

Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee

Agenda

Monday, June 8, 2026

The Dalles Transit Center, 802 Chenoweth Loop, The Dalles

Remote Option via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87029745177>

Or call 719-359-4580, Meeting ID: 870 2974 5177

10:00 – 11:00 AM

Topic	Time	Item
Call to Order	10:00	
Minutes Approval <i>March 2026</i>	10:02	Approval
The Link's Funding Challenges	10:05	Discussion
Staff Updates • The Link • Travel Trainer • Regional	10:25	Information/ Discussion
New Business/ Good of the Order	10:45	Information
Public Comment	10:55	Information
Set Next Meeting and Adjourn	11:00	

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WASCO COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

March 9, 2026 at 10:00 am

MCEDD Office, 802 Chenoweth Loop Road, The Dalles, and via Zoom

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Louise Sargent (*Chair*), Lee Bryant (*Vice Chair*), Rita Rathkey, John Williams, Korina Ta'ala, Jesus Mendoza

STAFF: Jessica Metta (Executive Director)

Guests: Jovi Arellano (ODOT Region 4 Public Transportation Coordinator)

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Lousie Sargent called the meeting to order at 10:02 am. A quorum was present.

MINUTES

Documents referenced: July 2025 and October 2025 PTAC Minutes

Lousie Sargent asked for any questions, comments, or edits on the minutes from the July or October 2025 minutes. *There were none.*

Motion: Lee Bryant motioned to approve the July 2025 minutes as presented. Rita Rathkey seconded the motion.

Approved By: Louise Sargent, Lee Bryant, Rita Rathkey, John Williams, Korina Ta'ala, Jesus Mendoza

Opposed By: None.

Motion: Lee Bryant motioned to approve the October 2025 minutes as presented. Rita Rathkey seconded the motion.

Approved By: Louise Sargent, Lee Bryant, Rita Rathkey, John Williams, Korina Ta'ala, Jesus Mendoza

Opposed By: None.

Jovi Arellano joined the meeting at 10:05 am.

REVIEW WASCO COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSIT RFP SCORING FRAMEWORK

Documents referenced: Memo from Jessica Metta, MCEDD proposal submitted to Wasco County

Jessica Metta noted that Wasco County has asked the Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee, acting as the county's Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Advisory Committee to review and score respondents to the Request for Proposals to offer Public Transportation Services. Wasco County receives Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5310 funds from the State of Oregon to fund public transportation operations in the county. FTA rules require that funds be awarded through a competitive solicitation by qualified contractors pursuant to FTA Circular 9070.1G Section 111 14e. This process was last completed in 2021 and is required to be done every five years, hence this request. Wasco County issued the Request for Proposals (RFP) on January 28th. Proposals were due to Wasco County by 4pm on Friday, February 27th. One proposal was submitted (from MCEDD) and is included in this packet for PTAC members to review. Jessica asked members of the PTAC to review each proposal submitted and evaluate the respondents based upon the procurement requirements and ability to deliver the requested services as outlined in the RFP. She opened the floor for discussion.

Discussion: The PTAC Members noted that only one proposal was received and that they are satisfied with MCEDD's prior work. They decided to make a recommendation without a specific score, which Jovi Arellano noted would be fine.

Motion: Rita Rathkey motioned to recommend that Wasco County accept the proposal submitted by MCEDD and award the contract to MCEDD. Lee Bryant seconded the motion.

Approved By: Louise Sargent, Lee Bryant, Rita Rathkey, John Williams, Korina Ta'ala, Jesus Mendoza

Opposed By: None.

Abstention: Jesus Mendoza

UPCOMING GRANTS

Documents referenced: Review of Upcoming Grants Memo

Jessica talked through the memo provided in the packet. She noted budgetary concerns because of at least a nine-month gap in grant funding for The Dalles Deviated Fixed Routes, which MCEDD is trying to see if they can fully cover with STIF Formula funding. MCEDD plans to submit a 5339 Discretionary grant for two replacement vehicles, as well as applications for The Dalles Deviated Fixed Routes, the Hood River-The Dalles service, and mobility management projects. Jovi announced that the legislature did not scrape all the STIF Discretionary funding to fill other ODOT funding needs so it will be available for grant applications.

