SESSIONS**  
**MAY 4 ,11, 25 & JUNE 1**  
**10AM - 12PM**

**May 4th** – Grant Planning & Finding Grants  
**May 11th** – Grant Narrative  
**May 25th** – Grant Budgeting & Management  
**June 1st** – Grant Evaluation

**Cost: \$100**  
**Location TBD, The Dalles**  
TICKET PRICE INCLUDES ALL FOUR SESSIONS  
Refreshments will be provided

**Virtual attendance options will be available!**

REGISTER AT  
[HTTPS://BIT.LY/GRANT-WRITING-REGISTRATION](https://bit.ly/grant-writing-registration)

Presentations by Paul Lindberg of Hat Creek Consulting, Ltd, MCEDD staff and regional partners.

EVENT PARTNERS  
  

# REGIONAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

## Broadband

MCEDD places a core focus on increasing broadband access throughout the region as essential economic infrastructure. Key projects this year included:

- **Speed Tests:** MCEDD worked collaboratively with other economic development districts for access to a broadband speed test platform and to create an outreach campaign around “Faster Internet Oregon.” This effort will gather similar data for our Oregon Counties as is available in Washington through the State Broadband Office. We also developed a survey to gather some additional information around broadband needs along with the speed information. Results will come in the next year but the platform should provide strong data to show where our communities have access to broadband in preparation for federal and state funding that is expected to be available in the coming years.
- **Broadband Action Team:** In collaboration with the Wasco County Economic Development Commission and Q-Life, MCEDD staff also supported the formation of a Wasco County Broadband Action Team that is meeting regularly to work towards local broadband goals.



Electric vehicle carshare programs and solar panels at the middle school are some of the ways Hood River County is meeting its energy goals.

## Renewable Energy

MCEDD coordinates the **Columbia Gorge Bi-State Renewable Energy Zone**, focusing this year on support for the regional priority Goldendale Pumped Storage Hydro project and sharing legislative information.

MCEDD also provides project management assistance to the **Hood River County Energy Council**, which supports development of energy projects that increase economic and physical resilience. Projects included the following:

- The Energy Council drafted and **adopted its 2022-2025 Work Plan**. The Work Plan outlines priority projects that align with the Hood River County Energy Plan’s established goals.
- The Energy Council launched a project that aims to identify and address barriers to accessing **solar, solar + storage, and energy efficiency among low-moderate income and Latinx communities in Hood River County**. This project is funded by a grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust and is being undertaken in collaboration with a number of nonprofit partners.
- Supported development of **FEMA application** for City of Cascade Locks

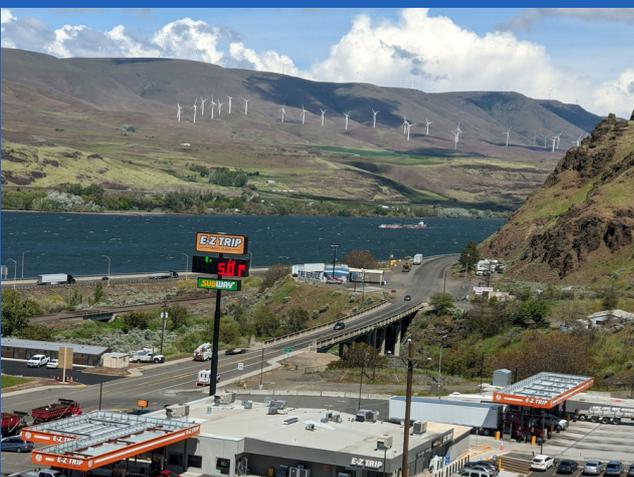
## Community Economic Development

MCEDD worked with communities across the region to support economic development projects that enhance the resilience of our economy and communities. This year we:

- Worked to **identify funding for infrastructure assessments or feasibility studies** for the Cities of Rufus and Grass Valley. We explored funding options with the Dallesport Water District for consolidation of smaller systems. We supported development of initial engineering of feasibility studies for the Port of Skamania's docks, a sewer system in Carson, and the Cascadia East Interconnection Co-location facility in The Dalles.
- Administered Sherman County's four **housing grant programs** for development of new rental and owner-occupied housing, rehabilitation of existing housing, and property clean-up to prepare for new housing.
- **Provided technical assistance** to find and apply for grants or develop business plans for the Wasco Event Center, Mid-Columbia Community Action Council's Navigation Center, and for parks owned by Dufur Park District and Wasco County.
- Participated in and supported the leadership group for the Wasco County-The Dalles **Brownfield Coalition** that implemented a grant allocating \$600,000 in funds for brownfields assessment projects. We also supported the City of Rufus in accessing brownfield funding from Oregon to assess hazardous building materials in their Community Center.
- Supported the **Wasco County Economic Development Commission** in updating its five-year Strategic Action Plan.

