

Coordinated Transportation Plan

Hood River County, Oregon

April 2007

Prepared by: Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

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Introduction

This document is a coordinated transportation plan focused on addressing the transportation needs of low income individuals, individuals with disabilities, and seniors residing in Hood River County.

Purpose

The Hood River County Coordinated Transportation Plan was developed as a tool to help local transportation providers and communities improve transportation services, increase efficiency of service delivery, and expand outreach to meet growing needs. It provides a framework to guide the investment of existing transportation resources and the acquisition of future funds. As such a resource, this plan:

- evaluates community resources
- assesses and documents transportation needs of the three target populations
- identifies strategies to address gaps in transportation services and efficiencies of service delivery
- establishes relative priorities of the strategies

Approach

- **Inventory existing transportation resources**

The consultant, MCEDD, compiled an inventory of existing transportation services operating in Hood River County along with a variety of local funding sources available to support them. The inventory of services includes both public and private transportation providers.

- **Conduct stakeholder interviews**

MCEDD interviewed and met with more than 20 stakeholders from transit systems, social service agencies, community groups, and the medical community. Stakeholders provided information about transportation resources, the county's transit needs, and the potential for coordination. The process also took into consideration existing transportation plans and the input used to develop them.

- **Seek public input**

Public input is an essential component of this plan. Efforts were made to contact special needs populations by distributing surveys at the offices of Department of Human Services and at senior meal sites, holding public meetings, and conducting on-board interviews with those using Columbia Area Transit (CAT).

- **Gather County Data**

MCEDD gathered demographic, socio-economic, and geographic information for Hood River County to inform the plan and clarify needs.

- **Prioritize Needs**

Needs identified through targeted contact with stakeholders and the public were prioritized based on those responses. In addition, the Hood River STF committee met in January to prioritize projects for 2007-2009 Special Transportation Discretionary Grant Funds.

Data and Information

Overview

Hood River County is located on the northern border of Oregon along the Columbia River. The county covers 534 square miles with an average of approximately 39 people per square mile.¹ Incorporated cities include Hood River and Cascade Locks. Hood River is the most populated community in the county with a total population in 2000 of 5,831. Population in 2000 was 1,115 for Cascade Locks. The nearest metropolitan area is Portland, Oregon.

Demographics

Hood River County

Total Population	20,411
Percentage of Population 65 years and over.	12.9%
Percentage of disabled individuals (5 years and over)	16.8%
Percentage of individuals living below the poverty level.	14.2%
Percentage of individuals that speak a language other than English at home.	24.7%
Mean travel time to work in minutes for workers 16 years and over.	19.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The population of Hood River County in 2005 is estimated at 21,284 people.¹ Across the state of Oregon, the population is becoming more racially diverse with the minority population growing faster than the white population. In addition, the population is growing older.² Human service providers in Hood River County have noted distinctly changing conditions as these two phenomena meet. Next Door, an agency serving Latino families, noted that older Latino adults would often leave the United States in the past. However, many older Latinos are now staying in the area, due to health conditions and family concerns, causing the development of a new aging community.

Common Origins/ Destinations

Hood River County's major population center, where much of the public transportation takes place, is the City of Hood River. The county's proximity to Portland and The Dalles, however, make those areas popular destinations as well.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau

² Portland State University Population Research Center

Origins

CAT drivers report that the majority of transportation takes place and originates within the City of Hood River proper. Specific origins include:

- Apartment complexes and RV/Mobile home parks. In Hood River, a number of the more affordable complexes are concentrated in the Heights on the south end of town. There are also a number in Upper Valley (Parkdale and Odell). A list can be found in Appendix A.
- Senior and assisted living facilities and retirement communities. A list can be found in Appendix A.
- Group homes
- Origins for Latino seniors, stakeholders noted, is not concentrated in many areas. However, Odell, Parkdale and Pine Grove were mentioned as locations with dispersed populations.

Destinations

- La Clinica
- Mid Columbia Center for Living
- Columbia Gorge Center
- Mobile Health Unit locations:
 - Monday: Parkdale Fire Dept 10:30 to 2; Parkdale Elementary 2 to 6
 - Tuesday: Odell Fire Dept 10:30 to 2; Mid-Valley Elementary 2 to 6
 - Wednesday: Cascade Locks City Hall 11 to 6
 - Thursday: Pine Grove Fire Dept 10:30 to 2; Pine Grove Elementary 2 to 6
 - Friday: Cascade Locks City Hall 11 to 6
- Walmart
- Safeway
- Rosauers/Hi-School Pharmacy complex
- Senior mealsites (Upper Valley, Cascade Locks, Hood River Adult Center)
- Providence Hospital

