



Transit Moves People. People Move Oregon.

Public transportation does a lot of important things that you might not even notice. It enables workers to get to jobs, older adults to medical facilities, younger people to schools, bike riders to urban centers, disabled adults to appointments and family members to shopping areas.

As public transportation matures and expands in Oregon, it will do many more important things. Electric buses will cut carbon emissions. Dial-a-ride and weekend service will give people more mobility options. Inter-community routes will expand the concept of neighborhood. On-demand scheduling and integrated payment platforms will empower statewide car-free travel. And that's just the beginning.

Oregon's 41 transit agencies have benefitted from additional funding through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) approved by the 2017 legislature.

In the attached backgrounders, the agencies tell their stories – what they did during the pandemic, how they invested their STIF funds and where they could invest additional STIF funding if it was available.



Check out the backgrounders at TransitMovesOregon.com

House District 59



Your Guide to The Link Public Transit

Why The Link service is so vital

Many of The Link's riders depend on transit to reach work, go to the doctor and attend school.

Shopping shuttles are key to older adults staying in place and taking trips to visit friends or social services.

All high school students in The Dalles ride for free to any destination with student ID. Younger children ride for free with a paying adult.

Transit Connect, which started in 2021, is a venue for community organizations to share free transit passes, travel ideas and become travel ambassadors in their communities.

Gorge Translink, an alliance of transit agencies, makes it easy to go from the Gorge to Portland and Vancouver.

The Link Public Transit began in 1997 to provide public transportation services Wasco County citizens. Originally operated by the Mid-Columbia Council of Governments, The Link Public Transit service operation was taken over by the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District in 2018. Since then, The Link transit service has expanded services by adding two fixed routes, Saturday dial-a-ride services, shopping shuttles and weekly shuttles serving Maupin, Dufur and Tygh Valley.

Deviated Fixed Routes: The Red and Blue Loops serve key destinations in The Dalles, Sixth Street shopping, Columbia Gorge Community College, Mid-Columbia Medical Center, the Veterans Service Office, Port of The Dalles, Waters Edge and more. At the Transit Center, riders can connect to Hood River, Goldendale and Greyhound services. Passengers can request route deviation up to one quarter mile from the fixed route. Deviated Fixed Route Service runs Monday to Friday from 7 am to 6 pm.

Dial-A-Ride: The Dial-a-Ride, door-to-door public transportation service operates Monday through Friday, 6 am to 6 pm. The Link added Saturday service in 2019, offering trips between 9 am and 4 pm. Dial-A-Ride picks up riders in the The Dalles, Dufur, Mosier, Celilo, the Lone Pine in-lieu site and unincorporated areas.

Inter-community Service: The Link operates an inter-community route between The Dalles, Mosier, The Port of Hood River and the Columbia Area Transit office in Hood River four times daily on weekdays. CAT operates the route twice per day on weekends. This route serves commuters and provides direct transfers to the Columbia Gorge Express which takes riders into Portland.

The Dalles and Hood River Shopping Bus: The shopping bus offers door-to-door service to grocery stores and shopping center in The Dalles on Monday and Wednesdays and Hood River twice a month. The cost is \$3 for unlimited stops with no shopping bag limit. Our drivers help passengers with their bags.

South County Shuttle: The Link serves riders in Maupin, Tygh Valley and Dufur every Tuesday by offering rides into The Dalles for shopping and appointments. The cost is between \$3 and \$5 depending on location.





In three years, The Link has transitioned from medically focused dial-a-ride to a wide array of services, including cooperating with other providers on an annual transit pass that can be used for unlimited rides.

How many buses, vans and other vehicles do you operate?

The Link Public Transit operates 13 vehicles. Eleven are <30 buses that carry 12 passengers and two wheelchairs. Two vehicles are wheelchair-accessible minivans.

Key priorities for making service route decisions?

We analyze ridership, origin and destination data for our dial-a-ride and deviation requests. We look at densities of transit-dependent populations and major trip attractors such as schools, day-care, community colleges, health care facilities, parks and social services. We emphasize access for the place-bound to health care, shopping and day trips.

How has The Link applied its funding from the STIF?

STIF funds support nearly all our services. It provides funding for Dial-A-Ride operations and supports inter-community shuttles. It also supports free rides for high school students and fare subsidies for low-income community members.

How would The Link apply additional STIF funding?

During our Transit Development Plan outreach phases, we heard a strong desire for longer operating hours and expanded weekend service. With additional funding, we could hire additional dispatch and driving staff to implement these requests. The Plan also recommends:

During 2021, The Link offered free round-trip rides to vaccination sites in The Dalles and elsewhere. During 2022, The Link offers free rides to and from cooling shelters.

- A longer inter-community route connecting The Dalles with Madras and Central Oregon transit providers.
- Significantly expanding the number of bus stops to increase the percentage of residents who live within a quarter mile of a bus stop.
- Transition to electric vehicles to improve air quality, lower fuel expenditures and reduce maintenance costs.

<https://www.mcedd.org/link/>

“Many of our riders are transit dependent and rely on our services to reach work, medical appointments and school. Our shopping shuttles regularly book up and have proven to be a vital component of allowing seniors to age in place.”

Jessica Metta, Executive Director



You Never Know Who You Will Meet on the Bus

Spend a day on a public bus in the Gorge and you are bound to meet all kinds of people. After all, the Gorge TransLink motto is: Everybody Rides.

People from all walks of life use Gorge TransLink to get to and from work, school the laundromat, shopping trips, social calls and doctor visits. A day riding the bus proves the point.

On a warm summer day, driver Steve Wilson welcomes passengers at the Mid-Columbia Medical Center. Seated in the back row of the bus is a 29-year-old woman on her way to work at Swell Gelato at the Port of The Dalles.

Many workers choose to take transit to work for environmental reasons. Buses with as few as seven passengers are more efficient than single-occupancy cars.

Columbia Area Transit (CAT) based in Hood River has implemented an Employee Pass program to increase ridership and lower carbon emissions.

A few minutes later, Harry Cagley, 70, boards the bus. He's a regular. "Going to the skin doc," Cagley tells Wilson, who nods his approval. "It would be hell in the heat without this bus," says Cagley, who also takes advantage of door-to-door service to grocery stores and shopping centers. Bus drivers help load and unload grocery bags.

Wilson views it as a red-letter day when his riders use the bike rack and the wheelchair ramp.

One of the next stops is at Pellet Shelters for the houseless. A woman and her wiener dog board with a suitcase and grocery bag. Virginia Medina, 71, and Bruno are headed to the laundromat at Cascade Square. Wilson helps lift her suitcase. Cagley helps, too.

Down the line is a stop at Columbia Gorge Community College. Many CGCC students, high school, elementary and even preschool students ride the bus or use dial-a-ride to go to school.

Alighery Jimnez Lozano, 18, often rides the bus to school, as well as for appointments and errands. Her family only has one car, so transit service provides alternatives. "It's also less expensive than owning and maintaining a car," she says.



This story is based on reporting by Cole Goodwin for CCCNews in July when he rode Gorge TransLink