

# **Coordinated Transportation Plan**

## ***Wasco County, Oregon***

April 2007

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**Prepared by: Mid-Columbia Economic Development District**



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# Introduction

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

## Purpose

The Wasco 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 Wasco 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 25 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 the Transportation Network.

- **Gather county data**

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

- **Prioritize needs**

Needs identified through targeted contact with stakeholders and the public were prioritized based upon available information. In addition, the Wasco STF committee met in January to prioritize projects for 2007-2009 Special Transportation Discretionary Grant Funds.

# Data and Information

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## Overview

Wasco County is located on the northern border of Oregon between Hood River and Sherman counties. The county covers 2,381 square miles with an average of approximately 10 people per square mile.<sup>1</sup> It is bordered by the Columbia River to the north, Deschutes River to the east, Warm Springs Reservation to the south, and Mt. Hood National Forest to the west. Incorporated cities include The Dalles, Dufur, Maupin, Mosier, Antelope, and Shaniko. Antelope (59 people) and Shaniko (26 people), however, are smaller than many CDP's and unincorporated areas. The nearest metropolitan area is Portland.

## Demographics

### *Wasco County*

Total Population . . . . .	23,791
Percentage of Population 65 years and over. . . . .	16.7%
Percentage of disabled individuals . . . . .	19.6%
Percentage of individuals living below the poverty level. . . . .	12.9%
Percentage of individuals that speak a language other than English at home. . . . .	10.5%
Mean travel time to work in minutes for workers 16 years and over. . . . .	18.6

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

The population of Wasco County in 2005 is estimated at 23,593 people.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

Human service providers in Wasco 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, creating the development of a new aging community.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau

<sup>2</sup> Portland State University Population Research Center

## **Common Origins/ Destinations**

Wasco County's major population center is The Dalles with almost 19,000 people. Individuals in Wasco County often require transportation traveling to, from, and within The Dalles as it is a major destination for accessing human service agencies, shopping centers and medical facilities. Although transportation to The Dalles was referenced as the greatest area of need, limited interest was also expressed for transportation locally within South Wasco County communities and regionally for transportation to Portland, Hood River, and Washington communities located directly across the Columbia River.

### ***Origins***

As the major population center, a majority of transportation needs originate in The Dalles. Specific origins include:

- Apartment complexes and RV/mobile home parks. These are concentrated on the west end of town where there is a great deal of low income housing. A list of the apartment complexes can be found in Appendix A.
- Senior/ assisted living facilities, retirement communities, and group homes. See full list of facilities in Appendix A.

Another major origin that was noted was Celilo Village, east of The Dalles. Celilo has tribal housing with approximately 39 families living in the Village. They have transportation needs to get to Portland, Warm Springs, and Yakima.

### ***Destinations***

Major destinations are concentrated in The Dalles with the following:

- Medical facilities
  - Cascade Eye Center
  - Mid Columbia Medical Center (MCMC) and Celilo Cancer Center
  - Public Health Department and La Clinica complex
  - East Cascade Physical Therapy
  - Rebekah Street Physical Therapy
  - Columbia Hills Medical Facility
  - Doctor's office complex near MCMC
- Department of Human Services and social services building
- Mid-Columbia Center for Living
- Shopping areas:
  - Safeway and Walgreens
  - Bi-Mart and Kmart
  - Fred Meyer and Cascade Square (Albertsons, Grocery Outlet, etc)
- Mid-Columbia Senior Center
- Columbia Gorge Community College

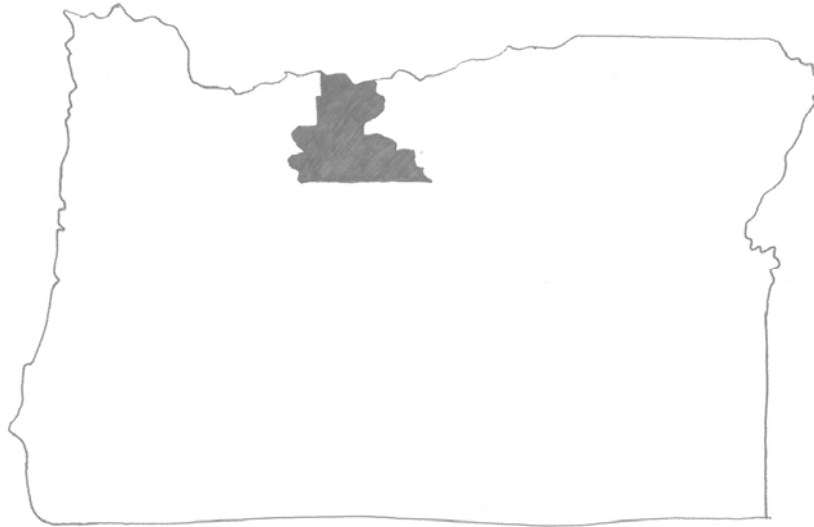
- Beauty Salons, especially Perfect Look and School of Beauty
- Norcor/Community Corrections