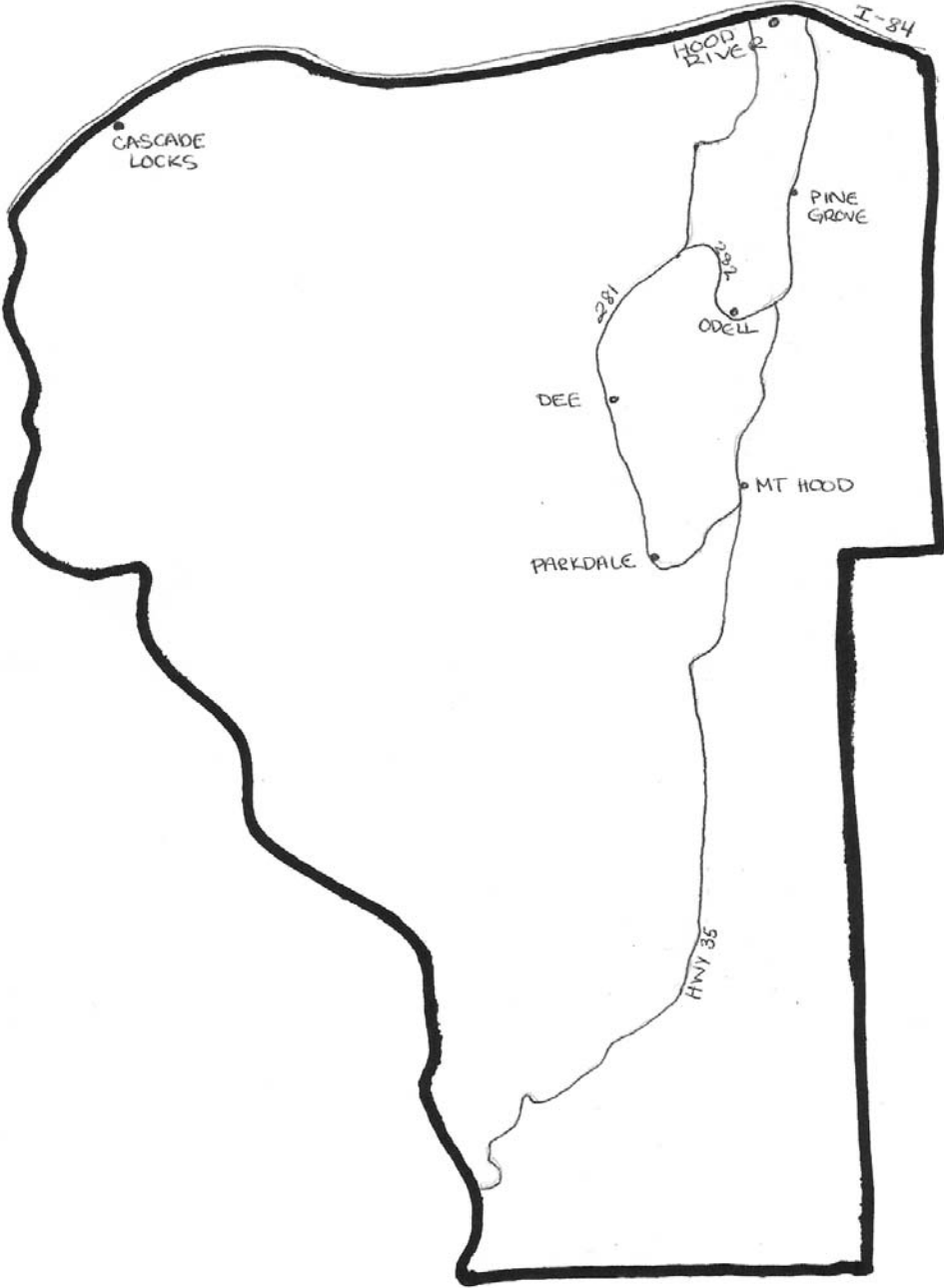
Maps of Hood River County's Major Transportation Routes and Destinations

Map of Oregon



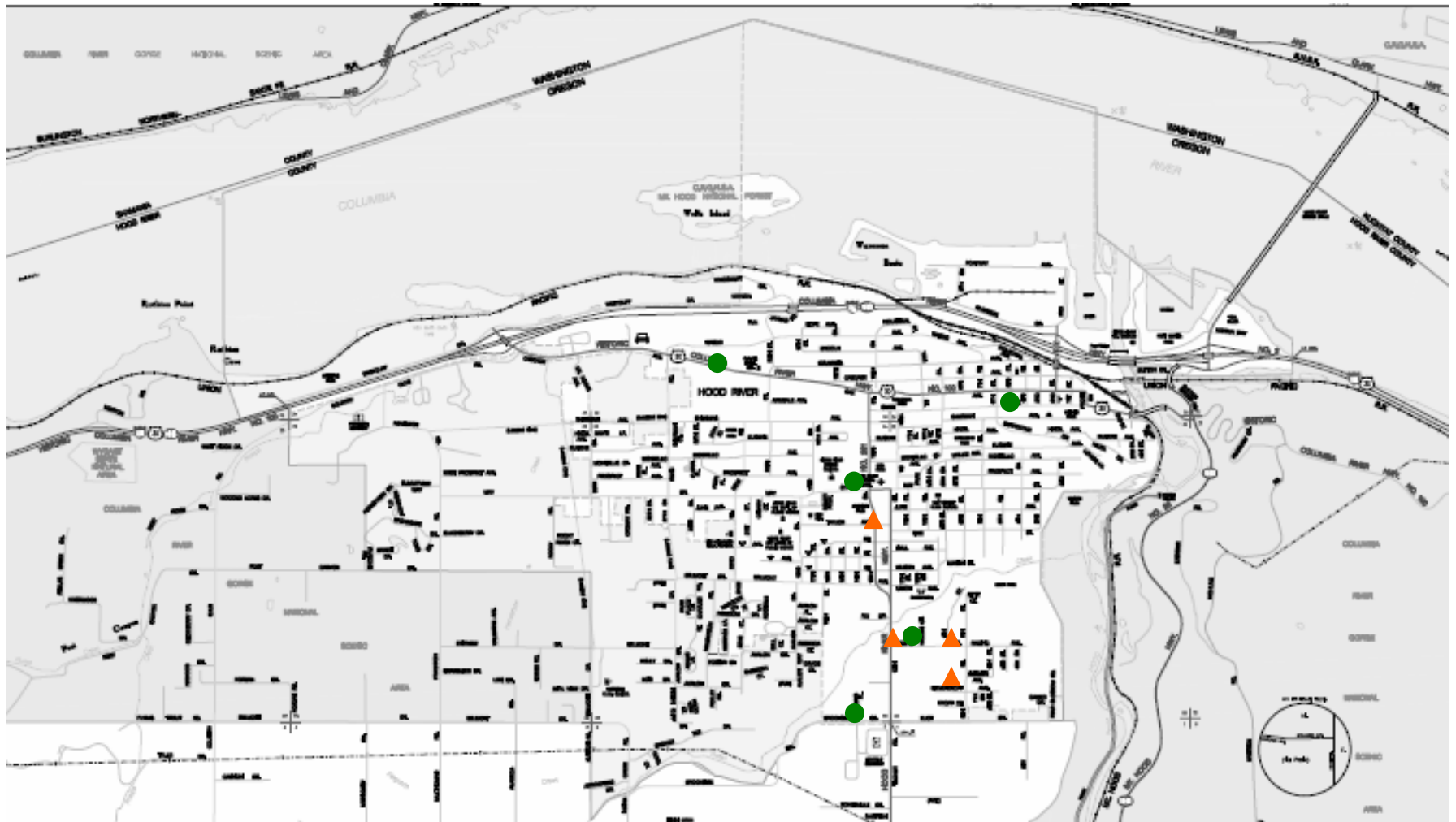
Hood River County is highlighted on this map of Oregon. Portland is the nearest major metropolitan area to Hood River County. Hood River County's main access is via Interstate 84.