## Project Highlight: Biggs Service District

The Biggs Service District has undertaken a project to develop a water system for their service area. To date, the area has been served by private wells, but a new water system will allow for more growth in the community of Biggs Junction and sufficient flows to support fire suppression. MCEDD supported the District in securing USDA Rural Development funding and provides grant management. The project entails drilling a new well, construction of a 400,000+ gallon reservoir, and installation of all water lines, fire hydrants and water meters. Construction will cost approximately \$3.8 million, with Sherman County supporting a portion of the costs. The project is expected to be complete by the end of 2022.



The community of Biggs Junction



Water line installation under the bridge.  
Photo credit: Anderson Perry

## Infrastructure Development

MCEDD places a priority on ensuring adequate infrastructure for business and community success. Our staff provided **technical assistance** to secure funding and move projects toward construction, including support to Hood River County on a successful **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application** for a kitchen rehabilitation project at the Adult Center and the Port of Skamania on an Economic Development Administration American Rescue Plan application.

## Grants Management

MCEDD offers administration of federal grants, including assisting in record keeping, labor standards compliance, and reporting. We provide pooled technical assistance for small communities without the capacity to administer grants with complex state and federal requirements. Projects this year included:

- **Biggs Service District water system:** Labor standards and grant administration support for USDA Rural Development grant and loan.
- **Crystal Springs Water District water project:** Labor standards and grant administration support for two Safe Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund projects, support in requesting an increase in funding to cover cost increases post-application.
- **Cascade Locks wastewater:** Labor standards and grant administration support for a USDA/Clean Water State Revolving Fund interim, CDBG, and Business Oregon Water-Wastewater program funding.
- **City of Hood River stormwater line replacement:** Labor standards and grant administration support for a Clean Water State Revolving Fund, Business Oregon Water-Wastewater program, American Rescue Plan funded project, support in securing congressional appropriated funding and training of city staff on grant administration/labor standards procedures.
- **City of The Dalles Dog River water pipeline replacement:** Labor standards and grant administration support for a Safe Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund and Oregon Water Resources Department funded project.
- **Sherman County bus barn project:** Project planning, labor standards and grant administration support for an Oregon Department of Transportation funded project.

## Infrastructure Support in Pictures



Reservoir site in Biggs Junction



Federal and state dollars at work in Cascade Locks



Ground breaking at the Dog River water pipeline replacement

# BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

## MCEDD Loan Client Spotlight: Cafe Genevieve's



Café Genevieve's opened in Goldendale, WA in January 2022 as a breakfast and lunch café with a coffee house atmosphere offering wifi and informal seating. The location is convenient to downtown and the new County Services building. When owner Kristeen McGreal Loy moved to Goldendale with her husband, Nathan, and their two children in 2016, they noticed a need in the town and decided to make it happen! Named after Nathan's Grandma Genevieve, Loy plans to continue her grandmother's family tradition of providing a place to gather and connect over excellent coffee, delicious food and great service.



## MCEDD Lending

Since the inception of our business loan program, MCEDD has made 320 loans to businesses totaling nearly \$19.5 million. This year, the loan program funded more than \$470,000 in new loans in support of:

- Equipment for a new children's clothing business.
- Opening of a new restaurant in Goldendale (see sidebar).
- Expansion of a gardening product developed in Stevenson.
- Equipment purchase for a well digging operation.
- Expansion of a towing, windshield repair and automotive services business near Odell.
- Expansion of a wine bar in The Dalles.
- Working capital for an outdoor equipment outfitter and jewelry studio in Maupin,

MCEDD also received a grant through Oregon Community Foundation, supporting a series of entrepreneurship networking events known as **PubTalks** in the Oregon counties as well as making improvements to our loan application.

### **MCEDD Loan Administration Board**

Scott Clements, Chair \* Bob Hamlin, Vice Chair \*  
Joe Dabulskis \* Les Perkins \* Dave Sauter \* Steve  
Kramer \* Dillon Borton \* AJ Tarnasky

## Mount Hood Economic Alliance

MCEDD administers Mount Hood Economic Alliance (MHEA), a gap financier covering Clackamas, Hood River and Wasco Counties. With support from MCEDD, MHEA this year:

- Adopted a Revolving Loan Fund plan that opened loan eligibility to clients without US Citizenship.
- Funded a loan for the start-up of GRIT MMA, a fitness and competitive training gym in Milwaukie. GRIT (an acronym that stands for Grueling Resolve and Innovative Techniques) is a mixed martial arts studio for MMA competitors and fitness enthusiasts at all levels.