# Maps of Wasco County's Transportation Routes and Major Destinations

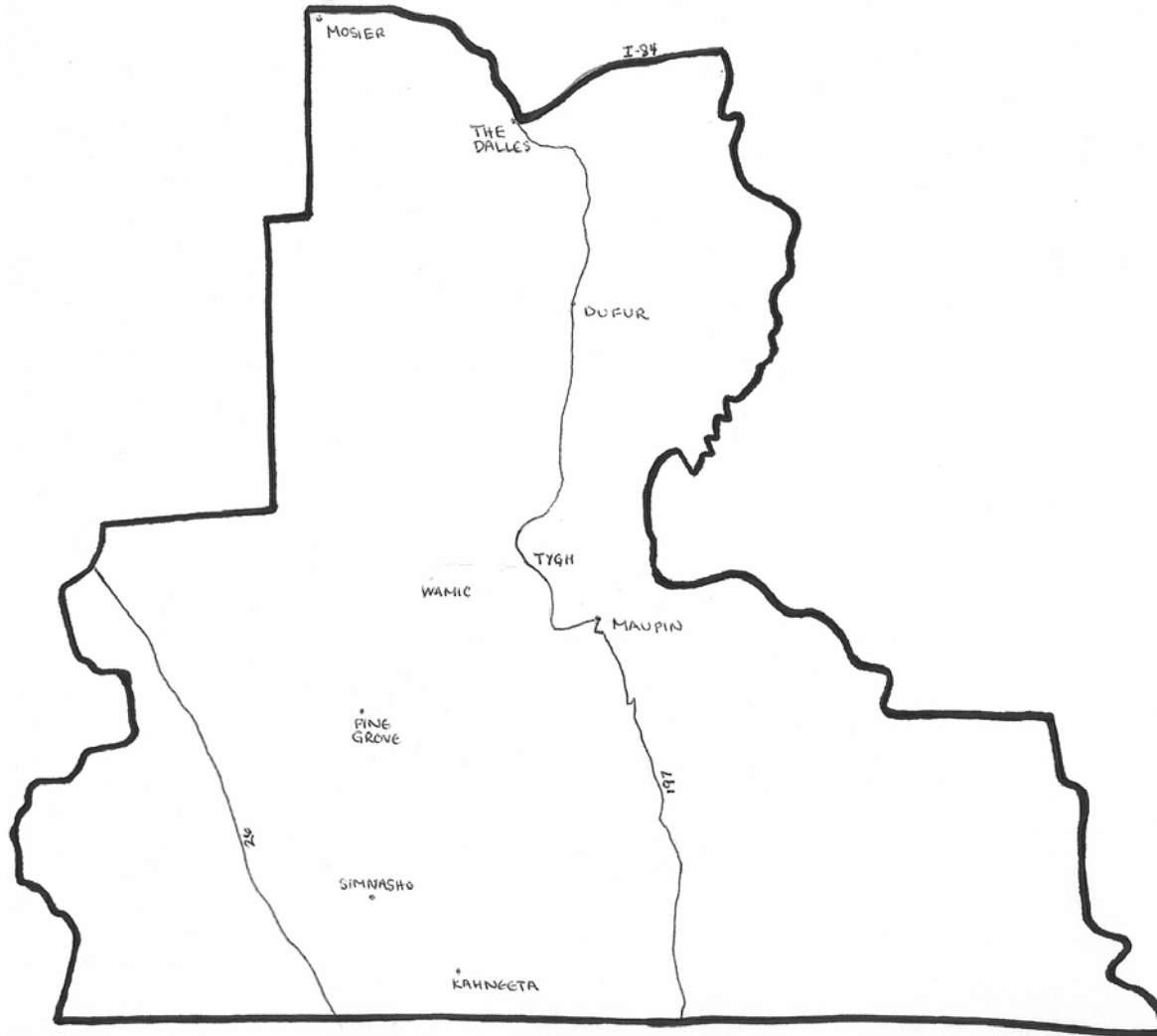
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## *Map of Oregon*