Hood River County, Cities and Unincorporated Areas



Major Transportation routes through Hood River County include Interstate 84, Highway 35, Highway 281, and Highway 282.

City of Hood River



Map Source: Oregon Department of Transportation

● Green dots mark major destinations. ▲ Orange triangles mark locations of major origins.

Stakeholder and Public Involvement

Stakeholder Process

Stakeholders were identified as those having significant contact with the three target populations or providing transportation services. These included public and private transportation providers, human service agencies, community organizations, medical facilities, residential facilities, and group homes. Stakeholders were involved in identifying needs of the target populations and the county, the transportation resources available, and new solutions. Information was gathered through individual interviews, public meetings, and involvement with the Special Transportation Fund (STF) committees.

Phone interviews and meetings were conducted with the majority of stakeholders in Hood River County with a few also participating in public meetings. These stakeholders were invited to the public meetings to discuss the availability of transportation resources and the potential for coordinating and improving transportation services.

Finally, stakeholders participated as members of the STF advisory committee and Hood River transportation board in developing priorities for discretionary fund applications for 2007-2009.

List of Stakeholders Contacted

Stakeholders providing information through personal interviews:

- Columbia Area Transit
 - Dan Schwanz, Director
 - John, bus driver
- Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital
 - Gary Young, Spiritual Care
 - Maria Castro, Mobile Health Unit
 - Kathy Lannon, Inpatient Services
- Faith in Action
 - Jill Dant, Project Director
- Mid Columbia Community Action Partnership
 - Corenne Stewart, Housing Case Manager/Intake Specialist
- Mid Columbia Housing Authority
 - Ruby Mason, Director
- Area Agency on Aging
 - Mary Kramer, Director
- Mid-Columbia Center for Living

- Rodney McDowell
 - Nerissa, Case Manager
- Eastern Oregon Support Services
 - Vicki Swyers, Personal Agent
- Next Door (Nuestra Comunidad Sana)
 - Claudia Montaña, Program Manager
- The Arc of the Mid-Columbia
 - Rich Williams, President
 - Sherry Mumford, Volunteer
- Hood River Valley Adult Center
 - Heidi Musgrave
- Department of Human Services
 - Earl Boots, Social Service Specialist, Child Welfare Programs
 - Bonnie Hinton, Social Service Supervisor, Child Welfare Programs
 - Maritza Mondragan, Aging and Disabilities
 - Carri Ramsey, Administration
 - Susan Gabay, Administration

Stakeholders participating in public meetings

- La Clinica del Carino
 - Daniel Ward, Director
- Veteran's Administration
 - Patrick Scranton, Veteran's Service Officer
- Columbia Area Transit
 - Dan Schwanz, Director
- Gorge YellowCab
 - Enrique Ortega

Public Involvement Process

In developing this plan, we relied equally as much on contact with the target populations as we did stakeholder interviews to determine needs and solutions. A couple of stakeholders commented that they did not feel comfortable speaking for their clients. As such, we focused on encouraging public involvement.

Existing users of CAT's Dial-a-Ride service, the local public transportation authority, were interviewed in December through an on-board transportation survey. Through individual interviews, 37 riders provided feedback about transportation services. Of these riders, 16 were seniors and 18 were disabled.

General surveys of our three target populations took place at the Department of Human Services (DHS) offices in Hood River. Surveys were available in both Spanish and English at the DHS offices. Surveys were collected and analyzed in January 2007. From this survey we received 22 responses. A copy of the survey is available in Appendix B.

Surveys were also conducted at the Hood River Valley Adult Center, the senior mealsite location in the City of Hood River. Surveying included both individual conversations and paper surveys. Paper surveys were printed with large type. Individual conversations allowed seniors that could not write an opportunity to respond. A total of 14 seniors responded to the surveys.