Jovi Arellano left the meeting at 10:32 am.

STAFF UPDATES

Documents referenced: MCEDD Staff Updates Memo, Map of ridership on the Deviated Fixed Routes, Quarterly ridership figures for FY26 Q1 and Q2.

Jesus noted:

- Because of the facility damage at Water's Edge, medical services there have been moved to Hood River which is hard for elders. The facility plans to reopen in late June.
- The map shows high ridership on the Hood River-The Dalles route, at CGCC, Once Community Health, and 12th and Dry Hollow.
- Ridership is down a little from no non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) rides and changing of the routes to eliminate the Port and Water's Edge stops to make the routes more efficient.

NEW BUSINESS/ GOOD OF THE ORDER

Rita shared information about the library's work to increase access to programming.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

SET NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURN

The next meeting was set for June 8th at the MCEDD conference room at 10 am.

Louise Sargent adjourned the meeting at 10:48 am.

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Metta, MCEDD Executive Director

Memorandum

To: Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee

From: Jessica Metta, MCEDD Executive Director

Date: June 1, 2026

Re: The Link's Funding Challenges

The Federal Transit Administration 5310 Discretionary grant we receive to operate The Dalles Deviated Fixed Routes ends December 31, 2026. We have applied for the next round of grants (ODOT's "Competitive Transit Grant Phase 2"), but ODOT has changed the timing of those to better align with the Federal funding cycle. The grants are competitive, so we are not guaranteed success. If we are successful, which we won't know until roughly Fall 2026, the grant would not start until either July 1, 2027 or October 1, 2027, leaving 6 or 9 months without this funding. The funding we receive is currently \$113,000 per quarter, meaning a \$226,000 gap for the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

We are also seeing increasing expenses, including fuel (Oregon average \$5.30 per gallon compared to \$4.02 per gallon one year ago), a 14% known increase in medical insurance benefits, and a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to wages to account for inflation.

We closely watched the May 19, 2026 election results for Measure 120, which would have doubled the amount of Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Formula funding we receive as of January 1, 2027. If it had passed, we would have been able to continue to operate at current levels; however, the measure failed.

As a result, The Link must adjust its service levels to align with anticipated funding and budget constraints. At the meeting on June 8, we will discuss the proposed changes.



To: Wasco County Public Transportation Advisory Committee

From: MCEDD Staff

Date: June 1, 2026

Re: MCEDD Staff Updates

The Link

Grant Application Updates

MCEDD or Wasco County submitted several grant applications for The Link over the last few months and are still waiting to hear decisions. These included:

- **Competitive Transit Grant – Phase 1**
This funding opportunity is supported through the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5339(a) Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program. The Link applied to replace two vehicles that have exceeded their useful life. The application includes an exact replacement of Bus #30 with a Category D vehicle and the replacement of Van #29 with an electric Ford E-Transit van.
- **Competitive Transit Grant – Phase 2**
Phase 2 of the Competitive Transit Grant Program allows agencies to apply for operating assistance. The Link submitted two applications to support continued operations: one for the regional route between The Dalles and Hood River, and one for The Dalles fixed-route services. We also submitted a Mobility Management request through this source.
- **Section 5310 – Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities**
This application provides funding to support the continuation of Dial-a-Ride services for seniors and individuals with disabilities in Wasco County.
- **Section 5311 – Formula Grants for Rural Areas**
This application provides operating assistance that helps sustain Dial-a-Ride transportation services throughout rural areas of Wasco County.

Outreach & Community Engagement

The Link participated in a few events, including:

- **CGCC Spring Term Resource Fair:** Provided students and staff with information about The Link's services and transportation options.
- **Cherry Festival:** Enhanced community presence and public awareness of The Link through participation in this local event.
- **Día del Niño:** A national celebration of children and childhood. The Link participated by providing small bubble wands, bicycle lights, frisbees, and sharing information with the parents.
- **The Dalles Middle School Family Carnival:** The family carnival invites all of the middle school parents to celebrate end of the school year with a fun carnival. This was the Link's 3rd year participating and sharing information with the families.