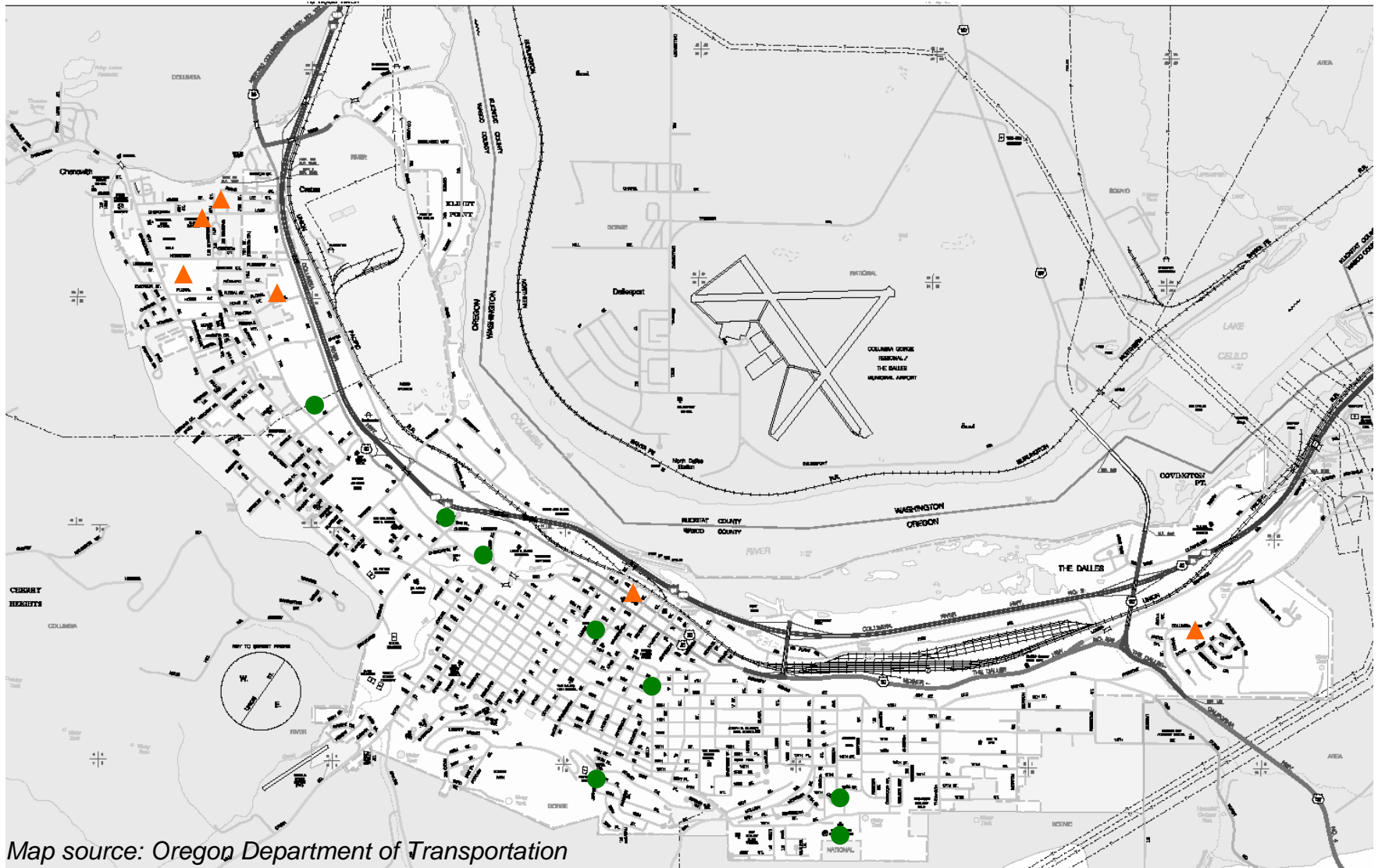
Wasco County is highlighted on this map of Oregon. Portland is the nearest major metropolitan area to Wasco County. Wasco County's main access is via Interstate 84.

**Wasco County, Cities and Unincorporated Areas**



Major Transportation routes through Wasco County include Highway 197, Highway 26, and Interstate 84. Note the location of large populated areas is along the interstate or highways. The remainder of the county is extremely rural and dispersed.