In addition to targeted surveying, public meetings were held across Hood River County to encourage additional input from those not accessing DHS services, participating in the senior mealsite program, or utilizing CAT. The first public meeting was held on November 20, 2006 at 8:30 a.m. at Cascade Locks City Hall. It was scheduled during CAT's normal operating hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) to allow those with transportation needs to attend. The second public meeting was held on November 20, 2006 at 7 p.m. in the Hood River library. An evening meeting was scheduled to allow those working during the day to attend. A third meeting was held November 21, 2006 at the Parkdale Grange at 8:30 a.m. Locations for these meetings were carefully chosen to allow residents from across the county to participate without having to travel far. Stakeholders, transportation providers, and the public were all encouraged to participate in these public meetings. Translators were available for Spanish speaking residents at the Parkdale and Hood River meetings. Messages were broadcast over the radio and on community flyers in Spanish and English.

Existing Services and Resources

Transportation Service Options

Hood River County's transportation options for people with disabilities, seniors, and individuals with low income include public and private transportation providers, volunteer services, rideshares, employer transportation, and human service agency transport. These include:

- Columbia Area Transit (CAT)
- Columbia Gorge Express
- Greyhound
- Amtrak
- Taxis
- Faith in Action
- Carpool/Rideshare (carpoolmatchnw.org)
- Human Service Agencies
- Employer Transportation

Columbia Area Transit (CAT)

The main public transportation provider for Hood River County is CAT. Although the main office is located in Hood River, administration is shared with the Transportation Network in Wasco County to reduce costs and increase coordination of services.

Services

CAT offers Dial-a-Ride, door-to-door service from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday throughout Hood River County. In addition, it connects to Greyhound for trips to The Dalles, Portland, and points east.

Fare

Door to door service is offered at a 10% discount to seniors and individuals with disabilities. Regular fares are as follows:

Hood River- \$1.25 each way

Odell- \$1.50 each way

Parkdale- \$2.00 each way

Cascade Locks- \$2.25 each way

The Dalles- \$4 each way

Mosier- \$1.50 each way

Bingen/White Salmon- \$1.25 plus toll (\$3.00)

Fleet

CAT operates a total of seven vehicles:

Make	Model	Year	# of Seats	Mileage	Lift Equip (Yes/No)	Securement Stations	Condition: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor
Ford	E-350	1995	18	139,868	Yes	2	Fair
Ford	E-350	1995	18	151,765	Yes	2	Fair
Ford	E-350	1995	18	106,679	Yes	2	Fair
Ford	E-350	1997	15	49,462	Yes	1	Good
Ford	E-450	2005	18	19,400	Yes	2	Excellent
Ford	E-450	2006	18	5,905	Yes	2	Excellent
Ford	E-450	2006	18	5,566	Yes	2	Excellent

Utilization of Current Services

CAT provided transportation for 22,552 passengers from July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006. Seniors and individuals with disabilities represented a large section of the population using CAT's services. The total number of trips provided to seniors in the same time period was 9,943, which is 44% of the total. The total number of trips provided to individuals with disabilities was 8,656, or 38% of the total rides.

Funding

The Hood River County Transportation District, which was formed in 1993 by a vote of Hood River County residents, provides a tax base for the operation of CAT. In addition to the tax base, operational costs for CAT services are covered through:

- Federal Transit Administration Funds
- Business Energy Tax Credit program
- Mass transit payroll taxes
- Greyhound commissions
- Medicaid, medical and non-medical.
- Fares.
- Contract with Mid-Columbia Council of Governments for shared administration

Financial support keeps fares at a reasonable level, allowing special needs populations to access transportation services at a minimal cost.

Columbia Gorge Express

Columbia Gorge Express operates seven days per week and has shuttle buses available for chartered trips. For a 20 passenger shuttle bus at regular fare, the rate is \$135 per drive hour and \$25 per stand by hour. Columbia Gorge Express can charter tours throughout the Gorge and to Portland.

Greyhound

Greyhound is an inter-city transportation provider offering service along the I-84 corridor. Services were significantly cut back in 2004 following a major reduction in Greyhound's route system, but a hub has been maintained in Hood River.

Service

From Hood River, passengers can travel to (among others) The Dalles, Portland, and points east. Currently, Greyhound makes three stops in Hood River per day in each direction. It leaves Hood River heading west at 4:35 a.m., 3:15 p.m., and 5:00 p.m. and arrives at 11:00 a.m., 12:50 a.m., and 12:40 p.m.

Although Hood River is fortunate to have maintained Greyhound service in the area, passengers planning a day trip to Portland, the nearest major metropolitan area, may experience scheduling difficulties. Day trips to Portland are sometimes necessary for Hood River County residents requiring access to specialized medical services. A person trying to reach Portland and return to Hood River via Greyhound during the course of a single day would need to leave Hood River at 4:35 a.m. and return on a bus departing Portland at 11:30 a.m.

Regular (non discounted) fares

Round trip to Portland: Fares vary between about \$25 and \$35.

Round trip to The Dalles: Fares vary between about \$20 and \$25.

Amtrak

Amtrak provides passenger rail service on the Washington side of the Columbia River. A train station is located in Bingen-White Salmon, Washington. Amtrak has a more favorable schedule than Greyhound for people who would like to take a day trip to Portland. Using Amtrak, an individual would leave at 8:04 a.m. from Bingen-White Salmon and return on a train departing Portland at 4:45 p.m. the same day. Fares for a round trip between Bingen-White Salmon and Portland are usually around \$22.

Taxi

There are three taxi companies located in Hood River County: Gorge Yellow Cab, Hood River Taxi, and Columbia Gorge Taxi.