Farewell to Transportation Operations Manager

After five years with The Link, Transportation Operations Manager Jesus Mendoza has announced his departure from MCEDD. From Jesus:

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be part of an outstanding organization dedicated to serving and supporting community members throughout the region. During my time with The Link, I have valued the chance to work alongside a committed team and community partners who share a passion for improving transportation and quality of life for residents.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all staff, board members, partners, and community members for their continued support of The Link and the important work it does every day. The relationships built and experiences gained over the past five years have been truly meaningful, and I will greatly miss the opportunity to work with and engage with all of you as I move on to the next chapter of my career.

I wish MCEDD, The Link, and the communities it serves continued success in the years ahead.

MCEDD Travel Training Program

MCEDD Travel Trainer Sara Crook manages the Gorge Transit Connect program, the Go Vets Columbia Gorge program, and is available to assist individuals with their travel training needs in Wasco and Hood River counties. MCEDD also manages the Klickitat and Skamania County travel training program which includes a travel trainer, Eve Elderwell. Eve supports MCEDD's Inclusive Outreach and Education public transportation project in Klickitat and Skamania Counties and provides travel training support to Mt Adams Transportation Services and Skamania County Transit.

Summer of Freedom 2026

Travel Trainer Sara Crook is preparing for the second year of Gorge Transit's Summer of Freedom program. The Ride & Rewards initiative gives youth ages 17 and under the opportunity to ride the bus, explore their communities, and earn prizes at participating local businesses and destinations. The program is designed to increase youth transit ridership, build confidence using public transportation, and encourage independent travel skills.

Structured Learning Class Transit Training – The Dalles High School and Wahtonka T21

Sara also partnered with an Occupational Therapist from North Wasco County School District to coordinate transit training outings for Structured Learning Classes (SLC). In March, The Dalles High School SLC students used The Link fixed-route service to visit Gorge Country Media, providing career exploration opportunities and valuable real-world transit experience, including one student's first community outing using a white cane. Students received Ride & Rewards punch cards to encourage continued use of public transportation. In May, Sara accompanied the Wahtonka T21 class on a transit training trip using The Link's Blue Route, helping students practice bus boarding, riding procedures, and independent travel skills while visiting community destinations. The outing provided hands-on experience using public transit to access local businesses and services while reinforcing confidence and independence in community travel.

Regional Transit Activities

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

Lyle Route Launch

MCEDD supported the development and launch of the new MATS Lyle Route, which began service in April. The route provides new transit connections between the communities of White Salmon/Bingen/Lyle/Dallesport and The Dalles and improves access to tribal in-lieu fishing sites along Highway 14. Mobility Management staff coordinated outreach with CRITFC, tribal-serving organizations, transit providers, and community partners to support route planning, outreach, and launch activities. Check out this wonderful video of the route and one of our most enthusiastic Lyle riders: <https://youtu.be/skmrlbpgmAY>

Transit Marketing and Community Outreach

Regional transit marketing efforts saw significant growth during the quarter, with social media outreach reaching more than 11,000 accounts and generating nearly 35,000 content views. Outreach activities promoted new and expanded transit services, including the new Lyle Route, Gorge to Mountain Express (final Spring runs), the Dog Mountain Shuttle, and the Columbia Gorge Express (summer expansion). The Get There Oregon Commute Challenge challenged Columbia Gorge employees to take the bus or bike/walk to work. A memorable outreach moment this quarter involved a Spanish-language Radio Tierra PSA. While listening to the broadcast, Kathy noticed that the script accidentally stated that owning a car costs \$100,000 per year instead of \$10,000! A follow-up correction was quickly aired. The correction turned into a good opportunity to connect with listeners, joking that while car ownership doesn't cost \$100,000 a year, current gas prices can make it feel that way.