# City of The Dalles



Map source: Oregon Department of Transportation

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



# Stakeholder and Public Involvement

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## Stakeholder Process

Stakeholders were identified as those having significant contact with the three special needs 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 Wasco 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 committee and Wasco County Board of Commissioners in developing priorities for discretionary fund applications for 2007-2009.

## List of Stakeholders Contacted

Stakeholders providing information through personal interviews:

- Transportation Network
  - Dan Schwanz, Director
  - Scott Isaacs, bus driver
- Mid Columbia Community Action Partnership
  - Corene Stewart, Housing Case Manager/Intake Specialist
- Mid Columbia Housing Authority
  - Ruby Mason, Director
- Area Agency on Aging
  - Mary Kramer, Director
- Mid-Columbia Medical Center
  - Linda Trautz, Patient Discharge
- Mid-Columbia Center for Living
  - Rodney McDowell
  - Nerissa, Case Manager
- Eastern Oregon Support Services
  - Vicki Swyers, Personal Agent

- Next Door (Nuestra Comunidad Sana)
  - Claudia Montano, Program Manager
- The Arc of the Mid-Columbia
  - Rich Williams, President
  - Sherry Mumford, Volunteer
- 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
- Mosier Creek Terrace
  - Margie
- Mill Creek Residential Facility
  - Rod Estes, Administrator
- MCCOG Workforce Investment Act
  - Martin Miller, Director
- Wamic Senior Bus
  - Joel "Jody" Chastain, bus driver

Stakeholders participating in public meetings

- La Clinica del Carino
  - Daniel Ward, Director
- Veteran's Administration
  - Patrick Scranton, Veteran's Service Officer
- City of Mosier
  - Kathy Fitzpatrick, Transportation Committee
- Canyon Rim Manor
  - Louise Sargent, Director
  - Deanna McDowell, Board (and Board of Wamic Senior Bus)
- Transportation Network
  - Dan Schwanz, Director
- Wamic Senior Bus
  - Joel "Jody" Chastain

## 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 number of stakeholders commented that they did not feel comfortable speaking for their clients. As such, we focused on encouraging public involvement.

Existing users of Transportation Network's Dial-a-Ride service, the local public transportation authority, were interviewed in December through an on-board transportation survey. We had a 100% response rate with 15 riders providing feedback about transportation services. Of these riders, 5 were seniors and 6 were disabled. Due to poor weather conditions in December, ridership was low during the time we surveyed. Many riders, especially seniors, cancelled appointments and events to avoid icy conditions.

General surveys of our three target populations took place at the Department of Human Services (DHS) offices in The Dalles. Surveys were available in both Spanish and English at the DHS offices. Responses were picked up in late December 2006 and tabulated in January 2007. A copy of this survey is available in Appendix B.

Surveys were also conducted at senior mealsite locations across Wasco County, including Mosier, The Dalles, Dufur, and Tygh Valley. 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 89 seniors responded to the surveys.

In addition to targeted surveying, public meetings were held in north and south Wasco County to encourage additional input from those not accessing DHS services, participating in the senior mealsite program, or utilizing the Transportation Network. The first public meeting was held on November 14<sup>th</sup> at noon at Canyon Rim Manor in Maupin. It was scheduled during the Transportation Network's 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 14<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. at The Dalles Senior Center. An evening meeting was scheduled to allow those working during the day to attend. 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.



# Existing Services and Resources

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## Transportation Service Options

Wasco 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:

- Transportation Network
- Wamic Senior Bus
- Columbia Gorge Express
- Greyhound
- Amtrak
- The Dalles Taxi
- Carpool/Rideshare ([carpoolmatchnw.org](http://carpoolmatchnw.org))
- Human Service Agencies
- Employer Transportation

### ***Transportation Network***

The main public transportation provider for Wasco County is the Transportation Network (formerly known as the Link), which is operated through Mid-Columbia Council of Governments (MCCOG). Although the main office is located in The Dalles, administration is shared with Hood River County's Transportation District to reduce costs and increase coordination of services.

#### **Services**

The Transportation Network offers Dial-a-Ride, door-to-door service from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday throughout Wasco County and the City of The Dalles. In addition, it connects to Greyhound for trips to Hood River, Portland, and points east. The fare is \$1.50 one way for riders traveling within the City of The Dalles. The fare increases for travel originating or ending outside of The Dalles.

#### **Fleet**

As of September 5, 2006, the Transportation Network owned and operated 10 vehicles. All vehicles are 2001 or newer and in excellent condition. The majority of vehicles are accessible; all but 2 are equipped with wheelchair lifts.