Faith in Action

One of the services provided by Faith in Action is transportation for individuals in Hood River and Klickitat counties to medical appointments. The program coordinates a network of volunteer drivers who utilize their own vehicles. Currently, Faith in Action has about 35 active volunteers, about 20 of which assist with transportation needs.

Utilization of Services

Faith in Action volunteers transport about 10 to 15 people per month. Although the program primarily serves seniors, there are no pre-qualifications that must be met in order to utilize this service.

Funding

The program was launched in 2004 with a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and continues its operations through funding from United Way, Lions Club, Providence Hood River Hospital, individuals, local congregations, and others.

Carpool/Rideshare (carpoolmatchnw.org)

Carpoolmatchnw.org is a carpool/rideshare service that has the ability to connect commuters in Hood River County. It has limited capability to recognize origins and destinations outside of the Portland area. Informal carpool networks also occur throughout the Gorge.

Human Service Providers

Some assisted living facilities, community organizations, and human service agencies provide their own transportation, which is supplemented by CAT's services. Agencies, facilities, and organizations providing their own transportation include:

- Veteran's Administration, which provides medical transportation services for veterans.
- Residential facilities, including Down Manor, Brookside, Hawks Ridge, and Providence Village, which all provide some transportation for their residents.
- Next Door, which currently provides much of their own transportation using staff vehicles to serve after-school and evening needs of their clients.
- School vans, which are available to outside groups for scheduled events if the request comes from school district personnel and the driver has been approved by the district. Next Door noted that they use them frequently. The liability is covered by the school and costs are minimal.
- La Clinica, which has a grant to purchase vehicles (will likely be two small vehicles) for their staff to use if a client has immediate transportation needs. As of the publication of this plan, the vehicles had not yet been purchased, but are planned.
- Eastern Oregon Support Services, which utilizes "personal providers" to transport some individuals for appointments and special events.

Employer Van Pools

A limited number of local employers provide transportation for their workers. Transportation is generally provided by employers with distant work sites, such as Mount Hood Meadows.

Local Funding for Transportation Services

Through stakeholder interviews, local funding sources were identified for transporting the three target populations:

- Individuals with disabilities may be eligible for a certain amount of money to purchase transportation services from a variety of providers. While in the past these funds went directly to the transportation providers, individuals now have the opportunity to choose.
- Providence Hood River Hospital. Inpatient services currently purchases about 10 CAT vouchers per week for individuals they need to get home from the hospital that do not have the funds to provide transportation for themselves. The hospital also has a non-urgent van that they use for after hours/weekends and to take individuals to places not served by CAT.

Coordination of Services

Some transportation services are already coordinated in the area. These include:

- Gorge TransLink, an alliance of transportation providers in the Mid-Columbia region. Gorge TransLink provides regional coordination and marketing for participating providers in Klickitat, Skamania, Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman counties.
- CAT administration is shared with Wasco County's Transportation Network.
- Vehicle provided to Providence Village.
- CAT also serves as a Greyhound agent.
- The CAT director meets with select human service providers.

Additional resources identified but not yet used

- Non-medical Medicaid resources for the developmentally disabled.
- ARC has limited funds and would like to use them to coordinate transportation for their clients.
- Faith in Action expressed an interest in coordinating companions to accompany seniors and disabled individuals to medical appointments.

Transportation Needs

Survey Responses

Public surveys at senior mealsites and DHS, and on the CAT bus revealed an interesting difference between those who were using public transportation services and those who were not. The results of the surveys are as follows:

CAT Network On-Board Surveys

Individuals currently using CAT were extremely satisfied with the service citing adequate operation hours and travel locations, responsive drivers, reasonable fares, and great companion policies. A few riders commended CAT for providing a high level of service with limited resources and commented that without CAT they would have no other means of transportation. Word-of-mouth (from family or a human service provider) was the most common means by which the riders had first learned of the system. The on-board surveys revealed an overall rating of “Excellent” from 100% of riders participating in the survey.

Senior Mealsite Surveys

By contrast, the senior mealsite surveys at the Hood River Valley Adult Center showed a large range of responses regarding the quality of public transportation service, with “good” ultimately reaching a majority. Specifically the response rates were as follows:

- 60% Good
- 20% Fair
- 10% Excellent
- 10% Poor

In the process of conducting surveys, many seniors sought advice on how to access transportation. Notably, a few seniors that had been living in the area for less than 6 months did not know that public transportation resources existed in the county. These types of responses, in which seniors acknowledge a need for transportation, but no information on accessing it, provide an indication that marketing and outreach should be increased.

An emphasis should be placed on marketing at the locations frequented by populations with special transportation needs, such as residential facilities and senior centers. Marketing devices should be easily repeated and not one-time shots. Frequently, mobile seniors expressed concerns that information about how to access public transportation may not be available if they suddenly lose the ability to drive. In addition to changing needs of mobile seniors, those new to the community need to have the benefit of having information about public transportation options readily available and easy to access.

Seniors who had correct information about the system generally cited as pressing issues:

- Increasing operating hours to include evening and weekend service.
- Creating daily fixed or deviated route service to eliminate the difficulty of scheduling a ride at least 24 hours in advance.
- Offering affordable travel to Portland. In our surveys at the senior center, however, there was a stronger preference for services within Hood River County (84.6%) than for services connecting to Portland (61.5%), even if given an ideal world.
- Assisting with the coordination of transportation to special events for seniors.
- Increasing marketing of existing services by placing information at senior centers and creating reference magnets about services.

DHS Surveys

Surveys conducted at the Department of Human Services office in Hood River were collected in late December 2006 and analyzed in January 2007. A total of 22 responses were received.