# Oregon Investment Board

Project funding awarded through the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Oregon Investment Board helps strengthen and diversify the regional economy. New lending in FY22 included:

- A new yoga studio in Hood River (see sidebar).
- The build out and provided working capital for a seafood forward fine dining restaurant in Hood River.
- A lingerie boutique in The Dalles that serves mastectomy patients and others.

MCEDD also successfully applied for a **USDA Rural Business Development Grant for \$1.9 Million** to supplement the existing revolving loan funds for the Oregon and Washington Investment Boards. These new revolving loan funds will be provided to small businesses in all counties within the National Scenic Area boundaries.



From a \$4 million allocation and revolved funds, the OIB has approved more than \$10 million total in grants and loans which have:

- Leveraged over \$15.6 million in private funds.
- Leveraged more than \$13.4 million in public funds.
- Directly created or retained approximately 750 jobs.

## Industry Sector Support

MCEDD has targeted development of opportunities in strong regional industry sectors including High Tech. **The Gorge Technology Alliance** (GTA) contracts with MCEDD for project management assistance. The local tech industry continues its strong performance and MCEDD staff assisted the GTA in completing an update of their **Strategic Plan** to provide a strong foundation for the organization as they come out of the pandemic's challenges with gatherings.

MCEDD also supported the initial planning stages for the **Wasco County Innovation Initiative** through development of a basic digital economy ecosystem assessment and strategy. The group also developed branding and began hosting an Innovator Drinks series with two successful events in The Dalles highlighting innovative entrepreneurs in Wasco County.

## OIB

### Members:

Chair Craig Bowder,  
Vice-Chair Doug Roof, Sec./Treas.  
Jorge Barragan,  
Jill Amery, Kirk Wright, Gil Kelley,  
Jamie Kranz

### OIB Loan Client Profile



Chelsey Moss found her way to yoga by way of a doctor's recommendation after a breast cancer diagnosis in her early 30s. She came to understand and love the practice and credits yoga in part for her 10 year remission. She completed her 500-hour certification to teach and opened her own studio, Big Buddha Yoga, in Hood River with the help of a loan from the OIB.

Moss noted there were challenges to opening the studio during the COVID-19 pandemic, but she hopes the studio will help the community heal emotionally from the trauma of the pandemic and reinvest in their wellness.

# TRANSPORTATION



The Go Vets Columbia Gorge grant program supported by MCEDD funds the following transportation needs in our region:

- Access to any healthcare or wellness resources
- Dial-A-Ride services (Hood River, Wasco, Sherman Counties)
- Connectivity to the Disabled American Veterans Van
- Hospital Shuttle to the VA in Portland
- Annual GORge Pass
- One-on-One Travel Training Assistance
- Travel Tools (noise-canceling headphones, etc.)

## Gorge TransLink Alliance

MCEDD staff manages this alliance of regional transportation providers. This year staff worked to support:

- Implementation of the **GORge Pass**, an annual transit pass for all regional fixed route services for a low-cost annual fee. Engaged in major marketing effort with TV and radio interviews, ads, social media videos and posts, and partnership with local businesses throughout the Gorge.
- Kickoff of the **Gorge Regional Transit Strategy Phase II**, a region-wide project to implement the vision identified in Phase I. The project considers regional priorities, coordination, governance, and future technologies.
- Continued **grant-writing support** to serve schoolkids, veterans, and other groups. Supporting COVID-19 response and recovery services and working closely with state and local organizations to lift community efforts.

## The Link Public Transport

MCEDD operates The Link, Wasco County's public transportation service, and continues to find ways to better serve the community through:

- Completing a **20-year Transit Development Plan** to guide investment and improvements to transit in Wasco County
- Introducing a **new service to Mosier, Hood River** 4x per day on weekdays.
- Distributing free GORge Passes and Dial-A-Ride tickets for low-income riders through the **Transit Connect program**.
- Creating a **travel training program** to connect individuals, employers, and organizations to free training on how to use the transit system.
- Operating a **summer route** with free rides to The Dalles Aquatic Center and The Dalles Farmers Market.



## The Link in FY22:

- Total Passenger One-Way Trips: 20,676
- Elderly/Disabled One-Way Trips: 7,584
- Revenue Service Hours: 14,269
- Revenue Service Miles: 170,445