## **Utilization of Current Services**

The Transportation Network provided transportation for 21,484 passengers from July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006. Seniors and individuals with disabilities represented a large section of the population using the Network's services. The total number of trips provided to seniors and disabled in the same time period was 13,754. Seniors, in particular, drivers noted, have embraced the service to the fullest extent.

## **Funding**

Operational costs for the Transportation Network's services are covered through:

- Oregon Special Transportation Funds
- Greyhound commissions
- Oregon Division of Medical Assistance Programs (DMAP, formerly OMAP)
- Medicaid (medical). Medicaid transportation service is distributed through the region's Medicaid Brokerage Service, the Mid-Columbia Council of Governments, which also operates the Transportation Network
- Medicaid (non-medical). Medicaid clients receiving community-based care may be authorized for non-medical transportation (e.g. family visits and hair appointments) if it is deemed good for keeping them out of nursing homes.
- City of The Dalles
- Wasco County
- Fares
- Shared administration with Hood River County Transportation District

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

## ***Wamic Senior Bus***

Wamic Senior Bus leases a vehicle from the Transportation Network to serve the needs of South Wasco County residents. In addition to the leased vehicle, they recently acquired a van to better serve senior transportation needs. Wamic Bus covers all of South Wasco County and is currently used to transport residents to The Dalles, primarily to meet their shopping needs. It is operated with the use of volunteers. Throughout the development of this plan, Wamic Senior Bus varied between 1 and 5 volunteer drivers. Drivers are trained by the Transportation Network

The partnership between Wamic Senior Bus and the Transportation Network allows for increased transportation services to residents in the more rural areas of Wasco County.

Fares follow the Transportation Network's policies and are regulated by the Senior Bus. Operations are covered through:

- Fares
- Medicaid transportation funds. Wamic Senior Bus has a contract with the Transportation Network to provide Medicaid transportation for South Wasco County residents
- Leased vehicle from the Transportation Network
- Volunteer drivers

Wamic Senior Bus would like to expand services and activities are already underway to recruit additional volunteer drivers.

### ***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 The Dalles.

#### **Service**

From The Dalles, passengers can travel to (among others) Hood River, Portland, and points east. Currently, Greyhound makes three stops in The Dalles per day in each direction. It leaves The Dalles heading west at 4:05 a.m., 2:45 p.m., and 4:30 p.m. and arrives at 1:50 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 1:10 p.m.

Although The Dalles is fortunate to have maintained Greyhound service in the area, passengers planning a day trip to Portland/Vancouver, the nearest major metropolitan area, may experience scheduling difficulties. Day trips to Portland are often necessary for Wasco County residents requiring access to specialized medical services. A person trying to reach Portland and return to The Dalles via Greyhound during the course of a single day would need to leave The Dalles at 4:05 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 \$40 and \$45

Round trip to Hood River: 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 Wishram, 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 7:30 a.m. from Wishram and return on a train departing Portland at 4:45 p.m. the same day. The difficulty with this situation for travelers, is getting to and

from the Wishram train station. Fares for a one way trip range from \$18 to \$39 to travel between Wishram and Portland.

### ***Columbia Gorge Express***

Columbia Gorge Express operates seven days per week and provides Medicaid transportation. In addition, it 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.

### ***The Dalles Taxi***

There is only one taxi located in Wasco County; The Dalles taxi. At least one taxicab in Hood River also provides service to and within Wasco County.

### ***Carpool/Rideshare (carpoolmatchnw.org)***

Carpoolmatchnw.org is a carpool/rideshare service that has the ability to connect commuters in Wasco County. It has limited capability to recognize origins and destinations outside of the Portland area and can be a challenging service to use for those without experience with computers. 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 the Transportation Network's services. Agencies, facilities, and organizations providing their own transportation include:

- Mill Creek Residential facility, which has a secure transport vehicle and 6 licensed and trained drivers. The secure transportation vehicle has been in service since August 2006 and is available to anyone needing secure transportation.
- Veteran's Administration, which provides medical transportation services for veterans.
- Mid Columbia Center for Living, which has a 9 passenger van.
- Eastern Oregon Support Services, which utilizes "personal providers" to transport some individuals for appointments and special events

There are also services which cater to the homebound individual to eliminate some transportation needs. One such service is Mid-Columbia Meals on Wheels, which brings meals to senior's homes.