Travel Locations

When asked where travel was required, individuals overwhelmingly cited in (72.7%) and around (45.15%) Hood River as the main place they required transportation. Portland/Vancouver was marked by 31.8% of respondents, followed by The Dalles (18.2%). Medical appointments (50%) and work (50%) constituted the main reasons for needing transportation, followed by shopping trips (38.9%) and special events (11.1%). Multiple responses were allowed.

Perceived Quality of Public Transportation Services

Half of all respondents from the DHS survey location rated public transportation services in Hood River County as “good.” This was followed by a rating of fair by 31.2%, excellent by 12.5%, and poor by 6.2% of respondents.

Comments

In addition to requests for service, cost was one of the most significant issues for those returning surveys and a common reason for not using public transportation. Other comments received noted the need for public education about how to access and use public transportation.

Fellowship for Peace Petition for Improved Hood River Transportation

The Fellowship for Peace submitted a petition for improved Hood River Transportation in December 2006. The petition read in part, “We the undersigned ask that our public transit system, the Hood River County Special District, work to more adequately serve the people residing throughout our county, and to help stop the degrading of our environment and

traffic pollution of Hood River and the Gorge. [...] The District would thus do well to now address needed service improvements, especially full (and fully publicized) daily public transit to Portland and The Dalles, and evening transit.”

This petition was independently conducted and circulated in Hood River County by the Fellowship for Peace and signed by 109 individuals from Hood River, Wasco, Klickitat and Skamania counties. It was also endorsed by Brian Stauff of the Department of Human Services, District 9, and Mayor Berry of the City of Mosier. The petition allowed residents to pledge that they would use expanded CAT services, but did not address funding concerns. One of those signing the petition noted that her concern was help paying for existing services. Most, however, marked that they would use one, or a combination of, expanded services to Portland, The Dalles, and evening transportation.

The petition indicates the level of concern residents have, and their motivation for expanding the services of their public transportation provider, CAT. This plan incorporates the concerns raised through the petition and seeks to provide an outline to define them and identify potential ways these concerns and others can be addressed.

Public Meetings

Public meetings held in Cascade Locks, Hood River, and Parkdale brought forth comments from residents, transportation providers, and human service organizations. Needs and issues identified in these three meetings included:

- Continuing CAT services. Existing public transportation services are vital to the communities they serve.
- Travel to Portland is currently inadequate and significant barriers exist to finding an affordable solution. The once a month trip to Clackamas could be marketed again.
- Designing a public awareness campaign to educate the public about the importance of transportation services to those using them.
- Creating a better connection to Wasco and Skamania counties.
- Increasing use of the rideshare system and making it accessible to those without computers.
- Addressing cultural divide issues and language barriers.
- Reorganizing the Cascade Locks Tuesday shopping trips to Hood River.
- Early morning service to pick-up residents in Cascade Locks.
- Advocacy for additional funding for public transportation services.
- Outreach to isolated populations.

Potential solutions for some of the gaps in transportation services for seniors, individuals with disabilities and individuals with low income were identified during the course of the meetings. Solutions included:

- Conduct a public outreach campaign to better inform special needs populations of their transportation options. This campaign should include attending Next Door and La Clinica meetings and advertising on Cascade Lock's local access channel.
- Market the monthly trips to Clackamas.
- Market Cascade Locks trips to Hood River to determine if there is a critical mass of riders. Locations to conduct surveys include at the Senior Potlatch, in the newspaper, and on the local access channel.
- Encouraging CAT to hire Spanish-speaking bus drivers.
- Utilize local groups to help advocate for increased funding of public transportation services and maximize the potential of these services.

Stakeholder Comments

Stakeholders commended CAT for providing a maximum level of service given a limited level of funding. Sustaining existing services was noted as a priority, however unmet transportation needs still exist. According to stakeholder interviews, the unmet transportation needs include:

Marketing and Outreach

As noted by the public meetings and surveys, special needs populations do not always realize that public transportation services are available for them to use. Those that are aware usually hear word-of-mouth from family, friends, or employees of human service agencies or community organizations. This sentiment was reinforced through the stakeholder interviews. Stakeholders noted that these populations often access a number of human service resources, so continually providing a flow of information to stakeholders is extremely important.

Connections can be made with the human service agencies through regular transportation forums or mailings. It is also important to educate new employees and ensure that information is flowing throughout an organization to reach front desk employees as well as administration. Additional ideas included:

- Developing a full marketing plan.
- Housing Authority offered to place a link to Gorge Translink on their website and would like to also post flyers at their office.
- Hosting a student intern to write articles for the local papers.
- Placing transportation brochures at places frequented by the target populations.
- Producing radio spots, including ones to be aired on Radio Tierra in Spanish.

- Placing ads or articles in newsletters with a focus on Spanish speaking populations: El Papalote, Providence Hood River Hospital (Spanish and English), Hood River Downtown Business Association materials, and Hood River School District.

Extended Hours

Early morning and evening service to facilitate work related needs for individuals with disabilities seniors, and individuals with low income was the most frequently cited need. Key times for worker transport are: 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. A lesser need exists for individuals working the swing shift that get off work between 11:30 p.m. and 12:00 a.m.

Evening hours were also a priority for getting individuals to addiction and support groups. Individuals attending these groups have often lost their license and have few resources for transportation. Classes are currently held at Mid Columbia Center for Living from:

- Monday 3:30 to 5 p.m. and 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
- Tuesday 3 to 5 p.m. and 5 to 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday 5 to 7:30 p.m. and 5 to 7 p.m.
- Thursday 5 to 7 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m.
- Friday 5 to 7:30 p.m.