### ***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 and John Day Dam. In the case of Mount Hood Meadows, however, workers must arrange for transportation to the pick-up location in Hood River. There is opportunity for an increase in the number of employer sponsored van pools in Wasco County. Currently, the Army Corps of Engineers utilizes VPSI.

### **Local Funding for Transportation Services**

Through stakeholder interviews a number of local funding sources were identified for transporting the three target populations:

- Mid Columbia Medical Center has funds available through their Chaplain's fund to pay fares for patients with no other source of transportation.
- 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.
- DHS utilizes System of Care (SOC) funds for necessary transportation.
- St Vincent de Paul has limited funds that they can use to assist stranded travelers.

### **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. Gorge TransLink provides regional coordination and marketing for the participating providers.
- Wamic Senior Bus-Transportation Network coordination through the leasing of a vehicle
- Transportation Network administration shared with Hood River County Transportation District.
- MCCOG serves as Greyhound Agent, regional Medicaid broker, and operator for Transportation Network.
- Transportation Network contracts with Wamic Senior Bus to provide Medicaid transportation.

### **Additional funding sources 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



# Transportation Needs

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## Survey Responses

The public surveys revealed an interesting difference between those who were using the Transportation Network Dial-A-Ride service and those who were not.

### *Transportation Network On-Board Surveys*

Overall, individuals currently using the Transportation Network were extremely satisfied with the service citing adequate operation hours and travel locations, kind and helpful drivers, a responsive system, reasonable fares, great companion policies and safety. A number of riders commended the Transportation Network for providing a high level of service with limited resources. A few riders commented that without the Network they would have no other means of transportation and rely heavily on what the service can provide. 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 13 of 15 riders. One rider declined comment as she was new to the system and one could not understand the question.

### *Senior Mealsite Surveys*

By contrast, the senior mealsite surveys at Mosier, Dufur, The Dalles, and Tygh Valley showed a large range of responses, with “good” ultimately reaching a majority. Specifically the response rates were as follows:

- 39% Good
- 33% Poor
- 24% Excellent
- 4% Fair

The most positive responses came from The Dalles, where transportation services have the largest presence. The least positive responses came from communities in the more rural parts of the county. However, those in South Wasco County were generally more favorable as a result of having access to the Wamic Senior Bus.

The individuals recording “poor” or “fair” ratings often had not used the system and had misinformation about what it could provide. For instance, a senior living in Dufur thought that neither the Transportation Network nor the Wamic Senior Bus would pick her up to reach medical appointments and access shopping centers in The Dalles. Both providers, however, have indicated a willingness to do so. 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, especially to the more rural communities in Wasco County where transportation services have less of a presence, should be increased.

Those individuals that 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.
- Providing better transportation to Hood River and a connection to CAT
- Offering affordable travel to Portland. The surveys indicated, however, a stronger preference for services to and within The Dalles (94.3%) and South Wasco County (32.9%) than for services connecting to Portland (27.1%), 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. Letting seniors and people with disabilities know that they can access the services.\
- Reducing fares.
- Reinstating past services such as the Mosier Senior bus.
- Providing options for travel within South Wasco County, not just to The Dalles.
- Accessing Wasco County taxes for increasing Transportation Network services.

### ***DHS Surveys***

Surveys conducted at the Department of Human Services office in The Dalles were collected in late December 2006 and responses were reviewed in January 2007. A total of 11 responses were received.

#### **Travel Locations**

When asked where travel was required, 100% of all respondents from the DHS survey cited The Dalles as the main place they required transportation. This was followed by Hood River (27.3%), elsewhere in Wasco County (18.2%), and Portland (9.1%). Medical appointments (81.8%), work (63.6%) and shopping trips (54.5%) constituted the main reasons for needing transportation. Multiple responses were allowed.

#### **Perceived Quality of Public Transportation Services**

Two thirds of respondents rated public transportation services in Wasco County as “fair” or “poor.” This was followed by 22.2% who thought the service was “good” and 11.1% who thought the service was “excellent.”

## **Comments**

In addition to requests for service, those taking part in the survey noted that they wanted a simpler system for public transportation, regular local routes, additional drivers to limit the number of days in advance one must call, and lower cost options. Cost was a factor for many individuals, who desired a fareless bus.

## **Public Meetings**

Public meetings held in Maupin and The Dalles brought forth comments from residents, transportation providers, and human service organizations. Needs and issues identified in these two meetings included:

- Existing public transportation services are vital to the communities they serve.
- Wamic Senior Bus lacks an adequate number of volunteer drivers.
- Some South Wasco County residents would like to expand Wamic Senior Bus operations to cover travel within South Wasco County communities.
- Canyon Rim is a new assisted living facility in South Wasco County which has the capacity for up to 32 residents. This facility will change the transportation needs of South Wasco County and coordination is needed, particularly with the Wamic Senior Bus.
- Travel to Portland is currently inadequate and significant barriers exist to finding an affordable solution. The once a month trip to Clackamas that Transportation Network once ran could be marketed again.
- Public Education and Awareness Campaign regarding existing services and the importance of transportation services to those using them is important.
- A better connection to Hood River is necessary.
- South Wasco County would like to consider coordinating a volunteer driver list. The communities would designate a contact for residents to call if they required transportation. This contact would then coordinate travel with a more mobile resident.

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. The process of attending the meeting and interacting with the participants already has some of the interested parties talking. For instance, in South Wasco County, Wamic Senior Bus and Canyon Rim began discussions on increased coordination for transportation of Canyon Rim residents. Other solutions included:

- Determining demand for transportation within South Wasco County by advertising in local papers, particularly the WamPinRock, and at community gathering spots.

- Recruiting volunteer drivers for the Wamic Senior Bus by advertising the need and utilizing existing volunteer networks, such as the EMS.
- Conduct a public outreach campaign to better inform special needs populations of their transportation options.
- Connect to Columbia Area Transit for the monthly trips to Clackamas.

## **Stakeholder Comments**

Stakeholders commended the Transportation Network 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 they can access public transportation services. 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. Connection 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 have 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 paper.
- Placing transportation brochures at places frequented by the target populations.
- Producing radio spots, including ones to be aired on Radio Tierra in Spanish.

### ***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 6 to 8 p.m. (at Life in Christ church, all others at CFL)
- Tuesday 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. and 4 to 5:15 p.m.
- Wednesday 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m.
- Thursday 5 to 7 p.m.

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 Mount Adams Transportation in Klickitat County, Columbia Area Transit in Hood River County and Three Rivers Transit in Sherman County. 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.

### ***Senior Buses***

Wamic Senior Bus noted that it will need more volunteers to meet service demands.

The Mosier Creek Terrace lamented the loss of their bus, Mosier Senior Bus, due apparently to the inability to cover insurance costs. They would like to return the service, if they could locate resources to cover the necessary costs.

### ***Fare***

The fare was generally mentioned as being quite reasonable, especially since it is supported by other sources. However, a few human resource providers noted that they have clients that simply cannot come up with the fare. This sentiment was reinforced though surveys in which individuals frequently cited fares as a barrier to their use of public transportation. Ideas presented included having a discounted fare available for special needs clients or moving to a donation based fare.

### ***Companions***

Transportation Network's policy on allowing companions to ride free was commended. Improvements can be made by coordinating with a community organization to maintain a list of volunteer companions that can ride with seniors to appointments.

### **Barriers to Coordination/Addressing Unmet Needs**

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

- Lack of a concentrated population outside of The Dalles
- Limited capacity of existing transportation providers
- Limited funding
- Time constraints

# Solutions and Priorities

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

## **Sustain existing services and maintain vehicles**

A wealth of public and private transportation resources exists in Wasco 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 Transportation Network and Wamic Senior Bus Services.

In order to maintain services, public transportation providers should seek to maintain current funds for operations and services and repair or replace vehicles as needed. Transportation Network has immediate vehicle repair needs.

## **Continue communication with Stakeholders**

Transportation Network 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, and senior mealsites.
- Publish articles in the WamPinRock about Wamic Senior Bus opportunities
- Participate in Gorge Translink marketing and education activities
- Provide Mid-Columbia Housing Authority with a link to Gorge Translink website to post of the Housing website

Long term with additional funding and capacity:

- Develop a full marketing plan
- Distribute flyers or Gorge TransLink brochures to apartment complex managers to be placed on doors

- Host a student intern from a local high school to write newspaper articles
- Produce radio spots, including ones in Spanish for Radio Tierra
- Create refrigerator magnets with the Transportation Network phone number.