Cascade Locks foster home requested an extension of service hours to allow CAT to pick up their passengers in Cascade Locks and transport them to CGC. This would require CAT to start around 7:30 a.m.

Next Door noted that the youth they work with need transportation for after school activities and meetings. They could potentially get 10 to 15 regulars. For this to be successful, it would require transportation as late as 8:30 p.m. and would require that it be scheduled in advance.

Weekend hours were requested, but the needs were mainly for shopping and convenience.

Connection to other transportation systems

Stakeholders noted a need for increased connection between other public transportation systems in the region, including Skamania County Transportation and the Transportation Network in Wasco County. DHS in particular noted that their disability office in Hood River was closed, forcing individuals to now travel to The Dalles. A consultant will be developing a plan for GorgeTranslink that will deal with these types of issues.

Fixed and Deviated Route Service

A number of human resource providers noted the difficulty scheduling dial-a-ride service can place on low income individuals. Conversely, some noted that they used this as a way to help their clients learn how to budget, plan, and live independently. For those without

someone to assist in the process, however, it was noted that very low income individuals may not have a phone (or money to use a pay phone). Ideas were not presented on alternatives to allow those without a phone to have increased contact with the system for scheduling other than stopping by the office if they could access it. Also, some individuals have difficulties that prevent them from having the capacity to plan in advance.

The Hospital noted that while they provide vouchers for inpatients (those staying overnight at the hospital), they have some concern for individuals that must come to and leave the hospital the same day. The concern is that this is an immediate transportation need which does not allow planning in advance and may occur on evenings or weekends.

Fare

The fare was generally mentioned as being quite reasonable, especially since it is mostly supported by other sources. However, a few human resource providers noted that they have clients that simply cannot come up with the fare. Ideas presented included having a discounted fare available for special needs clients.

Travel to Portland/Vancouver

In a survey conducted by Providence Hospital, 53% of respondents rated "Access to transportation to Portland" as a top problem. This issue was brought up in a few of the stakeholder interviews, but noted with understanding that resources are strained and limited options exist. It was a primary concern in the petition circulated by Fellowship for Peace, which was seeking expanded CAT service to Portland.

Companion System

CAT's policy of allowing companions to ride free was commended. Improvements can be made by coordinating with Faith in Action. Faith in Action has the necessary volunteers and administration in place to organize a companion system for seniors and individuals with disabilities traveling to medical appointments.

Mobile Health Unit

The Mobile Health Unit is a new service, started in October 2006 by Providence Hood River Hospital. The mobile health unit is too large to take to people's homes, so must park in central locations. Individuals may have difficulty getting from their homes to the set locations, so a partnership between the health unit and CAT was cited as a potential issue for coordination. A listing of the times and locations can be found on page 5 under "Destinations."

Building for CAT

CAT noted the need to move out of the small office next to DMV to a proposed location near Walmart. This would require the construction of a new building, but would create a more efficient system for the transportation providers. Not only would it represent an improvement for CAT, but it would also increase the efficiency of Greyhound in getting busses into and out of Hood River.

Barriers to Coordination/Addressing Unmet Needs

Common barriers to fully meeting transportation needs were noted by the public and stakeholders alike. These include:

- Dispersed populations
- Limited funding
- Limited capacity of existing transportation providers
- Time constraints

Solutions and Priorities

Based upon information gathered from public meetings, surveys, and stakeholder interviews the following are prioritized solutions for Hood River County's transportation needs:

Sustain existing services and maintain vehicles

A wealth of public and private transportation resources exists in Hood River County to support the three target populations. These are vital services to the county and must be maintained at least at their current level.

In particular, the focus is on ensuring the continuation of public transportation services, especially those offered by the Hood River Transportation District. The District should maintain relationships with other providers as they have done in the past.

In order to maintain services, public transportation providers should seek to maintain current funds for operations and services and repair and replace vehicles as needed. CAT has immediate needs for vehicle repair and replacement as does Providence Village. As a partner in public transportation, Providence Village's services should be maintained. They provide a valuable service that reduces the burden on CAT.

Continue communication with Stakeholders

Hood River Transportation District should strive to continue conversations with social service providers, public figures, and community organizations to keep stakeholders informed about transportation options. Options include mailings, forums, and meetings.

Outreach and market to special needs populations

Education and marketing about transportation services was noted as an unmet need. Existing efforts should be continued and combined with the following:

Short term:

- Ensure that Gorge TransLink brochures are available at social service agencies, senior centers, medical facilities, Mobile Health Unit, and senior mealsites.
- Provide Mid-Columbia Housing Authority with a link to Gorge Translink website to post of the Housing website.
- Participate in future GorgeTransLink marketing and education activities.

Long term (with additional funding and capacity):

- Develop a full marketing plan.
- Distribute flyers or Gorge TransLink brochures to apartment complex managers.
- Host a student intern from a local high school to write newspaper articles about public transportation options to market CAT and provide travel training.
- Produce radio spots, including ones in Spanish for Radio Tierra.
- Publish articles in newsletters, including El Papalote, Providence Hood River Hospital, Hood River Downtown Business Association, and Hood River School District.
- Place information on the Cascade Locks local television access channel.
- Attend Next Door and senior center mealsite programs to provide information to residents.

One option for assisting with this activity is to apply for an intern from Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO). The intern could help jump-start marketing and education activities and could be especially valuable if CAT services were expanded. SDAO offers summer internship grant funding to match the cost of a summer intern who is currently in an undergraduate program.