### **Expand Wamic Senior Bus with additional volunteer drivers**

Wamic Senior Bus should seek to recruit additional volunteer drivers, coordinate needs with Canyon Rim Manor, and look at the demand for offering service within South Wasco County. Discussions that have begun between Canyon Rim and the Wamic Bus should continue. To maintain and expand services, the Wamic Senior Bus should attempt to recruit volunteers by contacting volunteers serving in other organizations, advertising in the WamPinRock, and announcing the needs at the Tygh mealsite and community events. The South Wasco County area is considering innovative transportation ideas to meet increasing demand, so continuing those discussions is important.

### **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 the Transportation Network. For long term solutions, individuals have noted that the Network could explore its own taxing district. In the short term, it should seek to maintain current sources and develop relationships with social service agencies.

### **Extend Transportation Network services**

Transportation Network Services, 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. Weekend hours would be of secondary importance.

### **Increase coordination with transportation providers**

Transportation Network should strive to make a smooth connection to Columbia Area Transit. A secondary goal would be to make connections to Mount Adams Transportation and Three Rivers Transit. Overall, increased participation in GorgeTransLink is encouraged as a means for creating better connections. In particular, information about the Wamic Senior Bus should be added to the Gorge Translink website.

## **Encourage volunteer driver services**

Volunteer driver programs in the area should be encouraged if organizers begin to work on these services. The loss of Care-A-Van and Mosier Senior Bus were both felt strongly by the communities. Mosier has indicated a desire to restart their Senior Bus and develop a strategy for maintaining this service if they can locate a champion for the cause.

## **Encourage Employer Vanpools**

Employer vanpool options should be encouraged for businesses in Wasco County. Some employers have had success with these services and it would decrease the burden placed on other public transportation services.

## **Increase options for travel to Portland**

Increasing travel options to Portland was mentioned as a need, but with less urgency than some of the other services. There are currently providers offering this service including taxis, BlueStar, Columbia Gorge Express, Greyhound and Amtrak. 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 Wasco County could provide service to the metropolitan area.

## **Promote Rideshare**

The Carpool resource, [carpoolmatchnw.org](http://carpoolmatchnw.org) is underutilized. It is not appropriate for all individuals in the target population, but is a resource that may work for some.



## Plan Review and Adoption

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The plan is 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 Wasco County STF committee.

This first draft of the plan was presented to the Wasco County STF committee on January 11, 2007 and to the Wasco County Board of County Commissioners on January 17, 2007. It was discussed at both of these meetings. 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 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 Wasco County

*Located in The Dalles unless otherwise noted*

**American Village of The Dalles**  
West 10<sup>th</sup> Street

**Cascade West Apartments**  
West 5<sup>th</sup> Place

**Center III Apartments**  
West 8<sup>th</sup> Place

**Chenowith Rim Apartments**  
West 13<sup>th</sup> Street

**Court Crest Apartments**  
Court Street

**Commodore II**  
Court Street

**Casa Lomas Apartments**  
Vey Way

**East Hill Village**  
(farmworker housing)  
East 12<sup>th</sup> Street

**Flora Thompson Manor**  
West 8<sup>th</sup> Street

**Pomona Terrace Apartments**  
Pomona Street West

**Sunray Terrace Apartments**  
(senior housing)  
West 10<sup>th</sup>

**West Park Place Apartments**  
(low income working family housing)  
West 10<sup>th</sup> Street

**Westside Village**  
West 7<sup>th</sup> Street

**Mosier Creek Terrace**  
(senior housing)  
Mosier, OR

**Rose Garden Apartments**  
(mentally disabled housing)  
East 9<sup>th</sup> Street

**Sunrise Estates**  
West 7<sup>th</sup> Street

**West Park Orchards**  
West 13<sup>th</sup> Street

**Tillicum Apartments**  
West 7<sup>th</sup> Street

**10<sup>th</sup> Street Apartments**  
(senior housing)  
East 10<sup>th</sup> Street

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## Assisted Living, Nursing Homes, and Retirement Communities

*Located in The Dalles unless otherwise noted*

**Canyon Rim Manor**  
Maupin, OR

**Carolyn's Adult Care**  
West 10<sup>th</sup> Street

**Cascade Senior Center**  
West 10<sup>th</sup>

**Cherry Heights Retirement Community**  
Cherry Heights Road

**Christy's Adult Foster Home**  
East 18<sup>th</sup> Street

**Columbia Basin Care Facility**  
Webber Street

**Evergreen**  
West 25<sup>th</sup> Street

**Flagstone Senior Living**  
Columbia View Drive

**Mill Creek Point**  
West 10<sup>th</sup> Street

**Veteran's Home**  
Veteran's Drive

# 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"/> Other                |

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

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### 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?

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