Explore additional funding options

Limited funding and resources is a barrier to meeting the needs of the three target populations. Funding is particularly important for sustaining and increasing CAT services. In the short term, CAT should seek to maintain current sources and develop relationships with social service agencies. In the long term, public transportation providers should seek additional funding to support expanded services which will better meet the needs of riders.

Extend CAT's services

CAT, if provided with enough funding to do so, should extend their hours to include evening hours and early morning hours for individuals trying to get to work. Evening hours are also required for addiction and support groups, community college classes, and senior events. Early morning hours should also be explored for transporting residents from Cascade Locks to Hood River. This is of particular importance to the Foster Home in Cascade Locks as residents need to travel to Columbia Gorge Center at 8 a.m. Weekend hours would be of secondary importance.

Increase coordination with transportation providers/ Participate in Gorge Translink

CAT should strive to make a smooth connection to transportation providers in Wasco and Skamania counties. With the loss of some DHS services in Hood River, the connection to Wasco County is especially important. In addition, while the community college campus in Hood River is growing, some students still travel to The Dalles for classes and programs. Overall, participation in Gorge TransLink is encouraged as a means for better connecting with neighboring communities.

Multi-Modal Transportation Facility

A new facility is a priority for Hood River Transportation District to increase efficiency and service delivery. This facility is planned to provide administrative offices, dispatch, a Greyhound center, and an operations base. It would also include covered vehicle storage. Additional funds are necessary to construct this facility and those should be pursued.

Encourage return of the Cascade Locks Shopping Trip

The Cascade Locks Tuesday trips to Hood River ended due to lack of participation. With targeted marketing, though, these could be revitalized. Marketing should be done at Cascade Locks Senior Potlatch, to service providers, and through the newspapers and local access channel. If there is further interest expressed by residents, the trip should be reorganized.

Travel to Portland/Vancouver

Travel to the nearest metropolitan area, Portland/Vancouver, was frequently mentioned as an unmet need. There are services provided, including taxis, Amtrak, Columbia Gorge Express, and Greyhound. Each of these services has some drawbacks from high fares to inconvenient times to safety and reliability concerns.

Given adequate funding, ideally public transportation providers in Hood River County could provide service to the metropolitan area. Issues would still exist with providing an adequate service and maintaining local transportation resources when increasing travel to Portland. It is a distinct unmet need that should be pursued, given adequate funding.

Coordinate with Faith in Action

Coordinating volunteer companions with Faith in Action, or simply providing contact information as a resource for seniors nervous about using the public transit system, could be coordinated with CAT.

Promote Rideshare

The carpool resource, carpoolmatchnw.org is underutilized. It is not appropriate for all individuals in the target population, but is a resource that may work for some. Additional carpool efforts and improvements should be encouraged.

Further Quantify Transportation Needs

To assist public transportation providers in determining future expansions in service, it would help to further quantify the needs and refine the barriers to use of public transportation. This plan is an overview and further detail may be necessary to get have accurate understanding of the precise number of individuals that would utilize future services.

Plan Review and Adoption

The plan was posted on MCEDD's website (<http://www.mcedd.org>) for public review between December 2006 and March 2007. Stakeholders were encouraged to provide feedback as was the Hood River STF committee and Transportation District Board.

The first draft of the plan was presented to the Hood River Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee on January 8, 2007. It was discussed at this meeting and approved by the committee. The draft plan was also presented to the Hood River Transportation District Board on January 10, 2007. The draft plan was approved for submission to the Oregon Department of Transportation with the applications to the Public Transit Division Discretionary Grant Program. The board approved the first draft of the plan, noting that it was still in draft form.

The final plan was completed in April 2007.

This plan is designed to be reviewed and updated at least once every three years. It should be reviewed in 2010 at the latest.

Appendix A

Apartments in Hood River County

Located in Hood River unless otherwise noted

**American Village
Apartments**
Avalon Way

**Columbia View
Apartments**
Cascade Locks

Orchard View Manor
Pacific Ave

Arends Place I and II
Sieverkropp Drive

**Providence/Dethman
Manor**
(senior housing)
Montello Ave

Riverside
9th Court

Bella Vista
Hope Ave

Riverview Terrace
Cascade Locks

Down Manor
Sterling Place

Indian Creek Court
9th Court

Wind River
Sieverkropp

Columbia View
Oak Ave

Indian Creek Village
9th Court

**Wyeast Vista
Apartments**
8th Street

Assisted Living, Nursing Homes, and Retirement Communities

Located in Hood River unless otherwise noted

Ashley Manor
8th Street

Down Manor
Sterling Place

Parkhurst House
West May Street

Dethman Manor
Montello Ave

Hawk's Ridge
8th Street

**Providence/Brookside
Manor**
Brookside Drive

Hood River Care Center
Henderson Road

Appendix B

Help us improve transportation services!

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) is developing a coordinated transportation plan focused on the needs of seniors, individuals with low income, and individuals with disabilities. With limited resources and funds available for public transportation, we appreciate your responses as they will help prioritize transportation needs. Completed surveys may be returned to DHS and will be picked up by MCEDD.

Where do you usually need to travel?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Dalles | <input type="checkbox"/> Hood River |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Around Wasco County | <input type="checkbox"/> Around Hood River County |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Portland/Vancouver | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Where do you need transportation to get to?

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping trips | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical appointments | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special events | <input type="checkbox"/> Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

What days and times would you like to have access to transportation? (Please list and be as specific as possible)

Do you use public transportation?

Yes No

How would you rate the public transportation system?

Excellent Good Fair Poor

Do you have any comments on how we can improve public transportation services?
